Ricard Zapata-Barrero · Evren Yalaz

Editors

Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies

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Printed on acid-free paper

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Preparing the Way for Qualitative Research in Migration Studies

Ricard Zapata-Barrero and Evren Yalaz

> *"An attitude of moral indifference has no connection with scientific 'objectivity'"*
>
> *Max Weber*
>
> *The Methodology of the Social Sciences (New York: Free Press, [1905] 1949, 60)*

Migration is not only transforming sending, transit, and receiving countries, but also social scientific studies. The expansions of human mobility, profound demographic transformations, and their diverse social, political and economic consequences have brought unprecedented theoretical and empirical attention to the phenomenon. While migration research has relatively longer and more established tradition in US academia, its growth in European scholarship in the last three decades has been remarkable. An increasing number of scholars and journals devote their work to understanding causes and consequences, current situations, changes and continuities of migration-related issues in Europe. Moreover, the expansion of research centres and networks, undergraduate and graduate programs, conference meetings, winter and summer schools demonstrate increasing institutional visibility of migration research. For instance, IMISCOE (International Migration, Integration, and Social Cohesion), which is currently Europe's largest network of scholars in the area of migration and integration, has grown from 19 founding member institutes in 2004 (Brus 2014) to 39 member institutes in 2017 and over 500 individual members. On the other hand, what is less evident is the systematic attention to the methodological issues in European migration studies[1]. This edited volume presents an

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[1] There have been ample textbooks that primarily focus on qualitative research in social sciences, such as classic works of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and as well as more recent qualitative research handbooks of Beuving and de Vries (2015) and Yin (2010). While

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effort to address this gap, through the collaboration of migration scholars from diverse disciplines. It is a unique volume as it brings together a multidisciplinary perspective as well as illustrations of different issues derived from the research experience of the recognized authors.

The publication is particularly addressed to graduate and post-graduate students and, more generally, to those who embark on the task of doing qualitative research for the first time in the field of immigration. It is also addressed to more senior researchers who are interested in strengthening their competence in the use of qualitative methods, specifically applied to the study of migration processes. In a nutshell, each chapter provides the readers with a set of substantial reflections that we hope will guide them in dealing with the particular aspects of qualitative research when applied to migration studies. While covering different stages and topics of migration research, each author explores when and why a particular dimension of qualitative research becomes key to migration questions; how it adopts different logics, designs, and techniques; what kind of theoretical, epistemological, empirical, and ethical challenges researchers in this field face; and how these challenges can be addressed, and possibly lessened or at least controlled.

This edited volume is primarily concerned with the issues of qualitative methodology and its diverse research techniques in migration studies. The central focus neither assumes a hierarchy among different methodological traditions nor carries any intention of unilaterally imposing norms of one methodological tradition over others. In other words, qualitative methodology neither can be seen as inherently superior to other methodological traditions nor as a "last resort" technique when statistical methods are not appropriate (Mahoney 2007, p. 122). What current research shows is that scientific excellence and academic development go hand in hand with the use of diverse methodological tools, approaches, and designs. In this respect, we acknowledge the complementarity of different methodological paradigms that vary in terms of their strengths and limitations, and appreciate the efforts of multi-method collaborations.

Yet, we also believe that qualitative research has a particular importance for migration studies, considering its potential for producing rich, in-depth, and nuanced analysis; allowing for conceptual refinements with higher validity; redefining the existing categories and generating new hypotheses and even theoretical paradigms; exploring complex, conjunctural, multi-faceted dimensions of the migration dynamics; and last but not least, being better tuned for understanding the voices of social actors and immigrant groups, especially the ones who lack means of participation

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this extensive literature on qualitative research highly contributes to social scientific inquiry in general, it lacks an emphasis on migration studies and its special theoretical and methodological needs. On the other hand, few existing works on the area of research methods in migration studies (Iosifides 2011; Vargas-Silva 2012; Voloder and Kirtipchenko 2013; Elliot et al. 2017) either overlook unique issues of qualitative methodology in migration studies or did not address the need for developing special methodological awareness for the European context.

and representation in mainstream society and politics. Together with these distinct characteristics, most contributors in this volume also show another feature of qualitative research: there is always a certain degree of critical assessment of the reality being under qualitative scrutiny. We believe that these distinctive features of qualitative inquiry are crucial components of migration research.

Most of the migration-related topics, such as border/mobility, diversity/citizenship, integration, incorporation/participation, and discrimination/xenophobia require deep contextual analysis, which could not be folded into already existing analytical frameworks. This complexity is already present in many migration debates related to multi-level analysis, super-diversity, post-migration era, transnational studies, new forms of mobility in Europe, issues of refugees and so on. The authors in this volume, depending on their area of expertise, discuss the key aspects of qualitative research while drawing on their own theoretical, epistemological and empirical inquiries. Therefore, along with methodological guidance, each chapter provides rich empirical examples from diverse topics of migration studies.

Qualitative research is far from being a unified perspective. It is "a generic approach in social research" (Beuving and de Vries 2015, p. 19), covering a wide range of research designs (from single case studies to comparative designs), epistemological approaches (from critical realism to interpretivism) and research techniques (from in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation, to analysis of documents and visual data). In most of the cases, the disciplinary diversity of social research is largely translated into different qualitative tools covering political science's expert interviews and document analysis, sociology's organisational fieldwork, interpretive and interactionist research, anthropology's ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation, history's archival research and oral history, and linguistics' discourse analysis. This plurality makes it even more crucial to raise methodological awareness and interdisciplinary dialogue that would acknowledge specific theoretical, epistemological and empirical challenges that migration scholars encounter, and develop innovations to address particular research needs.

While migration studies carry a wide range of focuses, from migrants to host society and its actors, from migration-related policies to public institutions, this edited volume is primarily concerned with qualitative empirical research on migrants, migrant communities, and their interactions with the host society, public and private actors, and stakeholders. In this respect, some important areas of migration research, such as qualitative approaches to studying migration policy making or ethnographic methods to studying administrative institutions dealing with migrants are only tangentially addressed. In return, this migrant-centred and bottom-up approach enables the volume's contributors to unpack the category of migrants, explore its internal diversity, and problematize existing categories and boundary-making mechanisms. Rather than taking the category of migrants for granted, this volume complexifies it through distinguishing migrants, not only in terms of their country of origin, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender, but also in terms of their patterns of mobility (temporary/permanent stayers, circular migrants, etc.), condition of exit (economic migration, family unification, and forced migration), legal status (naturalized in host country, foreigners, documented/undocumented migrants),

position in labor market (high skilled, low-skilled), age at migration, and length of stay. In this respect, we acknowledge that migrants highly vary from each other in terms of available political, economic, and social opportunities in their destinations, incurred public reactions, perceptions of inclusion, discrimination, and marginality, and networks and resources to respond back to possible precarious conditions. This volume undertakes the task of exploring methodological underpinnings of qualitative study on such a diverse population and their interaction with the host society, directly or through public and private mediators.

One additional value of this book is its geographic focus on Europe. In this way, it seeks to explore theoretical and methodological issues that are raised by distinctive features of the European context. The border and definition of Europe is a highly controversial matter. As Martiniello and Rath (2014, pp. 11–12) point out, there is no consensus about Europe's geographical extent. While some would restrict Europe to six founding states of the European Community, others would define it as current member states of the European Union. While some would consider the continental peninsula as Europe, including both EU and non-EU countries, others would extent it even further, including Ukraine, Russia, and Turkey. In any way, what becomes evident is that European migration policies become a driver for building a European political community. This also invites a reflection on how to shape the normative contours of the external borders of Europe (Zapata-Barrero 2009). Efforts to define a European identity is a contentious issue (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2015). For some, Europe constitutes an exemplary union based on common ideals, values, interests, historical legacies and traditions. For others, European identity is quite ambivalent, reflected on its plurality, inconsistency, and contradictions. Europe is seen in a crossfire between diverse national (and even sometimes ultra-nationalistic) claims and uniformity posed by globalisation; between promoters of a common European identity and fluctuation and hybridization of identities; and between supporters of "Fortress Europe" and unprecedented human mobility and emerging transnational ties.

Despite all these viewpoints, in order to facilitate theoretical and empirical research, we continue to argue in favour of the analytical benefits of using Europe as a category of analysis. Historically, US-based scholarship has had a pioneer role in shaping the methodological debates in the field. These debates have often reflected the unique immigration experience of North America. The absence of diverse national political frameworks in the US context has prioritized efforts for devising methodological techniques for researching various immigrant groups in a single-country context. Across-place analysis has been limited to comparing different US states. The unique nature of immigration flows, the presence of a host society with a migration background, the lack of interventionist welfare state and *laissez-faire* nature of immigrant integration, the particular history of race-relations and the legacy of slavery, the extensive *jus soli* citizenship regime and many other factors has had deep impact on the questions and designs of qualitative research in migration studies in the US. On the other hand, we argue that Europe, despite its ambivalent nature, has a distinct place in international migration studies. Some of these distinctive features include its unique history of state and nation-making, its colonial past

and its lingering effects, its welfare systems, its varied citizenship regimes and integration policies, its transnational structure, its religious history, and its geographic proximity to hot spots of human mobility, such as the Mediterranean area. This latter being one of the epicentres of how tragic human mobility could be without moral face. We believe that these distinctive features of the European context profoundly shape the key questions, concepts, and research designs of qualitative inquiry, therefore, they can be best addressed through a context-sensitive methodological awareness.

Migration studies often require interdisciplinary knowledge, considering its inevitable link with a wide range of research areas such as citizenship studies, diversity studies, mobility studies, gender studies, cultural studies, religion studies, and urban studies. To address this issue, this book brings together migration scholars coming from different social sciences disciplines, working on diverse areas of migration research, and focusing on different regions and migrant groups of Europe. While each contributor focuses on diverse topics and different stages of research, they all share the common concern of considering the role of qualitative research in European migration studies. They do so by highlighting its key strengths, points of limitations, and ways to address these pitfalls through innovative techniques; by opening the category of qualitative methodology up and presenting its diverse logics and applications across different areas of migration studies and across different disciplines; and by contributing to building a context-based methodological approach that would address to the particular aspects of the European context.

In sum, this edited volume serves as a key reference work that stimulates methodological qualitative reflections and provides a framework for discussing the tools to frame and conduct qualitative research. It mainly serves as an instrumental source, both in regard of information-providing and knowledge-producing. The organization of chapters follows a general logic of qualitative research: beginning with theoretical and epistemological considerations; proceeding with crafting the research questions, developing the categories, selecting the cases, collecting empirical evidence through various techniques, and analysing qualitative data collected through these different methods; and finally calling attention to ethical issues and research/policy relations. We hope that this edited volume will familiarize scholars and graduate students who are learning to be researchers in migration studies with a more comprehensive appreciation of qualitative research tools and approaches. We think the book could also be useful for policy makers and the network of actors and professionals producing information and shaping policies in migration-related issues. What is more, it would also be of interest to scholars in social sciences, since it contributes to the methodological and epistemological debates in traditional disciplines.

After this introduction, in Chap. 2, the editors, *Ricard Zapata-Barrero* and *Evren Yalaz*, review the current qualitative migration research in Europe. By conducting paper-by-paper analysis of leading peer-reviewed journals in the field of migration research, they reflect on the current state and overtime development of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe (QMR-E). The chapter maps the continuities and changes taking place in QMR-E with respect to their qualitative research methods, designs, research sites and groups, multi-level analysis, and topics.

Then the edited volume is structured in four main parts. *Part I* (*Theoretical and epistemological issues,* Chaps. 4, 5, and 6) introduces the main theoretical and epistemological issues of qualitative research to first-time researchers. Then, we invite the reader to dive into *Part II* (*Building a qualitative research design,* Chaps. 7, 8, and 9)*,* where they will review the main reflections that must be addressed to frame the focus and approach of their research design. *Part III* (*Qualitative techniques and data analysis,* Chaps. 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14) will discuss qualitative techniques and analysis of qualitative data in migration studies, before going to the last *Part IV* (*Significant requirements before embarking,* Chaps. 15 and 16), where the authors provide some recommendations to researchers before beginning to walk through the qualitative research path, such as the ethical issues of the research/policy dialogue framework.

Part I begins with Chap. 3, where *Russell King* reflects on the essential character of migration as a space-time phenomenon. He explores the debates on multi-sited research designs and mobile field methods, while particularly focusing on multi-sited ethnography and its critiques. The last part of the chapter illustrates the relevance of context and multi-sited research designs with reference to the author's research on Albanian migration. In Chap. 4*, Maren Borkert* deals with the challenging question: why bother with interdisciplinarity in migration research? The chapter highlights promises and pitfalls of research that transcends conventional disciplinary boundaries. She argues that while interdisciplinary migration research fosters scientific innovation by allowing scientists to see connections across fields, in practice, it has undeniable downsides due to a lack of interdisciplinarity in academic systems and publication infrastructures. In Chap. 5*, Ricard Zapata-Barrero* explores the link between political theory and qualitative research. He underlines that qualitative research complements political theory with 'evidence-based and knowledge-based arguments', and in return, political theory equips qualitative research with 'theoretically-founded arguments within liberal-democratic conceptual frameworks'. To develop the potentiality of this link, the chapter proposes a conflict-based approach. In Chap. 6*, Theodoros Iosifides* discusses some crucial epistemological issues related to qualitative social research in general and qualitative migration research in particular. The chapter considers the issues of 'social reality' or 'realities', 'truth', interpretative relativity, causality and the dichotomy between interpretation and explanation in qualitative research methods, and then proceeds with more specific matters to qualitative migration research, including power differentials between the research participants and researchers, subjectivity and subjectification of research participants, and the issue of objectivity/subjectivity in qualitative migration research.

Part II of the book starts with Chap. 7, in which *Ewa Morawska* reviews the key epistemological premises, different research goals and questions, strategies of data collection, and the kinds of knowledge produced by traditional qualitative research. The chapter offers illustrations of the kinds of questions asked through standard methods of qualitative investigation, i.e. interviewing, observations, and document analysis in international migration studies. In Chap. 8*, Dirk Jacobs* delves into the issue of categorising what we study and what we analyse, and the exercise of interpretation. While qualitative researchers are well equipped in highlighting social complexities and deconstructing categorisations, Jacobs warns researchers to be

aware of dangers of excessive deconstruction and 'anything goes' stances. *Karolina Barglowski*, in Chap. 9, presents principles and guidelines of case selection and sampling in qualitative research by cataloguing different types of case selection and their application in selected empirical studies in migration studies. She discusses their merits and disadvantages, while highlighting the three methodological challenges that migration research is confronted with: methodological nationalism, ethnic lens and positionality.

In Part III, *Olena Fedyuk* and *Violetta Zentai*, in Chap. 10, explore the role of interview method in qualitative migration research by discussing its different forms, applications and methods of analysing data. They argue that interviews and its various forms allow researchers to discover knowledge that otherwise would remain undetected in formal surveys and other more standardized forms of data collection. The chapter also revisits epistemological debates and methodological challenges in the use of interviews and interview data analysis. Chapter 11 proceeds with the discussion of the use of focus groups in migration research. *Annalisa Frisina* considers this method as a forum for 'thinking public', which permits researchers to 'understand the process of creating consensus and dissent via interaction'. While outlining principles of how to conduct focus groups, the chapter also sheds light on how to interpret discussions and how to analyse the everyday naturalization of nation, ethnicity and race. In Chap. 12, *Paolo Boccagni* and *Mieke Schrooten* overview participant observation in migration studies. They discuss how this method becomes a crucial tool to capture the increasing spatio-temporal complexity of present-day mobility. The chapter concludes, with the insights on multi-sited ethnography, the relationship between ethnographers and their counterparts, and promises and pitfalls of online ethnography in social research on migration. In Chap. 13, *Teun van Dijk* introduces some discourse analytical methods for the study of migration. The chapter provides a brief introduction to Discourse Studies and proceeds with characterisation of Migration Discourse and a more systematic method for the study of migration discourse. *Koen Leurs* and *Madhuri Prabhakar,* in Chap. 14, offer their reflection on doing digital migration studies. After distinguishing various paradigms of digital media studies, the authors present the methodological research principles of digital migration studies with a commitment to social justice.

The last part of the book, Part IV, raises the issues that migration researchers will encounter within all stages of their research. In Chap. 15, *Ilse van Liempt* and *Veronika Bilger* present ethical considerations in migration studies by particularly focusing on research on smuggled migrants. The chapter gives insights on how to get access to participants, how to build trust, and how participants' narrations might be influenced by external factors such as; migration experience, migration policies and administrations, smugglers or the migrant community itself. Last but not least, *Peter Scholten*, in Chap. 16, explores how migration research and policymaking can interact in different ways. The chapter argues that various factors at the European, the national, and the local level can shape different configurations of research-policy relations. As the author points out, while the strong interdependency of research-policy relations may have the result of constraining the effect of research questions and methodologies in migration research, we can expect that a more reflective relation will produce more critical reflections on migration research.

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Chapter 2
Mapping the Qualitative Migration Research in Europe: An Exploratory Analysis

Evren Yalaz and Ricard Zapata-Barrero

2.1 Introduction[1]

While half a century ago migration research was a peripheral area of study within traditional academic disciplines, today it has become a firmly established multidisciplinary field with an increasing number of research centres, publication outlets, and academic programs. Almost all recognized universities in Europe make migration studies visible through their lines of research, master and doctoral programs, research groups, centers and institutes. The key academic editorials increasingly publish collections, handbooks, textbooks and companions on the key issues of migration studies, such as diversity, citizenship, integration, mobility, borders, and migration policies. For instance, IMISCOE has recently released a textbook series edited by Marco Martiniello and Jan Rath (2010, 2012, 2014) that assembled the studies on international migration and immigrant integration in Europe. The European research agenda on migration studies is multi-varied, and always connected to social, political and economical processes in Europe. The different programs of the IMISCOE Annual Conferences (www.imiscoe.org) clearly illustrate this multi-sited, multi-disciplinary and multi-level analysis.

This chapter aims to reflect on the current state and overtime development of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe (QMR-E). For this purpose, we have conducted paper-by-paper analysis on original articles published between 2000 and 2016 in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS) and *Ethnic and Racial*

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[1]We would like to thank John Solomos and GRITIM-UPF researchers for their invaluable comments on the earlier versions of this chapter.

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Studies (ERS), two leading peer-reviewed journals in the field of migration research.[2] In total, we have identified more than 2400 articles published in this period and looked for those that are based on qualitative empirical research in migration studies conducted in Europe. Six hundred twenty-seven original articles met our search criteria of QMR-E and were examined further. The main objective of this exploratory analysis is to map the continuities and changes taking place in QMR-E with respect to their research methods, designs, research sites and groups, levels of analysis, and topics. In this respect, we aim to identify the dominant trends and existent gaps in QMR-E literature, so that we could invite scholars to deepen the existing research agenda and to engage in new research directions.

One of the striking findings of this exploratory analysis is that scholarly interest in migration studies unprecedentedly increased over the last 16 years. Today, the number of issues and original articles released is three times more than in the early 2000s. In this period, the QMR-E articles kept on growing in quantity and accounted for approximately one-quarter of the total original articles released by these two journals. The analysis also demonstrates that QMR-E articles are diverse in terms of their qualitative methods and designs, groups and countries of study, the way they categorise migrants, levels of their analysis, and the primary migration issues that they focus on. Despite this diversity, we can still argue that the increasing interest in qualitative research in European Migration Studies makes it evident that migration scholars focus on detailed examination of their cases and have direct contact with their objects of analysis.

Before articulating the outcomes of this exploratory analysis, the main methodological criteria that were followed to collect and analyze the information will be introduced. In the second section, the main findings on the increasing interest in migration studies and qualitative research will be presented. In the third section, we will examine the current state and development of QMR-E following the criteria of analysis being proposed. In the concluding section, we will try to go beyond the descriptive analysis and infer some tentative generalizations in terms of patterns, gaps and new directions in QMR-E.

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[2] While mainly practical issues limited our analysis to two journals, we had some good reasons for selecting *JEMS* and *ERS*. First, both are the leading journals mapping migration studies in Europe and have a long publication history. Therefore, they have made overtime analysis possible. Today, there are many other journals dedicated to migration studies, but relatively younger journals, such as *Migration Studies* (since 2013), *Comparative Migration Studies* (since 2015), and *Journal of Migration History* (since 2015) would not allow us to examine the state of QMR-E at the beginning of the millennium. Secondly, because of our European focus, we have opted for journals with editorials based in Europe. Therefore, other leading migration research journals, such as *International Migration*, which is currently edited at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM), and *International Migration Review,* by the Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS) stayed out of our selection. Thirdly, we assume that peer-reviewed journals with relatively higher citation indices and impact factors would have more visibility and, therefore, potentially have more influence on the migration research agenda. Fourthly, we selected journals with an explicit focus on migration research. In this respect, other related journals, such as *Global Networks*, *Identities*, and *Ethnicities,* that publish migration-related work but do not prioritize migration research in their journal description were not taken into consideration.

2.2 Methodology: Main Criteria of Analysis

This analysis focuses on six main areas. Firstly, we examined the main *research methods* used in the QMR-E articles. In addition to learning about relative distribution of traditional qualitative data collection methods, i.e. interviews, participant observations, and document analysis, we asked whether and to what extent scholars adopt relatively new qualitative tools such as internet-mediated research and visual analysis. Moreover, we inquired the extent of which qualitative migration scholars working in Europe combine qualitative and quantitative tools.
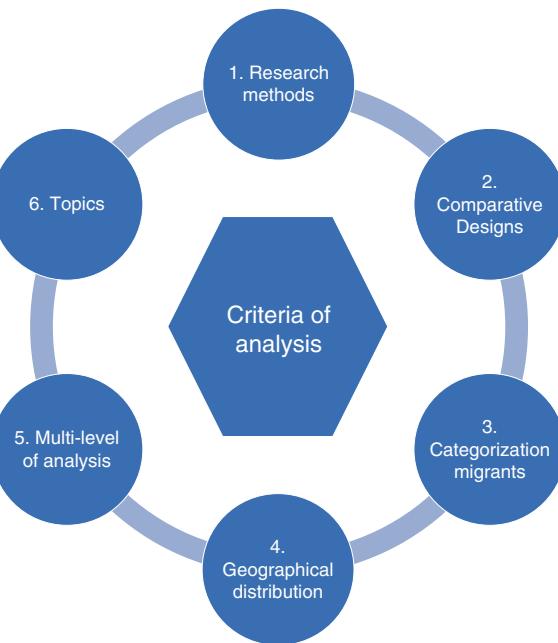
Second, we examined the status of *comparative research* in QMR-E. While the importance of comparative designs for understanding migration-related topics is highly emphasized, we still do not know the extent to which comparative research is prevalent in QMR-E. This analysis included an examination of relative distribution of comparative QMR-E overtime and the types of comparisons – cross-location (among territorial settings), cross-group (among migrant groups), cross-meso level (among organisations and institutions), and cross-time (among different periods) – that have been conducted.

Third, we focused on the ways that *migrants are categorised* in the QMR-E articles. Our main questions included: are migrants predominantly categorised with respect to their countries of origin, e.g. Turks in Germany, Poles in the UK? Is there an increasing attention to the category of generation and therefore second-generation migrants? What about the category of religion? Is the so-called *feminization* of migration flows (Castles and Miller 1993) and *feminization* migration scholarship (King et al. 2011) translated into categorising migrants with respect to gender categories? What about legal status? Is there more research considering migrants in terms of their legal status (i.e. documented, undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugees) in their receiving countries?

Fourth, we wanted to find out about the *geographical distribution of country-cases* in QMR-E articles. We asked whether and in which ways some countries are studied more than others. Do migrants from certain countries tend to be studied more often than others? Is there an overtime change in the distribution of research contexts and countries of origin? Previous analysis on *JEMS* already demonstrated the changing geographies of host and sending country contexts (King et al. 2011). There has been a shift away from the UK as primary host country context towards Southern and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the publications on UK's traditional sending regions such as South Asia and Caribbean have been declining. There has been a rise in the scholarly attention on "newer" sending regions such as Eastern Europe, Middle East, and East Europe. In this part, we checked whether these findings also hold true for QMR-E.

Fifth, we inquired the place of the multi-level analysis, which is the *status of national-level analysis* in QMR-E and whether local and transnational levels of analysis are on the rise. Some scholars have already been advocating against migration research at national-levels and have been critical of having nation-states as the basic unit of analysis (Wimmer and Schiller 2003; Amelina and Faist 2012). On the

Fig. 2.1 Six criteria of analysis

other hand, there has been growing interest in studying migration at local-levels (Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017) and at transnational level (Vertovec 1999; Levitt and Schiller 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

Finally, we examined continuities and changes in terms of the *topics studied* by QMR-E. We particularly focused on overtime distribution of eight main topics, i.e. identity, integration, policy, discrimination/exclusion, citizenship, forced migration and asylum, borders and mobility, and youth and the second generation (Fig. 2.1).

To analyse the overtime patterns in QMR-E literature, we went over all the original articles published in *JEMS* and *ERS* between 2000 and 2016, and identified those meeting the general criteria of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe. The research included four main selection criteria: (1) *qualitative research* that excluded studies using only quantitative methods, but included mixed-methods; (2) *empirical research* that excluded field reviews, conceptual, and theoretical articles; (3) *migration research* that strictly focused on migration-related diversity and its related issues, and excluded studies on local minority groups, ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural studies without a migration focus; (4) *research on Europe* that included the cases from Central and Eastern Europe and Turkey, multi-sited studies with European and non-European cases, but excluded articles with only non-European research sites.

Those articles meeting our research criteria are further examined and coded according to the six main areas[3]: (1) Qualitative research tools, e.g. interviews,

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[3] Each article is coded by two researchers to ensure reliability.

focus groups, participant observation, historical analysis, visual analysis, and mixed-methods; (2) Comparative research design (in case it exists) and its types, such as cross-location, cross-group, cross-time, and cross-meso level comparisons; (3) Categorisation of migrants, i.e. national, legal, class, religion, gender, geographical group categories; (4) Research sites (country and city information) and country of origin (if research includes a migrant group); (5) Multi-level analysis including transnational, European, national, and local levels; and (6) Research topics: in addition to including the keywords provided by the authors, we coded each article according to the list of research areas provided by IMISCOE on researcher's profile page (see Annex). Each article could have multiple topics. Section 2.4.6 presents the findings on eight highly repeated topics.

2.3 A General Reading: The Number of Migration Research Is Rising, But so Is Qualitative Migration Research in Europe?

While two decades ago migration research had a tiny presence in social scientific inquiry, today, growing scholarly interest in migration and migration-related topics is undisputable. Both *JEMS* and *ERS* demonstrated unprecedented increase in the number of issues and original articles they publish per year (see Fig. 2.2). *JEMS* used to release four issues and around 35 original articles a year up until 2003. It increased the number of yearly issues from 6 to 8 in 2004, from 8 to 10 in 2009, and from 10 to 12 in 2014. In 2016, it released 15 issues and more than 130 original articles. According to the journal's editors, such an expansion was a necessary step to respond to increasing number of submissions, while keeping the acceptance rate the same (King 2009; Statham 2016). *ERS* has also followed a similar trajectory.
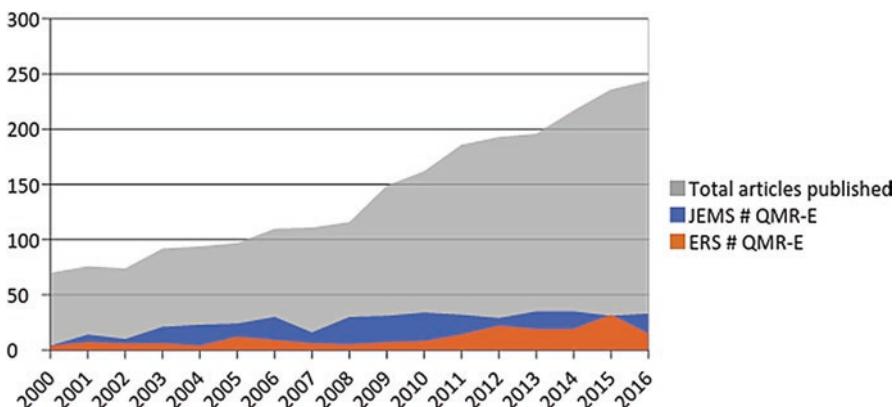
Fig. 2.2 Number of articles published in JEMS and ERS between 2000 and 2016 (Note: Figures exclude editorial introductions, book reviews, and debate articles)

Table 2.1 Number of articles published by JEMS and ERS between 2000 and 2016

	Yearly issues	Total articles	QMR-E articles	% of QMR-E
2000	10	70	8	11.4
2001–2002	20	150	37	24.7
2003–2004	24	186	54	29
2005–2006	28	207	75	36.2
2007–2008	32	227	57	25.1
2009–2010	39	311	80	25.7
2011–2012	44	379	97	25.6
2013–2014	48	413	108	26.2
2015–2016	59	480	111	23.1
Total	**304**	**2423**	**627**	**25.9**

Note: Figures exclude editorial introductions, book reviews, and debate articles

While in the early 2000s, six issues and around 40 original articles were published a year, today *ERS* releases more than 100 articles and 15 issues yearly including *Ethnic and Racial Studies Review* since 2014. Such expansion is a clear signal of strong scholarly interest in issues of migration, mobility, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity.

Has this steep increase also translated into the number of QMR-E? Table 2.1 shows that the share of QMR-E had boosted in the early years of the 2000s. While in 2000 only 11% of the articles published in *JEMS* and *ERS* qualified for QMR-E criteria, this share increased rapidly over the next years and made a peak in 2005–2006. This period interestingly coincides with a time of rapid changes in Europe with the Eastern expansion of the European Union, with the emergence of new European destination countries in the South, and with the expansion of public and political debates on migration and mobility. Since then, there has been a constant increase in the number of QMR-E articles, while their share has been kept stable (approximately one-fourth of the total publications).

2.4 Current State and Development of Qualitative Migration Research in Europe

2.4.1 Research Methods

Interviews are essential tools of qualitative research. The analysis shows that three out of four QMR-E articles have used a typology of qualitative interviews. Some examples[4] include semi-structured in-depth interviews with migrants (Søholt and

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[4] It is important to note that the articles we cite from our research are not the key-representatives, but just illustrations of our main findings. We are fully aware that we could have cited other articles from our research pool of 627 QMR-E articles, but practical reasons obliged us to limit our references.

Lynnebakke 2015; van Meeteren et al. 2015), with migrant activists (Cappiali 2016), expert interviews (Menz 2002; Helbling 2010; Wiesböck et al. 2016), biographical/narrative interviews (Liversage 2009; Qureshi 2016), and problem-centered interviews (Konzett-Smoliner 2016; Verwiebe et al. 2016).

Unlike interviews in general, *focus groups* have been much less common. Only 55 articles in the works collected have used focus groups. Having said that, we must also note the increasing tendency to use focus groups in QMR-E. We have found out that in the last 8 years the number of articles has more than doubled compared to the first 8 years of the 2000s.

Participant observation has been another major tool of QMR-E. Near 34% of the articles that we identified conducted some type of fieldwork and used the tools of participant observation. It must be noted that an overwhelming majority of the studies with participant observation (195 out of 210 participant observation articles) also conducted qualitative interviews. This confirms the already shared view that participant observation and interviews complement each other.

While it was relatively easier to detect the QMR-E articles using interviews, focus groups, and participant observation as data collection methods, the same was not true for finding out articles that used documents as primary sources. One obvious reason for this is that almost all studies use some sort of documents – let it be official documents, non-governmental reports, documents of political discourses, or written media sources. According to our analysis, 41% of QMR-E articles explicitly mentioned the use of documents in their analysis. As we will discuss later in this chapter, the majority of them were policy-related documents.

While the number of QMR-E has been increasing recently, we have found only 45 articles (7%) that conducted *historical analysis*, namely studying migration dynamics in the past and/or tracing continuities and changes over time. Many of them engaged in overtime analysis to explain the current situation of a studied topic, e.g. analysing the development of official perspectives on migrant transnationalism since the 1960s in order to explain the current political discourse (Bouras 2013). Just a few of these historical analyses were dedicated only to archival study of the past (see, for example, Dedieu and Mbodj-Pouye 2016; Ryan 2003; Walaardt 2013). While historical research is still at the margins of migration studies, we think there is a rising scholarly interest in this field. The launch of the *Journal of Migration History* (since 2015) is a clear sign of this.

As we expected, new research tools such as *internet-mediated research* or *visual analysis* are rare. Only 18 of the articles were conducting internet-based research to collect qualitative data. While the internet-mediated research was almost non-existing up until 2005, since then there has been a rapid increase. Almost one-third of articles using the internet as their main data collection site were published between 2015 and 2016. Recent examples include conducting online ethnographic research on social network sites to study migrant mobility and transnationalism (Schrooten et al. 2016), using Google street views to study social changes in times of super-diversity (Maly 2016), and analysis of webpages and online actors to study online Islamophobia (Ekman 2015).
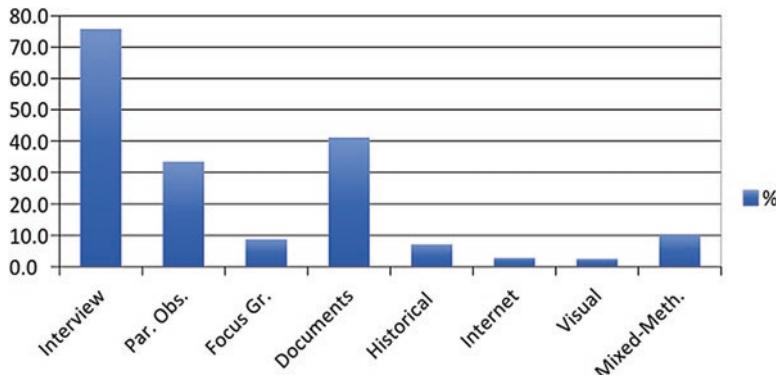
Fig. 2.3 Distribution of major methods in QMR-E (figures are in %)

Fewer articles (only 16 in total) engaged in qualitative analysis of visual materials. While we found the first examples of visual research as of 2006, recently, more scholars have been engaging in this kind of qualitative research (for an overview of visual approaches to migration studies, see Martiniello 2017). For example, Fedyuk (2012) inquires about the role of photographs in transnational parental relations; Long et al. (2014) use mental maps and photo-elicitation to examine the role of leisure and sport spaces in new migrants' social inclusion; and Gawlewicz (2015) combines visual methods with qualitative interviews and a supplementary survey to study social remittances and transmission of attitudes between Polish migrants in the UK and their significant others in Poland.

While there has been a strong call for bridging the qualitative and quantitative divide by using multiple methods, our research shows that this call has not yet been translated into practice in European migration studies. Only 10% of QMR-E articles combined qualitative and quantitative research tools. This ratio has been generally stable over time. Among mixed-method research, it has been a common practice to combine qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys (Parella et al. 2013; Wiesböck et al. 2016) as well as bringing together qualitative and census data sources (Hickman 2011; McGarrigle 2016). Moreover, another form of mixed-method research included studies combining quantitative media content analysis with different forms of in-depth-textual research such as discourse analysis (for example, see Bauder 2008) (Fig. 2.3).

2.4.2 Comparative Designs

Comparative research is crucial to migration studies, since it is only through comparison that "we can de-centre what is taken for granted in a particular time or place" (Bloemraad 2013, p. 29). We found that 15% of QMR-E articles used comparative research of various types. Despite its average low share, as Fig. 2.4 shows,
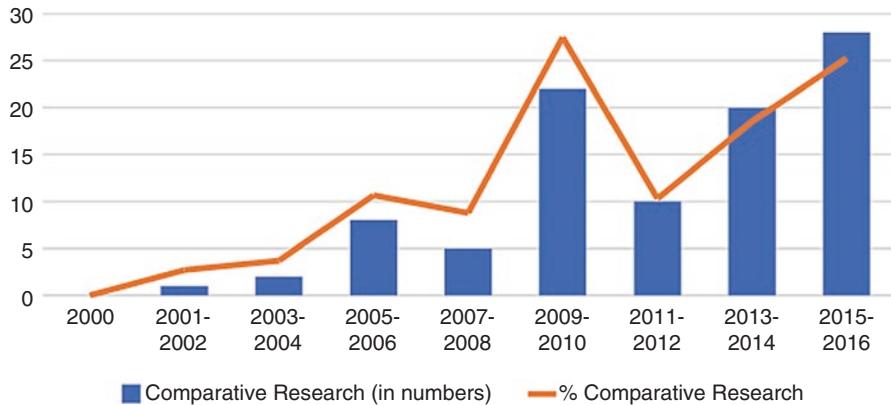
Fig. 2.4 Comparative research in QMR-E between 2000 and 2016 (in numbers and in % of total QMR-E)

Table 2.2 Types of comparisons (% in total comparative QMR-E articles)

Types of comparisons	%
Cross location	58.3
Cross country	*34.4*
Cross city	*7.3*
Cross group	32.3
Cross meso-level	11.5
Cross time	11.5

Total comparative research articles: 96

the number of comparative research in QMR-E has been increasing recently. During 2015–2016, one-fourth of the articles that we studied conducted a type of comparative research.

We observed a wide-range diversity of comparative designs (see Table 2.2). The majority of comparative studies adopted cross-location comparisons, i.e. comparisons across countries, regions, cities, and neighbourhoods. While cross-country comparisons have been the most common design (33 out of 96 comparative QMR-E articles), recently, there has been an increase in the number of articles with cross-city comparisons. This finding supports the recent claims for a local-turn in migration scholarship (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017). According to this exploratory analysis, the overwhelming majority of the cross-city comparisons were published after 2015 (for example, see Plöger and Becker 2015; Gebhardt 2016; de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). On the other hand, one-third of the comparative QMR-E articles conducted cross-migrant group analysis. Some of the cross-group designs included: multiple groups (from different countries of origins) in a single national context, e.g. comparison of Ghanaian and Senegalese transnationalisms in Italy (Riccio 2008); multiple groups in multiple national contexts, e.g. comparing inclusion and exclusion of

marginalized youth of North African origin in France and of Turkish origin in Germany (Loch 2009); and different migration waves of migrants from the same country of origin to the same receiving country context, e.g. comparing early and late economic migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK (McDowell 2009).

While not as frequent as cross-location and cross-group comparisons, one-fifth of comparative QMR-E articles adopted either cross-meso level or cross-time designs. Some examples of comparisons at meso-level included comparing across political parties, host organisations (Batnitzky and McDowell 2013; Simpson 2015), and migrant organisations (De Tona and Lentin 2011). While some of the cross-time analysis compared policies over a period of time (Howard 2010), some others engaged in before-and-after type of comparisons, such as comparing high-skilled migration policies (Cerna 2016) or East-West cross-border labor mobility (Wiesböck et al. 2016) before and after the economic crisis.

2.4.3   Categorisation of Migrants

Today, it is a widely accepted fact that migrants cannot be moulded into a single category. This is probably one of the first consequences of migration-related analytical frameworks such as transnationalism (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007) and super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). Migrants navigate across multiple and intersecting identities, including their national-origin, ethnicity, race, class, religion, language, gender, and generation (Vertovec 2015). Our research shows that an overwhelming majority of QMR-E articles categorise migrants in relation to their national origin such as Turks in Germany, Poles in the UK, and Moroccans in France. In other words, almost one of every two QMR-E articles (47%) identified migrants with their ethnic/national backgrounds brought from their country of origin. While some of these articles also referred to multiple identity categories such as class, gender, and generation, still their national and ethnic origin has been the most frequent one. Especially since the mid-2000s, an increasing number of scholars have been critical of using ethnic and national groups as units of analysis in migration research (Glick Schiller 2008; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2013; Runfors 2016). Figure 2.5 shows that this call has been partly effective in QMR-E. While the articles considering migrants as national/ethnic groups have made a peak in 2007–2008, there is a recent observable decline. Despite the calls for post-racial and post-multicultural era, where nationality and ethnic origins are expected to lose their weight as category of analysis (Vertovec 2010; Matejskova and Antonsich 2015), national/ethnic forms of categorisation of migrants is far more common than the other categories in the current state of QMR-E.

While European migration research has its origins in studying guest workers in the 1950s and the 1960s (see, for example, Castles and Kosack 1973), today, the category of class has been largely left in the shadow. Only one in five QMR-E studies (97 articles) has categorised migrants with respect to their class/occupational status. Moreover, one-third of these articles classifying migrants with their class
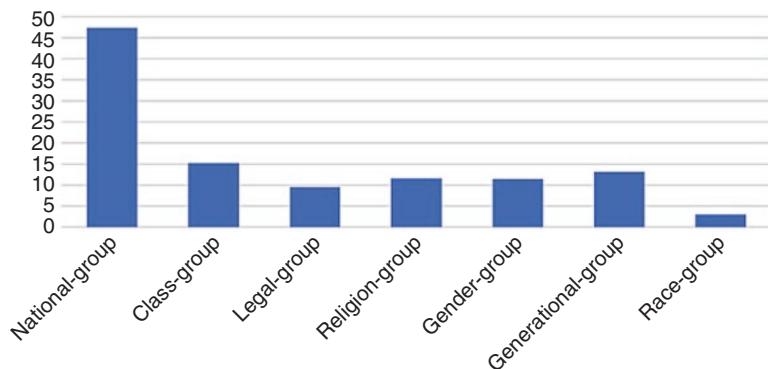
Fig. 2.5 Distribution of categorisation of migrant group categories (in % of total QMR-E)
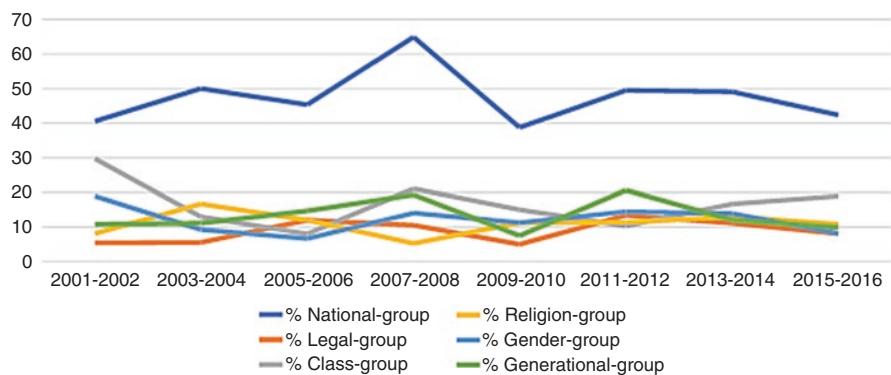
Fig. 2.6 Categorisation of migrants over time (figures in % of total QMR-E)

status had the UK as the country of destination. Another important observation is that the category of class has expanded beyond the concept of "guest workers" and included wide-range of diversity, including migrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman et al. 2016), high-skilled professional migrants (Ryan 2015), and domestic migrant workers (Anderson 2010).

As the so-called "refugee crisis" has hit Europe after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, our expectation was to observe increasing number of studies that categorised migrants with respect to their legal status, such as refugees, asylum seekers, documented or undocumented migrants. However, Fig. 2.6 shows that the QMR-E studies considering migrants with respect to their legal categories have been more or less stable over time. One possible explanation for this is that such studies might be opting for specialized journals on the topic of forced migration, such as *Journal of Refugee Studies,* as their publication outlet. Another possible factor is: as qualitative data collection methods require longer duration of research, on-going developments might not have shown their presence in QMR-E yet. A third potential hypothesis could be that many studies focusing on migrants' legal-status might be concerned

with the issues of democracy, human rights and liberalism at normative and theoretical levels and therefore did not qualify under our empirical research criteria.

While migration/religion nexus has been at the centre of many policy and public debates, we observed that few scholars categorised migrants with respect to their religion. This is also true for studies identifying migrants with racial categories. Here, we must note that our article-selection criteria excluded certain research on religious and racial groups, if these groups are considered as local minorities without any emphasis on their migration background. For example, some studies on Muslims in European countries did not meet our criterion of "migration studies", if they study Muslims as a minority group without referring to their migration history. Our findings show that 73 QMR-E articles used the category of religion while defining migrants in the study. What is more, almost half of them (30) studied the UK as the host country context.

Feminization of migration has been documented since a long time ago (Castles and Miller 1993). As women increase their share among international migrants, scholars expected to see *gender* becoming a prominent category in future migration studies (Lee et al. 2014). Despite these expectations, we have not observed an increase in the number of articles that categorised migrants with respect to gender categories. According to our research, 72 QMR-E articles (11%) focused on gender category while studying migrants. This insufficient attention to the gender category in migration studies makes specific conditions and experiences of migrant women invisible and occults gender asymmetries that are (re)produced at different migratory and settlement stages (Lutz 2010).

Last but not least, despite the emerging research tradition on children of immigrants in Europe (Crul and Schneider 2010; Crul et al. 2012), the analysis shows that only 13% of QMR-E articles accounts for migrants' generation. While the classification of generation was the second most highly studied category between 2011 and 2012, afterwards there has been a decreasing trend. Considering the urgency of the problems surrounding the children of migrants, there is a need for immediate academic attention on this issue.

2.4.4   Geographical Distribution

According to this descriptive analysis, the UK is the most frequently studied country. Together with Ireland, the UK counted for 41% of the QMR-E research sites. On the one hand, this finding is not surprising, since both data sources are based in the UK and are written in English. On the other hand, the journal selection and language biases are not the only factors that can explain the high share of the UK as the research case. We need to think of other conditions that make the British context a fertile soil for migration research in general and qualitative migration research in particular. Some of these factors include: long history of migratory movements, official acknowledgement of demographic diversity, longstanding academic institutions on migration, and their strong capacity to draw research funding. After the UK

Table 2.3 Geographical distribution of research sites over time (figures are in numbers of articles)

	UK + Ireland	Western Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	C. and E. Europe
2000	5	0	2	1	0
2001–2002	16	13	1	5	1
2003–2004	14	17	6	13	6
2005–2006	38	20	2	12	1
2007–2008	21	21	4	12	6
2009–2010	37	24	3	12	3
2011–2012	37	22	23	13	6
2013–2014	44	20	17	24	6
2015–2016	43	40	13	22	8
Total (in % of QMR-E)	**255** (41%)	**177** (28%)	**71** (11%)	**114** (18%)	**37** (6%)

Western Europe includes Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland; Northern Europe: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Demark; Southern Europe: Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece; and Central and Eastern Europe: Former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union states in the region

(238 articles), Germany (66) and the Netherlands (54) are the most studied cases by qualitative migration researchers. France (47), despite the long history of migration, lags behind other Western European cases.

As Table 2.3 shows, the distribution of country context has become much diverse over time. While in the first half of the 2000s the UK and Western Europe heavily dominated the country case selection of QMR-E, recently qualitative migration researchers study much diverse European contexts. This is probably due to the consolidation of more recent countries of migration, e.g. Spain, Italy and Greece, the enlargement of the European Union, and the incorporation of Eastern and Central European countries. The number of studies including South European cases is increasing steadily. Italy being the most studied country in this European geographical area, followed by Spain (Table 2.4). Although we have found only few QMR-E articles focusing on one or more country cases from Central and Eastern Europe, this number has been increasing recently. One of the surprising findings from our research was the position of Northern Europe. As Table 2.3 demonstrates, in the aftermath of 2011, North Europe has emerged as one of the major sites of QMR-E. Three out of four QMR articles that consist of a North European case were published during the last 6 years.

When we look at the distribution of countries of origin,[5] Central and Eastern Europe is by far the most studied sending region. This is followed by South Asia, which consists of former colonies of the British Empire. According to our analysis, Turkey by itself was the third most highly studied sending country. While migrants from Middle East and North Africa did not have much presence in QMR-E between

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[5] Note that only those QMR-E articles studying one or more migrant groups had a code for country of origin. Not all QMR-E articles included a migrant group into their study.

Table 2.4 Country distribution of research sites between 2000 and 2016 (figures are in number of articles)

Western Europe	177	South Europe	114	Northern Europe	71
Germany	66	Italy	55	Denmark	23
Netherlands	54	Spain	39	Sweden	21
France	47	Greece	15	Norway	21
Belgium	17	Portugal	13	Finland	8

Table 2.5 Geographical distribution of countries of origin

	Number of articles	% in QMR-E
Central and Eastern Europe	68	10.8
South Asia	37	5.9
MENA	28	4.5
Caribbean	14	2.2
Turkey	34	5.4
China	10	1.6

Central and Eastern Europe: former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union states in the region; South Asia: Pakistan, India, Bangladesh; MENA: countries in Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and North Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt)

2000 and 2016, we expect that this situation will change in the coming years. It is important to note that Morocco is a major sending country and it has been the highest studied sending country in the MENA region. Almost half of the QMR-E articles studying migrants from MENA focused on Moroccans (Table 2.5).

2.4.5   Multi-level of Analysis

In this part, we examined the different levels of analysis that each QMR-E article focused on. We have distinguished four different levels: national (level of nation-state), local (level of sub-national regions, cities, towns, municipalities and neighbourhoods), European, and transnational. These levels, for us, signify the level of generalization that each study targets. In this respect, it is different from study's location or unit of analysis.[6]

According to our research, national-level analysis has dominated the QMR-E. More than half of the studies consider their research within the scope of nation-states. However, as Table 2.6 shows, there has been a rise in the number of studies

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[6] For instance, Kreuzberg can be the single research site of a study, then we classify the level of analysis depending on the scale in which the findings are discussed: only referring to Kreuzberg (local-level), or generalized for Berlin (city-level) or for Germany (national-level). If the study aims to bring an explanation at the level of Europe, then it is coded as European-level. Lastly, if the study explicitly adopts a transnational perspective, then it is coded as transnational level. It must be noted that the same article can be coded with multiple levels of analysis.

Table 2.6 Distribution of different levels of analysis over time (figures are numbers of articles)

	National	Local	European	Transnational
2000	5	1	0	0
2001–2002	19	8	8	9
2003–2004	28	12	5	16
2005–2006	43	10	6	17
2007–2008	42	7	2	25
2009–2010	41	13	7	14
2011–2012	60	11	10	31
2013–2014	59	24	4	29
2015–2016	61	25	9	16
Total	**358 (57%)**	**111 (18%)**	**51 (8%)**	**157 (25%)**

at local levels. This follows the emerging trend of going from a state-centric to a local-centred analysis, where cities are becoming units of analysis of diversity policies. This has been, for instance, at the centre of a special issue on 'the local turn' in migration studies, which argued for the need to promote multi-level analysis from within a city point of view (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017).

The analysis also shows that the calls for transnationalism as a distinctive research framework of analysis in migration studies in the early 1990s (Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1994) demonstrate a strong presence in the post-2000 era. One fourth of the QMR-E articles referred to transnational level in their analysis.

2.4.6   Topics

In this last part of the analysis, we examined the key topics that QMR-E articles have been focusing on. The first striking finding is the dominance of the topic of identity in QMR-E in the last 16 years. This topic included the studies working on ethnicity, belonging, culture, race, religion, and language. Forty percent of QMR-E articles have focused on one or more aspects of the identity topic. After the topic of identity, policy and integration have been highly studied topics by qualitative migration researchers in Europe. As Fig. 2.7 demonstrates, there has been a growing scholarly interest on the topics of policy, integration, and mobility.

We have also had some surprising results such as declining number of QMR-E articles on youth and forced migration. While the topic of migrant youth was rising rapidly between 2009 and 2011, today, we observe a declining pattern. Considering the pressing problems of youth with migrant origins, this topic needs urgent retaking by qualitative migration researchers. The other topic that demonstrated a declining pattern was forced migration. In the view of recent refugee flows into Europe, this was an unexpected result. Yet, we must note that there are ample specialized academic journals on forced migration. Therefore, rather than a declining academic interest on the topic, as we noted earlier, scholars working on forced migration
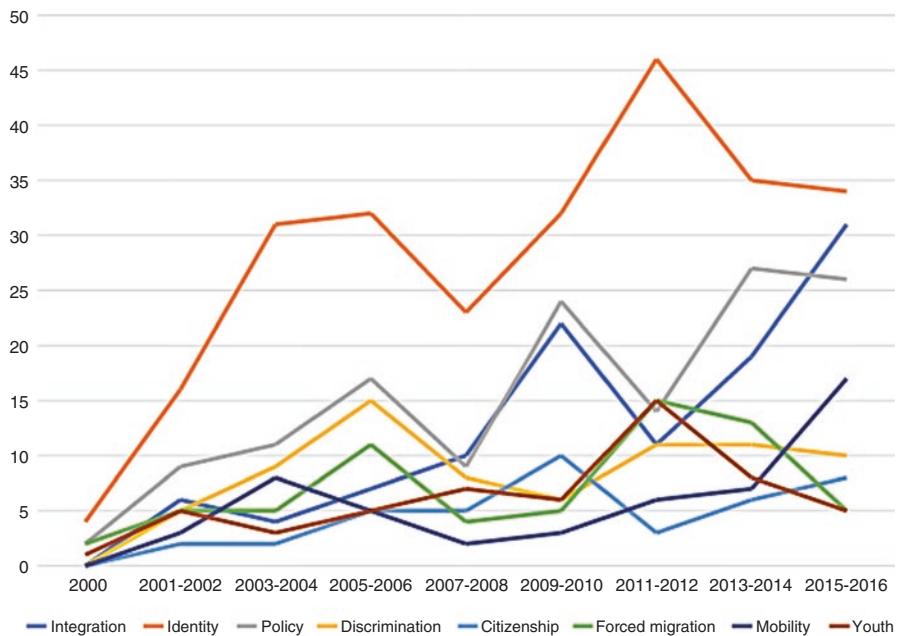
Fig. 2.7 Number of topics studied by QMR-E articles between 2000 and 2016 (Note: Each topic included a set of codes that served to identify research area/topic of each article: *identity:* identity, ethnicity, belonging, culture, race, religion, and language; *integration:* integration, incorporation, inclusion, and assimilation; *discrimination:* discrimination, exclusion, inequality, and islamopho-bia; *policy:* policy and policy-analysis; *citizenship:* citizenship and naturalization; *forced migration:* asylum, refugee, and forced migration; *mobility:* mobility and border; *youth:* youth, young, and second generation)

Table 2.7 Number of topics studied by QMR-E articles between 2000 and 2016

	Number	% to Total QMR-E
Integration	110	17.5
Identity	253	40.4
Policy	139	22.2
Discrimination	75	12.0
Citizenship	41	6.5
Forced migration	65	10.4
Mobility	51	8.1
Youth	55	8.8

might prefer journals such as the *Forced Migration Review*, the *Journal of Refugee Studies,* etc. as their primary publication outlet.

While the topic of discrimination ranked as the third most studied issue between 2003 and 2007, in the recent years it left its place to the studies of integration and mobility. The studies on citizenship have been more or less stable during this period (Table 2.7).

2.5   From Description to Generalization: Identifying Patterns, Gaps, and New Directions

The purpose of this exploratory chapter has been to identify patterns and analyse continuities and changes in QMR-E. This research has been highly descriptive, yet from this level of analysis we can reach some tentative generalizations.

The first, and probably most important one, is that QMR-E is not one unified body of studies, but highly diverse in terms of its qualitative research methods, designs, research sites and groups, multi-levels of analysis, and topics. Overtime patterns show that qualitative migration research is not separate from the context it studies. On the contrary, it reflects unfolding migration dynamics, social and political agendas, rising conflicts and controversies with respect to migration issues. Therefore, empirical reality in Europe and in the world continuously defines and shapes the landscape of QMR-E.

As this exploratory descriptive analysis has shown, migration studies in general and qualitative migration research in particular are rapidly growing in numbers. Despite this significant quantity, there are some research tools and areas that have received less academic attention than others. While QMR-E has become much diverse over the last 16 years in terms of the research tools and data collection methods used by the researchers, the field can still benefit from incorporation of certain under-used qualitative tools. For instance, historical analysis has been largely ignored by qualitative migration researchers in Europe. New research tools, such as visual methods and internet-mediated research still have a marginal place in the field. Despite its increasing numbers, comparative research in European migration studies can gain more presence. We believe that qualitative migration research can highly benefit from the inclusion of new qualitative techniques and comparative designs.

Despite the recent calls for going beyond methodological nationalism, we observed that nation-state based analyses still preserve their dominance in the field. Drawing on the relevant literature, we propose two ways of encountering methodological nationalism: first, accounting for multiple and intersecting identities of migrants rather than reducing them only to their ethnic/national origins. Second, considering the migration phenomenon at the intersection of multiple levels including local, national, and transnational.

This exploratory analysis also demonstrated that some of the research areas have been less studied than others. While the issues of integration, identity, and mobility have framed the current state of art, the issues of gender and youth have been largely overlooked in qualitative migration research. While feminization of migratory flows has been demonstrated a long time ago, there is still no sufficient attention on how migration processes affect men and women differently. Moreover, beyond including women migrants as objects of analysis, scholars need to pay more attention to gendered power relations and how gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and class. In the same way, young people with a migrant background have been another under-studied area. While in the US there is a well-established research tradition on

children of immigrants (for example, see Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Kasinitz et al. 2009), in Europe, qualitative research on second generation demands more attention.

Annex: Selected Research Topics Provided by IMISCOE on Researcher's Profile Page

- Assimilation
- Asylum
- Border
- Citizenship
- Culture
- Discrimination
- Diversity
- Education
- Entrepreneurship
- Ethical issues
- Ethnicity
- European Union
- Exclusion
- Forced migration
- Gender
- Globalization
- High-skilled
- Human Rights
- Identity
- Immigration
- Incorporation
- Inequality
- Institutions
- Integration
- Interculturalism
- Islamophobia
- Labor
- Media
- Minority Rights
- Mobility
- Multiculturalism
- Nationalism
- Naturalization
- Organisations
- Policy

- Public Opinion
- Race
- Radicalization
- Refugees
- Religion
- Return migration
- Second-generation
- Security
- Segregation
- Social Capital
- Transnationalism

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Part I
Theoretical and Epistemological Issues

Chapter 3
Context-Based Qualitative Research and Multi-sited Migration Studies in Europe

Russell King

3.1   Introduction

As a phenomenon which considers human mobility between places, across spaces, and through time, migration is inevitably context-dependent. The two basic contexts which frame migration (and other forms of human mobility) are the geographical/spatial context and the historical/temporal one. Both the geographical and temporal contexts are multiple, given the essential character of migration as a form of mobility or 'moving' process. The diversity of migration trajectories – no longer limited to the bipolar origin and destination – opens up new sites, mobile routes and research methods for migration research, reflecting George Marcus's (1995) encouragement of anthropological researchers to 'follow the people'. Especially in Europe, with its complex interlocking regime of open, closed and differently permeable borders, migrants follow multiple and often unpredictable spatio-temporal trajectories, including circular, seasonal and pendular migration, return mobilities, and onward or stepwise migration, to name but a few. Research studies on European (and global) migration patterns therefore need to be flexible and responsive to a phenomenon which is constantly changing. Whilst some historical certainties persist – such as the dictum that migrants tend to move from poor to wealthy countries – the modalities and routes through which this fundamental rationale of self-improvement is realised are constantly evolving and switching. A multi-sited approach, although not always necessary or achievable, is nevertheless increasingly appropriate to fully appreciate the ongoing complexity of migratory phenomena.

The broad and interdisciplinary field of migration studies encompasses two distinctive stages: the initial dynamics of migration, based on the determinants, processes and patterns of actual movement; and the ensuing settlement and 'integration'

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phase, which focuses on how migrants are incorporated, often problematically, into receiving societies (Castles and Miller 2009, p. 20). This distinction has been intrinsic to the foundation and on-going research of the IMISCOE network, whose very title distinguishes between 'migration' and 'integration and social cohesion' and whose first major collective output, entitled *The Dynamics of International Migration and Settlement in Europe* (Penninx et al. 2006), was predicated on that very structural division. This two-stage conceptual frame remains heuristically useful but, as Castles and Miller (2009, p. 20) go on to point out, is also artificial and hampers a complete understanding of what they regard as the 'overall migratory process'. Nevertheless, in this chapter we are mainly, if not quite exclusively, concerned with the initial phase of the migratory process, and less with the longer-term integration and accommodation of migrants.

This chapter is in three parts. The first expands on the overriding importance of *context* when studying migration, based on a multi-layered typology of contextual settings. The second part stresses the value of *multi-sited research* in migration studies and takes its inspiration from the landmark paper on multi-sited ethnography by Marcus (1995). In the third section, I illustrate the value of contextualised, multi-sited research by taking examples from my own research on post-1990 *Albanian migration* to Europe.

3.2   Context is Crucial

The importance of context for the study of migration cannot be denied: there is the sending-society context, the receiving-society context, as well as the contextual settings of routes traversed and places and spaces passed through. Context becomes increasingly important as migratory phenomena become more diversified, and as the statistical grasp over migration flows and stocks becomes less secure. Within the European context, this decreasing ability to accurately quantify migration is related to three things: freedom of movement within the EU and European Economic Area; the movement of irregular migrants from outside the EU; and the blurring of the distinction between migration and other forms of mobility such as seasonal migration, long-stay tourism, student exchanges, etc. Whilst some elements of context can be quantified (demographic and socio-economic variables, citizenship rights, legal status, etc.), the complex nature of these factors as potential drivers of migration, and their interaction with each other, can only be appreciated via a more qualitative approach rooted in specific socio-economic, political, cultural and spatial settings.

Further complications arise, especially in the current European migration scenario, when we realise that the origin-destination-transit triad only captures part of the spatio-temporal complexity of European migration nowadays. Many countries are simultaneously experiencing immigration, emigration, return migration (both of their own emigrants and of the immigrants hosted), and transit migration – let alone the interface with internal migration, both of 'native' populations and of immigrants

who move within their host country (King and Skeldon 2010). This 'complexification' of the migration landscape is further enhanced by different temporal patterns of movement (permanent, temporary, circular, etc.), migrant typologies (economic migration, family reunion, refugees/asylum-seekers, students, retirement and lifestyle migrants), legal status (naturalised, long-stay denizens, short-stay permitholders, undocumented/irregular, etc.), position in the labour market (low, medium or high-skilled), age, gender, ethnicity and so on (Zapata Barrero and Yalaz 2018). An exemplary illustration of the simultaneous and interlocking dynamics of several types of migration has been the case of Greece, especially over the past decade of financial crisis. As Pratsinakis et al. (2017) have shown, Greece's earlier typically Southern European transition from mass emigration up to the mid-1970s to large-scale immigration after 1990 has been succeeded and overlain by a whole slew of new migratory forms – emigration of mainly young, educated Greeks since 2008, return or onward migration of a significant share of the main immigrant nationality (Albanians) triggered by the crisis, arrival of refugees during 2015–2016, and finally a reshaping of internal migration dynamics from rural-urban migration to counter-urbanisation.

3.2.1   Spatial and Political Contexts

Taking on board the increasing diversity, complexity, and 'mixed flows' nature of contemporary European migration, let us now try to be more systematic in categorising context. The first contextual level to note is the macro-spatial geopolitical context. Europe is a very different, and more complex, theatre for migration than North America, especially the United States, where a lot of migration theory and survey methodology has been hatched (see Brettell and Hollifield 2015). In contrast to the unified framework for immigration in the US, Europe has both the overarching regulatory framework of the Single Market and Free Movement within the Schengen area, and the diverse political frameworks of around 40 countries, both inside and outside the EU. Amongst the features that give Europe a distinctive contextual role in the study of international migration are its complex history of nation-making; its colonial past and the imprint this has had on migration flows into former colonial metropoles such as France, the UK, the Netherlands and Portugal; its varied citizenship regimes (*ius sanguinis*, *ius soli*, *ius domicilii,* etc.) and integration policies (exclusion vs. integration vs. multiculturalism); its mosaic of languages, cultures and religions; and, last but not least, its geographical proximity to 'hot spots' of migration-generating conflict in Africa and the Middle East.

The spatial context of migration expresses itself at multiple levels and in several forms; from the European/EU continental scale to national political and integration regimes, and to regions, cities, neighbourhoods and villages. The national, regional or city-level context of statistical records and quantitative surveys often overlooks the local socio-geographical contexts – typically the urban neighbourhood where migrants settle, and the rural, village context from which they leave, and maybe

return to. In reality, there is a multi-layered scale hierarchy which builds on the now well-established *transnational* view of migration. In its initial formulation, 'transnationalism' referred to a process whereby 'transmigrants' inhabited social fields ('transnational social spaces'; Faist 2000) spanning their country of origin and that (or those) of their settlement abroad. They generated 'regular and sustained' cross-border ties of economic, social, political and cultural relations (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). The discovery of this 'new fact' (was it really new? – some said not; Foner 1997; Waldinger and FitzGerald 2004) that transmigrants live in complex border-spanning systems, maintaining activities, statuses and identities which were no longer 'contained' within a single nation-state, led to an important critique of prior research as being too wedded to what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) called 'methodological nationalism'.

The context-changing transnational paradigm has reshaped the way migration research, especially in Europe and North America, is carried out, including an obvious predilection for multi-sited endeavours, a theme I pick up later. Meantime, Hoerder (2012) has expanded the territorial-scale aspects of the transnational approach to migration by discussing the spatial hierarchy of multi-layered scales that pass from the global to the European, then to the national, and down to the transregional, translocal and the more a-spatial transcultural. These sub-national migrant social fields may also be scale-differentiated in another way: for instance, within Europe, between near and distantly located spaces (southern Albania and northern Greece is a contiguous transnational and transregional migratory space, whereas central Turkey to Stuttgart is a much more distant bipolar space), or beyond the borders of Europe, as with migrants originating in specific districts of countries in Latin America, Africa or Asia.

Above all, it is the important *translocal* contexts that shape the social realities of migrants' everyday lives, rather than a deterritorialised transnationalism (Brickell and Datta 2011). Embedded within these translocal social fields are the social and kinship networks that are the lifeworlds of migrants and their families and communities. At these (trans)local levels other micro- and meso-scale contexts come into play, which include the family context (does the migrant migrate alone, or with other family members?), age and gender selectivities (from many migrant origins, it is mainly young men who leave, but in some migration flows, it is mainly women who move), socio-occupational status (lower vs. higher skilled, employed vs. unemployed), educational qualifications (does migration remove the 'brightest and best'?), ethnicity (are migrants a discriminated minority in their country of origin?), and so on.

When aggregated up to a larger scale, these contextual variables can express themselves as important national-level migratory characteristics and processes – such as the brain drain of the highly educated, or an unbalanced loss of youthful labour – which can distort the demographic shape and socio-economic status of the remaining population. Similar, though often inverse in nature, impacts are likely to be made in the contextual setting of the migrants' destination, as well as on the spaces and places passed through in the case of transit migration.

Another set of contextual issues is evident in the political domain. Are migrants persecuted refugees, or discriminated minorities, or political dissidents? Similarly, does the political context of the receiving society function as an attractive factor for migrants, or are the political structures and allied obstacles to various kinds of citizenship a problem for migrants that has to be accepted and/or struggled against? Finally, under spatialised geopolitical contexts, how do borders present themselves as barriers or sieves for migration, providing their own linear spatial contexts for the channelling or blocking of migratory movements?

3.2.2   Temporal and Historical Contexts

Alongside these multi-scale spatial contexts for framing our understanding of migration are similarly multi-level temporal contexts, which can be systematised as follows, following Fielding (1993). The first temporal context is related to the business cycle – the conjunctural alternation between economic growth and stagnation or decline that seems to be inherent in capitalist economies such as those in (Western) Europe. Migration (more specifically immigration to the growth economies) increases during the years of boom, and then falls (or net immigration turns to net emigration) during the trough years of the economic cycle. The immediate post-war decades of European labour migration illustrate this pattern very well: 'mass migration' (King 1993) during the 'long boom' of the fordist years of industrial development (circa 1950–1973), followed by sharp reductions and even reversals in migration (net return migration) during the subsequent oil crisis. The most recent economic crisis, driven this time by financial collapse and mismanagement in the late 2000s and early 2010s, has also seen a tangible impact on migration flows, this time outwards from those countries most severely hit by the euro-crisis such as Greece, Spain and Portugal.

At a second temporal level are what Fielding calls 'restructuring' societal and economic changes which have longer-term impacts on migration (1993, pp. 9–14). Key here is the reorganisation of the production system driven by the new international division of labour (Fröbel et al. 1980), producing a new international geography of labour power and capital distribution. Several processes impacting migration have been at work here. The post-fordist break-up of large industries created a new geography of 'diffuse industrialisation' based on subcontracting and regional sectorial specialisation in 'intermediate' locations in Europe based on flexible supplies of labour, including new waves of migrants. This was seen most clearly in Italy where the industrial triangle of Milan-Turin-Genoa in North-West Italy gave way to a new economic dynamism centred on smaller-scale industries in regions such as Veneto, Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany in North-East and Central Italy (King 1985). Meanwhile, at a global scale, the concentration of capital in metropolitan centres such as London, New York and Tokyo, and the redistribution of labour-intensive manufacturing to the developing world reworked the global division of labour, the main results of which were the growth of high-skilled migration towards the

metropolitan cores of the fast-changing global economy, and the parallel rise in low-skill migrant service labour to support the lifestyles of what Sklair (2001) has called the 'transnational capitalist class'. For the evolution of migration patterns within Europe, two further restructuring events of keystone importance – this time geopolitical – were the removal of the migration barrier of the Iron Curtain in 1989–1990, and the progressive eastern enlargement of the EU since 2004; both of which have revolutionised migration dynamics within Europe in recent decades. A third and more recent significant event, the Brexit referendum in June 2016, may provide a new context for migration flows into the UK, especially from EU countries. EU immigration was at the heart of the public and media debate surrounding Brexit, but it remains to be seen what the concrete impact on migration trends will be.

Fielding is less clear about the nature of his third temporal migration context of 'deep structural' processes which, in his words (1993, p. 15), 'are so deep-rooted that for all intents and purposes they are unchanging from one decade to another'. He points to the on-going migrations 'which reflect the basic economic inequalities of the world in which we live', and especially 'the massive differences in life chances between Western European countries and those of the Third World' (1993, p. 15). Actually, within these deep global-scale migration structures, there are changes afoot, of which two can be highlighted here – the rise of China and India to global economic power status, and the impact of climate change on migration.

This threefold typology of Fielding is heuristically attractive but it does not exhaust the range of temporal influences over migration (Cwerner 2001). Other temporal contexts, of an even shorter duration than the economic cycle, result from geopolitical events, civil wars, and natural (or non-natural) disasters, the most recent being the Syrian refugee crisis, whose effects massively impacted on Europe throughout 2015 and early 2016 (King and Collyer 2016). Yet other temporal contexts relate to life-course and the spikes in migration propensity that result from the transition from one life-stage to another. Typical examples would be the transition from the end of full-time education to the search for employment; or, at the other end of the life-course, at or around retirement.

3.3   Migration Research Should Be Multi-sited

Along with mixed-methods, multi-sited fieldwork seems nowadays to have become *de rigeur* in doctoral theses on migration, especially those studies which are explicitly comparative in their focus – a point I shall return to later. This holds especially for empirical studies carried out within the disciplinary frames of human geography, sociology and anthropology, as well as those with an inter- or multi-disciplinary optic. That said, it is not compulsory that all migration research *has* to be multi-sited: excellent research can be done in one place. Examples of such single-sited research would be those carried out at the migrants' *place of origin* – for instance, studies of the factors leading to migration, or on the impact of remittances, or of return migration; the migrants' *place of destination* – for instance, studies of

integration, ethnic community formation or residential segregation; or at a *place of transit* such as a border site or a refugee camp, or a city of transit such as Istanbul where migrants aim to pass through but often stay longer-term.

However, it does seem that, given the very nature of migration as a human process that traverses spaces and connects two or more places, multi-sitedness in research design is either desirable or inevitable, a point strongly made by Boccagni and Schrooten (2018) in their contribution to this volume. The 'push' for multi-sited research is not driven just by pure methodological fashion, but rather can be related to important conceptual advances in how (international) migration is theorised and studied. Migration is essentially about *border-crossing*, *transnationalism* (and transregionalism, translocalism, etc.) and a range of multi-sited and multi-path *mobilities*. Phenomena such as the globalisation of economies, cultures and communications, and above all the globalisation of international migration (Castles and Miller 2009, p. 10), set the scene for the well-known critique of *methodological nationalism* (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) – an epistemological thrust that has guided much social science thinking over the past two decades, including new field-based methods based on a variety of 'non-national' units of analysis such as cities (Glick Schiller and Çaglar 2009), 'translocalities' (Anthias 2009; Brickell and Datta 2011), migrant social networks and other multi-sited fields that span borders (Amelina et al. 2012, pp. 4–9).

In reaction to the critique of methodological nationalism and its associated 'container thinking', Amelina and Faist (2012) elaborate a new '*methodological transnationalism*' (*pace* Khagram and Levitt 2008), encompassing a range of perspectives and research methods, chief amongst which are multi-sited research designs, which also include so-called *mobile methods*, which will be detailed later. Such methods recognise the simultaneity of the transnational practices of individuals and migrant-related organisations and institutions, including the transactions and relations between those who have migrated and those who have stayed in place (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

A further powerful justification for multi-sited research designs comes from the increasing importance of *comparative studies* of migration in exploring both the contrasts and complexities of social, spatial and historical contextualisation, and the need to look for meaningful similarities and generalisations (FitzGerald 2012). Such comparisons can include, but should go beyond, cross-sectional or 'horizontal' studies of migrants in different host-society contexts – a comparative strategy that leans heavily on assimilation and integration frameworks. Rather, multi-sited comparative research should also extend to comparing both the contexts of departure and destination, and the too-rare comparison of international and internal migration flows and outcomes (King and Skeldon 2010). Also important, when analysing what is allegedly distinctive about migrants' characteristics and behaviour, are comparisons between migrants and the control group of non-migrants – non-migrants in the origin country (bearing in mind that they, too, might become migrants in the future), and in the receiving society. That being said, it is important to clarify that the relationship between multi-sited and comparative research is not inevitably symbiotic: not all multi-sited research is comparative, and not all

comparative research is multi-sited. As an epistemological issue, comparison in migration studies may be necessary but this approach also brings its own perils, as two other chapters in this book spell out (Iosifides 2018; Jacobs 2018).

3.3.1 Spatial Designs for Multi-sited Research

Several spatial research design scenarios suggest themselves for multi-sited (and usually comparative) research.

- The origin-departure nature of many migration systems which are spatially bi-local opens up the possibility of field investigations at both 'ends' of the migration trajectory – 'here' and 'there'. This also facilitates studies of return migration, which 'reverses' the origin-destination matrix. For a pioneering set of anthropological studies which operationalised the two-ended nature of migration see James L. Watson's edited book *Between Two Cultures* (1977), or Robert C. Smith's *Mexican New York* (2006) for a recent classic. Often the perspectives of the sending and receiving context of migration, and perhaps later of return, are quite different, also in terms of how migrants, non-migrants and returnees interpret and narrate the effects of migration on themselves and the wider communities of which they are part. A variation of this multi-sited spatial design is the 'village-outward' approach of some studies of chain migration (e.g. Baily 1992).
- The more extensive study of migrants in different places is more challenging for a single researcher, but actually increasingly common in ambitious doctoral and post-doctoral research – a good example being Vathi's (2015) study of Albanian migrants and their children in London, Florence and Thessaloniki. Vathi's study was part of the ambitiously comparative TIES project on 'The Integration of the European Second Generation', which has generated a rich vein of research results on the education, employment, transnational and identificatory experiences of second-generation Turks, Moroccans and 'ex-Yugoslavs' in a variety of European cities and countries (see e.g. Crul et al. 2012).
- Other matrices of multi-sited research on migration reflect the networks and circuits that migrants form and become part of. Complex assemblages of sites and trajectories are created by transnationalism, diasporas, onward migration etc., often shaped by colonialism or 'post-imperial formations' (Hansen 2014), trade and virtual social networks, so that the causal processes observable at each site are not independent of each other (FitzGerald 2012, p. 1726). Cases of multi-sited fieldwork in a transnational and/or diasporic context are also legion: one particularly apposite example is Falzon's (2005) research on the widely-spread Sindhi trading diaspora.

3.3.2   Marcusian Multi-sited Ethnography

The methodological literature on multi-sited research inevitably pays tribute to George Marcus' (1995) clarion call in favour of multi-sited ethnography as a means to bridge the dichotomy between local realities and larger-scale social orders all the way up to the capitalist world system. Marcus' key point was simply that there are many social phenomena that cannot be fully accounted for by focusing on a single site, and which therefore benefit from field sojourns in more than one place. According to Falzon (2009, p. 2), his approach 'fired the spatial imagination of a generation of social scientists'. Marcus' landmark paper was primarily addressed to anthropologists, and actually says rather little about migration. However, he was at pains to stress the relevance and growth of new spheres of interdisciplinary research – he specifically mentioned cultural studies and media studies, and we might easily add migration studies to this, following the lead of Borkert (2018) in this volume.

Marcus proposed moving away from the conventional single site of traditional 'Malinowskian' anthropological enquiry – typically a remote community where the field anthropologist immerses him/herself for at least a year – to multiple sites related to complex macro-processes such as globalisation, new global social orders, transnationalism and human movement. Above all he was concerned to challenge and link together what he called (1995, p. 95) 'cross-cutting dichotomies' such as the local and the global, or lifeworld and system, resulting therefore in ethnographies which are, to quote the title of his paper, both 'in' and 'of' the global system. Here is his most cogent definition:

> Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, and juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some kind of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of ethnography (1995, p. 105).

His rallying cry for multi-sited ethnography reflected (but also pioneered) shifts in the epistemology of anthropology away from classical studies of 'peasant' or 'traditional' rural societies with their assumed essence of 'subaltern' communities, towards new ethnographies embracing interlocking nodes of cities, markets, states, the media, industries, organisations, elites, academia, etc. – what has come to be known as 'studying up' (Marcus 1995, p. 101, quoting Nader 1969). Moreover, in the contemporary world of social science, 'the object of study is inherently mobile and multiply situated, so any ethnography of such a subject will have a comparative dimension that is integral to it, in the form of juxtapositions of phenomena that conventionally have appeared to be (or conceptually have been kept) "worlds apart"' (Marcus 1995, p. 102). It is not hard to see in this quote an articulate prefiguring of the 'mobilities paradigm' which has helped to re-frame our understanding of the dynamics of European migration in the last decade or so (see Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007).

3.3.3 Critiques of Multi-sited Ethnography

The trend towards multi-sited ethnography has not gone unchallenged. Some of the critiques have been trenchant (e.g. Candea 2007; Hage 2005); others more balanced, combining prosecution and defence (e.g. Coleman and von Hellermann 2011; Falzon 2009; FitzGerald 2012); and Marcus himself has responded to the critiques and reappraised his original 1995 paper (Marcus 2007, 2011). Amongst the critiques, the most severe is the provocation by Hage (2005), who sees multi-sited ethnography as little more than a buzzword, a reflection of 'delusions of innovativeness'. Hage then concludes: 'I simply do not think there can be such a thing as multi-sited ethnography' (2005, p. 465).

The main critique is to question the depth and quality of fieldwork spread across several sites. Given the well-known challenges of doing in-depth fieldwork in one site, how can the same long-matured insights be developed when the field effort is dispersed and therefore diluted? Defendants of the so-called 'thick description' achieved through 'deep ethnography' in order to understand the 'ways of the people' – methodological principles enunciated by generations of anthropologists (for instance, Geertz 1973; Clifford 1997) – are sceptical about the sacrificing of detailed local knowledge implied by spreading oneself across several field sites. The purists are dismissive of 'itinerant ethnographers' whom they see as little more than travelling journalists or curious tourists. As Burawoy (2003, p. 673) put it: 'Bouncing from site to site, anthropologists easily substitute anecdotes and vignettes for serious field work'. But does a plurality of sites automatically mean dilution of research findings and their associated depth of insight? My answer, from a migration studies perspective, is a resounding 'No', for the following reasons.

First, the view of the single site as, indeed, a single site is itself flawed. The 'traditional' ethnography of a village is actually composed of multi-sited research, as the field-worker observes and encounters people in several settings – their homes, workplaces (out in the fields), their places of worship, their sites of relaxation (bars, cafés, the village square) or in community gatherings (the town hall, community centre, schools, etc.). Falzon (2009, p. 8) approvingly quotes Boissevain's approach to his fieldwork in *A Village in Malta* (1980, p. 116), where he lists the significant places and spaces in the village where he habitually stopped for information and conversation – the church, the main square, the priest's house, the bus stop, the barber shop etc.

Second, there is no reason, in principle, why in-depth fieldwork cannot be accomplished in more than one site. If 6 months is regarded as the minimum to achieve in-depth understanding, then two or three sites can reasonably be accommodated in a 3- or 4-year research project; allowing time for the integrated and comparative analysis of the material collected.

Third, the critique falls if the objects of study are themselves mobile – as migrants and other mobile people (travellers, tourists, adventurers, etc.) obviously are. This opens up a new methodological scenario – *mobile ethnography*. Field research is no longer confined to fixed points such as villages, towns, workplaces, etc., but is done

'on the move', on buses, trains, cars, airplanes, or at staging posts such as airports, bus stations, border crossing points, etc. The notion of 'fieldwork as travel practice' … 'represents the way [mobile] people *themselves* experience the world' (Falzon 2009, p. 9, emphasis in the original). The richness of 'mobile methods' has been explored by Büscher and Urry (2009; also Büscher et al. 2010), which involves collecting ethnographic and other data by observing people's spatial movements, 'shadowing' them or 'lurking' around those on the move.

Mobile methods have two further advantages. First, they enable the researcher to 'fix' migration and mobility in space and time by observing and experiencing the lived spatio-temporal rhythms of movement, delay, settlement, return, etc. (King and Lulle 2015; Meeus 2012). Second, the method acknowledges the dialectical relationship between mobility and immobility, offering chances to analyse both within a transnational or translocal perspective (Amelina and Faist 2012).

Another challenge to the use and interpretation of multi-sited methods comes from the way it is often linked to comparative studies of migration. FitzGerald (2012, p. 1728) calls this the *ceteris paribus* problem. In other words, one should not assume that an observed difference between two migration destinations causes the variation found between migration streams sharing the same source; or, analogously, that variations observed between different migration sources directed to the same destination derive from variations in the origins. In reality, the various sites (origins, destinations) are not isolated units each independent from the other: there may be prior links established through histories of colonisation, trade, or earlier waves of migration, as well as more recent forms of globalisation (de Munck 2002; Hansen 2014). That said, FitzGerald goes on to maintain that 'qualitative researchers are well positioned to make convincing claims about causal relevance when they are able to specify causal pathways and processes with detailed evidence from multiple sites' (2012, p. 1729).

The final critique to Marcusian multi-sited ethnography is what Falzon (2009, p. 12) calls the 'latter-day holism' charge. Multi-sited ethnography implies holistic ambitions, not least because of explicit reference to the 'world system' in the title of Marcus' 1995 paper. Whilst the capitalist world system, as envisioned for instance by Wallerstein (1979), provides a contextual structuring for people's lives and behaviours – including migration (cf. Castles and Miller 2009, pp. 26–27) – the suggestion is that the 'ethnographic macro-trope' (Rumsey 2004) of holism implies a higher level of comprehensiveness. Two answers are given by Falzon (2009, pp. 12–13) to this dilemma. The first is that holism is also and already built into the epistemology of the 'traditional' Malinowskian ethnographic monograph, designed to comprehend the workings of the 'social whole' of a designated community. The second is that multi-sited ethnography should not exaggerate its ambitions when trying to study 'everything'; it should opt instead for a 'limited slice of the action' – such as, to give just one example, remittances.

3.3.4   *Follow the People, and Other Things Too*

Marcus' powerful statement of justification for the intrinsic value of multi-sited research remains, however, rooted in the academic and epistemological traditions of anthropology and ethnography. I now turn this discussion more firmly towards the study of migration, and at the same time, broaden out from anthropology and ethnography to other social sciences that deal with this subject matter – sociology, geography, cultural studies, oral history, etc. Meantime, I stick with Marcus in his 'modes of construction', through which he suggests following 'the people', 'the thing', 'the metaphor', 'the story', 'the biography' and 'the conflict' (1995, pp. 105–110).

Follow the people is the most obvious link to migration, especially in studies which take a transnational approach or look at diasporic processes of 'scattering'. Following migrants across borders, to their sites of destination and settlement, is the classic genre of 'here' and 'there' research, but, of course, this is only one construction of the migration process. As noted already, contemporary European migration is much more complex and comprises, *inter alia*, onward migration, return migration, circulation, seasonal movements, internal migration, and the under-studied phenomenon of migrants visiting 'home' as well as being visited by their home-based relatives and friends. Some of this complexity is revealed in the Albanian case-studies at the end of this chapter.

Follow the thing involves the study of mobile material objects. Food, commodities, gifts and money are the most obvious linkages to the study of migration. Migrants take some of their material goods with them, and add to this by constructing in their destination setting a material world which reminds them of 'home', as well as stimulating a trade in 'ethnic goods' to sustain these customs (notably in food products). In the same vein returnees who resettle back 'home' often bring with them material goods – furniture, pictures, the architectural styles of their new-build houses etc. – which remind them (and others) of their migrant life. Remittances are perhaps the most important element in the socio-economic study of migration's impact on the home society and economy, and these, too, can be most effectively studied at both ends of the 'remittance corridor' (King et al. 2011).

Follow the metaphor 'involves trying to trace the social correlates and groundings of associations that are most clearly alive in language use and print or visual media' (Marcus 1995, p. 108). So the 'thing' being traced here falls within the realm of discourse, ideas and symbols, mediated through a variety of official and informal communication channels, from official policy and propaganda to received wisdom, hearsay and gossip. For the study of migration, the relevant examples might include discourses and information (accurate or biased) about a 'better life' through migration, or migration as an essential 'rite of passage' to adulthood and status (for more on 'migration discourse' see Van Dijk 2018 in this volume).

Follow the plot, story or allegory: this is a 'virtually untried mode of constructing multi-sited research' according to Marcus (1995, p. 109), but its potential is clear, especially with the growing interest in social memory, cultural studies and oral

history. There are both 'grand narratives' and 'small stories' about migration which are, potentially, effectively investigated through multi-sited research, including that which references multiple historical sites and sources.

Follow the life or biography deepens and personalises the previous mode, and again Marcus notes that there is much unrealised potential in developing multi-sited research which follows the life-history and key events of individuals or groups of mobile people across space and through time. According to Marcus (1995, pp. 109–110), this approach can reveal the juxtapositions both across space and time of places and events which otherwise remain obscured, either because they were previously hidden or unknown, or because they were embedded in systems and structures which distorted their true meaning. The challenge is to statistically and/or graphically represent these 'migration histories' in a way that demonstrates patterns which can be easily read or visualised. Carling's (2012) 'migration history charts' represent a very clear visual mapping of migrants' (and non-migrants') positionings and movements through space and time, including the intersecting trajectories of different generations and family members.

Finally, *follow the conflict* opens up interesting and highly relevant possibilities to study evolving migration conflicts such as refugee flows across borders. The dramaturgical unfolding of the recent and on-going Syrian refugee crisis, with its complex and shifting routes through Turkey, the Aegean Sea, the Western Balkans, and on through Central Europe to refugee settlement end-points in Germany and Sweden, is a clear illustration of this (see King and Collyer 2016).

3.4 Context and Multi-sitedness in Albanian Migration Research

I round off this chapter with some examples of multi-sited field research from Albania, the country whose remarkable story of migration I have been closely following for the past 20 or so years. I summarise the multi-sited research design and findings from three funded projects for which I was principal investigator.

Albania can be regarded as an excellent example of a research laboratory for the study of migration processes, for two main reasons (King 2005). First, Albania was a 'closed society', with emigration banned, for the 45 years between the end of World War II and the collapse of the communist regime in 1990–1991. Hence the migration waves that virtually exploded out of the country during the 1990s and have continued at a steadier pace since 2000 can be viewed against this unusual situation of a migration *tabula rasa*. Second, the scale of the migration has been, in a relative sense, larger than any other European country, with a 'stock' of Albanians now living abroad (mainly in Greece and Italy, but in recent years expanding to other European countries and North America too), equivalent to nearly half the current resident population of the country – 1.4 million vs. 3 million (World Bank 2011, p. 54).

3.4.1   Project 1: Albanians in London and Back 'Home'

The first project was a piece of research commissioned by Oxfam GB and the Fabian Society which investigated the causes and consequences of migration in a development context, as well as trying to destroy some of the myths about migration propagated by the UK media (King et al. 2003). The project represented Oxfam GB's first engagement with migration as a poverty-alleviating strategy, and deliberately chose a recently-arrived migrant group in the UK which had not been studied before and where there was no history of prior migration. The prime objective was to collect robust empirical data on the development-inducing effects of migration for the home country. One important extra component of the research was a gender dimension, especially in the field of remittances.

Unlike the 'village-outward' approach, which follows migrants from their place of origin to multiple destinations, this research design worked the other way around, starting with the destination and tracing back to key places of origin in Albania. We used personal contacts to snowball out to the Albanian migrant population in and around London and collected 26 in-depth interviews, some of which were recorded. Despite the fact that we were operating on 'home turf', it proved extremely difficult to access informants, due to their reluctance to be interviewed, their suspicion that we were linked to the Home Office or the police, and their own ambiguous status in Britain – most had arrived in the late 1990s via 'irregular' routes, including having been smuggled into the country in the back of trucks. Most interviewees were young men aged in their 20s and 30s, reflecting the age and gender dynamics of irregular migration from Albania. However, some came as young families or via family reunification, and the sample included interviews with seven young married women.

Based on these interviews and other UK-based contacts, we were able to identify two key regions of origin in Albania, linked by internal migration: the mountainous north of the country, a region of remote villages and small towns; and the peri-urban fringes of the capital Tirana, the site of much newly-built informal housing on land of unclear ownership. In these two regions, 46 interviews were carried out with families with migrants in the UK, including some interviews with returned migrants. These interviews in Albania proved easier to carry out, and most were conducted in an informal, relaxed atmosphere.

The triangulation of findings between these three locations – London, rural north Albania and the urbanising periphery of Tirana – enabled us to generate well-grounded insights into several processes linked to migration and the support and (under)development of home-country communities and localities, including the gendered nature of these processes. The multi-sited perspective allowed the cross-referencing of research findings from each 'corner' of the triangle. Furthermore, we were able to understand the complex gendered interrelations between international migration, remittances, internal migration, population concentration and depopulation, and strategies for survival and personal/family progress. In synthesis, our results confirm the following.

First and foremost, the patriarchal nature of Albanian society dictates that migration in the 1990s (somewhat less so today) was a 'male thing', and this applied to remittances too. The women interviewed in London told us how they were not 'allowed' to send remittances; and in the families receiving remittances in Albania (usually the parents of the male migrant abroad), it was 'the man' (the father, the head of the family, the patriarch) who decided how the money sent should be spent, sometimes in consultation with the son abroad (King et al. 2003, pp. 71–87).

Second, our multi-sited field evidence uncovered the complex and dynamic interrelationships between internal and international migration (King et al. 2003, pp. 68–71). The most consistent interlinkage from our data was that migration to the UK, and the income and remittances derived therefrom, are often used to finance an internal migration of the residual family from rural north Albania to Tirana. When migrants return, or contemplate return, it is to this more dynamic pole of the Albanian economy, not to their depopulating places of origin in the hills and mountains. This finding is confirmed by Vullnetari's (2012) more comprehensive analysis of the internal-international migration interface in Albania, based on multi-sited fieldwork in three south Albanian villages and in Korçë (the local regional capital), Tirana and Thessaloniki.

Third, the impact of return migration and returnees' investment in the Albanian economy was found to be rather limited (King et al. 2003, pp. 87–92). Interviews in London and with migrant families and returned migrants in different locations in Albania revealed the barriers and challenges to a 'sustainable' return. On the whole, migrants left initially with the ambition to return (to get married, start a family, set up an enterprise, etc.), but the poor economic prospects in Albania, the lack of adequate infrastructure (reliable power and water supplies, decent roads, etc.), and the pervasive culture of bribery and corruption as well as, in some cases, long-running inter-family feuds, were seen and experienced as fundamental obstacles. Nevertheless, some localised successes of returnees' investment in agriculture, tourism and small-scale service activities were encountered.

3.4.2 Project 2: Regional Contrasts in Albanian Migrants' Social Inclusion in Italy

The second project looked at Albanian migration to Italy and at the regionally differentiated process of social integration. The research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and culminated in the book *Out of Albania* (King and Mai 2008). The aim of the research was to document, through detailed on-the-ground fieldwork, the process of Albanian migration to Italy, encompassing the migration itself, experiences of employment, housing and social life, and the way the migrants reacted to, and partially overcame, their profound stigmatisation by Italian media and society during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Given the sharp regional contrasts in Italian economic and social geography, we strategically chose three contrasting cities to base the fieldwork in: Rome, the national capital, positioned in the centre of Italy; Lecce, a medium-sized city in the southern Puglia region; and Modena in the north, another medium-sized city and statistically the richest in Italy at the time. This multi-sited design was predicated on what we knew of the spatial dynamics of Albanian migration to Italy: a marked concentration in the south-eastern region of Puglia as the main arrival point into Italy, but a relatively poor region with high unemployment and limited opportunities for immigrants' longer-term economic progress; followed by subsequent northward migration within Italy, either to Rome with its multitude of mostly low-grade service employment, or to regions further north which have thriving industries (King and Mai 2008, pp. 6–8).

Given the time and resources available, we specified quota-sample targets of at least 30 in-depth interviews with Albanian migrants in each of the three cities, plus a further quota of at least 20 per city of key-interviews with employers and community leaders. All these quota-targets were achieved or exceeded, with a total of 174 interviews.

Key findings which vindicate this multi-sited research design are as follows. The main contrast uncovered was between the south of Italy (Lecce) and the north (Modena), with Rome occupying an intermediate position in terms of Albanians' experiences of social in/exclusion. In the south, Albanians found themselves, on the whole, more 'socially welcomed' and hence felt more 'at ease'; yet their material conditions, in terms of access to regular and decently-paid jobs, were much worse than in the north. For those whom we interviewed in and around Lecce, work opportunities were limited to casual and very poorly paid jobs in agriculture, or as temporary labourers on building sites or in storehouses. Qualifications earned in Albania – educational diplomas or vocational expertise – counted for nothing, so many experienced de-skilling in the work they did in Italy.

Many interviewees recalled their brutal experiences at the hands of the police at the time of the chaotic mass arrivals at the Puglian ports in 1991 when tens of thousands of Albanians arrived on overcrowded boats in a few days. Yet there were also some accounts of extraordinary help and kindness on the part of local people who virtually adopted young Albanians. Although the subsequent politically motivated and media-induced stigmatisation of Albanians covered all parts of the country, we found that, at an informal, neighbourhood level, Albanians were much better integrated in the south where, on the whole, they enjoyed good relationships with their Italian neighbours and workmates. We tentatively 'explained' this by the fact that southern Italians have their own personal and family experience of emigration: hence a sense of 'solidarity' is shared with the Albanian migrants.

In the north, and to a lesser extent in Rome, access to better-paid and somewhat more secure jobs was easier for Albanians, due to the demand for service-sector labour and (in Modena) some industrial jobs. Here, progress was easier once a migrant had been 'regularised' – and in fact it was difficult to survive in Modena without 'papers' (in contrast to the south where the police and authorities generally turned a blind eye). As a result, many Albanians moved internally from south to

north within Italy once they got regularised, as this enabled them to access the formal labour market more prevalent in the north. The counterpoints to this better material and legal situation were twofold – a higher cost of accommodation (hence Albanians were often forced to locate to cheaper housing in outlying villages and small towns), and a less welcoming social environment, whereby they continued to be marginalised by the more class-conscious northern Italian bourgeoisie. This was particularly the case in the rich but provincial city of Modena; less so in multicultural Rome, where Albanians were only one of a vast array of recently-arrived and more established immigrant groups from all over the world.

3.4.3 Project 3: Gendering the Greece-Albania Remittance Corridor

For the final example, we return to one of the themes opened up by Project 1 and explore this in more detail. This is about gendering remittances along what we call 'the Greek-Albanian migration and remittance corridor', a project funded by UN-INSTRAW (United Nations Institute for Training and Research into the Advancement of Women) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme): see King et al. (2011) and Vullnetari and King (2011) for key outputs.

The key questions which framed in this project were as follows. How do men and women within transnational families send and receive remittances? To what extent, therefore, is the transmission and use of remittances imbued with relations of patriarchy between genders and generations? Thirdly comes the recursive question of the previous one: how does the earning, transmission and decision-making over remittances re-shape gender relations within transnational families (if at all)? Finally, how are remittances used – for survival, for consumption, or for investment for the future?

The research plan for this project was both multi-method and multi-sited – a common combination in the field of migration research. The multi-sited design was linked to the above-mentioned concept of a migration and remittance corridor – a linear channel between two countries, regions or localities along which migrants move in one direction (typically from the 'poor' to the 'rich' region) in order to work and send a portion of their earnings home to family members in the form of remittances. These are usually mainly in monetary form but can also include goods and gifts. The precise sites where the research was carried out were a cluster of three villages in the district of Korçë, southern Albania, and the city of Thessaloniki in northern Greece, the main destination for migrants from this part of Albania. This is a rather short-range, cross-border migration-remittance corridor, compared to other globe-spanning examples (US-Mexico, Spain-Ecuador, Gulf-South Asia, etc.). Buses, taxis and private cars make the journey in 3–4 h, except when there are long queues at the border. This vehicular traffic is also used to deliver in-kind remittances in the form of parcels.

The mixed-methods package involved three main research instruments: a face-to-face household questionnaire survey of 350 remittance receivers in the Albanian villages; in-depth recorded interviews with 25 remittance receivers in the three villages and with 20 remittance senders in Thessaloniki; and some flexibly organised discussion/focus groups with village women.

Key results include the following. The questionnaire data allowed a rigorous mapping and categorisation of 'remittance dyads' – person-to-person transfers between a sender and a recipient, identified by gender, generation or other consanguinal relationship. Dyads were found to be highly gender-specific (Vullnetari and King 2011, pp. 113–123). Single male migrants send to their fathers. Married male migrants working abroad alone send mainly to their wives, except when their wives are cohabiting with the migrant's parents, in which case the remittances go to the father. In cases where the migrant is together with his wife abroad, the remittances go to his father, even when the migrant's wife is working abroad, since she is deemed to 'belong' to her husband's parental family, not her own, according to the Albanian patrilineal system. However, our interview evidence revealed that this rigid pattern is changing somewhat, and some remittances are sent to the wife's parents, especially if they are in need, for example if they have no sons working abroad to support them, and hence no incoming remittances of their own.

Hardly any females are 'primary' remitters: only 4 out of the 350 recipient households had migrant women as their main remitters. Married migrant women were sometimes 'allowed' to send money and gifts to her parents (or occasionally a sister), but, revealingly, these are re-labelled 'gifts' or small monetary 'presents' ('just for a coffee') and hence downgraded in significance.

Whilst there was no doubt, based on questionnaire responses, that patriarchal principles remain intact, especially as regards the denied independence of women as 'sole' migrants or active remitters, evidence from in-depth interviews revealed that the experiences of migration on the one hand, and of receiving and administering remittances on the other hand, were reshaping gender relations. In migrant households in Thessaloniki, husbands were sharing in household chores and in looking after children. This was not so much because of a profound ideological shift in the norms of gender equality, but more because of the necessities of two working spouses with different shifts. For migrant working women in Thessaloniki, freedom to travel around the city (again, out of necessity, to get to work or ferry children to school and other events), and to retain some control over money, could be regarded as modest means of empowerment. The same could be said of women as recipients and administrators of remittances; on the other hand, some women 'left behind' by husbands working abroad felt over-burdened by all the responsibilities being thrust on them – to look after children and perhaps also elderly parents(-in-law), to work on the household land and look after the animals, and manage the household economy on a daily basis.

Finally, this research uncovered differences and even clashes in expectations about the amount, frequency and utilisation of remittances – inconsistencies which can only emerge from the different perspectives of a two-ended, multi-sited and multi-method investigation, interrogating both the senders and receivers of remittances.

3.5   Conclusion

The diversity, complexity and dynamism of migration as a multi-faceted social, economic and cultural process requires the researcher to have a broad and interdisciplinary vision, as Borkert (2018) expounds in the next chapter. The breadth of this vision reflects not only the complex internal dynamics of migration but also the way that migration is embedded in regional and global processes, such as evolving geographies of uneven development and global geopolitical change. Migratory phenomena are also *emplaced* – in places of origin, destination, transit and return. Migrations are channelled along routes and networks, and interrupted and diverted by borders. To quote the evocative title of one paper which argues strongly for a multi-sited ethnographic approach, migrants move 'inside, outside, upside down, backward, forward, round and round' (McHugh 2000). Despite its restricted spatial scale, the 'Albanian laboratory' for studying migration dynamics as they unfold in time and space offers an excellent illustration of the value of multi-method and multi-sited research which surely can be paralleled in many other geographical contexts within Europe and beyond.

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Chapter 4
Moving Out of the Comfort Zone: Promises and Pitfalls of Interdisciplinary Migration Research in Europe

Maren Borkert

4.1 Why Bother with Interdisciplinarity in Migration Research? An Argument for Spanning Boundaries and Disciplines

In the academic world, interdisciplinarity is a widely used and very ambiguous term. The literature making interdisciplinarity a subject of discussion for theory, research, education and policy is vast and confusing. Broadly defined, interdisciplinarity refers to the *communication and collaboration across academic disciplines* as well as to the *integration of disciplinary contributions* to provide holistic and systemic results (Bruce et al. 2004; Jacobs and Frickel 2009). Interdisciplinary research might be conducted within the social sciences (e.g. between sociology and economics), but it may also occur between the social, life and natural sciences (e.g. between sociology and neurosciences to understand how social interactions affect brain activities; between ethnography and computer science to explore the success of the online platform 'Second Life'). In an attempt to combat terminological inexactitude, some scholars draw very clear lines of separation between cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. These three concepts are consequently used to differentiate between low, moderate and high levels of interconnectedness or conceptual integration (Aboelela et al. 2007; Salter and Hearn 1996) (Table 4.1).

Others rather distinguish interdisciplinary research with regard to the scope of the scientific endeavour. In this sense, interdisciplinary research is classified to be directed either towards:

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Table 4.1 Conceptual integration in hyphen-disciplinary research

Degree of interconnectedness between the disciplines involved		Terminology
High	+ ↓	Transdisciplinary
		(When knowledge is produced jointly by professionals and academic experts)
Medium		Interdisciplinary
		(When emphasis is on the integration of knowledge from two or more academic disciplines)
Low		Cross-disciplinary
	-	(When contributions to a research problem stem from two or more disciplines)

- Facilitating disciplinary development through e.g. methodological import from foreign disciplines which enable new issues to be addressed or sub-disciplines to form; or
- Addressing and providing solutions to wicked problems of social, technical and/ or political nature (Bruce et al. 2004; Klein 1996; Frodeman and Mitcham 2007).

Whatever the categorisation one decides to follow, interdisciplinary endeavours are grounded in a number of underlying assumptions that are worth bearing in mind. These assumptions involve matters of how knowledge is produced, how it is institutionalised and how it may affect society.

- *First,* the idea of interdisciplinarity has become increasingly intertwined with complexity in recent years. Hence, interdisciplinary knowledge is deemed to hold the potential for major breakthroughs in social challenges like climate change and global inequality. In this view, complex problems are dependent on the 360-degree vision and integrated approach which interdisciplinarity offers in order to generate new kinds of knowledge to solve them (Thompson Klein 1996; McMurtry 2001). An example of this is provided by the work of David Wrathall from United Nations University and Xin Lu from Flowminder who use mobile phone data to analyse human movement during natural disasters
- *Second,* interdisciplinary scholars assume that the growth of interdisciplinary knowledge and research is fundamental for advances in knowledge and progress in science. In this vein, in one of my own research projects, we draw upon forms of capital by Pierre Bourdieu to understand the cyclic processes of opportunity identification and evaluation among refugee entrepreneurs. By integrating sociology with business studies, we attempt to advance knowledge on personal, societal and economic factors influencing the decision-making process of business foundation among refugees beyond the current state of the art
- *Third,* proponents of interdisciplinary work support the idea that the existing academic disciplines and the institutional policies maintaining them are one of the main barriers to the diffusion of interdisciplinary scholarship worldwide. As

a consequence, interdisciplinary research groups on migration (like GRITIM at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona) have been set up all around the globe, while the interdisciplinary research network IMISCOE has become a major player on a European scale

- *Fourth,* interdisciplinary advocates anticipate that once the existing obstacles to interdisciplinary research are overcome, the efficient production of interdisciplinary knowledge will flourish.

As Jacobs and Frickel (2009) note, these beliefs are widely shared by advocates of interdisciplinary scholarship, yet 'rarely have they been subject to empirical investigation' (Jacobs and Frickel 2009: 48).[1]

However, the hype about interdisciplinarity that many have observed in the past years cannot be separated from the *underlying hope to be able to solve current social problems with science*. This hope is the more or less explicit foundation for a variety of public initiatives to foster collaboration across academic disciplines. An early example of the push towards interdisciplinary research is the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the University of Illinois, established in 1983 by the largest-ever private donation to a US public university at that time. Since the Beckmann Institute was founded, the interdisciplinary model has spread around the world, and interdisciplinary institutes have been set up in countries like the US, Europe, Japan, China and Australia, to name just a few, to solve complex problems such as global health and sustainability (Ledford 2006). We can safely assume that the promise of problem-solving is an intrinsic motivation for many scholars to get involved in interdisciplinary work. Within science though, interdisciplinary research encounters a multitude of barriers with regard to research and scholarship. Interdisciplinary scholars face epistemic barriers and may encounter difficulties in mediating between what often appear to be opposed styles of thought, research traditions, techniques and disciplinary languages. In computer science, for example, the term 'migration' is used to describe the process of translating data from one format to another. It is mainly motivated by saving costs. In the social sciences, on the contrary, migration focuses on people or groups of peoples who move abroad for a variety of reasons, often categorised as push factors (like economic recession and political unrest) and pull factors (such as good job opportunities and welfare services). In short, even if the terms are identical, they refer to very different phenomena which are explored with theoretical and methodological tools inherent to the respective discipline. Besides these epistemic barriers, also disciplinary and administrative structures such as disciplinary-oriented journals, conferences and departments may add to reinforcing scientific compartmentalisation. In the current situation, it is very often the individual researcher who must make an extra effort and assume the risk to pursue what is perceived as an outside-disciplinary endeavor, a fact that prompted some scholars to speak of interdisciplinary

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[1] One of the recent studies that sets out to end this, is led by Frickel, Albert and Prainsack. For more information please see: Frickel et al. (2016). *Investigating interdisciplinary collaboration. Theory and practice across disciplines*, Rutgers University Press.

research as a constantly failing academic movement (Jacobs and Frickel 2009; Smelser 2003)[2].

Overall, the field of interdisciplinary scholarship and research is marked by opposing tendencies. On the one hand, it is nourished by the common hope that one just needs to combine the right kind of scientific knowledge with practical know-how in order to solve a concrete problem. For instance, by integrating a thorough understanding of migration patterns during natural disasters with accurate natural disaster prediction one could design and deploy appropriate mitigation tools to prevent and/or counteract so-called climate migration. On the other hand, the field is marked by relatively little empirical progress towards mainstreaming interdisciplinarity into academia (Frickel et al. 2016). Despite the evident gap between high expectations and de-facto implementation, interdisciplinary research has continued to gain popularity for the past 60 years (see, for instance, Figs. 4.3 and 4.4 in the Annexes). Yet, how do these conflicting trends impact on the interdisciplinary study of migration? Are these tensions the context in which interdisciplinary migration research is embedded? Or is the study of migration a special case and therefore exempt from the barriers which interdisciplinary research usually encounters?

With its strong emphasis on formulating innovative and effective policy proposals, the study of international migration is seen as an interdisciplinary field of research par excellence. There are inherent motives that make the study of migration a breeding ground for cross-disciplinary fertilisation: both the forces driving migration and the consequences of migration are embedded in the economic, demographic, geographic, social, political and historical realm making it almost impossible to explain migration phenomena with a single disciplinary perspective. Consequently, faculty members and researchers teaching curriculum-based education on migration usually stem from a multitude of diverse disciplines such as economics, law, history, sociology, areas studies, political science and geography, to name just a few. As a research field, Migration Studies is heterogeneous in terms of disciplinary composition, and influential scholars laud the ability and willingness of migration scholars to appropriate new concepts from other disciplines and to integrate them into novel approaches for the study of migration (see e.g. Bommes and Morawska 2005; Boswell and Mueser 2008; Brettel and Hollifield 2000). Simultaneously, though, the same authors note that interdisciplinary migration research has not yet become a common practice. They point out that the integration of (particular) disciplines has to be fostered in order to better understand the interrelated causes of migration movements, their patterns as well as accommodation policies and integration trajectories (Boswell and Mueser 2008; Morawska 2003). What does this mean for the subject under study? What is, empirically speaking, the situation of interdisciplinary scholarship in the study of migration? Is it, like inter-

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[2] What is even more is that there is an alarming number of publications across the disciplines that establish a connection between conducting interdisciplinary research and ruining your scientific career (see e.g. Byrne 2014; Callard and Fitzgerald 2015).

disciplinary research in general, high in popularity but difficult to put in practice? These are relevant questions which will be addressed in the following sections assessing the field of interdisciplinary migration research in Europe.

4.2   Exploring the State of the Art of Interdisciplinary Migration Research with the Web of Science

To get straight to the point: for those who are looking for a comprehensive picture of the state of art and extent of diffusion of interdisciplinarity in qualitative migration research in Europe, it must be said, this data is hard to find. To this day, a systematic analysis of interdisciplinary migration research in Europe is missing and evidence is sparse and fragmented. For a first overview and as a rough indicator of the growth of scholarship in this area, I have charted the use of the term 'interdisciplinary' in the title of journal articles on migration, drawing on data from the Web of Science. Nearly 17,722 articles have been published using the term 'migration research'. Of those, I excluded academic disciplines such as 'biochemical research methods' or 'limnology', 'ornithology' or 'zoology' with assumingly little relation to the human movement under study.[3] This led to a total of 8,402 articles. As Fig. 4.1 demonstrates, the overall number of journal articles in the area of migration research has steadily increased over the past years and at a faster rate since 2007/2008.
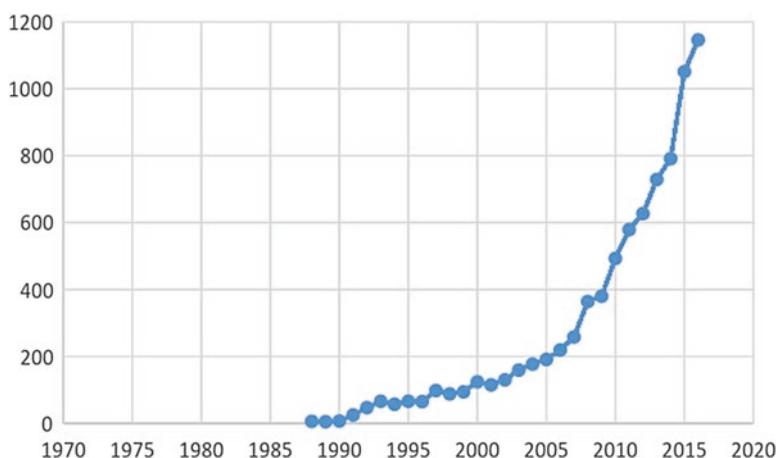
Fig. 4.1   Trend in articles with the term 'migration research' in title, 1988–2016 (Data from Web of Science 2017)

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[3] For a full list of excluded categories please see Table 4.3 in the Annexes.
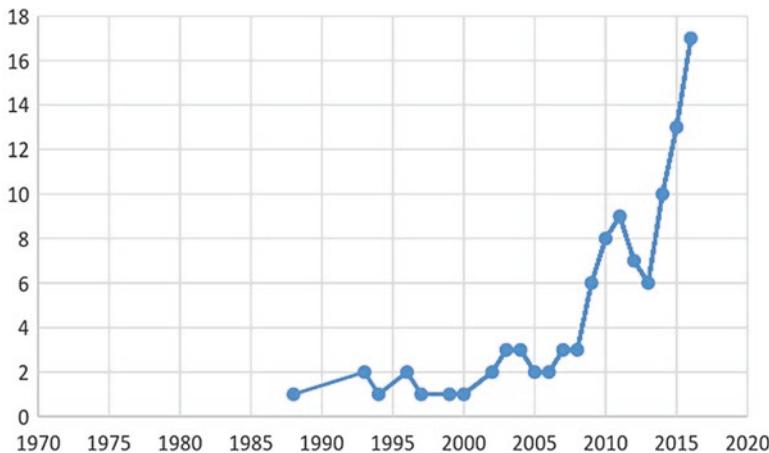
Fig. 4.2 Trend in articles with the term 'interdisciplinary migration research' in title, 1988–2016 (Data from Web of Science 2017)

In order to investigate if the push for more interdisciplinarity has been accompanied by more discussion of this topic in academic writing on migration, I also ran an analysis of the use of the term 'interdisciplinary migration studies' in the Web of Science database. As shown in Fig. 4.2, the publication of journal articles in this area has grown steadily since the 1990s, while the consistent upward trend since the 2000s is particularly remarkable. As is shown for the term 'migration research' in general, also the scientific production on 'interdisciplinary migration research' has particularly prospered since 2008, the year of the worldwide economic crisis.

But what is the distribution by academic disciplines to these articles? As Table 4.2 displays, there is a remarkable interest in the subject of 'migration' across a wide range of disciplines, from geography and environmental sciences to public environmental occupational health, religion and psychology.

Even if not all cited disciplines engage in the study of human migration as intended in this book, the table above illustrates an interest in the subject across a multitude of academic disciplines. How we can interpret the results from this first overview, is yet the question.

What is both indicative and surprising from this first exploration of the state of the art of interdisciplinary migration studies is that the total number of journal articles using the term 'interdisciplinary migration research' remains surprisingly low: of the 8,402 journal articles surveyed, only 181 (2.15%) make reference to interdisciplinarity in the title. One may, in fact, be compelled to conclude that when it comes to publishing in international peer-reviewed journals, interdisciplinarity in migration studies does not sell. Furthermore, there are academic disciplines in which the use of the term 'interdisciplinarity' in the context of migration is more common than in others: while geography and sociology are heading the rankings of academic disciplines with references to 'interdisciplinary migration research', the

Table 4.2 Distribution of articles with the term 'interdisciplinary migration research' in title, by journal subject category (top ranking) (Data from Web of Science 2017)

	Record count	%
Geography	16	8,8%
Sociology	13	7,2%
Demography	13	7,2%
Environmental science	12	6,6%
Public environmental occupational health	11	6,1%
Ethnic studies	11	6,1%
Environmental studies	11	6,1%
Ecology	11	6,1%
Geosciences multidisciplinary	8	4,4%
Water resources	6	3,3%
Planning development	5	2,7%
Neuroscience	5	2,7%
Urban studies	4	2,2%
Psychology social	4	2,2%
Political science	4	2,2%

use of the term, for instance, in political science and economics is less frequent. Is this a sign of academic rigour and low permeability of interdisciplinary migration literature within these disciplines? If so, can we deduce that there is a more accentuate interdisciplinary migration research community in some academic disciplines than in others? The pursuit of these questions seems to lead automatically to a call for more research in the future. Indeed, only a comprehensive citation analysis between disciplines within articles on migration would (in my view) allow visualising the scientific landscape of interdisciplinary migration research in Europe and answer the above-mentioned questions. As this type of analysis is still missing today, a look at an individual interdisciplinary career within migration studies might be illustrative to better understand the promises and pitfalls of pursuing interdisciplinary migration research in Europe. To this end, the following section will introduce the personal case of a qualitative-oriented interdisciplinary migration scholar as an example of the opportunities and existing challenges in the subject under study.

4.3 Practices of an Interdisciplinary Career in Migration Studies: My Case

There are two key elements for every testimonial or eyewitness account as far as the law is concerned. The first is the event they witnessed and the second is the identification of the person(s) committing the crime (Tredoux et al. 2004). In this case, the observed event is the undertaking of interdisciplinary migration research, while the

second is the interaction with diverse academic and non-academic cultures and environments in which the scholarship of interdisciplinary migration research is formed. The event consists of a series of acts like in a theatre play, which are going to be discussed in chronological order. In each scene, I will present the various actors at play and highlight the impact of the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary exchange on the scientific formation of the individual researcher, i.e. me. This means that this chapter is shaped by two overlapping narratives: while the first focuses on the chronological description of the career itself, the second relates to the environment, circumstances and elements impacting interdisciplinary learning and research. In his 'theatre in the scientific age', Brecht demanded that 'der Mensch ist Gegenstand der Untersuchung', i.e. that 'the human becomes the object of investigation', and that 'the spectator stands opposite him and studies him' – with the aim to awaken the spectator's abilities and to drive his/her sensations to knowledge (Müller 2007). In this sense, the following paragraphs will present major instances of my own interdisciplinary formation in migration studies in order to stimulate the reader's activity and enable him/her to decide on the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary work.

The *first step* of becoming an interdisciplinary researcher consisted of a *move from the conceptual to the empirical*. While being a student of Italian literary studies, I decided to write my diploma thesis on immigration in Italy and its perception in politics and public. It seemed like a natural move to select two supervising professors, one from romanistics and one from sociology. Both of them had a huge interest in the topic, but expressed doubts with regard to the supervision of the other. The sociology professor raised concerns about the appropriateness of an 'aesthetic education' for the study of the social and questioned the methodological guidance I would receive. The romanistics professor, in a humorous way, warned me against changing one professional ivory tower for another – just to keep the view. As a consequence of their gentlemen dispute, content-related instructions were rare, and both the conceptual frame for the study of perceptions on migrations in Italy and a suitable research strategy were developed autonomously. Without binding disciplinary standards, I opted for an integrated quantitative and qualitative media analysis combined with an in-depth literature review through which many Italian(-language) books were translated and introduced into the German academic discourse. In the course of the research, Italian migration concepts became known to German academia, while social science methods were introduced into literary studies in the broadest sense. Interestingly, the question of disciplinary belonging and the choice of methods for research and analysis that emerged on this occasion turned out to be a recurring theme for future interdisciplinary encounters.

The *second step* of my interdisciplinary formation went hand in hand with the move *from a paradigmatic choice of methods* induced by the German 'Methodenstreit', i.e. the dispute over methods that marks German sociology until today, *to empirical pragmatism*. After deciding to switch disciplines and pursue a doctorate degree in sociology, I took the opportunity to leave German academia for an extended fellowship in an Italian sociology department. This experience proved to be highly beneficial to both my intercultural and interdisciplinary training as well

as the unfolding of my dissertation project. This project was inspired and nourished by the stark contrast between the wording of Italian migration policies on paper and their actual layout in reality. As I soon noticed, most political sciences studies on migration policies at that time concentrated on the written word and on researching policy papers, while the ways policies are carried out and implemented at different levels of society were largely disregarded. Sociology, in contrast, conceptualized policies as (a condition) impacting on individuals rather than an actor itself. Nevertheless, it offered a great deal of research tradition on how the definition of a situation impacts the actual behaviour of people. Hence, it seemed to be most appropriate to combine the strengths of both disciplines. In an attempt to integrate seemingly opposed models of thought, I designed and conducted an actor-oriented analysis of the implementation of Italian migration policies as an exploration of the field inspired by grounded theory. To this end, the thesis combined qualitative and quantitative methods before mixed methods became established and recognised as a third methodological movement in Germany (Tashakkori and Creswell 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2008).

The *third step* of my interdisciplinary education consisted of a move from academic migration scholarship to applied migration research. Starting to work as a research officer in an international organisation focusing on migration policy development, the area I was suddenly working in was characterised by a very close relationship between professionals, i.e. policy makers and implementers, as well as academic experts (e.g. sociologists, ethnographers, Africanists, lawyers etc.). In this hybrid space, academic and non-academic knowledge, theory and practice, discipline and profession merged and impacted on knowledge production in a way that can be best described as transdisciplinary according to the definitions provided in Sect. 4.1. Having crossed national as well as disciplinary borders, I was used to processes of conceptual acculturation. This (new) hybrid mode of inquiry and knowledge production though challenged many of the dichotomies I had been educated in, like the schism between theory and practice or the adoption of an external viewpoint and a view from within (often disguised as a top-down vs. bottom-up approach). The double blurring of boundaries, between theory and practice, the insider and the outsider, was at times stressful and confusing, even if beneficial to the development of practice-based approaches in migration (policy) research and theory (many of which were not published due to political concerns). After studying German and Italian migration policymaking, this period was also rich in insights into the political, administrative and legal system of Austria and its close ties with public media. However, the decision to pursue an academic career led me to leave the microcosm of international organisations.

In my *fourth step,* I moved from applied migration research to the study of international development accepting an employment offer in the newly established Department of Development Studies at the University of Vienna. Born out of a student initiative, this Department combined a unique foundation history with an extraordinary claim – to challenge classical conventions and produce new transdisciplinary approaches and theoretical concepts of 'development' that transcend disciplinary boundaries. When it was founded in 2010, the department was composed

of five professorships from sociology, economics, political science, history and gender studies. Four of these professorships were assigned to a 'home faculty', meaning that the professors were appointed by their respective scientific peer community who largely showed limited interest and/or knowledge for the study of development. This in-house architecture led to the bizarre situation in which potential professors with a passion for the interdisciplinary study of development issues had to prove themselves as worthy representatives of their respective field in order to be appointed. Consequently, the disciplinary impact on the department's structure remained strong. Moreover, many of the department's research projects and discourses were faced with not very flexible disciplinary structures. In applying the concept of human security (vastly applied to research in so-called development countries) to investigate the living situation of migrants in Europe, our interdisciplinary research project was confronted with substantial challenges in passing disciplinary peer community evaluations and acquire third-party funding. However, in an attempt to move away from the dominant deficit perspective that characterises most of the approaches on migration in German-speaking (and perhaps most European) countries, my *fifth step* was marked by putting an emphasis on the *contributions* that migrants make to their new countries of residence and hence on migrant entrepreneurship and innovation. In what has been called 'the summer of migration 2015', I left the University of Vienna to move to the Technical University of Berlin to start my new position at the School of Economics and Management. In what (surprisingly) appears to be an excellent breeding ground for scientific innovation, I was able to start not one but five interdisciplinary research projects that combine classical migration theories with business studies, sociology, network analysis, innovation research and computer science. Having experienced that the publication strategy is of key importance to the impact of scientific research and academic career progression, in my current (multidisciplinary) research team we discussed and agreed on a strategy of publication at an early stage of the project. Our main considerations included the relative prestige of a publication, as evidenced by impact factors weighed against rejection rates, turn-around and backlog times. This led us to consciously focus primarily on high ranking journals in business studies and only occasionally on journals with a cross-disciplinary appeal.

What does this itinerary of interdisciplinary formation, transdisciplinary experiences and intercultural training, spanning disciplines like sociology, romanistic studies, political science, international development and economics, tell us about the emerging area of interdisciplinary migration studies? Although it is based on an individual testimony, this narrative yields insights into the undeniable potentials and perils of interdisciplinary scholarship and career advancement. Interdisciplinarity makes moving out of the comfort zone a basic condition for scientific advancement and personal development. But how does one start to embrace the uncertainties of interdisciplinary endeavours? It is rooted in curiosity and the search for new knowledge? It is triggered by imagination or awareness? As this story exemplifies, interdisciplinary thinking results from combining curiosity, imagination and awareness with an ability to ponder on disciplinary assumptions, but also to communicate them to others and take on opinions or advice from other academic disciplines. Only

then, according to my experience, genuine collaboration can begin to emerge. To call into question the fundamentals of mono-disciplinary thinking, there is no need to cross international borders. This can be seen, for instance, in the description of the first interdisciplinary collaboration attempt when writing the diploma thesis, which is a good example of trying to integrate knowledge stemming from two disciplines as an individual effort. Yet, crossing national and cultural boundaries and, associated with this, being called into question as a scientist, even if uncomfortable, proved to be beneficial to the scientific advancement of my dissertation project in migration studies, my positioning as a researcher and my personal-professional development.

4.4   Conclusion: Promises and Pitfalls of Pursuing an Interdisciplinary Career in Migration Studies

Doing interdisciplinary research means stepping outside traditional disciplinary boundaries (Barry et al. 2008) and making a commitment to uncertainty, disciplinary detachment and conceptual overload. The latter refers to the paradox finding that providing individuals with more options in terms of theoretical input can be detrimental to choice. Speaking from my own experiences in interdisciplinary formation, placing interdisciplinarity in the work of migration scholars is not without risks. As Mills and Ratcliffe (2012) note, the common calls for interdisciplinarity are part of a push for research in the *knowledge economy* marked by a shift from 'pure' research to applied science. On one hand I am convinced of the potential of interdisciplinary work to foster scientific innovation, provide for more systemic and holistic insights into recurrent scientific and social challenges, and to train our ability to capture 'the complexities and conflicting motivations that spur along change' (Gleason 2004). On the other hand, I am also mindful of the undeniable downsides and even negative effects at the personal, institutional and systemic level.

On the *individual level,* scientists who decide to pursue an interdisciplinary approach are faced with opposing and, sometimes, conflicting styles of thought, research traditions (like inductive and deductive thinking, positivism and constructivism), methodological ideologies (claiming, for instance, the incompatibility of quantitative and qualitative methods) and disciplinary languages. The tricky aspect of these epistemic barriers, as was shown above, is that one can have no idea of what resides on the other side, or how many more barriers one may encounter beyond it. Against this background, interdisciplinarity unfolds as the individual competence to overcome barriers and to stimulate the free flow of knowledge between two or more parties. If this seems trivial, it is worth reminding ourselves what is associated with and claimed in the name of a 'discipline'.

According to Kuhn (1962), scholars of a disciplinary field share a set of underlying theories, models or generalisations that guide their work. He maintained that those trained in a discipline learn to see the same things when they are stimulated in the same way. Leaning on anthropological terms, Becher and Trowler (2001)

referred to 'academic tribes' to convey the idea of disciplines as self-regulating and self-sustaining communities with proper identities, practices and rules of conduct. This property list of disciplinary behaviour can be expanded by shared understandings of a particular language, processes of data collection, ways of organising material and interpretative protocols. In other words, only once you are 'in' a particular discipline, you understand what others in the same discipline are talking and writing about (Dressel and Marcus 1982). These norms and values that bind and regulate the disciplines are tightly woven to systems of power that regulate human conduct and social relations (Foucault 1980).

This compartmentalisation of sciences into disciplines and the resulting *disciplinary structure* started to dominate liberal arts colleges in North America in the nineteenth century, as historian Thompson Klein (1990) noted. It was facilitated by the proliferation of specialities in science demanded by a growing industry.

Despite the great deal of attention that interdisciplinarity in general is receiving today – an attention that Gleason (2004) compared to the force of a figurative hammer – empirical research suggests that disciplinary and administrative structures such as discipline-oriented journals, conferences and appointment procedures still remain strong. This topic, i.e. the nature of disciplines and the relations among them, has been a subject of scholarly reflection in philosophy, history of science and sociology since the second half of the last century, and there is no shortage of theories about it (see e.g. Jacobs and Frickel 2009 for a list of references). As Abbott (2001) points out, the same set of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities can be found in almost all universities and colleges around the world and changed very little from its institutionalisation in the last century. According to him, disciplines function as employment markets and essentially economic cartels which hire from within, thus institutionalising rules of access, exchanges of faculty and training markets. The point of disciplinary continuity is sustained also by Fuller (2004), who emphasises that the benefits of interdisciplinarity lie in its capacity to interpenetrate disciplines and to provide for platforms of communication, exchange and the creation of new epistemic standards, but not on removing them. When taken into account the thesis that women scientists engage more often in cross-disciplinary activities, collaborations and problem-oriented research than their male counterparts, and hence that interdisciplinarity has a gender dimension (Rhoten and Pfirman 2006), this raises important questions about the consequences of pursuing an interdisciplinary career.

Aside from difficulties that may emerge with the scientific peer community, the landscape of research funding is often uneasy with interdisciplinary project applications. This occurs, in the first place, with regards to the question of how to assess the quality of interdisciplinary research proposals since evaluation criteria and processes are standardized to gauge disciplinary depth before intellectual breadth. Secondly, it entails the practical dimension of how to find interdisciplinary evaluators to ensure fairness in selecting winners (Mallard et al. 2009). In addition to the points mentioned above, interdisciplinary scholars are also faced with the question of what has been coined the 'citation penalty', i.e. the difficulties to be recognised and invited to publish in a disciplinary journal or adjust for the relative lower status

of an interdisciplinary journal. What might come as comfort from research on citation patterns is that some concepts actually successfully diffuse across the humanities and the social sciences as well (Crane 2008; Jacobs and Frickel 2009). Taking Bruno Latour's 'actor-network theory' as an example, Jacobs and Frickel (2009) demonstrate that the concept has appeared in a wide range of disciplinary journals such as anthropology, business, ethics, law, public health, urban studies, and, of course, sociology. Their results seem to contradict the (interdisciplinary) assumption that there is little (if any) diffusion of ideas across disciplinary boundaries. In contrast, the empirical studies conducted by Jacobs and Frickel suggest that empirical evidence of academic silos impeding diffusion is hard to sustain. One may, in fact, hypothesize that a concept needs to be well-accepted within its discipline of origin before it is adopted in another.

When taking active account of the downsides of cross-disciplinary work and collaborations at the individual, institutional and systemic level, one might easily ask why all the fuss about interdisciplinary research? And how to make it attractive to junior migration scholars at a crossroads of their professional career?

In the narrative of interdisciplinary formation provided above, contemporary incidents played a significant role. Witnessing important events in how migration impacts and transforms society—such as the German 'guestworker' admission in the 1970s, the self-imposed consequences of the 'failure of integration' jolting most European countries in the 1990s, the silent Europeanisation and urbanisation of migration policies around the turn of the millennium as well as what has been coined as the European 'refugee crises' in 2015 together with the Brexit vote in 2016—made me aware that complex questions in a global society cannot be answered using a single method or approach alone. Even if the empirical proof for the general superiority of interdisciplinary over disciplinary knowledge is still missing, as Jacobs and Frickel (2009) critically note, today's masters and doctoral students in migration studies will be, as researchers, called upon to approach and possibly answer the grand questions of migration. Subtle, or with the figurative hammer, they are going to be confronted with questions about what societies' needs are and what their respective discipline can offer to meet them. In this chapter, I argued that moving beyond the bounds of one academic discipline is beneficial to migration research because it allows us to see connections across fields. The interdisciplinary formation as a migration researcher laid out in Sect. 4.3 was characterised by striving for diversity, making international experiences and softening monodisciplinary boundaries. It came with a cost. Almost 20 years of research and academic migrancy in the field have weakened the ties to the (national) scientific peer community. Still, the question of knowledge-producing institutions like universities and colleges being able to deliver the knowledge needed to meet societies' grand challenges is a strong driver to continue pursuing the interdisciplinary path. Together with Koen Leurs and the researchers from the IMISCOE research group on ICT & Migrations, we thus continue to establish the new and highly interdisciplinary research field of Digital Migration Studies at the intersections of traditional disciplines and computational (social science) methods. If interdisciplinarity is a path, one might conclude, the journey of discovery is far from being at the end.

Annexes
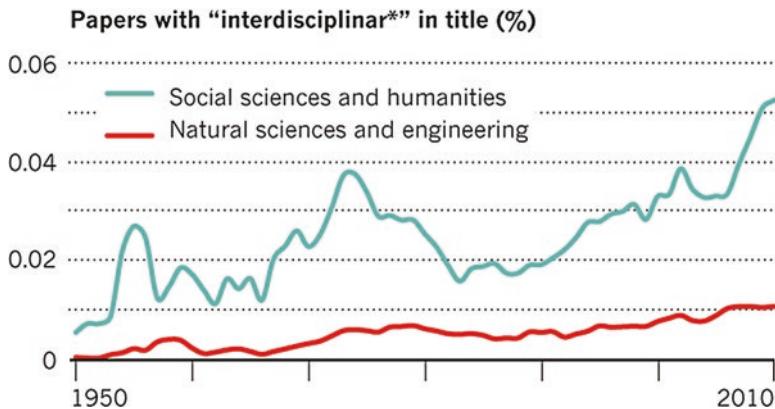
Fig. 4.3 The rise of interdisciplinary articles (Larivière and Gingras 2014)
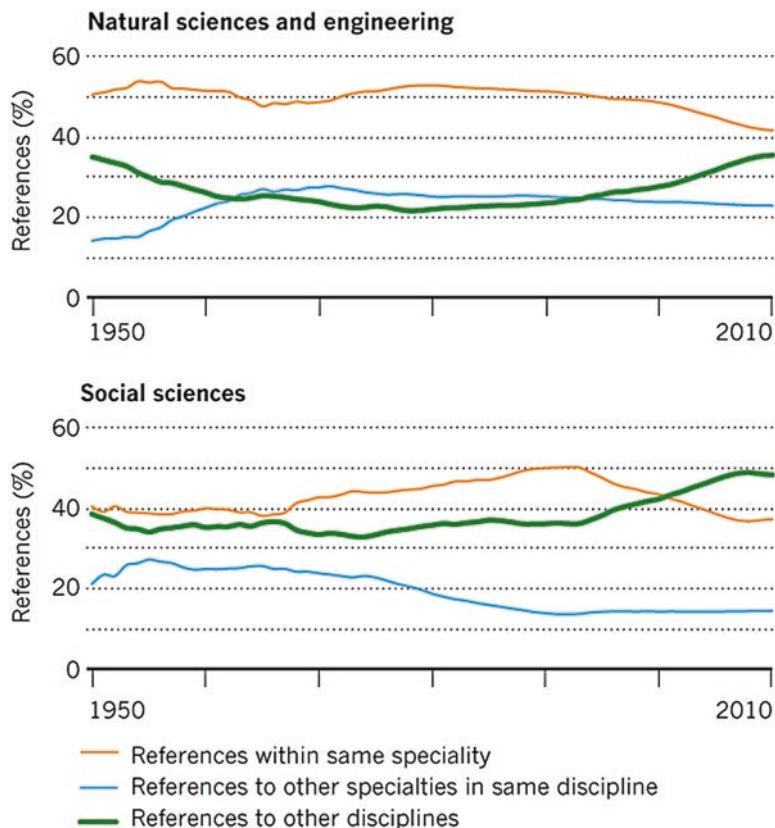
Fig. 4.4 The rise of citations outside the own discipline (Larivière and Gingras 2014)

Table 4.3 Non-relevant disciplines in which articles on 'migration research' were published, in alphabetic order (Data from Web of Science 2017)

Analysis: [excluding]:
WEB OF SCIENCE CATEGORIES: (BIOCHEMICAL RESEARCH METHODS OR LIMNOLOGY OR ENGINEERING CIVIL OR REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY OR BIOPHYSICS OR ENGINEERING CHEMICAL OR ONCOLOGY OR ORTHOPEDICS OR PLANT SCIENCES OR CELL BIOLOGY OR BIOTECHNOLOGY APPLIED MICROBIOLOGY OR BIOCHEMISTRY MOLECULAR BIOLOGY OR SURGERY OR HEMATOLOGY OR ENDOCRINOLOGY METABOLISM OR PATHOLOGY OR ARCHAEOLOGY OR CHEMISTRY ANALYTICAL OR MATERIALS SCIENCE BIOMATERIALS OR PHYSIOLOGY OR EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY OR OBSTETRICS GYNECOLOGY OR MARINE FRESHWATER BIOLOGY OR COMPUTER SCIENCE THEORY METHODS OR CLINICAL NEUROLOGY OR SOCIAL SCIENCES BIOMEDICAL OR PERIPHERAL VASCULAR DISEASE OR ORNITHOLOGY OR PHARMACOLOGY PHARMACY OR ENERGY FUELS OR CHEMISTRY MEDICINAL OR NEUROSCIENCES OR MEDICINE GENERAL INTERNAL OR INFORMATION SCIENCE LIBRARY SCIENCE OR MEDICINE RESEARCH EXPERIMENTAL OR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION OR CHEMISTRY PHYSICAL OR COMPUTER SCIENCE SOFTWARE ENGINEERING OR METEOROLOGY ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES OR PHYSICS APPLIED OR MATERIALS SCIENCE MULTIDISCIPLINARY OR COMPUTER SCIENCE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPLICATIONS OR NANOSCIENCE NANOTECHNOLOGY OR BIOLOGY OR DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY OR IMMUNOLOGY OR ENGINEERING ENVIRONMENTAL OR CELL TISSUE ENGINEERING OR OCEANOGRAPHY OR ENGINEERING BIOMEDICAL OR CARDIAC CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEMS OR GEOGRAPHY PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGY MULTIDISCIPLINARY OR PSYCHOLOGY SOCIAL OR WATER RESOURCES OR FOOD SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY OR GERONTOLOGY OR NUCLEAR SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY OR PEDIATRICS OR GENETICS HEREDITY OR TOXICOLOGY OR ZOOLOGY OR NURSING OR VETERINARY SCIENCES OR CHEMISTRY MULTIDISCIPLINARY OR RADIOLOGY NUCLEAR MEDICINE MEDICAL IMAGING OR ENGINEERING ELECTRICAL ELECTRONIC OR INFECTIOUS DISEASES OR GEOCHEMISTRY GEOPHYSICS)

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Chapter 5
Applied Political Theory and Qualitative Research in Migration Studies

Ricard Zapata-Barrero

The decision to interpret or not to interpret is not an option open to human beings (Ball 1995: 7)

If there were only one truth, you couldn't paint a hundred canvases on the same theme (Picasso 1966)

5.1   Introduction: The Benefits of Bridging Political Theory and Qualitative Research

This chapter proposes a framework for a dialogue between theoretical normative issues and empirical research in migration studies. My point of departure is that political theorists and qualitative researchers are likely to be working in different academic rooms, but within the same social science building. Apparently, they have no relationship. Roughly speaking, political theorists evaluate the application of normative liberal-democratic principles (such as the freedom of movement, the equality principle, non-discrimination, the freedom of expression, etc.) and values (justice, good governance, solidarity, humanitarianism, security, well-being), and qualitative researchers are concerned with how subjective views determine perceptions and behaviour. However, I argue that they probably have access to the same

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viewpoint, especially when they try to interpret migration and diversity dynamics. Unfortunately, their links have thus far been unexplored. I will first highlight how Political Theory (PT) and Qualitative Research (QR) both have common features in how they focus their work, how they relate to their object of study and how they produce knowledge. The evaluative character following conceptual and normative analyses is what is distinctive to PT (Pettit 1991), and the identification of themes and patterns of particular migration issues is what is peculiar to QR (Miles and Huberman 1994; Ritchie and Lewis 2003). This chapter not only underlines that there are many commonalities between them, but also concentrates on the benefits they can generate: QR provides PT with evidence-based and knowledge-based patterns, and PT provides QR with theoretically founded normative arguments. We know that PT contains many empirical assumptions and QR contains many assumed normative ideas, so the bridging benefits are complementary. In working together, they can each produce more pragmatic knowledge linking the "is" (realism) and the "ought to be" (idealism) (Carens 1996) of most arguments related to migration governance and diversity management, and develop an empirically informed critical thinking to migration studies. I am not intending to signal that qualitative researchers do not theorize or that political theorists do not engage in "real-world" issues, but rather that each area of research can benefit from the other to better perform their own tasks.

Among the variety of theoretical frameworks in QR (Anfara and Mertz 2015), I will focus on the qualitative content analysis. Broadly speaking, this means the systematic classification of the process of coding which can help identify themes or patterns through the interpretation of the content of text data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1278). Concerning PT, I will follow Applied Political Theory (APT). This particular field can be considered as the evidence-based dimension of PT (Zapata-Barrero 2004). APT is always concerned with practical viability, reliability and feasibility of normative ideas. Its main concern is not only to learn more about how to apply principles and values (for instance, the equality principle, the non-discrimination principle, solidarity and security, etc.) in a given context (Baubock 2008), such as in the workplace, in schools, or at the admission level of borders, but also to question why most of the time these principles have difficulties in guiding given practices. APT's main focus is on principles guiding particular cases (Favell 1998). In our understanding, a principle is a way to relate means and goals of a given position in order to manage an issue. It is normative when, for instance, it includes deontic operators (related to duties, permissions, and related concepts), such as *ought*, *may*, *permissible*, *obligatory*, *right*, or *wrong*, as is mostly the case in theoretical political thinking on diversity and migration issues.

From APT, we can say that there are instrumental and deontological principles. The first one emphasizes more on the importance of the means to achieve a goal; whereas the goal is of primary concern for the second one, whatever the means. In analysing migration-related conflicts, there may be actors providing solutions to the situation following deontological and instrumental principles. The respect of human rights, for instance, can be a deontological principle defended by NGOs and social movements in evaluating how state institutions control flows; and the fact that

international rules must be respected in dealing with refugees, even if they infringe basic human rights. This can be considered an instrumental principle within the same refugee's situation.

Most political theorists recognize that what distinguishes them from other social science fields is that they combine conceptual, normative and evaluative analyses (List and Valentini 2016). APT seeks to evaluate patterns within a given normative framework (justice, goodness, equality, freedom, solidarity, etc.) (Zapata-Barrero 2004). In other words, it tries to determine the good or the bad, the better or the worse, the desirable or the undesirable in analyzing conflicts and in identifying migration-related paradoxes (Cole 2000; Spencer 2003). Laegaard (2016) says that normative political theory formulates evaluative claims about the legitimacy, justice, or relative goodness of acts, policies, or institutions; and prescriptive claims about what we should do, which decision procedures we should follow, or how institutions should be reformed. In migration studies, this means, for instance, the questioning of the legitimacy of control policies, on the lack of opportunities for social mobility for migrants, how the structure of society determines migrants' life expectations, xenophobic political discourses, and religious diversity management contradictions (how to accommodate religious diversity in secular and democratic societies, for instance, Bader 2007).

A research focus that centers on deficits using the "gap hypothesis" is also well-known in migration studies, as is the so-called "policy gap" between migration policies and their outcomes (Guiraudon and Lahav 2007). In fact, migration studies develop most of their research frameworks by identifying the existing gaps between current dynamics and old structures and policy paradigms. The identification of democratic deficits and policy contradictions in diverse societies also belong, in my view, to the premises of APT, and most of the time it is presented in terms of fracture and contextual restraints that force these contradictions, especially national-based policies (Cole 2000).

There is also a "diversity gap" in public institutions, which means, in broad terms, the distance between social-diversity dynamics and the participation and representativeness of schools, police, public administrations, political parties (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017b), trade unions (Penninx and Roosblad 2000), and parliaments (Bloemraad and Schönwälder 2013). Most of the works on political participation and representation probably fall within this focus. How diversity, for instance, becomes a factor in understanding social inequalities, power relations and distrust, has centered mostly on the literature working within the inclusion/exclusion, democratic/undemocratic divide framework (see, for instance, Martiniello 2005; Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009; Bird et al. 2011).

APT generates arguments by contrasting principles and their application to present-day problems (Smits 2009; Favell and Modood 2003). And by doing so, the normative evaluation becomes critical for current practices, since it develops the resources that are needed to identify contradictions and paradoxes (White 2002: 474). For instance, in a ground-breaking work Carens (1987) identified a contradiction in liberal states: if we accept that freedom of movement is a core liberal principle, then the liberal tradition cannot accept the closure of borders. There was no way for Carens to justify the control of borders given such established liberal principles.

Similarly, with the paradox formulated by Hollifield (1992), who explained that, while there are some principles involved in sustaining some institutions that legitimize restrictive policies (national and welfare states), others produce claims for admission (market). It is then through APT that we can identify the contradictions of societies and political institutions when managing migration processes. Such paradoxes exist between security and freedom/equality, human rights and security in areas such as border policies debates, and solidarity and interest, to mention some key discussions. These conceptual frameworks are not only present at the border and at human mobility levels, but also at the incorporation and diversity accommodation levels. The different citizenship regimes, for instance, give political rights according to subjective national-interest criteria (Slim and Squires 2008). There are certain paradoxes that exist which are related to how to manage inequality of opportunities between immigrant workers and citizen workers, and the contradictions between socialization processes of young migrants and their opportunities for social mobility (Crul and Vermeulen 2003; Crul et al. 2012). What all these situations have in common is the contrast between principles and values (equality, freedom, respect, tolerance, solidarity, etc.) and their application or the fact that not all principles and values defended by each position can be applied at the same time (incommensurability).

APT places these conflicts under the umbrella of some theoretical frameworks. In migration studies, the links between unity and diversity, inclusion and exclusion, majority and minorities produce substantial debates (Boccagni 2015; Meer et al. 2016; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2015). The recent work of Hampshire (2013) probably illustrates this view. The book shows how four defining facets of the liberal state – representative democracy, constitutionalism, capitalism, and nationhood – generate conflicting imperatives for immigration policymaking, which in turn gives rise to paradoxical, even contradictory, policies.

To underline the benefits in linking APT and QR, I propose to follow a *conflict-based approach*, since I argue that it is through conflict analysis that we can unravel their potential. Subsequently, after a section presenting the specificities of conflict and how to focus a conflict-based approach, I will devote the remainder of the chapter to the three main bonding practices of the understanding function: interpreting, conceptualizing and contextualizing. The logic of research can be summarized as follows: (1) choose a problem; (2) identify the main actors as key players of the conflict; (3) identify their shared guiding-question (4) analyse their position regarding a problem through the search for arguments (answers) of the guiding question.

I propose to apply this conflict-based analysis at the meso-level (level of collective action and network relations), without neglecting the macro-level (level of public structures and state institutions) where I will frame the context. As there are a great variety of possibilities within the meso-level, I will take into account different actors working on migration issues from particular administrations, international organisations, NGOs, immigrant associations, civil society organisations, trade unions, political parties, etc. I will end the chapter with a special claim that what probably makes these bridging and bonding elements between APT and QR stronger are that they produce critical knowledge that is not only social and political, but also theoretically founded and empirically grounded.

5.2 Bridging Elements: What a Conflict Is and How to Focus a Conflict-Based Approach

The best starting point to engage with the definition of a conflict can be found in a ground-breaking essay of Simmel, when he correctly asserted:

> That conflict has sociological significance, inasmuch as it either produces or modifies communities of interest, unifications, organizations, is in principle never contested. On the other hand, it must appear paradoxical to the ordinary mode of thinking to ask whether conflict itself, without reference to its consequences or its accompaniments, is not a form of socialization. (Simmel 1903: 490)

The premise is then to consider a conflict as a factor of socialization and an indicator of social change. In broad terms, a conflict can take the form of racism in the competition for scarce resources between immigrants and citizens, between immigrants themselves and immigrant and state institutions, and then, instead of, social and economic equality, prejudices and inter-group relations can take the form of power relations, limits in participation and under-representation. A "conflict zone" can also have cultural and economic dimensions (even structural and legal dimensions) as well as different categories that are diversity-based, which can help to frame a problem: for example, religion, language, age and gender. Most conflicts related to religious pluralism, to national identity or to social rights are probably distinctive to the European approach. This may be due to the particularity of European welfare systems and European nation-building processes, or even to the history of how Europe has managed religious tensions in the past and/or the colonial past of most of its States. I can even say that what drives a category is always its conflictive dimension. Otherwise it would become meaningless (Vertovec 2015; Jehn et al. 2008), because one of the most important functions of a category in migration research is to make tensions visible. What interest us is a shared view about what a conflict is and to develop what bonds APT and QR: the view that a conflict always involves a set of key-agents, each defending their own interpretation and interest of a given fact, policy or declaration. The starting point is to frame the plurality of existing positions that surrounds a migration-related problem.

There is already a large body of literature on immigration and conflicts, which is primarily related to social movements and ethnic relations (Dancygier 2010) and now with crime and terrorism (Freilich and Guerette 2006). A common core of all typologies is the fact that it involves different agents. A conflict can arise due to a social dynamic ("boat people" in the Mediterranean or neighbourhood protests against the building of a Muslim oratory or mosque), a contested policy (prohibition of burkinis – the full-body swimwear that Muslim women wear at public beaches –, which provoked a national identity debate in France after an incident in Nice in the summer of 2016), or a reaction to a discourse (the declaration of Chancellor Merkel that multiculturalism is dead in October 2010, for instance, or the key discourse of former British Prime Minister D. Cameron on 5 February 2011 on radicalization and Islamic extremism). A conflict expresses not only disagreement between the parties, but a perception that the "other" views are a threat to the accomplishment of

one's own view. The nature of most migration-related conflicts takes the form of this disjunction. For instance, if you follow a humanitarian-based approach to refugees, the security-based approach followed by most states can be perceived as a threat. There is always a certain degree of incompatible views around a conflict, which can exacerbate the tense situations when all the parties try to impose their interpretation to the detriment of the other. This is the starting premise of radical views and critical positions. And in migration dynamics and governance, many conflicts can take this shape. It is precisely what I may call these "conflict zones" that are more productive in terms of the generation of different visions. Following mainstream conflict theories (Oberschall 1978, 2010; Gibney 2008), the fact that a disagreement implies a threat gives rise to a competitive situation around the different means/goals to solve an emerging problem. Consequently, a conflict always describes the fact that there are different positions on how to solve a given problem, and not all can be applied at the same time in their complete form. There will always be "winners" and "losers" in terms of their own narrative. One challenge when following a conflict-based approach in migration research is to determine the different forms a conflict can take (identity, race, socio-economic, legal conflicts).

The incommensurability of values and principles is consubstantial to PT (Hsieh 2016) and it implies that conflicts cannot be reduced to a common theoretical standard or measure. Of course, there can even be different interpretations around the problem-formation, and a conflict may even arise because all the parties do not always share the same definition of a migration-related problem. For instance, in diversity research, some may problematize the under-representation of migrants or citizens with immigrant background in parliaments, in political parties, or in public administrations in general, while others would not categorize this evidence as problematic (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017b). The conflictive scenario can be political or social in its origin and aftermath. From an APT's perspective, the differences are related to social/political means/goals to reach a problem-solution. Social cohesion and political stability are the usual bases to standardize normative evaluation. Of course, a conflict situation in migration studies can also have more virtual realities than "real realities", in the sense that the parties defending their own positions (means/goals) defend "their truth", even if it is constructed through a set of misinterpretations (the fear of invasion of migrants to justify their own position against a flexible border policy, this may be unfounded, but true as a fear). There can also be a set of contextual factors influencing the position of the parties. For instance, factors related to positions of power and the legitimacy within the system, as well as evidences linking the actor with the topic and the influence it can have on its process. These contextual factors situating the parties in terms of power and structure of opportunities are important to highlight since they can perfectly influence the conflict analysis. The argument here is that not all parties have similar power/strength to advocate for their own position and implement their goals. In this sense, a conflict always reflects the power relations existing in the society. This is common in the study of public opinion, of public policy processes, or even in critical dis-

course analysis, when political parties sometimes resolve virtual problems, such as the link between Syrian refugees and terrorist attacks, to gain attention. We know likewise that Islamophobia is generally a political construction, rather than a social reality (Zapata-Barrero and Díez-Nicolas 2012). For APT and QR, the purpose is not to evaluate the "truth" of a position, but to analyse the fact that there is a real conflict of positions (different views on the means and goals to solve a problem).

In this preliminary process of conflict-definition, the political theorist must try to identify the main normative arguments and existing principles involved in the topic under discussion, and link them to the interpretations produced by the different actors previously identified. One good illustration of this analysis is the Special Issue on the 'Muhammad Cartoons' case in September 2005, in *Ethnicities* (Lindkilde et al. 2009), where the principles of freedom and equality were mobilized by different actors, reflecting a multicultural crisis in Europe (national controversies over religious diversity). Several works related to multiculturalism and European identity are now penetrating the European migration debate (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2015; Kastoryano 2009) along similar lines.

The premises of a conflict-based approach are that arguments and debates produced by different actors are central to the process of conflict formation. Therefore, the main purpose would be to saturate all the potential existing positions that there are around a problem. This saturation technique is one distinctive feature of sampling in qualitative research (Bowen 2008) and it is used by researchers not only as an indicator of quality (Guest 2006), but also as a technique that hampers content validity (Fusch and Ness 2015). This is done not from abstract suppositions, but rather from concrete actors' perceptions. Interpretation formation will then be done primarily using qualitative techniques (discourse analysis, interviews, observations, focus-groups, etc. See other chapters in this volume) to generate information basically coming from the agents involved in the conflict. This is why the identification of a conflict needs to be in tandem with fixing conflict-related agents. Each actor is an interpretation-producer, and the identification of the web of interpretations through qualitative techniques is one of the first channels an APT has to develop for its normative evaluative purposes.

5.3 Bonding Practices of the Understanding Function Between APT and QR

The basic argument in this section can be stated as follows: *to understand a conflict is to assume that behind a conflict there is always a web of interpretations, a web of concepts, and a web of particular contextual circumstances, which need to be inferred through the use of qualitative techniques.* When delimiting a case, we start from a conflict, and then select a process (for our purposes, this is the basic operation of contextualising) that will allow us to frame a web of interpretations and
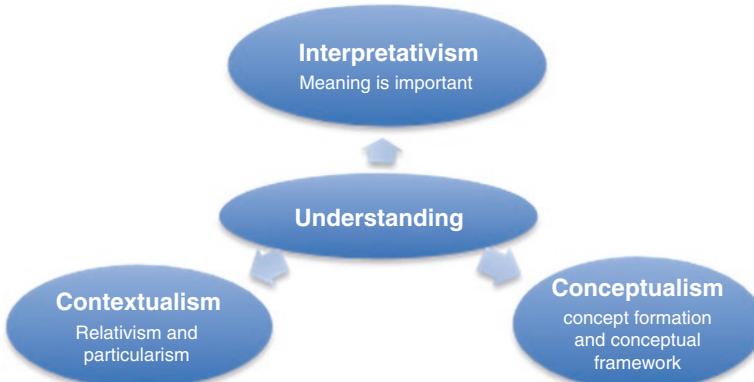
Fig. 5.1 Bonding practices of the understanding functions between APT and QR

finally define the main concepts that arise from these interpretations. Thus, there are three basic operations in the practice of understanding a conflict: interpretation, conceptualisation and contextualisation.

Graphically speaking (Fig. 5.1):

5.3.1 Interpreting: The Importance of the Meaning

"To interpret" means, literally, "to give meaning". It is futile to ask if you are for or against the use of interpretation in the field of migration research. There is no choice indeed. Paraphrasing Ball's words, "the decision to interpret or not to interpret is not an option open to human beings" (Ball 1995: 7). In fact, what bonds APT and QR is the hermeneutic method of "interpreting interpretations". As I place the analysis at the meso-level, the first purpose is to identify the interpretations given by actors or institutions involved in the conflict, and once saturated, to identify frames and themes that will inform patterns (QR), and analyse them through a normative evaluation (APT). For both, interpreting has, first of all, a cognitive significance, in the sense of accounting for how actors attribute meaning to a problem-solving situation. Interpretative research then designates those approaches that position *meaning* as a fundamental element of social (inter-) action (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). This is the basis of the *interpretative turn*, which is at the forefront of positivist methodology and is based more on facts than on meanings (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: Xi–Xiii). It also represents an *ideational turn* in QR directly linked to PT, since it also claims that ideas, values and principles influence perceptions and actions, independently of whether they are true or not, and respond to prejudices or prejudgments.

Accordingly, "interpretivists assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) can only be done through social constructions such as language, con-

sciousness, shared meanings, and instruments" (Myers 2008: 38). Therefore, the way actors and institutions "give meaning" to problems is important to analyse in order "to give meaning to the meanings". This second-order level function is then paramount. It combines ontological (how to identify a given problem) and epistemological questions (how can we know this is a conflict-related problem). An interpretative methodology holds that there is no direct, unmediated access to reality (a basic claim in interpretive epistemology), and this, in turn, means that humans interactions with their external worlds are always already mediated by the cultural contexts in which they find themselves (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2009: 34). To interpret how an actor interprets a given conflict is, therefore, a task that allows us to link QR and APT, since it also looks to identify what is distinctive between different views, not what is general and representative. In fact, what actors share and what they do not share within a given conflict is probably the primary dividing line that an interpretivist researcher must draw.

But if an interpretation is the whole recipe, what are the ingredients? Certainly, as we are in a conflict-based scenario, the process of interpreting allows us to differentiate perceptions and approaches to the conflict. This also posits that every interpretation responds to a given interest; it is not value-free. As we are working mainly at the meso-level, an interpretation can contain different actor's interests and viewpoints. An interpretation can not only include a diagnosis of a given situation, but also explanations and ways to solve the problem. Sometimes, of course, actors are not coherent among these three narrative levels (diagnosis, explanation and solutions), and the viability/feasibility nexus can also become a matter of conflict among actors. For instance, in the current refugee crisis, there are not only actors welcoming refugees for humanitarian reasons, but also other agents who are more oriented towards the feasibility and security consequences of welcoming people without limits. As Sigona (2014) advises, there are many crisis in the refugee crisis. The purpose is not to evaluate interpretations, but to understand conflict through the identification of interpretations. What we wish to develop, therefore, is how do we analyse an interpretation.

Generally speaking, actors formulate arguments around a conflict. These arguments describe the conflict, explain it and prescribe some solutions. These three narrative levels (description, explanation and prescription) can be coherent and interrelated, but not necessarily so. Through interviews, we can formulate questions related to each level of argument. Through content analysis of a party manifesto or a social report, we can also differentiate these narrative levels. Of course, these different ways of describing/explaining/prescribing could be coded and these different categories could be grouped according to different actors. The categories must be coherent among them, and can take different forms: in terms of diversity-related arguments (identity, economic, social arguments) or in terms of the given conflict (humanitarian and security arguments around the refugee crisis, for instance), as well as related to principles and values (equality, freedom, respect, solidarity, common humanity, opportunities). Likewise, the fact that some actors hold specific interpretations is dependent, of course, on their place in the political process. In general, NGOs and immigrant associations tend to have a more humanitarian view

and deontological arguments of given conflicts, up to the point that they can be at the origin of processes of change in migration dynamics. Political parties and administrations tend to have a much more security and instrumental logic of thought when describing/explaining and prescribing solutions to a conflict. However, this is not always the case. Taking a multilevel analysis, cities and states have not always had the same narrative towards the same problem, as is the case today with the refugee crisis (Glorius and Doomernik 2016). This *local turn*, or the fact that cities can be active agents producing different narratives, is a path of analysis in multilevel migration studies (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017a). These are, of course, tendencies. We know perfectly well that the power relation could explain determinate positions, as well as governmental responsibilities and inter-dependencies among actors. But this hypothesis-building reflection probably goes beyond the scope of this preliminary chapter.

5.3.2 Conceptualizing: Concept Formation and Conceptual Framework

The process of building a conceptual framework is consubstantial to the process of understanding. But concepts are not cut in stone and are never neutral, they respond to different meanings and purposes**.** Social and political controversies around a phenomenon always take the shape of a web of concepts. This is why the identification of key-concepts in a conflict is paramount. In fact, the major disputes among actors revolve around the meanings of key-concepts. For instance, Portes (2008) analyses the concept of social change related to migration studies; Kymlicka (2015) has recently offered some reflections on the concept of solidarity in diverse societies, or my recent proposal on the concept/policy framework of analysis for the emerging debate on interculturalism (Zapata-Barrero 2015).

Weber notes that progress in social science occurs through conflicts over terms and definitions (quoted by Gerring 1999: 359). The fact is that disputes about concepts often reflect deeply opposing approaches around a conflict. A long-standing concern in PT is the analysis of political concepts: freedom, equality, justice, authority, legitimacy, democracy, welfare, and so on. Each of these has been defined in numerous ways, following different democratic traditions, and PT can help us clarify the background of different interpretations. For APT, each concept has a *domain of application*. That is, a set of objects of which it is meaningful to ask whether they fall under the given concept or not. We might say, for example, that the domain of the concept *border control* is a network of actors and institutions doing/deciding border control, and even criticising how this control is done in practice.

A *conceptual framework* can be then defined as a network of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. This is not merely a collection of concepts, but, rather, a construct in which each concept plays an integral role. According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 440), a conceptual frame-

work "lays out the key factors, constructs, or variables, and presumes relationships among them". In research terms, a conceptual framework is not composed of variables or factors, but of categories within a web of concepts that maintain meaningful relationships among them. The purpose is not to provide a causal/analytical setting, but, rather, a framework to understand a given migration-related conflict. Conceptual frameworks are indeterminist in nature and, therefore, do not enable us to predict an outcome, or even to explain it. Rather than offering explanation, as do quantitative models, conceptual frameworks provide understanding. A conceptual framework does not provide knowledge of "hard facts", but, rather, a "soft interpretation of intentions" (Jabareen 2009). The construction of a conceptual framework can be a product of these interlinks between APT and QR, and a conceptual analysis may offer normative guidance (Margolis and Laurence, 2014). This focus certainly has a long tradition in PT. In seminal work, Weldom (1953) noted that most of the discussion in PT does not have a factual content, but instead deals with arguments and definitions, namely that most conflicts are nominalists. Concepts such as 'power', 'justice', 'freedom', 'humanity', 'solidarity', 'security', are "essentially contested", in the sense that there is no neutral definition, but are rather always a matter of interpretation. The different ways actors use the same concept gives rise to different conceptions. The analysis trying to infer the concept and the conceptions can help us understand how actors give meanings to their positions in a given conflict.

Following the literature on the "essentially contested concepts", there is a conceptual core or a nuclear definition, which is shared by all actors using the concept in a given conflict. Most of the migration-related concepts mix description (what is the concrete reference of a concept) with normative dimensions (behind a concept, there is always some principles and values orienting action and regulating behaviour). Likewise, behind concepts, there are not only principles and values, but also practices. The concept of "humanitarian help" or even the concept of "welcoming policy" has its meaning only through given practices.

In the analysis of a given conflict, once we have identified the main actors involved (and for us, providing different interpretations around the conflict), the inference of the key-concepts framing the conflict can help us articulate different arguments according to given guiding-questions. The conceptual map must always be constructed as being the answer of a key question. Concretely, it is a way to conceptually organize the answer through arguments. This is why the identification of the guiding-question is so paramount in the process of understanding a conflict. As Saunders et al. (2015: 3) state,

> Using the analogy of a box for the mental image or abstraction, a concept is the box in which we place things we believe to have aspects in common. The concept of organisation therefore includes a wide range of elements, such as people, structure, roles and responsibilities, learning and so on.

To draw a conceptual map of the conflict means to answer the questions: (a) what are the basic arguments and how they relate to each other so that we may understand them in conflictive terms?; (b) what are the different guiding-questions assumed or explicitly posed by the different actors around the conflict?; (c) how are the different

interpretations of the conflict organized: around which guiding-question? Of course, a conceptual framework needs to be validated, that is, once constructed it must also make sense to other researchers, and we must be able to answer the question: does the framework present a reasonable understanding for scholars studying the phenomenon? Finally, the overall purpose of developing a conceptual framework is to make research findings meaningful and generalizable.

But most concept theorists also share the idea that the purpose is always to place concepts in context, since it is the context that certainly helps to identify meanings. Conceptual analysis is a highly contextual process (Gerring 1999: 366. See also the contribution of R. King, Chap. 3 in this volume).

5.3.3   Contextualizing: Against Scepticism and Universalism

Frege famously declared in section 60 of his *The Foundations of Arithmetic* (1884) that only within complete sentences do words have meaning. This different principle of compositionality is usually referred to as the *context principle*. Contextualism is seen as a part of the methodology to understand interpretations, and in our case, migration-related conflicts. It has been a common concern both for APT and QR**.** It is consubstantial to qualitative research on migration, and the framing of political theories on diversity of cultures, since most of the arguments come from the inference on particular cases. Both share the view that behind a conflict there is a web of particular contextual circumstances, which need to be identified. As a determinant of understanding, to contextualize a conflict is to place the conflict within a process.

This contextual approach has been explicitly discussed by political theorists dealing with diversity, from the seminal claim of Carens (2004) to Bader and Saharso (2004). A similar approach can also be found in the work of Kukathas, who affirmed that "much of the political theory of multiculturalism seems to be of the contextual variety" (2004: 215), and to the most recent works of Lægaard (2014, 2016). We can also include qualitative researchers mainly introduced by cultural studies (Schwandt 2007: 43), when it is said that "interpretations are context bound in the sense that a specific situation determines the form and direction of an interpretation". Contextualism, in Miller's sense, is the position that principles of justice are not universal, but context specific (Miller 2013: 42–43). Knowledge/understanding and context have, therefore, a necessary epistemological implication. Context denotes a description of particular cases, specific facts or their particular circumstances. From an epistemological point of view, the importance of contextualism and its role in contributing to providing meaning to interpretations is also an argument both against scepticism and against universalism (Cohen 1986; De Rose 1999; Rysiew 2016), and against overgeneralizations in most political theory arguments arising from one context and translated to others (Lægaard 2016: 262).

To contextualize a conflict is to place the conflict in a specific phase of a continuum line process with other phenomena. *The process of conflict-identification cannot be done without a rigorous contextual framing technique.* "Framing" means,

first of all, to place the conflict within a given topic, and in a specific time and place. For instance, in the process of migrants' incorporation in a school, some conflicts may arise in the process of solving the problem of the concentration of migrants in a determinate school (place-frame) and moment (time-frame), or the wearing of chador by some girls in a specific school. The determination of the topic, the place and the time will indeed constitute the *contextual focus of the conflict*. Once the conflict has been *focused*, the qualitative researcher can leave "place" to the political theorist. This is why there can be two kinds of sources that APT can use to analyse interpretations and frame the conflict. Primary sources directly related to the specific context where the conflict arises (information directly produced during the conflictive situation by the main agents involved, such as public administrations, political parties, immigrant associations, trade unions, neighbourhood associations, NGOs, etc.), and secondary sources directly related to the identified topic, (for instance, the debate on religion/concentration of immigrants and the school in our example). In the previous case, large scholarly literature exists on migration studies linking diversity, religion and schooling (for example, Triandafyllidou et al. 2012). For instance, in this context, the principle of equality of access to school is at odds with the secular principle of national identity. The same conflict can then be solved according to different standards. In Catalonia, the right to go to school has priority over whatever religious considerations there may be (Generalitat de Catalunya 2015). The Islamic scarf controversy in France, however, follows another route, favouring secularism over the right to school (Arslan 2015). Or we can also take other examples where the core debate is not only about the different principles followed to solve a problem, but the ranking of them.

If context plays an important role in PT, there will always be an issue of delimiting it, since it then seems crucial to invoke what are the "relevant facts". In her most recent overview, Lægaard (2016), for instance, distinguishes different dimensions of contextualism. The "issue contextualism" refers to the process of setting out specific cases in relation to theoretical arguments, and "methodological contextualism" also means that context can be relevant to formulate/test and modify given theories. In this case, some critical scholars doubt that it can be a distinctive dimension of political theory (Kukathas 2004). As Levy (2007) notes, this methodological contextualism is very close to the "reflective equilibrium" (Rawls 1999: 18–19, 42–45), so clearly shared by Carens (2013), when he stressed that the way we compared general principles with particular cases in order to see whether the implications of the principles square with considered judgments. Parekh (2006) can also be another example of analysing particular cases such as Muslim headscarves. He states that religious symbols cannot be defined and compared in the abstract, both because they rarely have the same equivalent significance and because they acquire different meanings in different contexts and historical periods, and might sometimes even cease to be religious in nature. We need to contextualize them and compare them not abstractly or "in themselves", but in terms of the character and significance they might have acquired at a particular time (Parekh 2006: 251–252). Therefore, the substantial dimension of contextualism is that the normative dimension of general principles can only have meaning in a given context. We may even say that contex-

tualism plays the role of the mediator between a general principle and its specific treatment, and it is at the core of APT (Parekh 2006: 257).

That there is some affinity between diversity and context in PT is suggested by almost all multiculturalists and its critics (Barry 2001, for instance). Levy (2007: 12-13) notes that "when theorists write about cultural rights, they typically write with a few cases in mind". This makes sense; it is hard to imagine arguing about cultural rights without referring to any "culture". Political theorists also suffer the same criticisms as qualitative researchers regarding the limits of their generalisations. This is because they also work with very few particular cases, which makes it difficult to claim that arguments are universal. However, there is no evidence that they acknowledge how particular cases limit the applicability of their arguments (Flyvbjerg 2006). There is also a debate about European multiculturalism taking place in other contexts. This discussion was probably first raised by Modood et al. (2006), followed by other edited books such as Triandafyllidou et al. (2012). In Europe, diversity and multiculturalism are mainly centred on Muslims and religion, rather than race. Discussions of multicultural accommodation, therefore, needs to address the broader question of the relationship between politics and religion. Euro-multiculturalism reopens the issue of secularism (Bader 2007), which is probably a distinctive European way of conducting arguments that are related to religion.

5.4   Concluding Remarks

The interdisciplinary relationship between APT and QR can only be an asset for a better understanding of migratory dynamics, politics and policies. In summary, APT makes use of normative concepts and principles coming from liberal and democratic traditions (equality and freedom, for instance, but also some seminal distinctions as the public/private realm), with the purpose of interpreting processes of social and political change. In doing so, it needs to use QR for generating the empirical first-hand information inferring the basic frames, themes and patterns around a conflictive situation.

Certainly, in identifying contradictions, paradoxes and gaps between principles and reality, what makes these bridging and bonding elements between APT and QR stronger is that they produce critical knowledge that is not only social and political, but also theoretically founded and empirically grounded. It can help, for instance, to develop an evidence-based theory of security encompassing all the dimensions, including human and migrant security (Zapata-Barrero and Gabrielli 2017), as well as taking into account the views of refugees and not only the interest of States. Or, at the level of diversity management, rather than border issues, an empirically grounded analysis on how people live through social conflicts in their everyday life – such as in their neighbourhood, interacting with people from different national and cultural backgrounds. This is especially relevant for migration issues, which are always in need of more demanding objective evidence for scientific development, as well as in need of offering viable policy routes to guide social and political changes.

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Chapter 6
Epistemological Issues in Qualitative Migration Research: Self-Reflexivity, Objectivity and Subjectivity

Theodoros Iosifides

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concerns some crucial epistemological issues related to qualitative research methods in general and qualitative findings in particular, with special emphasis on migration processes. First, I discuss some central epistemological matters of qualitative social research in general, related to the complex and, sometimes, challenging or problematic relations between ontology, epistemology and methodology. Then, I proceed to the more specialized discussion of issues of interest within the context of this chapter such as:

- Self-reflectivity: the power differentials between participants and researchers during and after the research process and thus the need for constant reflexivity of the researcher. Moreover, the need to place self-reflexive elaborations and subsequent modifications at the centre of the research process and as powerful means for the evaluation and interpretation of qualitative data and findings
- Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative migration research: here, I offer a critique to the traditional hostility of qualitative methods to the notion of objectivity – which is always equated to the positivist conceptualization of it – and I propose different and alternative notions of objectivity and truth which hopefully contribute to the dismantling of the dichotomies of objectivity/subjectivity in social research in general and qualitative migration research in particular.

Finally, the chapter concludes by stressing the need for qualitative migration research to become more relevant in contemporary social relations, which are characterized by extreme injustice and inequality. Those, in my view, can be reached by

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reconciliating notions of self-reflexivity, subjectivity, objectivity, interpretation and causality in qualitative methods.

6.2 Some Ontological and Epistemological Issues in Qualitative Migration Research

In this part of the paper, I discuss some crucial issues of ontology and epistemology in social sciences in general, and in qualitative research in particular, and how ontological and epistemological commitments are implicitly or explicitly linked with methodological choices and practices. I give special emphasis in critiquing some of the most widespread ontological and epistemological accounts in contemporary qualitative research, those of interpretivism and social constructionism, and offer critical realist meta-theoretical assumptions as a viable alternative (Iosifides 2011a, 2012). Consequently, I proceed with examining qualitative research practice on migratory processes which is simultaneously interpretive *and* explanatory, and avoids both the shortcomings of positivism and the traps of relativism of any persuasion (see Hammersley 2008, 2009).

It is more than common in contemporary qualitative inquiry in its broadest sense, to be conceptualised as inherently linked with certain meta-theoretical and epistemological approaches, notably those of interpretivism and various versions of social constructionism and post-structuralism. Thus, Tsiolis (2014, p. 29), for example, directly connects qualitative methods with the interpretivist approach, adopting the extremely widespread position that the entirety of social reality is a symbolic construction. Conceptualizations of qualitative methods such as this, inherently connect qualitative and quantitative methods with certain meta-theoretical and epistemological theses and, explicitly or implicitly, reproduce the unfruitful dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research (Lim and Wieling 2004; Iosifides 2011b). I think that although it is beyond dispute that positivism and neo-positivism opt for quantitative methods while interpretivism and social constructionism for qualitative ones, the opposite is not the case and has not to be the case. There are no separate qualitative and quantitative paradigms and epistemologies, that is, there are no inherent and necessary connections and linkages of different methods to certain epistemological principles. Different methodological strategies and approaches are appropriate for the investigation of different aspects and dimensions of social reality, phenomena and processes. The latter are characterised by aspects and dimensions of more qualitative or quantitative character and can be approached by the respective methods or by their combination under any meta-theoretical scheme. The real question is how ontological, epistemological and methodological choices, either explicit or implicit, may enhance explanatory power and produce meaningful answers to research questions.

For example, the phenomenon of deportations and the socio-political processes which are associated with it, are characterized by various aspects, some of which

are more qualitative and some more quantitative in character. Thus, a quantitative researcher might be more interested in the number of deportations states are engaged with every year and to the quantification of state categorizations of wanted and unwanted migrants. A qualitative researcher might be more interested in the investigation of how social relations produce racist and discriminatory practices such as deportations, subjectification processes of deportees, the role of securitization discourses and associated material practices to migrant selectivity and so on (see, for example, de Genova 2002; Skleparis 2016a, b). Thus, I advocate a kind of qualitative methodological approach which treats qualitative data as evidence for describing, analyzing and explaining broader social realities, phenomena and processes. This kind of qualitative research practice is re-oriented from its strong linkages with certain versions of interpretivism and social constructionism avoiding their weaknesses and pitfalls (see Iosifides 2011b, 2012).

Interpretivism, or to be more precise, certain versions of it, reduce social reality to interpretations, beliefs and conceptualizations of it, denying any notion of independence of various aspects of reality from individual and collective interpretations. In this way, this kind of interpretivism adopts a "narrow" ontological position – reality is confined to agential action governed by subjective and inter-subjective interpretations and meanings. This approach derives from the epistemological thesis according to which our knowledge of reality cannot move beyond individual and collective meanings and interpretations (see Hartwig 2007). Moreover, this kind of interpretivism is totally hostile to any notion of causality in the social world and causal explanation of social phenomena and processes replacing these notions with *verstehen*, that is, understanding of meaning and meaningful actions of social agents. This is because those versions of interpretive thinking equate causality and causal explanation with the positivist conceptualization of it and implicitly adopt its positivist definition. They cannot move beyond the positivist notion of causality – a successionist, independent and distinct cause and effect view of it – and cannot imagine any alternatives to it. Thus, the rightful rejection of positivist causality leads to the abandonment of any notion of causality and causal explanation in the social world.

The above characteristics of this version of interpretivism, which is the most widespread in contemporary qualitative research, notably the exhaustion of reality to interpretations and meanings, the abandonment of causal thinking of any manner and the almost total prioritization of agential subjectivity and action are simultaneously its greater weaknesses (see Wengraf 2001; Willis 2007) *First*, they do not allow for adjudicating between more and less valid meanings, beliefs and interpretations, and they do not acknowledge misunderstandings and *false* (not just different) interpretations (Iosifides 2011a). *Second*, they dissociate understandings of the point of view of social actors from *explaining* them as well, that is from making an effort to explore the causal conditions which allowed certain beliefs, meanings and interpretations to arise and not others. And *finally*, they reduce social reality to subjective agential action, ignoring and neglecting a series of other factors and causal powers such as materiality, structural conditioning, social power asymmetries or cultural dynamics (see Elder-Vass 2010, 2012).

Now, it is extremely difficult to imagine the congruent functioning of those features of this version of interpretivism in practice, both in ordinary everyday life and in qualitative research practice. As Potter and López (2001, p. 9) point out:

> We can (and do!) rationally judge between competing theories on the basis of their intrinsic merits as explanations of reality. We do so both scientifically and in everyday life. If we could not we would not be very frequently successful in even our most mundane activities. Science, in one sense at least, is merely a refinement and extension of what we do in the practical functioning of everyday life. However, it is a refinement!

The necessity of adjudicating between different meanings and interpretations, of acknowledging the complexity and ontological depth of reality and of locating agential meaning making and action within the broader interplay of different and distinct causal powers becomes clearer if we think about some examples from migration research. For instance, conducting qualitative biographical research about immigrant lived experiences, subjectivities and interpretations within certain versions of interpretive thinking – for example, phenomenological or symbolic interactionist approaches – is associated with the explicit or implicit premise according to which interpretations and meanings of immigrants refer to and are the products of the research interactional context and not to any reality or realities "out there" (see Iosifides and Sporton 2009). Thus, it is very common that within such ontological and epistemological frameworks:

> …biographical narratives are the mere product of the communicative interaction between the researcher and the research participant in the present (that is at the time of interaction), and cannot be used in order to highlight the impacts and role of any 'real' processes (see Tsiolis 2006). Thus, a narrative of an immigrant about her trajectory of spatial and social mobility in the host country, about passing different stages and phases resulted in modified social situation and relations, have value only as 'accounts' that is as interpretations or discourses. (Iosifides and Sporton 2009, p. 105)

Of course, the consequences of such thinking are more than important. For example, they are related to the inability to account for how exactly immigrant subjectivities and meanings are formed and how they are shaped and influenced by unacknowledged and uncontrolled by individual immigrant factors such as the mostly structural process of categorizing *some* geographical mobile people as migrants. They are also related to the abandoning of efforts to formulate criteria for separating valid from invalid beliefs and interpretations. This is, of course, understandable when reality and interpretations of reality are epistemologically taken to be the same thing, but this kind of thinking leads inevitably to the position that all interpretations have equal validity and the inability to account for *false* interpretations, beliefs and meanings (see Sayer 2000; Manicas 2009). Thus, racist and xenophobic interpretations and categorizations of migrants are *false* interpretations in the sense that they are not related to any real features of the categorized groups – which, of course, exist *outside* of the interactional context that such interpretations are formed (see Carter 2000). At the same time, those beliefs have *real causal impacts* on social processes as they lead to social and material de-valuation of certain social groups and categories.

Now, let me briefly discuss social constructionism and, more specifically, the version of the so called "strong", "strict" or radical social constructionism (Elder-Vass 2012), which influences contemporary qualitative research in general and qualitative migration research in particular. This kind of social constructionism differs from interpretivism in adopting a macro perspective and in reducing human agency, subjectivity and agential action to discourse and discursive practice (see Sayer 2000; Carter 2000). This kind of social constructionism views "…reality, including social reality, as inseparable from socially constructed knowledge and its understandings" (Iosifides 2011b, p. 110). Thus, social phenomena, processes and realities are constructed by language and discourse and, epistemologically, we only have access to different discursive constructions of the social world and never to processes, social conditions and causal mechanisms, which exist and exert their influence independently of how they are thought of, conceptualized and linguistically described. Of course, it is impossible to proceed here with an adequate analysis of the whole spectrum of constructionist thinking due to space constraints and because such a task exceeds the purposes of the present chapter. Nevertheless, I can briefly discuss some serious limitations and flaws of such kind of thinking associated with an example from migration studies indicating its negative effects on qualitative research practice.

First, this kind of social constructionism views linguistic forms, discourses and discursive practices as all pervasive and as *constitutive* of social relations, practices and processes. Constructionists of this kind fail to acknowledge, or explicitly declare, that there cannot be any separation between discursive and non- or extra discursive dimensions of social reality (see Laclau and Mouffe 1985). To be more precise, they fail to acknowledge that in many cases discourse can have access to realities beyond it. Moreover, they cannot imagine or account for that discourses may be simultaneously *constitutive* of social phenomena and *constituted* by realities ontologically existent separately from them. Thus, this version of social constructionism is a kind of discursive reductionism, which do not allow for the account and researching of the whole range of social complexity and ontological depth of social reality. *Second,* radical social constructionism is based on a view of a much contested and critiqued view of language as a closed, self-referential system of signs (see Archer 2000; Potter 2001), ignoring the *referential* potentialities of language and discourse and the role of practice in social life, which always exceeds and goes beyond linguistic forms and constructions (Sayer 2000; Nellhaus 2001; Fairclough et al. 2004). *Finally*, radical social constructionism cannot avoid internal inconsistencies and contradictions and, especially, *relativism,* which undermines critical and emancipatory social research. This is because relativist thinking connects any assertion about social reality with a certain conceptual scheme, which is rendered equally arbitrary and conventional with all others and thus does not allow for any kind of access to mind-independent realities (see Hammersley 2008). But as Hammersley (2009, p. 12) rightly points out:

> To propose that there are no phenomena existing independently of our accounts of them is to put forward a knowledge claim. Yet if the validity of all knowledge claims is relative to

some socio-cultural framework or context, then this is true of this claim as well. And this means that in terms of some other frameworks or contexts it will be false.

Moreover, the inability to adjudicate between different discourses through relating them to extra-discursive realities is not resolved and continues to be a major problem even when the criteria of judging between different situations and conditions are ethical and moral. This is because relativist and discourse-reductionist thinking is all embracing and is not possible to limit it to the cognitive-epistemic realm. Thus, Hammersley (2009, p. 21) again stresses that:

> From a relativist point of view, what is morally acceptable is so only in the context of a particular cultural framework, and could well be unacceptable from other perspectives. In these terms, the implications of relativism are the same as regards both epistemic and moral standards; so why abandon the former while retaining the latter?

Now, the limitations and fallacies of this kind of thinking and its disadvantages as regards social-scientific, critical, emancipatory qualitative research practice on migration can be indicated through the example of *securitization* research. Securitization means the conceptualisation and treatment of immigrants as a threat and problem, and is connected with illegalization and criminalization of migration and the whole range of associated actions and policies against cross-border mobility by certain categories of people (see Karyotis and Skleparis 2014). Methodologically, qualitative research on the field is based on the analysis of discursive practices of various social/institutional actors and, epistemologically, it has been influenced by various schools of thought, notably the constructionist Copenhagen School speech act securitization theory (see Squire 2009). Squire (2009), following partially this line of thinking and adopting the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) declares that:

> …there exists a world and objects that are independent of discourse, but that these are only accessible through a discursive frame. When it comes to the process of analysis, such an approach is thus decidedly anti-objectivist, because it is based on the assumption that 'natural facts are also discursive facts … (Squire 2009, p. 31)

And elsewhere:

> There are thus two ontological assumptions on which an anti-objectivist theory of securitization is based. First, it rests on the assumption that any *purely* objective meaning or identity is impossible. Rather, it examines the relational processes that are inherent both to the construction of meaning and to the construction of identity. Second, it rests on the assumption that a discursive order can never be complete, or that it can never reach the point of absolute closure. (Squire 2009, p. 31)

While I agree with most of the above remarks, I think that this line of thinking is characterized by all problems of radical constructionist approach and, eventually, limits critical and emancipatory potentialities and this, of course, irrespective of the political and theoretical theses of scholars who follow it. *First*, it equates the positivist notion of objectivity with objectivity in general. It cannot imagine that there may be certain inter-subjective discourses and certain conceptual schemes and frameworks that grasp extra-discursive realities quite accurately. Actually, in many instances, the points of view of the dominated and exploited, such as those of

contemporary criminalized or illegalized migrants and the theoretical elaborations based on them, can grasp broader realities of capitalist relations across different geographical scales extremely accurately, because they derive from specific positions in social hierarchies (see Danermark et al. 2002). *Second*, it leans towards epistemic and inevitably moral relativism. For if discourses construct reality and we have access only to them and not to the extra-discursive realm, then what are exactly the criteria of choosing among securitizing and non-securitizing discourses? As we indicated above, within relativist frameworks of thinking, there are not epistemic, cognitive or moral criteria to do so. Moreover, the assertion that we resist – theoretically and, some of us, in practice as well – securitizing discourses because they result in deeper exploitation and social injustice will not do either. For, given the relativist, radical constructionist reasoning, the realities of "exploitation" and "social injustice" are also discursive constructions and are connected to certain conceptual schemes and, thus, we cannot assert that they exist *outside* those specific discourses and conceptual schemes.

Now, I propose a way of overcoming the limitations of both interpretivist and radical constructionist thinking in qualitative research in general and qualitative migration research in particular, without stepping back to positivism and neo-positivism and without losing the invaluable qualities of interpretive and constructionist approaches. This way is to pay attention to the ontological, epistemological and methodological theses of critical realism, which integrates interpretive and causal reasoning, the notion of a mind-independent reality with moderate constructionism (Elder-Vass 2010), subjectivity with a different notion of objectivity and qualitative with quantitative methodological approaches (Danermark et al. 2002; Iosifides 2011a). Understandably, I cannot elaborate on the whole richness and complexity of the critical realist approach, but I can refer to some of its most basic premises and more importantly to the ways that critical realist meta-theory modifies qualitative research practice.

Critical realism asserts that some social entities, processes and mechanisms exist independently from their interpretations and conceptualizations or from their identification as such (see Bhaskar 1993, 1998; Fleetwood 2005). This thesis indicates the importance and emphasis that realism gives on ontology. In other words, what exists in reality beyond interpretations and discursive formations. For realists then, the social world is characterized by ontological depth that is, by a complex spectrum of phenomena, processes, mechanisms and causal powers, which may be unobservable or non-acknowledgeable but real, in the sense that they exert influences and contribute causally to the production of certain social outcomes (Cruickshank 2003). Although our access to the social world and its phenomena and processes is possible only through our conceptual schemes, interpretative repertoires, theoretical schemes and discursive formations, in many instances, some of them *refer* to features which are part of the ontology of the social. This is because for realists, language has, among others, referential potentialities as well and it is not conceptualized as a closed, self-referential system, but as an open one and in constant interaction with practice and the world outside it (see Archer 2000). Moreover, critical realism places *causality* at the center of social scientific inquiry and research of any kind,

but it proposes a far more different and elaborate notion of causality from that of positivism. It is a notion of causality as generative and of causal powers as *emergent* from the relational makeup of social entities (Sayer 1992; Outhwaite 1998; Elder-Vass 2010, 2012). Thus, for critical realism, the social world is viewed as stratified and emergent, and phenomena and social processes are produced through the constant interaction between human, individual and collective agency and action, social material structures and ideational discursive formations. Within this framework, agential interpretations and reasons are causes of social action and discourses are emergent from social interaction and exert causal influences. So, critical realists deeply appreciate the role of individual/collective interpretative action and engage with discursive research and analysis (see Fairclough 2003, 2005), but they avoid agential or discursive reductionism and relativism by constantly relating them with social elements beyond them and investigating the ways in which they interact with one another.

Within the above framework, qualitative research disassociates itself from the epistemological premises of some unproductive versions of interpretivism and social constructionism and means:

> The *'art' of connecting* rather than conflating: individual meanings and perspectives with their referents and thus assessing their adequacy as well; discursive with non-discursive practices and social relations; perceptions about the character of social practices and courses of action with the real character of practices and courses of action; agential with structural-material and cultural-ideational causal properties and powers. (Iosifides 2011b, p. 17)

It is a kind of qualitative research practice that places *equal emphasis* on meaning-making and discursive practices and on the material and societal conditions which facilitate their formation, material and other interests, social relations of any kind, practices and doings of social actors. This kind of qualitative research has as its basic aim the in-depth investigation of different causal powers – agential, material-structural and cultural-ideational –, how they interact with each other and how they produce certain outcomes.

Allow me now to return to securitization research. Under critical realist premises, qualitative research on securitization, criminalization and illegalization of migration investigates securitizing discourses and associated actions within broader socio-economic and political contexts and developments and how those discourses *constitute* migration as a threat and danger and are simultaneously *constituted* by extra-discursive societal-material interests (see also King, Chap. 3 in the present Volume). It also investigates how securitizing discourses facilitate power-driven, unequal and unjust social relations in various spatial scales and how they are simultaneously facilitated by those relations. For example, the in-depth examination of how the capitalist crisis and the associated changes in the capitalist social and economic relations globally, especially after the 1990s, created the need for even cheaper, more precarious, more disciplined and without rights working force and, thus, to illegalization of migration, would be a necessary theoretical baggage in this kind of qualitative research practice (see Scripta 2013). Finally, this kind of qualitative research on securitization of migration seeks to causally explain it, to uncover

the domineering and exploitative conditions which allow its rise and persistence, to indicate how things work *in reality* about the matter and to offer prospects for changing its background conditions and resisting it.

6.3   False Dichotomies: Subjectivity, Objectivity and the Legacies of Positivism

In this section, I offer some brief thoughts aiming to the dismantling of the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity in qualitative methods, using examples from migration research (Sayer 2000; Iosifides 2011b). I consider this dichotomy an unnecessary remaining of positivist thinking and offer a critical realist alternative of both subjectivity and objectivity, which can be combined together. For classical positivists, human subjectivity is excluded from the scientific endeavors of discovering absolute truths and achieving objectivity (see Leontidou 2005). Thus, the positivist notion of objective knowledge presupposes an "Archimedean position" or a "God's eyes view" of reality (Iosifides 2011a), which is an impossibility as all knowledge is always conceptually mediated. Moreover, objectivity and truth for positivists are equated with and restricted to transparent correspondence of thought to sense experiences and to the formulation of universal, ahistorical "laws" (see Andriakaina 2009). Interpretivists and social constructionists rightly reject these notions, but they usually adopt the position that objectivity in social scientific inquiry is impossible. In other words, they endorse the positivist definition of objectivity as the only available and possible, and then reject both this definition and objectivity in general. Thus, they restrict reality either to subjective and intersubjective meanings and interpretations or to discursive formations and practices, and thus adopt, either implicitly or explicitly, relativist and conventionalist ways of thinking (see Hibberd 2005).

Critical realism offers a radically different notion of objectivity and stresses that concept mediation of knowledge and reality does not preclude truth and objectivity. As Moya (2000, p. 12) asserts:

> (1) all observation and knowledge are theory mediated and that (2) a theory-mediated objective knowledge is both possible and desirable. They replace a simple correspondence theory of truth with a more dialectical causal theory of reference in which linguistic structures both shape our perceptions and refer (in more or less partial and accurate ways) to causal features of the real world. And they endorse a conception of objectivity as an ideal of inquiry rather than as a condition of absolute and achieved certainty.

Now moving at the level of social actors and relations, critical realist ontological and epistemological approach views subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as *integral parts* of reality. So, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity can be approached in a way that valid and objective (although fallible) knowledge about them is possible. Moreover, subjective and inter-subjective beliefs, meanings and interpretations of reality and social experiences may vary in how they accurately describe realities

beyond them. Qualitative research has an invaluable role and can contribute significantly to the assessment of accuracy of such meanings and interpretations as both more or less accurate interpretations play a vital role in social change (or stasis). For realist qualitative researchers then, subjective and inter-subjective meanings and interpretations along with perceptions connected to personal and social identity are treated as theories about reality, which can be assessed for their truthfulness and validity (Iosifides 2011a). Thus,

> …there is a cognitive component to identity that allows for the possibility of *error* and of *accuracy* [emphasis added] in interpreting the things that happen to us. It is a feature of theoretically mediated experience that one person's understanding of the same situation may undergo revision over the course of time, thus rendering her subsequent interpretations of that situation more or less accurate. (Moya 2000, p. 83)

This is extremely crucial for researching migration processes and phenomena, as the role of certain interpretations and discourses in mystifying reality is vital. Some beliefs, subjective meanings and public discourses have to be necessarily and *objectively false* in order to contribute to the reproduction of *objectively real and true* conditions of domination and exploitation. For example, racism of any form and type and form, either every day, institutional, collective or political, is one such set of interpretations and discourses which tend to mystify reality and obscure real relations of domination and exploitation. Combined with the needs of capitalist accumulation in different spatial scales and with political efforts for popular mobilization through scapegoating and systematically devaluating certain categories of people, racist ideas, beliefs, interpretations and discourses are contributing significantly to the production and reproduction of power inequalities and injustice. As such, realist qualitative researchers pay acute attention to them and conceptualize them as utterly wrong and false and not as just different constructions of reality derived from self-referent signification systems (see Carter 2000). Moreover, researchers of this kind take into serious account the complexity of subjectivity formation and re-formation in time and *causally connect* subjectivity, inter-subjectivity, experiences and social positions of social actors (see Moya 2011; Walby 2009). They also take immigrant subjectivities and subjectivities *about* immigrants very seriously, but ontologically/ epistemologically and methodologically they move beyond them and they do that by assessing their adequacy, by causally linking them to realities outside them and by thoroughly investigating their role in either resisting or reproducing complex, intersecting social inequalities of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic level, migration status and so on (see Walby 2007).

6.4 Power and Reflexivity in Qualitative Migration Research: The Case of Methodological Nationalism

In the next two sections, I proceed by discussing some more specialized and specific issues concerning qualitative migration research, placing them within the lens of critical realist meta-theory. In this one, I discuss issues of power differentials between researchers and research participants in qualitative migration research and

I extend this beyond the "classic" preoccupation about relations between researchers and research participants in the field. I give special emphasis on the dominant way that social sciences treat this "special" kind of mobility called migration, and the repercussions of the colonization of social scientific conceptualizations of migration by state categories. In other words, I raise the issue of methodological nationalism that is equating "societies" with nation-states and viewing migratory movements as exceptional and abnormal (see Glick Schiller 2007). I also stress that methodological nationalism poses one of the greatest dangers in researching migration today, due to its un-reflexive and power-driven character (see also Barglowski, Chap. 9 in the present Volume).

In migration research, matters of relations between the researcher(s) and research participants, reflexivity and positionality are of great importance, as they are part of or influence significantly the theoretical and conceptual frameworks at hand, the ways that data are collected and produced and the approaches within which findings are interpreted and presented (see Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Iosifides 2008). Qualitative researchers who investigate migration are or have to be extremely sensitive about such issues, as they are usually more intensely involved with the lives of people who, in most cases, found themselves in more disadvantaged positions in social hierarchies. Thus, matters of power differences between researcher(s) and research participants and a constant preoccupation with the positionality of the researcher(s) (that is, with the role of points of view, conceptual frameworks and theoretical categories) have to be at the center of qualitative inquiry. As migration researchers, being reflexive about our own positions in social settings, our own thought categories, beliefs, emotions, points of view and conceptual schemes, has to be an explicit and vital part of our research endeavors. Nevertheless, reflexivity and positionality can be exercised within different ontological and epistemological frameworks and can lead to different outcomes. Within certain versions of interpretivist and constructionist thinking analyzed in the previous section, reflexivity and positionality lead to the adoption of the idea according to which it is impossible to move beyond the specificities of various positionalities and points of view in order to discover how things work in reality (see Sayer 2000). On the contrary, for the critical realist meta-theoretical approach, reflexivity and positionality are not in contradiction with the goal of discovering the workings of real causal powers, but a basic part of it. Critical realists stress that *some* positions and *some* conceptual frameworks are more privileged than others in guiding researchers to explain social phenomena and processes more adequately (see Danermark et al. 2002).

> The relation between theories/theoretical concepts and the properties of objects the concepts are referring to is not unambiguous and simple; nor is it arbitrary. All theoretical descriptions of reality are fallible, but not equally fallible. Theories and theoretical concepts are developed in relation to the experiences we obtain when we use them to understand reality. (Danermark et al. 2002, pp. 116–117)

In this point, critical realism shares notions of objectivity with other approaches, notably this of standpoint epistemologies and "strong objectivity" (see Harding 1993).

Thus, the task of qualitative researchers influenced by critical realism is, through intense reflexive work, to find and adopt the adequate position and conceptual framework in order to explain phenomena and processes. I think that in the case of migration studies, this reflexivity work has to be done for the research field as a whole. I mean that, as qualitative migration researchers, we have to be reflexive about the conceptual and theoretical categories we use in order to study migratory phenomena, with the goal to adopt those frameworks which illuminate migration realities more truthfully and adequately. This presupposes abandoning the so called methodological nationalist way of thinking about and theorizing migration and avoiding thinking and theorizing cross-border mobility through the lens of state and other dominant categories, discourses and interpretations (Amelina et al. 2012). It also presupposes the adoption of the perspective of the subaltern, the dominated and the exploited and its refinement to theoretical schemes, which can explain contemporary migratory phenomena and simultaneously critique underlying real mechanisms of exploitation, domination, exclusion and injustice. In other words, it presupposed the engagement with what critical realists call "explanatory critiques":

> Explanatory critiques entail proving certain ideas or beliefs to be false - that is, to be antithetical to the interests of their holders -, certain social relations to be exploitative and asymmetric and, in many instances, proving the necessity of holding false ideas for the reproduction of exploitative or oppressive social relations (Sayer 2000). (Iosifides 2011a, p. 46)

One such false idea, which is highly influential in contemporary migration studies, is methodological nationalism. Methodological nationalism *"…is an ideological orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states. Nation-states are conflated with societies and the members of those states are assumed to share a common history and set of values, norms, social customs, and institutions"* (Glick Schiller 2007, p. 43). Moreover, methodological nationalism entails the naturalization of notions of "nationhood", "national belonging", "cultural, national and ethnic identities" and contributes to nationalizing and ethicizing social relations masking power and class relations and antagonisms, as well as obscuring their nature under global capitalism. Methodological nationalism guides research practice, either quantitative or qualitative, which takes dominant categories and conceptualizations as given and natural and researchers influenced by it investigate social reality, including migratory phenomena and processes, *as if* state and national conceptualizations were true.

In migration related research, methodological nationalism leads or enhances

> (1) the homogenization of national culture (2) the homogenization of migrants into ethnic groups – seen as bearers of discrete cultures – who arrive bearing cultural, class, and religious differences, and (3) the use of national statistics organized so that ethnic difference

appears as an independent variable in the reporting of levels of education, health status, degrees of employment, and level of poverty. In other words, as they are currently constituted, migration studies and their ethnic studies counterparts contribute to the reinvigoration of contemporary nation-state building projects… (Glick Schiller 2007, pp. 43–44)

Although it is impossible here to review the extended literature on the matter, it has to be noted that, for critical realism, methodological nationalism is the false perspective to view and research migration and related phenomena and processes. Its falsity lies in the fact that it obscures the workings of real causal powers whose interaction produce certain categories of people who are described, labeled and treated as migrants.

Qualitative research can significantly contribute towards overcoming methodological nationalism due to its inherent characteristics, which are related to its intensive engagement with the lives of real people, real social relations and their interactional structural and cultural outcomes (Iosifides 2011b). *First*, the very term "migration" has to be used, discussed and analyzed with caution. Having in mind that no term is neutral, it has to be noted that "migration" is usually used to describe and give special meaning to spatial mobilities of certain *poorer* categories of people. Thus, "migration", through its whole baggage of conceptualizations about *management*, *containment*, *discipline* and *control* (Geiger and Pécoud 2012; Georgi and Schatral 2012), tends to obscure unequal and power-driven social relations and to naturalize the fact that, for some people, freedom of movement is demonized and, for others, is celebrated and encouraged. *Second*, qualitative migration research is valuable in the depth investigation of how boundaries between people are constructed and become effective and how unequal power relations are enhanced and reproduced through them (see Wimmer 2008). Qualitative migration research inspired by critical realism integrates the study of agential interpretations of any kind, of discursive formations, and of social practices and social relations with the aim to discover *real generative mechanisms* which produce contemporary migratory processes. The avoidance of methodological nationalism entails the focusing on the real character of social relations that exist independently of their interpretations and discursive descriptions and can be grasped under the adequate interpretations and discursive formations and, especially, those that are characterized by asymmetry and inequality. As Glick Schiller (2007, p. 62) asserts: *"…migration studies with its rooting in the concerns of nation-state building projects have not only failed to address global political economy but also have not examined its relationship to several kinds of power including that which racializes and subordinates regions, populations, and localitie*s". Finally, there is a necessity of the modification of the usual units of analysis in migration studies, such as naturalized ethnic or national groups towards the positioning of people in various structural, class and other power hierarchies (see Wimmer 2007; Weiss and Nohl 2012).

6.5   Concluding Remarks: Towards a More Relevant and Empowering Qualitative Migration Research Practice

Finally, the concluding part of the chapter concerns some very brief thoughts regarding a kind of qualitative migration research which focuses on real causal processes of domination and exploitation across different spatial scales, does not become an integral part of state or other "migration management" policies and empowers both migrants and non-migrants social action towards social justice. In my view, this kind of qualitative migration research practice is better achieved under the critical realist meta-theoretical premises, because it integrates several crucial strengths and advantages, notably a *critical stance*, *avoidance of relativism* of any kind, *relevance* and *explanatory potential*.

First, adopting a critical stance of social relations of power inequality, exploitation and domination is extremely important for contemporary migration researchers who reject methodological nationalism and state-centered lens of viewing the social world. Employing qualitative methods which are inherently connected with getting closer to reality (see Wengraf 2001) contribute significantly to the enhancement of this stance.

Second, avoiding relativizing real relations of inequality, exploitation and domination along with the real causal powers which produce and reproduce them reinforce critical views and ideas and helps migration qualitative research to be relevant and make its points. This time, its relevance and utility does not concern states, administrative agencies or intergovernmental organizations, but movements and collectivities aiming to resist power asymmetries, fight anti-immigrantism (Doty 2003) and achieve freedom of movement for all people (Hayter 2004). *Finally*, this kind of qualitative migration research practice is explanatory as well. Apart from collecting and producing material on immigrant experiences, interpretations and actions, it seeks to explain migratory-related processes by accounting for certain causal generative mechanisms which lead to certain outcomes (Iosifides 2011a).

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Part II
Building a Qualitative Research Design

Chapter 7
Qualitative Migration Research: Viable Goals, Open-Ended Questions, and Multidimensional Answers

Ewa Morawska

In the first part of this chapter, I review the epistemological premises informing qualitative investigations of international migration; identify the main research goals that can be pursued through this approach; briefly note relevant strategies of data collection and analysis; and suggest how best to present the results of qualitative studies**.** Drawing on the framework thus created, in the second part, I offer examples of the kinds of questions raised through the standard methods of qualitative investigation (interviewing, observation, and document analysis) in the examination of some of the existing and emerging problems that currently preoccupy scholars in the field of international migration studies. They include the decision-making process of potential cross-border travellers, immigrants' integration into the host society, and the role of super-diversity/multiculturalism in immigrants' everyday lives.

7.1   The Main Premises, Goals, and Strategies of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research in the social sciences in general and, of concern here, in investigations of international migration, traditionally aims to reconstruct people's everyday experience, both the inner and outer aspects of it, with the meanings those social actors attach to their situations and pursuits. It pays heed, in other words, to what the Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki (1882–1958), under whose guiding star I was trained in social research methods at the University of Warsaw, called the "humanistic coefficient". Because social facts are created by social actors, Znaniecki

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insisted, the former can only genuinely be understood from the perspective of the latter (Znaniecki 1934). In order to take the humanistic coefficient in any given context into account researchers need to assume the perspective of the people whose lives are being examined. In short, they need what in the German tradition of *verstehende* or interpretative sociology is described as *Einfühlung*, empathy – quite literally the ability to sense what is going on in another person's mind or heart. Sociological research in the *verstehende* tradition represents a micro-level type of investigations into the social world conducted, however, with what C. Wright Mills referred to as the sociological imagination or, in his words, "the vivid awareness of in the relationship between personal experience and the wider world" (1959, p. 7). Qualitative research approaches the meaningful social action—the core concern, on Max Weber's account (1968), of sociological analysis – as inherently polymorphous and constantly assuming new forms as it unfolds, all of which should ideally be reflected in the collected data and its interpretation. Consequently, qualitative researchers are natural bricoleurs, "Jacks (and Jennies) of all trades", mixing and blending and, where necessary, reconfiguring a diverse range of methods and relevant insights (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, pp. 3–4) to render complex, multidimensional, and frequently "fuzzy" assessments of the examined situations. While this methodology of mixing, blending, and reconfiguring compounds the inherent diversity of the dynamic everyday functioning of social worlds and the human actors who (re)create them, qualitative analyses can, as I will argue, nevertheless facilitate the systematic pursuit of a variety of research goals and significantly expand our understanding of the social worlds we explore.

Qualitative research also focuses on the centrality of what Znaniecki (1934) called the "kinetic" or processual nature of social phenomena, which requires analytical attention to the temporal dimension of human lives. In his now classic essay, "Historical Sociology and Time" (1992), the American historical sociologist Ronald Aminzade distinguishes four dimensions of time whose effects should be considered by researchers approaching their object of study as processual rather than fixed: duration, pace, trajectory, and rhythm. Duration is relevant, for example, when the varying lengths of time an immigrant may have spent in the host country without authorization are likely to affect his or her prospects of mainstream employment. The differential impact of immigrants' sporadic vs. frequent journeys to their home country on the scope of their integration into the host society is a question of pace. For immigrants who came to the host country as children and completed their education there before entering the job market, the processes of socioeconomic integration are likely to differ markedly from those of their fellow nationals who arrived as grown-ups with occupational specializations acquired in the home country. These are questions of trajectory. The (ir)regularity with which immigrants experience everyday racial or religious rejection and discrimination, and the impact of that experience on the pace of their integration is a matter of rhythm.

Founded on the premise of the multi-dimensional and multi-form nature of human activities and the social world they create, which informs qualitative social science research, qualitative investigations render the representations of the analysed phenomena as inherently diverse, complex, and often "fuzzy". Adding to the

amorphousness or under-determinacy of the outcomes of qualitative investigations are intended and unintended misrepresentations produced by the subjects of our investigations as well as the omissions and biases of the researchers themselves. Even with the critical assessment of the examined sources and the researcher's self-reflexive account of his/her impositions on the collected evidence (for good discussions of the what and how of self-reflexivity, see Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Lofland and Lofland 2006; Alvesson and Skoldberg 2012; Iosifides 2011, 2018), the representations of the social world and its human actors produced through qualitative investigations are, as most of the contemporary practitioners of this approach agree, unavoidably "gappy" and incomplete. Yet while the qualitative approach may not produce perfect, mirror-like representations of the phenomena it investigates, its practitioners are by no means abandoning the standards of scholarly practice. Rather, they are intellectually comfortable with their commitment to achieving the greatest possible measure of verisimilitude or the closest achievable approximation of their objects of study (this case has been persuasively argued, for instance, by Hammersley 1995, Atkinson 1990, and Madison 2012). Well executed qualitative studies, in our case of issues related to international migration, which achieve a high measure of verisimilitude generate rich, multi-layered, and nuanced accounts of the ways in which various aspects of the everyday immigrant experience evolve and unfold. The main strength of the qualitative approach in the social sciences lies in its ability to render more accurate representations of the actual life-worlds of those who inhabit them than purely quantitative surveys and analyses can.

As they become acquainted with the state of knowledge in the specific field of their investigation, the researchers should decide on the specific goal(s) that will guide their data collection and analysis. Charles Ragin (1994) has specified seven purposes informing social-science research: (i) identifying general patterns and relationships; (ii) testing and refining theories and guiding concepts; (iii) making predictions; (iv) interpreting culturally or historically significant phenomena; (v) exploring diversity; (vi) giving voice; and (vii) advancing new theories. On Ragin's account, qualitative research is conducive to the pursuit of three of his seven possible goals: the interpretation of culturally or historically significant phenomena, the exploration of diversity, and the lending of a voice.

In migration studies, the interpretation of culturally or historically significant phenomena is important, for instance, in assessing the transnational engagements of present-day immigrant-members of racial minorities in Europe, which are significant for their individual and collective self-esteem, or their likely impact on the immigrants' future integration into the mainstream of the host societies.

The qualitative exploration of diversity encompasses the probing of variations within phenomena or of deviations from patterns generally acknowledged in the relevant field of study. This might concern, for example, gender and/or racial sub-varieties of the segmented assimilation modes generally governing immigrants' integration into the host society, or a sustained transnational investment of immigrants' grandchildren in their forbears' home country, which does not conform to the more usual gradual inter-generational weakening of this kind of engagement.

The desire to lend a voice informs projects, which examine groups or phenomena that have been un(der)investigated and about which we know little or nothing at all – the most recent Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan refugee settlers in Europe, for example, have not yet attracted much attention from social scientists. Often it is also the guiding principle in studies which aim to add more and/or new information to the already-existing stock of knowledge regarding particular groups or issues.

The testing and refining of theories and guiding concepts, by contrast, Ragin does not consider a suitable goal for qualitative research. Here I would disagree. In the case of international migration studies, the capacity of qualitative research to facilitate the testing and refining of theories and guiding concepts is well demonstrated, for example, by no fewer than five essays in the volume, *Outsiders No More? Models of Immigrant Political Incorporation* (2013), edited by Jennifer Hochschild et al. In our contributions, John Mollenkopf, Rafaela Dancygier, Monica McDermott, Michael Jones-Correa, and myself, each in our own way, challenge as too narrow and "ossified" and therefore revise the accustomed understanding of the ways in which immigrants are incorporated politically into the host society.

Alongside these four research goals qualitative research also has the potential to generate new research questions. The fieldwork conducted by Parvaneh Astinfeshan, a PhD student of mine at the University of Essex, is a case in point. Her research was originally devoted to the acculturation of sexual practices among Iranian immigrant couples – a surprisingly under-investigated dimension of newcomers' integration deserving of further study of the kind that lends a voice. The information her initial fieldwork generated led her to engage in a second round of data collection on a broader issue, namely, the continuities and changes in patterns of intimacy among these newcomers. Her conference papers on her findings have, in turn, inspired follow-up investigations of the mechanisms and challenges of acculturation in the field of intimacy and sexuality encountered by other immigrant groups.

All five research goals can, of course, be combined in a single project. Alongside the determination of the research goals that any given qualitative research project can hope to pursue, three more general issues need to be taken into consideration in the planning and execution of qualitative analyses. Firstly, one needs to decide whether to undertake a single- or multiple-case investigation. Most qualitative research projects are single-case studies – focusing, for example, on the mechanisms triggering the cross-border migration of Bangladeshis to the United Kingdom, or the civic-political acculturation of Polish migrants in Berlin who have settled in that city since their country joined the European Union in 2004. Single-cases studies can serve the pursuit of any of the named research goals and, if well executed, produce useful scholarly insights. Comparative multi-case investigations are more time- and energy-consuming, but also more rewarding in terms of the knowledge they generate. They can aim for a high level of complexity by including as many dimensions of the examined phenomena as possible. Alternatively, one can take the opposite approach, which tends to be more feasible for an investigator whose time and means are limited, and follow a simple (or even deliberately simplified) setup: a comparison of similar actors in different settings looking, for example, at the trajectories of acculturation of Indonesian immigrants in Amsterdam, Hamburg, and

London; or of different actors in a similar setting looking, for instance, at multicultural orientations and everyday practices of Serbians, Turks, Poles, and Romanians in Vienna. They can be guided by one or more of the identified research goals (for an excellent discussion of different kinds of comparative analyses in qualitative investigations, see Charles Ragin's *The Comparative Method* [1987]). By way of encouragement to early career researchers let me note that qualitative comparative research can also be based on an original single-case investigation of one's own set in relation to comparative material gathered from other cases already covered in the secondary literature (provided, of course, that a sufficient amount of such evidence relevant to one's own topic exists).

The second consideration concerns the question of how to make sense of the evidence collected in qualitative investigations. A commonly used approach in qualitative research, which I recommend to the readers' consideration, holds that one can best answer the question of *why* social phenomena come into being, change, or persist, by demonstrating *how* they do so, that is, by showing how they have been shaped over time by various constellations of changing circumstances (Abrams 1982). In order to show how/why a social phenomenon evolves in a certain direction – rather than another – and assumes certain specific characteristics – rather than others – qualitative researchers reconstruct the constellation of specific circumstances that shaped these particular developments. Assuming we agree that the central focus of sociology – perhaps of the social sciences in general – lies on the ways in which society shapes individuals and individuals, in turn, shape society, an elegantly executed analysis of qualitative data should account for the relevant macro- and meso-level societal influences by placing the orientations and activities of human actors within their immediate sociocultural surroundings centre stage. This brings me back to C. Wright Mills's emphasis on the need to bring "sociological imagination" to the interpretation of qualitative data.

In applying this precept in my own ethnographic research on international migration, I have derived the greatest cognitive gain from a multi-step assemblage of the constellation of factors, which shape the development(s) I am examining. I begin by identifying the macro-level (global, regional, national) circumstances – technological, economic, legal-political, sociocultural – that set the limits of the possible and the impossible within which individuals define and evaluate their situations, set their goals, and make decisions about the appropriate action/non-action. Next, I locate the relevant factors at the meso- (migrants' towns/villages and local communities) and micro-level (families and friends) that impact their preferences and actually available choices. I then reverse the direction of my analysis and look at the ways in which individuals creatively negotiate their situations in (re)defining their goals and pursuing their purposes, thus sustaining or, over time, transforming the broader economic, political, and sociocultural contexts in which they act.

The third consideration concerns the way in which the results of qualitative research are presented. Regardless of the specific research goals any given qualitative investigation may pursue – be it the interpretation of culturally or historically significant phenomena, the exploration of diversity, the lending of a voice, the testing or refining of existing theories and concepts, and/or the formulation of new

research questions – and no matter whether it does so on the basis of a single-case or comparative analysis, the propositions resulting from qualitative research are best phrased in "soft" terms that emphasize the likelihood of any given conclusion rather than resorting to apodictic statements. Given the multi-faceted, fluid nature of the world we live in, and which qualitative investigations are to account for as faithfully as possible, the soft language of the propositions formulated in this genre of research is, in my opinion, yet another strength of this approach, not a limitation.

Focusing on three standard methods of qualitative research – interviewing, observation, and document analysis – I now want to illustrate how the premises governing forms of research in the social sciences guided by the "humanistic coefficient" work themselves out in practice by pointing to the sorts of questions we ought, to my mind, to be asking and, by implication, to the sorts of answers qualitative research on international migration accommodates.

7.2   Questions and Answers in Qualitative Research on International Migration: Illustrations from the Current and Emerging Problem Agenda in the Field

I have arranged my suggestions concerning the research questions I think we ought to be asking – and the caveats investigators, to my mind, need to bear in mind regarding the answers – by themes that feature among the existing and emerging problem agenda in migration studies: the contexts and considerations that shape migrants' decisions to undertake cross-border travel; the integration of immigrants into the host society; and the issue of super-diversity/multiculturalism in the everyday experience of immigrants. Given the importance of the decision to migrate or not to migrate for the subsequent life experience of those who move and those who stay, it is surprising how little attention qualitative researchers have paid to this issue (in marked contrast to the extensive quantitative examination of international population flows); hence my decision to focus on this theme. The integration of immigrants into the host society is a well-established and highly elaborated subject of research in migration studies and will therefore receive the most attention in this section. The issue of super-diversity/multiculturalism in the everyday lives of immigrants, by contrast, merits attention as the field of research that, in the course of the last decade, has made the most conspicuous advances in the field of migration studies, the recent increase in nationalist and exclusionary sentiments in several host countries notwithstanding.

I will not consider questions calling for simple "yes" or "no" answers – "do you hold the citizenship of your host-country?" etc. – and focus instead on inquiries that probe multi-dimensional aspects of the immigrant experience and are likely to be characterized by a range of diverse and often mutually attenuating or contradictory components. It is in the exploration of these constellations, after all, that qualitative

research can make its core contribution. I will not engage, either, in the discussion of issues involved in critically assessing the reliability and validity of information gathered through interviewing, observation, and document analysis. The accepted procedures for dealing with these problems are well documented (see Bryman 2004, Ch. 18; also, Hammersley and Atkinson 2003, Ch. 5; on the critical assessment of official statistics, see Prewitt 2004).

7.2.1 The Contexts and Considerations Shaping Migrants' Decision-Making Regarding Cross-Border Travel

In my long practice as an immigration ethnographer I have benefited from initiating my investigations by asking my interviewees to narrate their life stories (on oral histories as a good method of gathering information in qualitative research, see Thompson 1978; Denzin 1989; Plummer 2001). This tends to put the interviewees at ease and provides researchers with valuable information regarding the basic facts about, and important events in, the respondents' lives. In keeping with the premises of interpretative sociology, it also gives room to the subjects' own interpretations of their life experiences, in our case, of the process that led to their decision to leave their home country and their choice of destination. Basic factual information aside, these accounts also offer initial insights into the relative significance of relevant events and circumstances for the decision to emigrate, and the sequence in which they impacted and shaped that decision. They can also reveal possible class, gender, and other socio-demographic differences, which then need to be followed up with the help of other sources and alternative research methods.

The individuals' accounts of the phase in which they prepared for migration should also be checked carefully for their narratives of how they performed social roles and adhered to, or deviated from, the expectations and obligations associated with those roles. Attention to the ways in which the individuals position their (e) migration-related activities in the context of their (trans)local social relations is also well worth the researchers' effort. Did they undertake those activities in inter-action with others and against the backdrop of a general consensus, or did they proceed largely or in part on their own and met with opposition in their families and social circles, and what does this tell us about the hold of their social group over its members? (For a good qualitative account of migrants' experiences based on life stories told by Punjabi travellers to Europe, see Varghese and Rajan 2015; on the decision-making process among British-born Cypriots "returning" to Cyprus, see Teerling 2015).

The immigrants' life stories that open the investigation can take the form of an unstructured interview, allowing the narrators to follow their own priorities and concerns. Subsequent interviews may be conducted as semi-structured or structured face-to-face conversations (on different types of qualitative interviews and their respective advantages and limitations, see Denzin and Lincoln 2008; O'Reilly 2005). My preferred approach is a combination of both. I conduct these interviews

with pre-prepared general themes in mind that correspond to the focus of my research and initially allow the respondents to elaborate on each theme on the basis of their perceptions of, and feelings about, these issues, before then proceeding to ask more specific questions on the matters in hand, some of which I have formulated in advance and some of which emerge over the course of the interview. Given that, like all important steps in life, decision-making about whether and, if so, where to migrate commonly involves ambivalence and contradictory sentiments and/or reasons, and that the underlying purpose of qualitative research is to reconstruct these complexities behind people's actions/non-actions as closely as possible, the investigator should pay careful attention to the indications of such indecision/hesitations in the respondents' life stories.

For researchers who intend to conduct their investigations in emigration regions and who are sufficiently familiar with the language and cultural codes guiding the conduct of those whose behaviour they want to study, observation is a good way of supplementing the information gathered through life stories and follow-up interviews (for the basic know-how regarding access to observation sites, different forms of observation, and ways of taking field notes, see Atkinson et al. 2001; Johnson 1975; O'Reilly 2005). Issues researchers are likely to want to focus on when undertaking such observation include the juxtaposition and evaluation of migration and non-migration in conversations and the underlying opinions and arguments; the ways in which the success or failure of returned migrants are referenced; and the extent to, and ways in, which migrants who have already reached their destination are treated as reliable sources of information and support by those contemplating migration themselves. In gauging the influence exerted by returnees on the decision of individuals to stay or migrate, their outward appearance, demeanour, material standard of living, lifestyle, and social status needs to be taken into account. Where applicable, the extent to which public statements by local political and/or religious leaders about the dis/advantages of migration are taken seriously by local residents in general, and potential migrants in particular, should also be observed.

When observing settings in the host country relevant to potential migrants and, especially, so-called foreign colonies and the formal and informal gathering places of mixed or ethnically distinct groups of immigrants, one needs to focus on the functioning of translocal social relations and cultural norms associated with membership in the respective social groups; on the *émigrés'* conversations about pending arrivals and the ways in which the arguments for and against their decision to migrate are discussed; and on evidence for the support they offer new migrants in the form of information and assistance with travel, housing and employment opportunities, as well as the expectations and caveats attached to such help (for excellent accounts, based on observation, of the migration experience of Polish and Caribbean cross-border travellers, respectively, see Irek 2014; Olwig 2007).

When it comes to the use of documentary sources, the crucial mainstay of research on the migration experience in its classic phase in the first half of the twentieth century, immigrant letters, have largely been replaced in the meantime by communication by telephone and via email and the internet (the most renowned multi-volume book based on immigrant letters is W. I. Thomas and Florian

Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, 1918–1920; for qualitative research on virtual modes of communication in general, see Hine 2000; Jones 1999; on immigrants' use of the web, see Crush et al. 2012; Leurs and Prabhakar 2018). Here too the researcher needs some familiarity with the investigated group's language and cultural codes of expression. Issues that can be probed by examining internet sites include the reasons identified by the participants as playing a role for them personally when considering the possibility of migration or deciding to migrate; the pros and cons they mention when discussing (e)migration in general and journeys to specific destinations in particular; and the information and support networks organized and relied upon by those who decide to migrate. Researchers should visit as many different sites as possible and do so several times, not only in order to cast the widest possible net when recording the issues that are of concern to the participants, but also in order to check how regularly specific problems and opinions feature and how prevalent they are.

Other documentary sources that can render information on the circumstances involved in the immigrants' decision-making processes regarding international travel and the ways in which they organize their movement, along with the dilemmas that accompany these experiences, include newspaper reports and letters to the editors; the TV and radio programmes of the *émigrés*' home society and their ethnic communities in the destination countries; novels about *émigrés*' lives; and, when it comes to assessing the significance and impact of role models for the migrants' decision-making processes, images of friends and acquaintances both in the home and host countries that illustrate their relative standard of living and general appearance and demeanour (for an example of the document analysis-based reconstruction of the cultural orientations of East European migrants to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Morawska 1987). The information gathered from such documentary sources reflects a collective experience – not in the sense of being statistically representative, but in the sense that the experience is shared more or less commonly by members of the investigated (im)migrant group – which the researcher then checks and checks again against individual life stories and interviews.

7.2.2 The Immigrants' Integration into the Host Society

Qualitative research on the integration of newcomers into the host society that is guided by the premises of interpretative sociology likewise tends to begin with the collection of the interviewees' life stories. In addition to basic information about their family histories, residential (re)locations, and the jobs they have had since their arrival in the host country, possible ups and downs in these developments and the ways in which they coped with these turns are of particular interest. Of similar importance are the personal and external factors they credit with an impact on their adaptation process, and the transformation (such as it is) of their previous worldviews and everyday practices in accordance with the cultural values and social

expectations of the host society. These factors may include their human capital, individual initiatives and aspirations for the future, family life, social relations, residential locations, and occupational positions (Herbert's account [2008] of the ways in which South Asians put down roots in Leicester [UK] offers a good example for the effective use of immigrants' life stories in this context).

These autobiographical accounts will be of particular interest to qualitative researchers who pay attention to the processual nature of the ways in which immigrants adapt and, specifically, to the significant role that the sequence of events can play in *émigrés*' lives. An example from my own immigrant biography as compared to that of my same-age, same-urban-intelligentsia background friend highlights the relevance of this temporal dimension, while also illustrating an interesting aspect of diversity in the processes of newcomers' adaptation. We both came to America at roughly the same time as political refugees from communist Poland. While I spoke enough English to be offered a fellowship, which allowed me to undertake doctoral studies shortly after my arrival, my friend, who did not speak any English, had to postpone her graduate education plans and, instead, find work to support herself. Seven years went by, we both got married, but I already had my PhD and a job at a prestigious university while my friend, whose English by that time was passable, had not even enrolled in a graduate program yet. She then had two children (I did not have any) who preoccupied her completely for the next 8 years, and finally began her graduate studies 15 years after our arrival in America, at the same time as I was promoted to a full professorship. On graduation, she had a hard time finding academic employment and now works in a small community college in the Midwest. Our rather different trajectories were in no way caused by a disparity in our individual talents – my friend's intellectual potential when we were both in college in Warsaw was probably greater than mine – but resulted from the cumulative effects of the differing sequences of events in our respective lives as immigrants.

The accounts of their integration offered by immigrants when telling their life stories need to be probed further in follow-up interviews. Here it is again important to focus not only on basic factual data (their residential location, moves, and jobs since their arrival in the host country, and possible ups and downs along the way), but also on the impact which their residential location and occupational status has had on other (social and cultural) aspects of their assimilation, the extent to which they may or may not be developing a sense of belonging, and the ways in which their sociocultural adaptation affects their economic integration and vice versa. Especially when interrogating women and immigrants from racial or religious minorities it is important to ascertain whether they have experienced discrimination or prejudice, how they dealt with it, and how it has affected their self-perception and commitment to the host society.

Probing into what Milton Gordon (1964) called the intrinsic or symbolic dimension of immigrants' cultural assimilation, the qualitative researcher should inquire into the respondents' life orientations and cultural codes of perception and evaluation of their surroundings, both declared and applied in everyday practice, the transformations thereof since their relocation into the host society, and possible tensions between particular elements of these worldviews. Immigrants' cultural (mis)under-

standings of the events/exchanges they encounter in their everyday lives are important aspects of their integration into the host society and should be carefully probed by the researcher. The process of my own assimilation in America was also marked by a series of misunderstandings as I began to put down cultural roots in my new country. An instructive example was my initial assumption that an African-American student in my introductory GTA class at Boston University (where I worked on my doctorate) came from Southern Italy – this was the only familiar label the East European me could assign to his light brown complexion; it is somewhat disconcerting that I subsequently failed to notice when, in the process of my acculturation into the American zero-sum system of racial classification, I stopped making such "mistakes." A good way to probe these issues is to ask the informants to enumerate the various walks of everyday life in which their own value judgments and cultural expectations, to their mind, correspond, or fail to correspond, to those of the host society. How has this changed since their arrival and which factors have influenced and effected this change? When communicating with, or visiting, their country of origin and its residents, to what extent and in what ways do they think of themselves as differing from their former fellow citizens and how would they explain this process of differentiation?

Standard inquiries into immigrants' cultural adaptation focus on their self-representations; their familiarity with, and use of, the language of the host country at home, in their neighbourhood, at work, and at social events; their assimilation of the cultural customs and traditions, culinary conventions, dress codes, and public holidays of the host country and the frequency with which they themselves practise or adopt these customs. It is important that these issues are probed in an open fashion that allows informants to report multiple self-perceptions and diverse, even contradictory, practices of which researchers can then try to make sense. "Who are you?" can be a useful opening question, provided one encourages the respondents to mention all the identities they consider important. One might then follow up by asking what, specifically, in terms of their values, aspirations in life, and cultural preferences, to their mind, makes them Indian (or Pakistani, Nigerian, Polish, Romanian etc., as applicable). Conversely, have they acquired personal characteristics that they associate with the host country, and are they experiencing any tensions between specific orientations adopted from their home and host communities respectively?

As a next step, one might explore in greater depth the various elements that comprise immigrants' identity-sets and the specific contexts or situations in which particular elements come to the fore. How has the admixture of the elements within their identity-sets changed over time and what, in the opinion of the informants, has contributed to this transformation? (For a good discussion of immigrants' "multiple" and "divided" identities, see Spickard 2013; Leonard 2008). When respondents suggest that they identify with the host country, one should seek to ascertain which qualities, specifically, they identify with and whether there are any aspects of the public and private lifestyles characteristic of their new environment that remain alien to them (and, if so, why).

When it comes to the important linguistic aspect of the integration of immigrants, informants are typically asked about the measure of their familiarity with the language of the host country and the contexts within, and the occasions on, which they use the language. Yet these basic questions hardly seem sufficient to gain an insight into the newcomers' inner state of being. In my own ethnographic investigations of the ways in which immigrants adapt to their host countries, I have found it much more rewarding to engage them in a conversation about the languages they feel comfortable using in various specific contexts: when speaking – which may differ depending on the interlocutor and the context – and writing or reading – which may differ depending on the nature and function of the text – when thinking or, for that matter, when crying or rejoicing. Here too, it is important to inquire about possible changes over time and the factors that affected them, and to ask how this impacts on their sense of belonging.

The forms of sociability engaged in by immigrants are another obvious point of interest. With whom do they associate, in what kinds of joint activities do they participate and how often do they do so, how have these encounters shaped their sense of belonging, and have the company they keep and/or the shared activities they engage in changed over time? Where immigrants live in multi-ethnic settings, it is a good idea to check whether their integration into the host society is facilitated by direct contact with, or immersion in, the dominant social group or by intermediaries. The recent Russian Jewish immigrants in Philadelphia are a case in point for the latter. They have come into contact with mainstream American institutions and "learn America" in large measure through the established American Jewish community in the city (see Morawska 2004).

Throughout, qualitative researchers will be keen to formulate questions that probe the multi-dimensionality of the processes by which immigrants adapt to the host society: do the economic, civic-political, social, and cultural aspects of their integration evolve synchronically or at varying paces? If they are out of step, why is this so and how do immigrants experience this asynchronicity? Middle-class Asian Indians in the United States, for example, have reportedly assimilated along two different trajectories – adhering to the mainstream in the economic realm yet maintaining an in-group ethnic path in the sociocultural sphere – and they apparently manage to avoid any significant tension between these two parallel paths of integration by deliberately keeping their relevant economic and sociocultural lives apart (Bhatia 2007; Dhingra 2007; Kurien 1998). For the members of other groups, however, the path to integration and the ways, in which it is experienced may be quite different. Given that humans are rarely able to shape all the aspects of their life into a coherent whole, qualitative researchers need to allow for discrepancies or even obvious contradictions in the accounts informants offer of their integration into the host society. The task lies in trying to understand the ways in which these discrepancies and contradictions are "lived" by the respondents.

Turning now to observation, it is important, when setting out to observe the ways in which the adaptation of immigrants to the host society is reflected in their verbal communication and social behaviour, to focus both on small groups and on larger social gatherings, both formal and informal, and to do so more than once, preferably

on a number of occasions that vary in character. Alongside the ethnic composition of the groups it is important to take into consideration what the founder of micro-sociology, Georg Simmel (1903), called the "social geometry" of a group, i.e., the degrees of physical proximity and the regularity, duration or variability of interactions among particular people, and the kinds of bonds they generate. The type of food and/or drink served at these occasions, if any, requires reflection, especially in terms of the degree to which it is characteristic of either the home or the host country, as do the music played and/or the TV stations and/or other media watched, and the décor of the immediate surroundings. How prominently do topics relevant to the host and home societies, respectively, feature in conversations, and does the way in which national and local politics, and cultural issues are discussed vary, when they focus on the host society as opposed to the home country? Far from least, in which language(s) are these exchanges being conducted? Are particular issues discussed in a particular language, and why might participants be opting to mix the languages of their home and host countries? Do they use the word "we" to denote primarily either the home or the host society, or with which frequency and meaning(s) do they use it in both contexts? To the extent that an external observer is capable of reading it, one also needs to pay attention to the body language accompanying the immigrants' verbal expressions, bearing in mind that relevant codes and norms may differ between the home and host countries – one might think, for instance, of the contrast between the expressive-expansive style common among people from southern and eastern Europe and the constrained, self-controlled manner of the Northerners. Changes in body language may well reflect the degree to which newcomers have adapted to the host society. It is also possible that different settings evoke differing body languages, as Lieber and Levy (2013) have shown in their observation-based study of the adaptation of highly skilled Chinese settlers in Switzerland.

When trying to gauge the extent to which immigrants have internalized the cultural codes, which inform social interactions in the host society, one needs to take note of the style of conversation they adopt in ethnic as opposed to mixed social settings. As a native-born Pole and an ethnographer, I have invariably been intrigued and irritated roughly in equal measure by the unselfconsciously confrontational style displayed by many of my fellow East European immigrants in debates, in the United States and Europe alike, which is so roundly at odds with the "smoothed-over", compromise-seeking mode of discussion generally practised in the West. This deeply ingrained confrontational style, founded on the premise that I must be an imbecile if we disagree and my interlocutor is right, extends even to topics as harmless as the weather forecast: if I say that it will rain tomorrow, my partner in conversation may well raise his or her voice and shout, "no, there will be sunshine!" This approach results in no small measure from the fact that the term "compromise" has a distinctly negative connotation in the Slavic languages, suggesting a lack of moral fortitude on the part of the person or group willing to compromise. When interviewing or observing East European immigrants one would therefore focus both on the extent to which they continue to maintain the more confrontational style to which they are accustomed or, alternatively, have adopted a less confrontational style more suited to their host society, and on the ways in which this may vary

across a range of sociocultural contexts and encounters. It could be, of course, that the respondents' very concept of compromise has also changed in the course of their integration.

The range of documents that can usefully be analysed in this context does not differ substantially from those worthy of consideration when examining the cross-border migration process. Internet communication, reports and letters to the editor in foreign-language newspapers, TV and radio programmes, and novels about *émigrés*' lives reveal a good deal of information about various aspects of the process by which immigrants adapt to their host country. (I omit from this discussion, though qualitative researchers obviously need to examine them carefully, the official "book-keeping" documents such as national and local censuses, relevant labour and welfare statistics and data detailing the residential concentration, demographic profile, economic position, and civic status of foreign-born residents). One should certainly examine how varying opinions about the host country's economic and legal-political system, its people and culture, on the one hand, and the various pursuits and achievements of the immigrants, on the other, are articulated on various websites, while also noting the frequency with which differing viewpoints are expressed and the responses they precipitate. The same goes for media and literary reports as well as immigrants' self-representations, where particular attention is merited both to the ways in which the term "we" is used and to the *loci* immigrants associate with their aspirations in life. All the while, researchers must continue to bear in mind that the process by which immigrants adapt to their host country is always multi-layered. Different dimensions of their lives (the economic, political, social, and cultural) may not be evolving synchronically and the trajectory of their integration may be non-linear, taking (re)turns and twists due to specific changes in their personal lives or political developments in their home or host countries.

It is also a good idea to encourage immigrant informants to show photographs of themselves, their families and their living environments both in the countries of origin and destination. These can be compared over a number of years to discern possible changes in individuals' appearance and demeanour and their environment on which one should then ask the respondents to comment.

Documents related to the activities of associations formed by immigrant groups, such as minutes of their meetings, membership lists, appeals issued, election records, etc. are also a valuable source for research on the integration of immigrants. What do these associations hold in common and what distinguishes them, in terms of their declared purposes and organization, how might this change over time, and (how) do their operations differ from those of comparable mainstream organizations in the host society? What contacts – civic-political, charity-related, or connected to inter-faith initiatives or cultural events – do the groups maintain with institutions and individual representatives of the host society, how regular, frequent and durable are these contacts? How many immigrants participate in the group's activities and what is their socio-demographic profile? (The study of the Italian ethnic press by Deschamps [2011] and Garapich's [2016] examination of the role ethnic media play

in the process by which Polish immigrants in London simultaneously adapt to the host society and maintain ties to their home country are good examples of the use of document analyses in qualitative investigations).

7.2.3 Immigrants' Experience of Super-Diversity/ Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism, typically defined as "the recognition of difference" within the public sphere of "laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship" (Modood 2007: 2), has been a matter of intense debate among social scientists for the last two decades. Together with its companion concept "super-diversity" – a term coined by Steven Vertovec (2007) to denote the increasing ethno-religious diversification of contemporary societies – the concept of multiculturalism has recently also entered the field of international migration studies. While political scientists conceive of it more as a set of policies and legal provisions regarding the entitlements of different groups, qualitative research in migration studies approaches it primarily in terms of the ground-level experience of people's everyday lives. Quite a few studies of multiculturalism "from above" have already accrued, but the investigation of multiculturalism "from below", as experienced on an everyday basis, is something of a newcomer on the academic stage (see, for example, Wise and Velayutham 2009; Vertovec 2011).

I propose to define ground-level multiculturalism as consisting of three dimensions conceived in terms of degrees rather than present-absent attributes: (i) the forms and regularity of neutrally civil in the least and, at best, openly friendly inter-group contacts; (ii) representations of group differences as more horizontal than vertical arrangements; and (iii) a negotiatory rather than head-on confrontational mode of inter-group conflict resolution. How multiculturalist one's views and practices are in any given situation may vary according to the specific circumstances. The same holds true of the degree to which each of these three factors may be at play in any given context. Interview questions probing the multiculturalism of immigrants' orientations and practices – gauging, for instance, their attitudes towards generalized "others" and members of specific groups, the forms and frequency of their contact with them, the measure of familiarity and intimacy involved in these contacts, their participation in other groups' festivities and adoption of their culinary conventions, and their opinions about members of other groups holding public office (take the election of Sadiq Khan as mayor of London in May 2016) – therefore need to be designed in a manner that allows for ambiguity, flexibility, and discrepancies in the reported sentiments and activities, and must inquire carefully into the situational dynamics of the specific multicultural engagements.

Immigrants' possibly multicultural modes of integration into the host society could also be an interesting venue of investigation for a qualitative researcher. This line of inquiry would involve questions–as above, open-ended and inviting equivocal statements and uncertainty –about their symbolic identification with plural national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society and their traditions; about the internalization and practice of extrinsic (language, customs) and intrinsic (value-orientations, normative expectations, beliefs) components of the cultures of other national/ethnic-religious groups resident in the host society; regular social engagement with members of other national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society in formal, semi-formal, and/or informal settings including neighbourhood public places such as streets, shops, pubs, and eateries; workplaces, kindergartens and schools; homes and gardens; and civic commitment to/responsibility for the well-being of the body politic of several national/ethnic/religious communities resident in the host society.

Observation in this field would focus especially on immigrants' engagement of, and opinions about, national, ethnic and/or religious groups other than their own and the one that is dominant in the host country. One would pay attention, for instance, to the ethnic composition of the social gatherings the immigrants in question attend and the forms of interaction between them and the members of other groups they meet there, looking not least at the body language (noting measures of physical proximity and verbal intimacy); and one would carefully monitor topics of conversation among them, paying special attention to the models of a "good society" and "good legal regime" they espouse and their assessment of the measure of civic tolerance and respect for human rights afforded by the status quo in the host country in general and their own locality in particular. Should the way in which these issues are discussed and opinions are expressed differ between meetings attended exclusively by the immigrants in question and mixed meetings, it is important to take careful note of these differences. Familiarity with, and enjoyment of, the cultures of other groups (food, music) and their members, whether expressed verbally or in practical terms, should also be registered, since they reflect multicultural modes of adaptation to the host country.

The documentary sources likely to be of use in this context are again largely the same as before: internet communications, personal and group photographs, foreign-language newspapers, TV and radio programmes, novels about immigrant lives, and the records of relevant organizations. Here too, the principal focus would be on the presence (or absence) of groups or representatives of groups other than those of the immigrants in question themselves or the group that is dominant in the host country, the manner of their portrayal, and the extent to, and ways in, which it changes over time.

7.3 Conclusion

Following a review of the basic epistemological premises of, and different strategies of research conducted in, the *verstehende* or interpretative tradition in social research, I have offered some examples of the sorts of questions and answers qualitative investigations of the experience of cross-border migration can raise and generate. These examples reflect the current agenda of migration studies and my own concerns and predilections and obviously do not constitute an exhaustive or mandatory list. They are meant as heuristic guideposts for the whats and hows of qualitative research in this field. If I were to offer any further advice to students interested in undertaking qualitative studies of migration-related phenomena, I would suggest that, when planning and designing their projects, they familiarize themselves with the research strategies and types of questions raised by scholars of migration whose training and expertise differ from their own. This would allow sociologists to gain new and useful insights from studies of the migrant experience conducted by anthropologists, social psychologists, historians, and/or urban geographers and might stimulate mutual cross-disciplinary engagement between all of them – thus energizing the debates within the field of migration studies in general.

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Chapter 8
Categorising What We Study and What We Analyse, and the Exercise of Interpretation

Dirk Jacobs

8.1 Introduction

A lot of qualitative researchers have a healthy wariness about straightforward categorisation and modelling endeavours undertaken by quantitative researchers. Too often, variables and measurements are too rigid in quantitative analysis to take stock of all the complexity and context-dependency of human behaviour, attitudes and identities. In the worst-case scenario for migration studies, this leads to oversimplification, essentialisation and culturalism. In line with King et al. (1994), I would, however, in this chapter, like to plead for qualitative researchers to take into account that, in terms of challenges of validity and reliability, we have a lot to learn from each other. Acknowledging that qualitative research has its distinctive advantages (Brady and Collier 2004), I will argue that choices in categorisation, case selection and research design are of crucial importance, perhaps even more in qualitative studies than in quantitative studies, even if in both methodological traditions we are confronted with similar challenges. Being transparent and reflecting on the consequences of our choices of categorisation, analysis and interpretation is of crucial importance. It is too easy to think that qualitative research would, by definition, be better equipped in doing justice to the phenomena we wish to study in the field of migration, especially if our research focusses on migrants.

I will first discuss the general challenge of categorisation, then reflect on the issue of working with essentially contested concepts and shed light on the debate whether making ethnic distinctions is legitimate or not. Consequently, I discuss the importance of including a comparative approach in the research design as a good practice.

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8.2   The Challenge of Categorisation

In one of his typical long multi-layered sentences, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has well described the challenge of categorisation. It merits to be carefully read (and re-read):

> Every science which pretends to propose criteria which are in the best way anchored in reality should not forget that it does not do anything else than registering a particular state of the struggle of classification, that is to say, a particular state of material and symbolic relations of power between those who have an interest in this or that particular way of classifying and who, just as itself, call upon scientific authority to establish in reality and in reason an arbitrary division which it hopes to impose". (Bourdieu 1980, p. 66)

The double hermeneutics – the two-way relationship between 'lay' concepts and social science terminology (Giddens 1987) – that are inherent to social scientific activity does not allow us to imagine the constitution of scientific categories that are truly autonomous. Products of a social and political context, they are not immutable. They can be redefined when the context changes or they can lose their relevance when they have been instrumentally used – for instance, when being used more as means of declassification than as means of classification. Categories that want to distinguish social groups and individuals – such as 'migrants' – should thus be treated with prudence and large reservations. Caution is particularly relevant in the field of migration studies, in which scholarly choices can quickly become performative acts with political consequences given the high political salience of the topic at hand. In the worst-case scenario, one becomes complicit to forms of elite racism (see the Chap. 13 by van Dijk).

Quantitative researchers sometimes insufficiently take this cautionary advice at heart, qualitative researchers sometimes exaggerate in deconstructing existing categorisations and entrench themselves in critical discursive and self-reflexive analysis. Nevertheless, at the same time, we do need categorisation in our scholarly work. Indeed, one should be able to identify particular groups in order to be able and study them, we need to be clear on what we actually wish to examine and we need to name problems in order to resolve them. Serendipity is never to be totally excluded, but often vague delimitations and exploratory inductive work run the risk to create more interpretation problems than they actually solve.

Clear definitions, replicable categorisations and a targeted research design, in our opinion, is also of considerable importance in qualitative research, particularly when treating highly political topics which are often central to migration studies. It is true that quantitative research often imposes a too rigid research design, often lacks sensitivity to political dimensions, reflexivity and/or individual agency and often runs the risk of oversimplifying reality in its models following a mathematical logic. However, one can also only hope that a qualitative researcher no longer acts as if the methodological and epistemological wars of the 1980s in social sciences are still waging and all insights and approaches from their quantitative colleagues would be useless. If one would refrain from daring to make choices in classifying pupils according to ethnic background for statistical analysis of educational

attainment (as any classification will do some injustice to the complexity of ethnic identification processes), it becomes, for instance, almost impossible to objectify structural discrimination stemming from patterns of segregation in education. That's too big a price to pay.

The linguistic turn in social sciences has been of crucial importance, but as a field, we should also go further than only critically deconstructing (academic) discourse. It should rather push us to be more aware of decision making processes in conceptualisation, categorisation and operationalisation and be clear and open about them. Some post-modern approaches seem to have done our field more harm than good in advocating the stance 'anything goes'. There is still 'science' in 'social science'. Being aware of the political implications and responsibilities of our work is important, but we are not in the business of 'slow journalism' or 'essayism' either. The 'science' in 'social science' is not about having the naïve objectivist ambition to reveal the 'truth', but it is all about being entirely clear about methodological choices and procedures in order to produce the best possible 'knowledge'. Most qualitative researchers at some point struggle with finding the right balance between not opting for a postmodern 'anything goes' – stance on the one hand and not being too limited in possibilities for research and interpretation by following a too formatted cook-book of methodological procedures. The same holds, by the way, for quantitative researchers who have to strike a balance between not following a too rigid research design on the one hand and not going on a fishing expedition for statistically significant effects on the other hand either.

We, of course, have to reflect on the impact of our work. If we only critically deconstruct categories or refrain from using clear categorisation out of fear of essentialising, we run the risk of falling in the trap of conceptual relativism or vagueness, rendering our role as academics a seemingly pointless ivory tower exercise for policy makers and the general public. If we uncritically adopt state categorisations, political or day-to-day discursive categories, we risk reinforcing stereotypes, particular power relations and/or (elite) racism, racialisation and essentialist forms of culturalism. Patrick Simon has nicely formulated this dilemma with which researchers and policymakers are confronted when it comes to the controversial issue of ethnic categorisations:

> (…) is it preferable to defend the invisibilisation of ethnic differences in the observational apparatus, while at the same time risking allowing hidden discriminatory practices to prosper, or should one construct categories which, by their simple existence, can potentially reinforce a stigmatizing designation of particular populations?. (Simon 1997, p. 9)

In the post-migration context, especially in countries with liberal nationality legislations, it is clear that the legal category of foreigner will often not be sufficient as a selection criterion when wanting to evaluate, say, the integration of groups of foreign origin. Social scientists (and policymakers) need new categories to be able to count and classify people according to their ethnic origin in order to be able to examine their integration and measure the racial discrimination or processes of social exclusion of which they are victim (or not). The classification of ethnic groups most probably constitutes a necessary tool in the construction of an efficient

policy aiming at equal opportunities and in the struggle against racism. The hesitations with regard to the performative effects of ethnic categorisations, especially in their statistical form, should invite us to epistemological vigilance, but should not frighten us in a way leading to retreat. At the same time, claiming to be studying 'migrants' or 'ethnic minorities', without being able to clearly define who we are talking about (and why), is highly problematic.

8.3   Essentially Contested Concepts

In the field of migration studies, most – if not all – of our concepts can be considered to be 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie 1956). Gallie, in his seminal article, attributes seven characteristics to essentially contested concepts. They are (1) appraisive (they have a moral component); (2) internally complex (have multiple dimensions); (3) describable in multiple ways; (4) open (subject to revision in particular situations); (5) reciprocally recognised as being contested among contending parties; (6) they have an original exemplar that anchors conceptual meaning and (7) they are subject to progressive competition. Examples are notions like 'democracy' or the 'rule of law'. Collier et al. (2006) provided a very interesting appraisal of Gallie's approach to the often-unavoidable intersection of normative and empirical concerns in social science. Some have criticized that it leads to self-defeating skeptical nihilism and leads to moral and conceptual relativism (Gray 1977). Others (Waldron 2002) have pointed out that the use of the term 'has run wild' when implying that all concepts are contestable. Collier et al. (2006) stress that one probably should not expect all criteria put forward by Gallie to always apply and rather has to use them as a framework for the analysis of conceptualisations. They also pinpoint that Gallie's framework is useful to study conceptual issues both in scholarship as in 'real' politics, which can, of course, also be interrelated. Obviously, for all concepts used in scholarly work a clear definition and operationalisation is needed. Not in all cases the issue of 'appraisiveness' arises. With appraisiveness, Gallie refers to particular concepts being 'achievement' words, 'signifying or accrediting some kind of value achievement'. Paradigmatic examples include democracy and social justice. In the field of migration studies, one could think of 'integration', 'inclusion' or 'equality' as being such concepts. Collier et al. (2006) stress that the normative appraisal could also be imagined to be of a negative nature. In our field, we can think of notions like 'discrimination', 'racism', 'xenophobia' and 'ethnocentrism' as phenomena the bulk of researchers will wish to combat. The normative and moral dimension is not – or less – outspoken when we use concepts like 'migration', 'migrants', 'origin', 'culture', 'segregation' or 'ethnicity'. In those cases, however, the criteria of internal complexity and diverse options for description certainly apply. Internal complexity makes it plausible that different views or definitions can be relevant. The scope and relevance of particular concepts like 'migration' and 'ethnicity' will largely depend on the (often geographical and cultural) points of reference we adopt and can hence, from context to context, differ. Without

necessarily raising issues of appraisiveness, they are often also intrinsically tied to power relations between groups and/or the functioning of the nation-state and hence historically and politically situated. We should be aware of this and explicitly discuss it, however, without at the same time going into retreat from using clear definitions and delimitations of our concepts all together.

In the field of migration studies, race and ethnicity are central examples of contested or contestable concepts being embedded in particular political, cultural and linguistic traditions. It will have struck any newcomer to the field that there is a strongly embedded tradition to talk about race and race relations in the Anglo-Saxon world – even if there is a wide consensus that race is a social construct without a genuine clearly delineated underlying genetic or biological basis –, while continental European academics will routinely avoid using the word 'race', unless they are communicating in English at international venues in presence of Anglo-Saxon colleagues.

Often Anglo-Saxon researchers simply mimic official discourses when making classifications of groups and, for instance, routinely speak about 'race'. The continental European elephant in the room – going back to the memory of the systematic persecution of Jews and the Holocaust (Jacobs et al. 2009) – is that using the word race in the own language actually signals that you are either a racist or at least someone who believes in a biological basis for racialized differences. As an alternative, one will most often use the concept of ethnicity or ethnic group.

In some national spheres, France being the clearest example, even the use of the notion ethnicity is seen to be controversial, in light of its idiom of nationhood and citizenship (Brubaker 1992) and philosophy of integration (Favell 1998). This is also reflected in the (European) debate on ethnic categorisations and ethnic statistics. The political passions that feed the scientific debate strongly demonstrate that the definition of statistical categories on ethnicity and race is not merely a technical matter. The construction of these categories is influenced by ideologies, visions about nations and visions about interrelations between social groups. An additional element that further complicates the debate is that they are also performative: the use of ethnic categories reinforces the ethnicisation of society.

Once they are socially constructed, these categories gain their own life. Some people are, hence, convinced that the negative performative effects of talking in terms of ethnic categories precludes any legitimate use and one should hence refrain from doing so. I do believe that this is a legitimate position to take by those who fear that academic research actually reinforces racialisation and ethnicisation of social phenomena from the moment one uses the words 'race' and 'ethnic group', i.e. that it feeds declassification rather than classification of individuals and has an essentialising effect. However, if these same people want to study individuals or groups with a migration history, migration background or part of an ethnic majority or minority group, they will have to resort to alternative designations.

This can either be done by using hyphenated identity markers (for instance "African-Americans" or "Turkish-Germans"), descriptors ("people of migration background" or "people of Moroccan origin") or euphemisms ("youngsters in deprived areas"). These solutions do not always deliver more precision. Let us give

just one example: in the case of Turkish migrants, for instance, one can quickly embark on politically laden debates on, for example, who is to be classified as a 'Turk' or as a 'Kurd', and how long one actually remains a person of Turkish (or Kurdish) origin, if one, for instance, was born in the territory of the receiving nation. For how many generations does 'origin' remain relevant and how are people of mixed origin to be classified? When asking an auditorium of students whether Barack Obama is white or black, one can get a huge variety of answers, especially after having pinpointed that the former president of the US has a 'black' father and a 'white' mother, and confronting people with their conscious or unconscious decision criteria.

8.4 To Ethnically Categorise or Not to Ethnically Categorise, That Is the Question

Data on immigrants and ethnic minorities of different European countries are, today, hardly comparable. A number of countries can produce very detailed distinctions with regard to the foreign origin and composition of their population, while other countries feel the production of such data is inappropriate and dangerous. As a result, we have quantitative data on apples and pears and proper comparative social scientific work is often being frustrated. If we want to do serious (quantitative) comparative work with regard to foreign origin groups across Europe, we need comparable operationalization systems which go beyond the simple distinction between nationals and non-nationals. The latter system is biased given the important variation in nationality legislations across Europe. The same challenge holds for qualitative analysis: a foreigner in Sweden or the Netherlands is not quite the same kind of sociological category as a foreigner in Austria or Greece, as it is much more difficult in some countries than others to obtain state citizenship.

The Regulation on harmonized statistics proposed by the European Commission is a step forward to sensitize on this issue, but does not resolve the issue of identifying and quantifying second generation immigrants and longer established ethnic minority groups. In the Netherlands and Nordic countries, a formalized criterion (birth place of parents) has been introduced in the 1990s to pinpoint ethnic minority and foreign origin groups. It has proven to be a useful instrument in documenting discriminatory practices and social exclusion of ethnic groups. At the same time, however, the differentiation between western allochthones or immigrants and non-western allochthones or immigrants (see Jacobs and Rea 2012), has added to the process of racialisation of society. Even worse, in public discourse these statistical notions sometimes function as (dis)qualifying social categories. As a result, the categories have incited quite some resistance among those being classified against their will. One way out would be to allow people to classify themselves as is done for instance in the UK. From a methodological point of view, there are also problems. Country of birth of parents (or grandparents) can only function as a proxy for

immigrant background and ethnicity for a limited time span, especially because people with mixed origins are difficult to classify in a coherent and sensible manner. Furthermore, there is no 'objectively' fixed transition point – like being of the third or fourth generation of immigrants – between being part of an ethnic minority group and no longer being part of an ethnic minority group. Self-identification shifts the burden of this problem to the people we want to classify. That does not entirely resolve a number of fundamental challenges. People might legitimately want to classify themselves as part of the dominant ethnic group or as part of no ethnic group at all, but still be faced with discrimination (or ethnic disadvantage) if they are judged to be part of a visible minority or negatively racialised group.

When we confront the ethnic self-categorisation questions with the theoretical framework on ethnic groups, we notice that these do not overlap; also, opinions and behaviours of others are crucial in the formation of ethnic groups (Jenkins 1994, 1997). Furthermore, objective approaches, as well as self-categorisation questions, threaten to erase the necessary logical connection between categorisation by others and disadvantageous treatment. A person is not discriminated because he or she is black, but because other people believe this person is black (Sabbagh and Morning 2004, p. 50). In this sense, an important distinction is to be made between self-categorisation (how does one define or see oneself), other-identification (how is one defined or seen by others) and perceived identification (how does one think others define or see you). Therefore, for conceptual as well as for policy reasons, it might be useful to let people classify themselves in the way they believe most other people perceive them. When ethnic group membership is operationalized in this manner, it comes close to the Canadian concept of visible minorities, in which visibility (often in terms of skin colour) has a central place. By going beyond self-categorisation and combining it with other-identification and perceived identification, a balance can be struck: on the one hand, one can give justice to identification choices by individuals, while at the other hand one can embrace the empirical challenge to grasp the prevalence of discriminatory treatment among different analytical groups (independent of self-classification choices by individuals).

In the end, every system of ethnic categorisation holds the risk of essentialism: it reifies ethnic groups. Furthermore, ethnic categorisations reflect (dominant) opinions about who is 'in' and who is 'out', which are embedded in a specific time and place. Scientific classifications, and their statistical formalisation – even if informed by self-classification – are not immune to this. They are equally subordinate to the societal context and power relations as other social products. This can be exemplified by the various manners in which self-classification questions in the US, UK and Canada are posed.

Ethnicity, race, skin colour, cultural background, ancestry and geographical areas or countries are used as operationalisations in various forms and in various combinations, across as well as within countries. Social scientists (and policy-makers) need analytical categories that allow counting and classifying people according to their foreign origin or ethnic background in order to be able to examine their integration into mainstream society. We need reliable data to measure racial discrimination or processes of social exclusion of which visible minorities are

victim. General public support to such registration is rather high: in 2006, 75% of the EU25 population said to be in favour of providing information about their ethnic origin if that could help to combat discrimination in their country (Eurobarometer 2007, p. 169). However, we should be conscious (and remain vigilant) with regard to the performative effects of ethnic categorisations, especially in their statistical form. As Keith puts it

> empirical academic studies potentially reify minority presence through ascribed ethnicities that are monitored, counted, and measured in terms of demographic penetration of political systems, employment profiles, and attempts to promote equal opportunities. Such measurement may be pragmatically progressive and politically defensible but inevitably it highlights the 'border problems' of definitions of demographic fixity that reveal the absurdity of racial languages enshrined in politics of affirmative action and census monitoring. (Keith 2005, pp. 258–259)

The classification of ethnic groups in our view, however, constitutes a necessary evil in the construction of an efficient policy aiming at equal opportunities and in the struggle against racism. Furthermore, if we want to promote the quality of international comparative work on the issue, it is essential that classification systems of foreign origin and ethnic background are as similar as possible. For the time, being this is not (often) the case. Researchers should bare this in mind and reflect on the consequences. Policy-makers want to know whether their immigrant integration policies are effective and in a European context increasingly seek to compare the outcomes of their policy choices to those of other national models (for instance, assimilationism vs. multiculturalism). Academics are urged to provide answers on questions like what the best model for immigrant inclusion might look like and some colleagues (Koopmans 2008) are trying to do so even though they have to rely on limited amounts of genuinely comparable data. Immigrant integration policy is high on the political agenda of quite a number of European Union member states. The debate on what the best immigrant inclusion policy might be is at the political centre stage in several countries. The media and policy makers expect that academics working in the field of ethnic and migration studies help and come up with some reliable analysis on which these evaluations can be based. Even in perfect circumstances this is a risky business, but a lack of qualified comparable data to base claims on, makes things even worse.

I cannot propose a 'perfect' system for classification here. I do, however, think that comparative research will profit from the availability of reliable data on country of birth of parents of the population across Europe to be able to investigate recent immigrant groups of first and second generation. Possibly, a two speed Europe could develop, in which those countries that today already have a good registration system agree on some basic definitions so that at least these countries produce comparable data in a short time frame. Later, other countries may adjust their definitions and data collection methods. In the long term, and for those countries which have already long established ethnic minority groups, such a formalized classification system should, in our opinion, be combined with a self-identification procedure. It is not a matter of one or the other system being better. For (comparative) research on immigrant origin groups and ethnic minority groups, both strategies have their

advantages and disadvantages. External classification (with proxies as country of birth of parents) is better suited for statistical comparative work on people linked to recent immigration waves. Self-identification allows to (somewhat) remediate imposition effects and is better equipped to deal with 'historic' ethnic minority groups, but is more difficult to organise and more difficult to compare across countries. In qualitative research, taking into account 'other identification' (how you think others see you), is a useful addition. We do need to take into account, however, that also these perceptions can be influenced by class or national context.

Once the issue of classification is (temporarily) resolved, we should also reflect on the research design and the consequences of the (lack of a) comparative outlook. What needs to be avoided as much as possible in case selection is 'selection on the dependent variable'. Let us take the example of a study on homeless people. If we would undertake a biographical analysis among homeless people, an inductive analysis might lead to the conclusion that most homeless have in common a history of drug abuse, relational disruption and professional failure. If, however, we have only interviewed homeless people, it might be misleading to identify these as explanatory factors for homelessness. Quite likely other people who also lost their job and relationship at a particular moment in time and responded with drug abuse as a coping mechanism, did not become homeless. Case selection should be done in assuring there is variance on the independent (explanatory) factors, if we want to put ourselves in the position of doing any inference. Often the mistake is made to select on the dependent variable (see King et al. 1994). Not everyone agrees on such a strong rejection, however, as authors like Alexander George and Andrew Bennett (2005) point out:

> Practitioners and analysts of case study methods have argued that selection on the dependent variable should not be rejected out of hand. Selection of cases on the basis of the value of their dependent variables is appropriate for some purposes, but not for others. Cases selected on the dependent variable, including single-case studies, can help identify which variables are not necessary or sufficient conditions for the selected outcome. (George and Bennett 2005, p. 23)

8.5   The Perils and Necessity of Comparison

If one wants to investigate the behaviour, attitudes or participation in a social field of an immigrant group (having determined how to identify them), one needs a comparative group of non-immigrants (or other immigrants) in order to be able to evaluate the specificities of the immigrant group, if that is the aim. Indeed, by focusing the analysis solely on a group of immigrants, one faces the risk of overemphasizing ethnic or cultural characteristics: one should make sure that a characteristic is only present among the immigrant group and thus not shared by the non-immigrant population (and/or other immigrant groups) before grasping at ethnic or cultural explanations.

Empirical research on immigrant issues most often, therefore, needs a control group of non-immigrants in order to investigate characteristics that could be due to the origin of respondents (i.e. ethnic characteristics or the migration experience). The comparison of attitudes, behaviours or participation of an immigrant group with a non-immigrant group enables, indeed, the researcher to evaluate and measure specificities of the immigrant group relatively to the non-immigrant group. In other words, such a comparison allows the researcher to detect attitudes, behaviour or participation of the immigrant group that effectively differ (or not!) from the non-immigrant population. However, the comparison should not be simply done at face value, but should check for the impact of a number of intervening variables.

Let us try and elaborate this by means of an example. A researcher could be interested in evaluating the participation of immigrants in the labour market of the receiving society. If we take the situation of Brussels, the unemployment rate of non-EU immigrants was 35.7% in 1999 (Thys 2000). That clearly is a high figure, but at the same time, this percentage does not tell us whether the non-EU population in Brussels suffer from high unemployment risks compared to other groups. Indeed, the unemployment rate of the non-immigrant Brussels population might be as high as the unemployment rate of non-EU immigrants. Thus, in order to evaluate immigrant participation in the labour market, one needs to compare the unemployment rate of the immigrant group with the unemployment rate of the non-immigrant group.

The proportion of unemployed Belgians in 1999 in Brussels was 13.0%. The comparison between the unemployment rates of both Belgians and non-EU immigrants tells us that people from non-EU countries are almost three times more likely to be unemployed than Belgians. Nevertheless, this picture of immigrant participation in the labour market is still incomplete. Indeed, these unemployment rates of non-EU citizens and Belgians can give us an idea about the average unemployment risks between these two groups. However, a closer look at the unemployment risks of non-EU immigrants in comparison to Belgians according to their educational profiles gives another picture of immigrant participation in the labour market.

Brussels labour market is constituted mainly of high-qualified jobs in the tertiary sector, so that low skilled inhabitants suffer to a larger extent from high unemployment rates. In addition, the education profile of the non-EU population differs largely from the education profile of Belgians: the non-EU population in Brussels is on average lower educated than Belgians. Because Brussels labour market is largely constituted of high skilled jobs and because the average level of education largely differs between non-EU citizens and Belgians, one should also take into account the education profile of both the immigrant population and the non-immigrant population in the evaluation of immigrant participation in Brussels labour market.

Differentiating the participation in the labour market of non-EU immigrants and Belgians along their education profiles gives indeed a more precise idea of the unemployment risks of the immigrant population, all other things being equal. What do the figures tell us then? Among the Brussels population with at most a secondary education degree, non-EU inhabitants are twice more likely than the Belgians to be unemployed. Among the Brussels population possessing a tertiary education degree,

people from a non-EU country are even five times more likely than Belgians to be unemployed (Thys 2000). In other words, it is not that non-EU immigrants, who are often low skilled in Belgium, simply have the bad luck to find themselves in an economy which does not need low skilled labour and that this explains differences in participation rates. As it turns out, participation levels of highly educated immigrants are actually even more problematic. Situating testing according to the procedures established by the International Labour Organisation helps us to understand why: ethnic discrimination is a huge problem on the Belgian labour market (Jacobs et al. 2004).

This example shows that immigrant participation in Brussels labour market varies largely across the education profiles of the population, which, in turn, affects the likelihood of unemployment (in this particular example in a rather unexpected way). Thus, if one wants to evaluate accurately the integration of immigrants in Brussels labour market, it is not sufficient to compare the average participation of the immigrant population with the average participation of the non-immigrant population. One needs also to differentiate these two groups according to their education profiles, since their participation varies largely across education profiles. Having done this exercise, we actually discovered a bit of a surprise in our Belgian data: highly educated immigrant groups are even more the victim of ethnic discrimination than lower educated immigrant groups.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will emphasize the necessity of using a control group in migrant studies. We will, furthermore, try and show that potential intervening factors need to be introduced in the comparison of the immigrant group with the non-immigrant group. One of the conclusions we can draw from our Brussels' example is that, in order to shed light on the specificities of immigrants' attitudes, behaviours or participation, one needs a comparison group of non-immigrants that has the same socio-economic profile (and, for that matter, the same gender and age profile) as the immigrant group. In other words, an immigrant group should be compared to a comparable group of non-immigrants. Indeed, if the research interest lies in investigating immigrant attitudes, behaviour or participation in a social field, focusing on immigrant status, one should make sure that observed differences between an immigrant group and a non-immigrant group are not due to other socio-demographic factors than the ethnic origin. In multivariate statistical models for quantitative research, these matters are relatively 'easy' to verify, in qualitative research we are only able to do so if our initial research design gave us the means to do so. Often, by not following a hypothetico-deductive approach, qualitative researchers fall into the trap of missing this point.
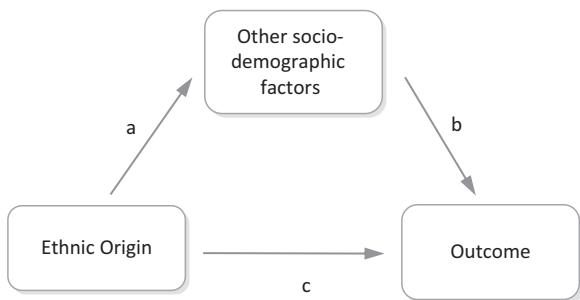
Ethnic disparities observed at first glance might not be due to effective ethnic differences, but to socio-demographic disparities between the two groups. Ideally, thus, research on immigrant integration should strive to compare an immigrant group with a non-immigrant group that has exactly the same socio-demographic profile as the immigrant group. In such a research design, the only socio-demographic characteristic that differentiates the two groups would be the ethnic origin. Thus, such a design would enable the researcher to link without doubt any observed difference between the two groups to the immigrant background of the immigrant

group. For instance, a sample that approximates such a research design would be composed of a group of immigrants and a group of non-immigrant respondents who live in the same neighbourhood as the immigrants (see, for example, Crul and Heering 2008; Modood et al. 1998; Swyngedouw et al. 1999). Indeed, sampling immigrants and non-immigrants living in the same areas would increase the likelihood that the immigrant and the non-immigrant groups have the same socio-economic profile. Admittedly, such a reasoning takes as a point of departure the additive (and distinguishable) nature of explanatory factors. In light of reflections on intersectionality, such an assumption may be untenable.

However, even if such a sample improves the comparability of the two groups, it would not completely ensure that immigrant and non-immigrant respondents have exactly the same socio-demographic profile: it is virtually impossible to construct a subsample of non-immigrants who have exactly the same socio-demographic characteristics as the respondents composing the immigrant subsample. Indeed, migrant surveys with a control group are not experimental studies performed in a laboratory in which the researcher is able to control for every stimulus of the experiment. This is even less the case in qualitative research. Rather, migrant studies aim at investigating respondents' attitudes, behaviours or participation that are shaped by their individual trajectories, experiences and situations; sampling two (or more) groups of respondents in a society that are completely equivalent in their socio-demographic profiles is thus illusory. Therefore, even if a control subsample is drawn by maximizing the socio-demographic similarities with the immigrant group, socio-demographic disparities between the two subsamples are still likely to arise and, consequently, to hamper the measurement of ethnic specificities. Thus, in the (statistical) analysis of integration of immigrants, one should pay attention to other socio-demographic characteristics that might account for ethnic disparities observed in a face-value (bivariate) analysis. One should, therefore, analyse the variation of an outcome between the two groups with a multifactorial perspective. The use of multivariate techniques enables researchers embarking on quantitative analysis to isolate the effect of ethnic origin on an outcome by statistically controlling the effects of potential alternative explanatory variables (Cohen et al. 2003), such as socio-economic variables. Thus, before concluding to significant ethnic differences on an outcome (i.e. significant differences between the immigrant group and the non-immigrant group), one should investigate with a multivariate analysis whether observed ethnic differences are not due to other socio-demographic characteristics. In quantitative studies, this can be included in the statistical model, in qualitative studies all will depend on the researcher taking multiple explanatory factors in consideration while doing interpretations.

This procedure (or way of reasoning) can best be explained with the graph displayed in Fig. 8.1. We give an example from a quantitative approach. The multivariate model is adapted from the mediation model of Baron and Kenny (1986). In a bivariate analysis, the path between ethnic origin and the outcome (i.e. path 'c' on the graph) is the only parameter to be estimated. By contrast, a multivariate analysis allows the researcher to isolate the association of ethnic origin with the outcome by controlling for the effects of other socio-demographic characteristics in the parameter estimation.

Fig. 8.1 Multivariate model for analysing ethnic differences on an outcome. (Adapted from Baron and Kenny 1986, p. 1176)

The situation in which such socio-demographic characteristics may account for the association of ethnic origin with the outcome is depicted on the graph: the association of ethnic origin with the outcome is (partly) explained by other socio-demographic factors that are associated with both ethnic origin (i.e. path 'a') and the outcome (i.e. path 'b'). In our example with the unemployment rate, if one is interested in the relationship of ethnic origin with unemployment risk, one should also introduce the education level of respondents in the analysis, since the education level of Brussels population varies according to the origin of the population and, at the same time, unemployment risks varies as a function of education level. Thus, if the research interest lies in the association of unemployment risks with the ethnic origin of the population, one needs to isolate the effect of ethnic origin on unemployment by holding constant the other socio-demographic variables (such as education) that might affect the association between ethnic origin and unemployment risks. In quantitative approaches, one can statistically model this; in a qualitative approach, one has to deliberately build it in during the case selection procedure and make sure sufficient cases of subgroups are present in the study. On the graph, the 'other socio-demographic factors' are mediating the association of ethnic origin with the outcome. Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1176) stated that 'in general, a given variable may be said to function as a mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion'. In other words, 'a mediator variable is one that explains how or why another variable affects the outcome' (Kraemer et al. 2001, p. 852). The 'other socio-demographic factors' displayed on the graph are also called confounders in quantitative research (Cohen et al. 2003), because they might confound the relationship between ethnic origin and the outcome. For instance, observed ethnic differences on an outcome in a bivariate analysis might be solely due to a different distribution of socio-demographic characteristics (such as SES) across the origin categories. If some of the socio-demographic characteristics are associated with the outcome, observed ethnic differences on the outcome are (at least partly) spurious. In this case, by introducing socio-demographic factors in a multivariate analysis, ethnic differences on the outcome will not be significant any longer. Thus, if a bivariate analysis results in significant ethnic differences on an outcome, a multivariate analysis might show that the association of ethnic origin with an outcome is spurious and can be totally explained by other socio-demographic factors that function as confounders. The procedure of controlling for possible con-

founders in the investigation of the association of a variable on an outcome is not specific to empirical research on immigrants, but is recommended for any empirical research in social sciences (for instance, see the methodological book of Cohen et al. 2003). However, the failure of following adequately this procedure in migrant surveys can have particularly severe social and political implications. The same holds for qualitative research, where case selection procedures are of crucial importance (in order to avoid selection on the dependent variable).

Think, for instance, of the so-called link between ethnic origin and criminal behaviour. Van San and Leerkes (2001) published the results of a study ordered by the Belgian Justice Minister on the criminal behaviour of immigrant youth. In their analysis of crime data, they showed that the proportion of immigrant youngsters with a criminal record was much larger than the proportion of their Belgian peers. However, their results were based on a bivariate analysis of ethnic origin with data on registered criminal behaviours. They did not control for socio-demographic factors that have shown to be largely associated with criminal behaviours such as age, neighbourhood or socio-economic status. However, the population with an immigrant background in Belgium is characterized by a large proportion of young people and of people with low socio-economic status. Thus, if one wants to analyse the association of ethnic origin with criminal behaviour, one should take into account intervening variables that may confound this association (such as age or SES, without even mentioning different profiling practices by the police). Indeed, when analysing crime data, it will often be the case that, when controlling for socio-economic status and age and police procedures, there is no difference at all in crime rates between immigrants and non-immigrants. Nevertheless, the results of the study of van San and Leerkes (2001) with their shortcomings were largely echoed in the Belgian media with the consequence of strengthening immigrant stereotypes as criminals among the broader population. Thus, while multivariate procedure is recommended in many social sciences fields, it is of particular importance in migrant surveys. Indeed, failing to control for possible confounders in migrant surveys can result in ethnicising or culturalising phenomena that are in reality perhaps not associated with ethnicity or culture. This, in turn, can have severe implications for the academic arena and the broader society. One of the same authors also undertook qualitative research among young Antillian offenders in the Netherlands and their mothers (Van San 1998). One of the outcomes of the research was that mothers seemed to be (too) empathic and understanding towards their sons showing violent behaviour, triggering the author to conclude there was an anthropological dimension to Antillian forms of crime in the Netherlands. This is an interesting insight. Without wanting to totally discard the value of the study, not having interviewed non-Antillian mothers of offenders undertaking the same type of crimes can, however, be argued to be quite problematic. It is very plausible that mothers, irrespective of their ethnic background, but stemming from a similar socio-economic group, find some ways in trying to justify or empathize with the problematic behaviour of their children. When this has not been studied explicitly, we simply do not know. Obviously, this does not mean either that cultural explanations are to be ruled out automatically. However, giving a culturalist explanation, while not having variation on the cultural component in the research design, is a risky endeavour.

8.6   Conclusion

Categorisation is a central feature and challenge for social scientific research. Particularly in the field of migration studies, critical reflection on potential bias triggered by categorisation, case study selection, comparative designs (or an absence of a comparative design) and analysis methods is of essential importance. Given that political stakes and societal fears with regard to the topic of migration issues are very high, precision and clarity on choices and limitations of choices made in categorisation are very important. When dealing with categorisation of migrants, for instance, it is useful to make a distinction between self-identification (how does one define or see oneself), other-identification (how is one defined or seen by others) and perceived identification (how does one think others define or see you). These different types of categorisation do not necessarily overlap and qualitative research should take different combinations serious, as they have differential consequences. Often, there is no easy way out. However, choices need to be made and instead of aiming for a 'perfect' solution for categorisation, one should focus on clearly explaining the advantages and disadvantages of one's choice in categorising. Furthermore, particular attention should be given to the changing nature of categorisations according to the context or particular types of social interactions. Qualitative research is often much better equipped to shed light on this complexity than quantitative research. However, researchers need to be conscious about pitfalls and choices. Qualitative researchers tend to be very strong in deconstructing categorisations and highlighting complexity of identification processes. At the same time, they should remain sufficiently pragmatic and operational when doing deconstruction of socially constructed categories, at the risk of otherwise getting stuck in a swamp of non-decision making and forsaking the task of social scientists to "reduce the complexity of social reality". Concluding that everything is complex in itself is something we already know. Furthermore, by obscuring or stalling on clear decision making in research designs, researchers might make unwished and uncritical implicit choices, while fleeing from explicit choices out of (legitimate) fear of inherent limitations and performative discursive acts. In this chapter, largely inspired by the approach taken by King et al. (1994), who claim that quantitative and qualitative approaches fundamentally need to tackle very similar methodological challenges, we have provided some examples of pitfalls and choices with regard to categorisation and analysis in the field of migrant studies. I have stressed that one should avoid selecting on the dependent variable. Furthermore, I have argued that the introduction of possible confounders in the analysis is necessary for a correct estimation of ethnic differences on the outcome. If a bivariate effect is estimated in the absence of potential confounders, the analysis may produce spurious relationships between ethnic origin and the outcome (i.e. relationships between ethnic origin and the outcome that are not due to an effective effect of ethnic origin on the outcome, but to other socio-demographic or attitudinal factors). Ideally, a researcher should take into account in his or her analysis all the potential confounders (or mediators) that have shown in the literature to be associated with the outcome. This is perhaps easier done in a quantitative approach (as one can do it post-fact data collection), but

actually should just as much apply in a qualitative approach. In that case, however, the research design has to have foreseen this from the start. In practical terms, this means that an element of comparison is always necessary (be it with non-migrant groups or other migrant groups) in almost any study in the field of migration studies: one should always leave open the possible outcome that, in fact, there is nothing 'special' to the particular group one wishes to focus one's research on.

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Chapter 9
Where, What and Whom to Study? Principles, Guidelines and Empirical Examples of Case Selection and Sampling in Migration Research

Karolina Barglowski

9.1   Introduction

Case selection, or sampling—both terms will be used interchangeably throughout this text—denotes the decisions about the research site (where?), the unit of analysis (what?) and participants to a study (who?). Finding answers to these questions is of utmost importance for the production of social scientific knowledge, as it has been underlined early in the social science literature. Glaser and Strauss (1967), have placed the process of selecting cases centrally by developing an own sampling technique ("theoretical sampling"; see Sect. 9.5) as an integral part of their Grounded Theory's research process and methodology. The pivotal role of selecting cases also is mirrored in the title of Ragin and Becker's (1992) famous book "What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry". In the last years, in the course of the development and refinement of qualitative methodology, distinct sampling techniques have evolved. Their application depends on the research design and focus as well as the theoretical and methodological approach of the respective study. This chapter aims to provide some guidance for researchers who aim to design a qualitative study on migration, by on the one hand cataloguing selected sampling techniques and on the other hand by discussing their advantages and disadvantages with regards to the distinct field of migration. In doing so, this chapter means to show that researchers need to think carefully about issues of sampling or case selection in qualitative research.

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As to the significance of sampling for the validity and generalizability of results, scholars need to reason the rationales of case selection systematically. This point has not always been well reflected in the classic ethnographic studies, where sampling followed rather "opportunistic" (Gobo 2004) considerations, meaning that cases were "given" aspects of the research question (Curtis et al. 2000, p. 1002). Also, studies like William F. Whytes' famous "Street Corner Society" (1943) were interested in the inner workings of a particular "tribe" or a "subculture", thus they usually did not question the boundaries of their empirical field. Nowadays globalized forms of communication, travel and exchange though makes it difficult to say where an empirical phenomenon "ends". Furthermore, as Russell King argues in Chap. 3 of this book, it is the very nature of human migration to traverse spaces and connect two or more places, which often leads to multiple identities and the shift of boundaries in transnational spaces. While the study of the processes through which socio-spatial boundaries are drawn has become a central question and topic in contemporary migration research, it is also prone to distinct methodological challenges.

Important challenges for migration research can be derived from the insightful text by Amelina and Faist (2012). In particular the challenges of methodological nationalism and overemphasizing ethnicity need to be reflected in the process of sampling. Methodological nationalism refers to the unquestioned common-sense according to which "nation-state institutions are the main social context within which migration occurs and for which migration is relevant" (Amelina and Faist 2012, p. 1709). When simply assuming that social life takes place within nation state borders, researchers might overlook that many people's lives nowadays take place within transnational social spaces, which arise from the dense and continuous cross-border interactions of various actors (Faist 2009). Selecting cases in various places can be a way to reflect on methodological nationalism ("matched sampling", see Sect. 9.5). Migration research is also challenged when reflecting on the "ethnic lens", meaning a homogenizing view of ethnicity that assumes that people share commonalities because of their assumed and ascribed ethnicity. By overemphasizing ethnicity research risks overlooking that empirical phenomena might be evoked by other boundaries, such as class or gender, which often intersect with ethnicity. For instance, Erel (2002) showed the diversity of childrearing practices, i.e. single motherhood or separation from children, of mothers from Turkey in Germany, which runs counter to stereotyping discourses in Germany about the "traditional" and "patriarch" Turkish family. Such studies let us critically reassess naturalized views on ethnicity and nation. Instead, a transnational lens encourages researchers to question common conflation of nation, ethnicity and sociality and rather to shift attention to "the changes relating to existing boundaries and the formation of new ones" (Faist 2009, p. 70). Sampling is an important way of dealing with such an "ethnic lens", because when interview partners are selected "according to their 'ethnicity' or 'national belonging'" (Amelina and Faist 2012, p. 1710), there is a risk to also when analysing respondents' accounts to reduce their orientations and practices to their "ethnicity", while, as shown above, they might be evoked by other boundaries. Other ways of sampling, such as selecting respondents according to their legal status (e.g. Nohl et al. 2006), or in a way that they cover respondents

which are heterogeneous in terms of gender, class and other relevant boundaries (Barglowski et al. 2015) will be discussed later in this chapter.

While the mentioned challenges apply to migration scholarship in general, with regards to the study of migration within the European Union (EU), we need to additionally take into account that we face a unique migration regime. In contrast to most other migration spaces across the globe, where border controls are often rigid practices of facilitation and restriction, inclusion and exclusion, migration of EU-citizens within the EU is not only unrestricted, but is also politically cherished as a means to decrease inequalities and supported by a variety of EU programs. This situation of the freedom of mobility regime of the EU has created new and "liquid" (Engbersen and Snel 2013) patterns of crossing borders, settling, moving on or returning, and also aggravates inequalities between EU citizens and non-EU citizens or between those from the "new" and those from the "old" member states of the European Union. Thus, the study of migration within the EU requires research designs, methods and epistemologies which are able to grasp multiple attachments, mobility opportunities but also "challenges to belonging" (Barglowski 2016) arising from frequent border crossings. At the same time, this particular situation of migration within the EU promises instructive insights into the contingent, and often paradoxical, ways in which the socio-spatial categories of the local, national, transnational and global come to influence contemporary social life.

Given these premises, this chapter seeks to present some guidance for migration researchers in constructing their samples for research. It begins with some notes on the relevance of sampling in qualitative research. Then it generally discusses what "a case" is in qualitative research and as well assesses some guiding principles of case selection. In light of these general thoughts, the subsequent section catalogues different types of case selection, i.e. purposive, theoretical, snowball and matched sampling, and shows their application in selected studies on migration. It ends with an overview of the diverse sampling techniques discussed in this chapter.

9.2   Some Notes on the Relevance of Sampling

Researchers' decisions on selecting cases largely depend on what kind of knowledge they intend their study to contribute to. It also depends on whom they want to represent in their study. From the beginning of their research, they need to think about where and from whom they would most likely learn about their particular research objective. For instance, if one is interested in how people come to decide about leaving their home country and moving to another one, one would need to specify what about the many dimensions, people and areas involved in migration decision making is exactly of interest. What is it about people who migrated from a specific area which poses a theoretical or an empirical puzzle? Is it a particular incident, such as the EU enlargement, whose consequences on decision making we want to study? For instance, we could decide that Polish migrants are the most appropriate ones for the latter question, because after Poland's accession to the EU,

unexpectedly many people emigrated from Poland, particularly to the UK, which makes emigration from Poland a paradigm case for how changing legal and political conditions affect individual behavior (Burrell 2009). So, we could decide to find some Poles which recently arrived in the UK and talk with them about their migration reasons, or about their biographies and family ties and how they were affected by their migration. However, as to the magnitude of Polish migrants in the UK, we would need to decide whom exactly to ask: only those in one particular city, or those with a specific age, social class or family composition? We could decide for a quantitative approach and take a look at an already existing survey, for instance a British household panel, and explore how many Poles are represented there and whether they were asked for their migration reasons. If yes, we could calculate whether there are any correlations between their socio-demographic characteristic such as gender and class, and the reported migration reasons. By this procedure, we would achieve valid results about the composition of mobile populations in a given country and the causal relations between socio-demographic markers and patterns of migration and settlement, which, though, is not the aim of qualitative research. Qualitative research, in contrast, is mostly interested in how actors construct and interpret the world surrounding them, and how these interpretations affect their actions, identities and everyday experiences (see Chap. 7 by Ewa Morawska in this book). Although quantitative and qualitative ways of empirical research are very different as to their epistemologies, methodological foundations and their foci of interest, they share the similarity that, for the most part, they draw their results from a snapshot of the population. Those results heavily depend on what and whom we selected as the object of study and unit of analysis.

In contrast to the random character of case selection in quantitative research, which relies on statistical methods of randomization and probability theory, the selection of cases for qualitative research is much more purposive. In qualitative research, cases always stand for something. No matter how interesting an individual story or biography is, for social scientists it is always a "representative" of some wider pattern. Wider issues that are represented by qualitative research are often experiences, orientations and relationships. An example is the qualitative study by Vullnetari and King (2008) who have explored the experiences of elder people in Albania to cope with the situation when many of their younger generations emigrate from the country and the impacts of such a situation on intergenerational care regimes. Qualitative research also has its strengths in disclosing hidden structures of domination and oppression, such as hierarchies in scientists' transnational mobility (Amelina 2013). Hierarchies and regimes, like other social formations, cannot be studied as a whole. Therefore, researchers need to find some instances which adequately represent the broader phenomenon of interest. In both works we see that sampling refers to at least two general levels: the selection of countries and the selection of participants. In Amelina's work, Ukraine and Germany were chosen because they represent a transnational field of science that connects the "core" and the "periphery" of Europe. She locates her research in the wider area of inequalities in European migration and argues that the enlargement has "created new peripheries of Europe, which include, amongst others, countries such as Russia, Ukraine,

Belarus and Moldova" (p. 142). For research on inequalities and migration, as she argues, people who move between those countries experience different forms of oppression and exploitation. Thus scientists as a particularly mobile group, and for who mobility is considered an important motor for future careers, are an appropriate group to study. Vullnetari and King (2008) chose Albania as an example of a post-communist country with high rates of emigration and where elderly care is normatively framed as a family issue. They were interested in how the familial system of care is affected by the mass emigration of young people, who leave their elderly "behind". These decisions show that the selection of sites and people to study depends heavily on the research focus. In a nutshell, constructing cases requires three major steps: first, decisions about the site of study (various places, countries, and different departments), second the unit of analysis (groups, families, values, social classes), and third, the identification of appropriate empirical incidents (situations or interactions to observe, people to ask). These decisions can be taken before starting the research. Or, these decisions about which respondents or incidents to search and to include are conducted simultaneously with the collection and interpretation of data and thus as inseparable research mechanics. Regardless of what kind of sampling we decide to be the most appropriate for our study, the validity and generalizability of results largely depends on our answer to the question of *what is this case a case of*? It is not enough for a qualitative study to state what is special about a case, but instead we need to clarify which wider social pattern it represents. To start with, the next section will shed light on the not so easy question of what a case is.

9.3   What Is a Case?

Ragin and Becker (1992) perfectly summarize the general position about "what a case is" in qualitative social sciences on the cover of their book:

> The concept of the 'case' is the basic feature of social science research, and yet many questions about how a case should be defined, how cases should be selected, and what the criteria are for a good case or set of cases are far from settled.

The difficulty of defining and clarifying the concept of a "case" stems from the fact that the definition of a case "depends upon what one is arguing", which means that terms such as countries, units of analysis, sample or population "are definable only by reference to a particular proposition and a corresponding research design" (Gerring 2004, p. 342). When we consider issues that all scholars need to clarify at some point or the other during their research, we get an idea of how complicated decisions of what a case is are. Is a study of emigration rates from Poland a study of many cases (individuals) or one about one case (country)? Is an interview with a Polish migrant woman in Germany about her experiences of migration one about gender specific biographies, one about migrant decision making in general or more specifically about the impact of a political incident (e.g. Poland's accession to EU)

on migration trajectories? Is it her experiences of settling or how she comes up to live her life transnationally, or the inequalities she encounters? The same interview would eventually be used very differently by researchers with distinct research interests. There might be potential concerns, that when cases are not selected properly, they would not offer the expected results for the specific research interest. That is, however, a minor problem for qualitative researchers, who adjust their research questions and focus during research as a fundamental trait of the explorative stance on the world of qualitative research. Nevertheless, when researchers define what a case for their research is, they need to be aware that they set out the direction of their research results and their generalization. This does not though mean that we need from the beginning know what a case is. Instead, constructing cases can be regarded as one of the goals of qualitative research.

Charles Ragin reports, that during a workshop, Howard S. Becker aimed to motivate researchers to constantly ask themselves "what is my case?" and even more importantly "what is this a case of?" (see Ragin 1992, p. 6). Yet, he also warned them against premature answers, because according to him, the more researchers are unclear about answers to these questions, the more interesting and deep their research is. As such, answers coalesce in the most final stage of research, when results are written up. In consequence, this means that all qualitative researchers need to sustain insecurity during their research and constantly reflect and ask themselves these questions, which for all researchers, and for the less experienced researchers in particular, is tenuous. For dealing with insecurities, some guidelines might be of help. In the following sections, some basic guidelines on the principles of sampling in qualitative research and the most common forms of sampling will be provided, which are illustrated on their use and application in selected migration studies.

9.4   Principles of Case Selection in Qualitative Research

The most important feature of sampling in qualitative research is that it needs to be coherent to the research question, methods and research design. There are differences in the sampling strategies, mainly in terms of their foundation in a specific methodological or analytical approach. On the most basic level, the different forms of sampling espouse a "rather pure type of 'theoretical' sampling, designed to generate theory which is 'grounded' in the data, rather than established in advance of the fieldwork, (…) as opposed to those who promote forms of 'purposive' sampling suitable for qualitative research which is informed a priori by an existing body of social theory on which research questions may be based." (Curtis et al. 2000, p. 1002). Despite methodological differences, all qualitative methods share some basic principles. They are all oriented toward an exploration of the diversity of human life in an inductive rather than a deductive manner. Also, they share the objective of refining or even developing theories. Therefore, we can list some key features of sampling in qualitative research:

1. Samples must not be drawn in a probabilistic or statistic manner, but on purposive or theoretical considerations.
2. Samples are usually not wholly pre-specified, but either there are some general criteria established before research (see later on purposive sample) or the selection is conducted in a circular process of data collection and analysis and identification of further relevant cases (see later on theoretical, snowball and matched sampling). Sampling is either driven by the "theoretical framework, which underpins the research question from the outset or by an evolving theory which is derived inductively from the data as the research proceeds" (Curtis et al. 2000, p. 1002).
3. Qualitative research should be reflexive and transparent about the principles of selecting cases, because they largely influence which results we gain and how we can generalize them. The research thus needs to be transparent about why and which cases were selected and often also about which cases were deliberately not considered.
4. Samples are small, but analyzed extensively. Each case provides typically a large amount of information.
5. The sample should enable analytic generalizations, which are either oriented toward constructing a typology or toward generic processes. In contrast to statistical generalization, this type of generalization does not generate results which can be applied to wider populations, but offers new insights into existing theories or helps to elaborate or reformulate existing theories (Curtis et al. 2000).

9.4.1   Sample Size and Saturation

As one part of sampling, the sample size has attracted some attention recently. Literature agrees that the sample size largely depends on the approach to qualitative inquiry pursued by the researcher. The discussion of numbers of cases stems from a more quantitative logic where generalization happens based on the statistical representation of the population, which requires a large sample. It is thus not the size of the sample that is relevant for the quality of the results, but much more that it covers the diversity and differences in the empirical field, which usually happens through comparisons and contrasts. When one is interested in the experiences of migrant women who come to Germany and the inequalities they encounter when having their degrees recognized, one would probably need two contrasting cases, a woman who encounters some problems and another one who does not. However, contrasts can also be built based on the literature, theoretical considerations or document analysis. In this way, one case can provide valid results when it is analyzed as to its deep structures and contrasted with what is known about the field or generative mechanisms discussed in the literature.

According to Grounded Theory Methodology, the sample size is large enough when the results are saturated (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Saturation means that further data collection would not provide relevant results to the themes, concepts, codes or theory. In other words, we search for cases as the research proceeds and we stop sampling when we find no deviant cases anymore. This quality criterion might sound logical and yet meeting it poses some challenges for experienced and less experienced researchers alike. First of all, there is limited practical guidance for researchers to assess whether their sample is saturated which resonates with a lack of transparency in most research articles on how researchers came to detect their sample as saturated (O'Reilly and Parker 2012). Furthermore, it is debatable whether saturation is a general quality criterion for qualitative research or only for samples obtained by theoretical sampling in Grounded Theory based studies. One could also doubt whether there can be a situation in the empirical world where more data would not offer more information.

Although the sample size is not a very reliable characteristic for the quality of findings, we are very often confronted with having to provide a definite sample size, for instance when writing exposes for thesis or research proposals for funding. Here, it is important to be aware of the reader of the proposal. While qualitatively trained readers will most probably know that size is not the most relevant predictor for the quality of the research and findings, many social scientists until now equate size with quality. Therefore, some studies provide recommendations for sample size, which can serve as a straightforward example of how many cases to put into our proposal as well as a legitimation for why we have decided for a particular number. For instance, Guetterman (2015), based on a review of peer-reviewed research, and Mason (2010), based on a review of PhD studies, provide definite numbers for respective methodologies, which range from 20 to 30 in Grounded Theory Methodology to three to ten cases in ethnography.

9.4.2   Generalization of Results

Sampling is crucial for the generalization of research results. In contrast to quantitative research, the aim of qualitative research is not to test a theory, but to reexamine existing theories or generate new ones. Generalization in qualitative research denotes the process through which scholars infer regularities in the social world from mostly consciously chosen cases. Therefore, the sample should not match the criteria of statistical representativeness, but of "social representativeness", which means to identify the general patterns or types represented by cases (Gobo 2004, p. 423). Yet, in inferring broader patterns from singular instances, the interpretivist stance on the world is faced with an inherent conflict. The strength of qualitative research is at the same time its weakness: its focus on time-and context specific ways of lives, subjective meanings and identity constructions means that it is critically engaged with "groupism", meaning the equation of structural characteristics

with respective subjectivities, meanings and action (see Brubaker 2004). At the same time, when being too close to the singular case and its uniqueness, such analysis runs the risk of being haphazard. Furthermore, it might misspend the opportunity of the real strength of qualitative research, which is to bring hidden structures of social life to the fore. Therefore, researchers need to be cautious when more generally asserting about what was learned from singular cases. On the one hand, the uniqueness, time and context specificity of cases needs to be shown while, on the other hand, these need to be related to more general patterns. Constant reflections of one's own position and own knowledge on the empirical field, as well as on the whole process of analytical generalizations is essential to qualitative research.

Besides inferring patterns from cases, typologies, in the tradition of Weberian "ideal types" are a common way of generalizing qualitative research results. Constructing typologies always involves overemphasizing similarities among people classified as one "type", while, at the same time, underemphasizing similarities between "types". For instance, Pustułka (2016) has studied different types of mothering among Polish migrants in Germany and the UK. The author has used a sampling strategy which aimed to depict the heterogeneity among Polish migrant women in terms of their ethnic, class and gender identities by using a "non-probabilistic and deliberative sampling strategy" (p. 45). With such a sample, the author organized her findings around three types of mothering, "each one confronted with the explicative terms related to various gender and ethnic identifications expressed and desired by Polish migrant women" (p. 48).

9.5 Sampling Strategies and Their Application in Migration Research

This section portrays different sampling strategies and exemplifies their application in selected migration studies. The different strategies enable the construction of and approach to a variety of research units. They have particular strengths and weaknesses for dealing with the aforementioned methodological challenges in migration research and thus their choice is dependent on the research focus.

9.5.1 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is one component of the Grounded Theory Methodology and involves that the research units are not defined before the research, but are selected during the process, based on analytical considerations of the information needed and aims to achieve a relevant sample. The pioneers of Grounded Theory research, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, developed theoretical sampling during their

research in medical sociology in the 1960s. They describe in the following passage how they proceeded in theoretical sampling:

> Visits to the various medical services were scheduled as follows. I wished first to look at services that minimized patient awareness (and so first looked at a premature baby service and then at a neurosurgical service where patients were frequently comatose). Next I wished to look at the dying in a situation where expectancy of staff and often of patients was great and dying was quick, so I observed on an Intensive Care Unit. Then I wished to observe on a service where staff expectations of terminality were great but where the patient's might or might not be, and where dying tended to be slow. So I looked next at a cancer service. I wished then to look at conditions where death was unexpected and rapid, and so looked at an emergency service. While we were looking at some different types of services, we also observed the above types of services at other types of hospitals. So our scheduling of types of service was directed by a general conceptual scheme—which included hypotheses about awareness, expectedness, and rate of dying—as well as by a developing conceptual structure including matters not at first envisioned. Sometimes we returned to services after the initial two or three or four weeks of continuous observation, in order to check upon items which needed checking or had been missed in the initial period. (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 59)

This quote is instructive, as it shows the iterative process of sampling guided by experiences and reflections during research. Theoretical sampling is a very common method of contemporary social science research, also in migration studies. Its main premise is the search for contrasting cases which can be used to enhance the knowledge about the topic of interest, as well as to gather its multi-dimensionality and complexity. This method is also appropriate when researcher's knowledge on the field is limited, or when the focus of the research is very abstract and hard to break down. For instance, Richter (2012) has found that her research focus on the formation of transnational social spaces between Spain and Switzerland is far too abstract as to use snowball-sampling and to ask people about others they know who are "transnational". Furthermore, as her research was interested in how people conceive of transnational social spaces, she felt that she would have influenced her respondents too much while interviewing when it would be known that she searches for "transnationals". Thus, she opted for theoretical sampling, which she used in the following way:

> As a first step, I started with a sample of 19 second-generation Spaniards in Switzerland. The sample aimed at a maximum variety in order to draw a first picture of the ways in which people of the second generation maintain or abandon transnational relationships. It followed the logic of theoretical sampling, diversifying the sample finally along categories such as gender, age, educational level, professional status, and parents' region of origin in Spain. This first phase served to initiate the research and the research relationship with the interviewees. Biographical interviews gave good insight into people's connections to Spain, the people in their networks, and site attachment. Based on these first insights, I was able to make a selection of the cases to follow further. I compared the interview focusing on the way they maintained their transnational linkages. The temporal aspect proved to be an important characteristic when describing the way the second generation inherited the networks from their parents, appropriated them, and maintained them (Richter 2012, p. 17).

Theoretical sampling is a very appropriate sampling strategy for migration research, as it allows to deconstruct the "ethnic lens" when searching for contrasting cases. In this way, other categories than ethnicity, such as in Richters' study "temporal aspects" can come to the fore. Theoretical sampling thus meets the main strengths of qualitative research, which is the exploration of concepts from empirical data in an inductive manner, thereby extending, refining or even building theories. At the same time, this sampling can be costly and time-consuming. Furthermore, as to its cyclical nature, it can be hard to apply it in the "textbook-way" to the realities of social scientific research, which usually follows a more linear way of sampling, collecting, analysing and writing up.

9.5.2 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is another technique where the sample evolves during research. It basically proceeds in that the researcher identifies one or more respondents and, after interviewing them, asks them for further contacts to their relatives or friends. As such, snowball sampling allows the tracing of networks and relationships. Akanle (2013), for instance, describes the merits of the snowball sampling technique he used in his study on Nigerian migrant networks, when he describes how he recruited participants to his study:

> A snowball technique was employed in the selection of respondents. This method consisted of identifying and contacting respondents who were then used to refer the researcher to other respondents who were relevant, available and willing to participate in the study. Inclusion however, depended on respondents' consent to be interviewed. The snowballing technique was particularly useful because a lot of the potential respondents were skeptical of the researchers' intentions. Initial respondents and contacts were thus relied upon of recommendations to further respondents. Hence, as an advantage of this technique, the snowballing technique was found to be suitable, as the respondents were involved in various kinds of networks or relationships with other potential respondents who shared the characteristics of interest (Akanle 2013, p. 57).

For migration research, this sampling technique allows to reflect on some of the methodological challenges. When people are recruited based on their relation to other respondents, researchers might come in contact with people who live outside the country of where the research has started. Also, researchers might find people within one network who are of multiple national and ethnic belonging, thus fighting the "ethnic lens". However, if only snowball sampling is used, and if the studies' focus is not an analysis of networks or relationships, this sampling might fail to reach those units of analysis, which are not connected to the units of entry. Multiple entry points can decrease the risk of being limited to one network as a research unit.

9.5.3 Matched Sampling

The transnational perspective aims to explore and understand the multi-local positioning and flows of people, networks, goods, and organizations. In order to capture these complexities, transnational research in particular requires a sampling strategy, which allows going beyond the national frame of reference. A convenient sampling strategy was developed by Mazzucato (2009). In her research, she was interested in how flows of goods, money, services, and ideas between Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and people they know in their home country transform the institutions that shape local economies both at home and abroad. Her research is based on the assumption that through contemporary means of communication and travel people can be engaged in various places at the same time. Mazzucato (2009) implemented this notion methodologically in a matched sample design:

> First, the unit of analysis is a network of people who are not necessarily based in the same nation-state. Rather than an individual migrant or her household back home as was typical of migration studies of the past, here the unit of analysis includes the migrant but also her friends, family, colleagues and others with whom she engages in trans-border exchanges. This makes the unit of analysis the transnational network. Second, simultaneity is taken into account by conducting the study through a team of researchers based in the main locations of migrants' networks so as to study the people in a network at the same time (Mazzucato 2009, p. 219).

This sampling is mostly a network-based approach, which is a common optic in contemporary migration research. It is convenient in that it allows reflecting on methodological nationalism and the ethnic lens. However, when the research focus is broader than the relations between migrants and their relatives other techniques of sampling need to be applied. Furthermore, methodological ambitions often have their challenges. For instance, obtaining contact details in a matched sample design might be demanding because people may be doubtful about giving out contact details of their significant others in the emigration countries, especially when transnational research teams are involved in the project, as the interviewers in the immigration and emigration countries are often not the same person. Interviewees might also hesitate to give the contact details of their friends and relatives who they identified as "vulnerable". This sampling method thus proves to be challenging and can lead to dissatisfaction during the research (Barglowski et al. 2015).

9.5.4 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is useful when the research is orientated towards a rather clearcut research interest. In the literature, it is also known as "opportunistic", "maximum variation", "typical case", "homogenous", "theory based", "random/stratified purposeful", "deliberate" or "convenience" sampling (Iosifides 2011). It involves the identification of relevant cases before the research is conducted. There are

different strategies of constructing a purposive sample. Patton (1990) is usually the authority when it comes to delineating the basics of purposeful sampling:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. For example, if the purpose of an evaluation is to increase the effectiveness of a program in reaching lower-socioeconomic groups, one may learn a great deal more by focusing in depth on understanding the needs, interests, and incentives of a small number of carefully selected poor families than by gathering standardized information from a large, statistically representative sample of the whole program. The purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study (Patton 1990, p. 169).

What is considered to be an "information-rich case" can either be identified based on own knowledge about the field, mirror the research interest, or be derived from theoretical considerations. A purposive sampling may make it easier when writing proposals demands to provide a definite sample size, than with the more cyclical forms of theoretical or snowball sampling, where the sample evolves throughout the research. Purposive sampling is useful when the research is orientated towards a specific case and when researchers have a rather clear image of what they aim to find out. For instance, in a joint research project on migrants' self-entrepreneurship, cases were deliberately chosen as to rather clear characteristics:

> [The] central cases were male and female migrants and native-born females who, due to dismissal, operational termination or a longer period of family life, no longer had reasonable chances for a profitable future in similar employment situations. Further study participants were female members of the dominant society and relatives and offspring of first- and second-generation migrants who, despite completing educational and training programs—in many cases a university degree—for an occupation for which they were well qualified, were not able to attain traditional dependent vocational placements. They had opened, either with or without the support of private commercial assistance programs, small businesses which typically offered personalized services or had started a so-called solo self-employment business which relied solely on the diligence of the owner him/herself. In the first years, incomes of such activities seldom reached levels considerably higher than those of unemployment and social assistance, and in some cases were even lower. Extensive expansion in the future was not expected (Apitzsch 2003, pp. 165–166).

Alternatively, the purposive sample method can also be used when the research design allows only to have limited numbers of cases as data sources. This kind of sampling can also be used in multi-sited research designs, where data are collected in different locales. In migration research, multi-sited mostly means field work in different countries. Vullnetari and King (2008) were interested in how care for elderly works in countries with high levels and normative ideals of familial care, but simultaneously very high rates of emigration of young people. First, they have picked migration from Albania because "the collapse of the old regimes' paternalistic welfare state has combined with the mass emigration of working-age people to produce a new social phenomenon of abandoned and destitute elderly" (pp. 139–140). They have decided to study the mass emigration to Greece, as a main destination country for Albanians, and have decided for a multi-sited approach, and

conducted interviews with different types of respondents in different places. Within these "country" cases, these authors picked cases, such as people to ask or situations to observe, that would most likely be good "informants":

> Interviews (n = 38) in a cluster of four small villages in southeast Albania. All interviewees were selected as older village residents with adult children currently living abroad. Some of the households also had children who had migrated internally to Tirana or other important towns.
>
> Interviews (n = 23) with Albanian migrants from the four villages who had relocated to the Greek city of Thessaloniki. Some of these were family members of interviewees in the villages. In Thessaloniki our focus was both on the care practices of migrants towards their elderly relatives back home, and on older people who had followed their children to Greece (Vullnetari and King 2008, p. 148).

Another purposive way of constructing samples is according to analytical considerations. This type of sampling does not involve "information-rich" case, but the construction of status groups, as associations between respondents' characteristics. A very illustrative example for such a sample was provided in Nohl et al. (2006). The authors sampled respondents according to their legal status, thereby aiming to avoid an ethnic lens. At the same time, collecting accounts from respondents with different legal status allowed for thorough comparisons of the impact of legal status on, in their case, migrants' labor market incorporation. Comparisons in many qualitative methodologies are an important analytical procedure to achieve valid results, for instance in Grounded Theory Methodology. That is, because rather than the size of the sample, the internal variation is an important quality criterion of qualitative studies. In their study on cultural capital in migration, the authors defined different groups of migrants and investigated how they can "transport" their cultural capital from one country to the other. As such, the investigation's objective was to analyze the processes of capital recognition, such as skills and knowledge in different national contexts. Their sampling perfectly matched their research question, as the main aim was to find out how different status groups, in terms of educational credentials and where they were obtained, matter for the opportunities and restrictions various "groups" face in entering the labor markets in the immigration country.

> [I]n particular we differentiate between persons with medium and high educational qualifications, between so-called Bildungsinländer (the group of indigenously trained persons whose last educational title was acquired after migrating) and Bildungsausländer (the group of foreign trained persons whose last educational title was acquired before migrating). Furthermore, we categorize groups with respect to their right of residence and legal access to the labor market. Formal legal equality means in this context that migrants have no legal problems with respect to their right of residence and work permit which would put them into a position of disadvantage compared to the native-born population (Nohl et al. 2006, p. 31).

Researchers, however, need to be aware that by having many considerations prior to entering the field, they might exclude empirical evidence besides these categories. Furthermore, this type of case selection might reproduce "groupism", in terms of treating scientific categories as natural categories and assume equal identifications

within those groups. The cited authors here are well aware of the potential limitations of their sampling strategy, which, as all types of sampling, faces particular challenges. Nohl and colleagues reflect groupism and the reification of ethnonational categories by constructing their sampling according to legal groups and not ethnicity.

9.6   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the basic principles and guidelines of sampling in qualitative research and emphasized the significance of selecting cases for the generalization and validity of findings. Therefore, when designing a qualitative study, researchers need to carefully think about which sampling strategy to use, because the way they select their cases largely influences the breadth and depth of their study. The purposive character of sampling in qualitative research urges researchers to constantly reflect on the question of what general pattern their sample will represent, or in other words: *what is the case a case of*? Searching answers to this question is an inherent part of the qualitative research process. It can be demanding as it requires researchers to deal with insecurities of not knowing where exactly their research will lead them. At the same time, the field of migration involves some particular considerations for case selection, because of the methodological challenges that migration research is confronted with: most importantly methodological nationalism and the ethnic lens (Amelina and Faist 2012). Notably in research on migration within the European Union, where its freedom of mobility regime yields multiple border crossings, research techniques need to be open to the various socio-spatial boundaries that come to influence contemporary social life. Accordingly, researchers should avoid the common-sense that nation states and ethnicity are the main organizing principles of sociality. Sampling is a crucial part of research which enables interrogating the significance of the boundaries of nation states and ethnicity. To provide some guidance, this chapter discussed the basic principles, merits and disadvantages in relation to these challenges of the most common sampling techniques in migration research:

1. *Theoretical Sampling*: this sampling is based on the inductive method of Grounded Theory Methodology. Its merits are that it evolves during the research process and thus corresponds with the explorative character of interpretative research. Also, as to its comparative approach and goal of maximum variation it can reduce overemphasizing ethnicity. Yet, it is often hard to implement, because it is time consuming and the quality criterion of saturation for samples, which means that more data would not lead to more information, makes it hard to offer definite sample sizes in writing research proposals as well as it maximizes insecurities in the research process.

2. *Snowball Sampling:* this sampling allows tracing networks and relationships by asking respondents for contacts to people they know. It is a very convenient method to analyse networks, but it minimizes the probability of accessing people which are not connected to the units of entry and if not well reflected it might be prone to an "ethnic lens". Multiple entry points can decrease the risk of being limited to one network as a research unit.

3. *Matched Sampling:* this convenient sampling strategy was put forward by Mazzucato (2009). It is based on the assumption that people are simultaneously positioned in more than one place and thus involves data collection in different places. It is particularly fruitful for transnational research and dealing with methodological nationalism, though it runs the risk of an ethnic lens if not carefully implemented. Also, it can be costly and time-consuming as well as it proved to be hard to reach respondents in the emigration countries, particularly those which were perceived by their relatives as "vulnerable" (Barglowski et al. 2015).

4. *Purposive Sampling:* this sampling relies on researcher's judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics. In contrast to the other sampling techniques, the characteristics of respondents are established before entering the field. This makes it easier for writing those research proposals where definite information, such as numbers, of respondents need to be stated as well as it might provide some security towards the contingencies of the research process. But it also runs the risk of the "ethnic lens", as well as of not reaching cases outside the pre-established categories. Its potential to avoid methodological nationalism depends on the application during the research.

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Part III
Qualitative Techniques and Data Analysis

Chapter 10
The Interview in Migration Studies: A Step towards a Dialogue and Knowledge Co-production?

Olena Fedyuk and Violetta Zentai

10.1 Introduction

The European migration research agenda, marked by an incredibly rich overlap of transnational social fields, brings various global and local trends, tightly overlapped, to its fore. The diversity of migration as an experienced and lived phenomenon, the multiplicity of work, welfare and citizenship regimes that often structure the move of individuals through European national and supra-national borders, and the histories of migratory trends and routes to and within various European states, all make the European context particularly diverse. It also signals the existence of intricate connections between various local conditions across the globe through the processes and histories of colonization, migration and globalisation. The interview, as one of the key methods in the broader qualitative research toolkit, and within migration research in particular, calls for a thorough epistemological scrutiny of its application, purpose, limitations and strengths. In this chapter we argue that the interview has great potential to unravel the "multi-layered links of global connectivity" (Castles 2012: 36) when applied with dynamic reflection on the contextual connections constituting the very core of migration research, the role of the researcher and the interviewed, and the power of knowledge production.

Even though the interview has been widely employed as a method to improve qualitative insight in various types of research, for migration studies, interviews have proved indispensable when researching vulnerable groups of people on the

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move, and collecting data about various aspects of irregularity, grey economic activities, and the autonomy and agency of mobile people. As such, the interview has long been central to the design of ethnographic studies; however, it has also been increasingly used as an integral part of comparative case-study research, historical inquiries, and critical policy studies of migration. Interviews are often successfully integrated into wider qualitative inquiries, and used to obtain expert knowledge or elite opinions and political positions, thus departing substantially from the same method employed in ethnographic studies of non-elite, lower status or specifically vulnerable groups. As such, the interview needs to be carefully adapted to each data collection purpose, and to incorporate a reflexive reflection on the role of the interviewer and accompanying power dynamics.

In recent decades, the interview has also become essential to scholarly endeavours that pursue collaborative knowledge production and participant research. It has been used to carve a space directly for the respondents' voices and analysis of the situation, even though, as we will demonstrate later, this always remains contextual. As a method, various forms of interview allow for the unveiling of knowledge that otherwise would remain under the radar of formal surveys and other more standardized forms of data collection. Additionally, forms such as biographical and life story interviews, or unstructured interviews, allow the respondent to actively shape the research inquiry, and for the researcher to map out those areas not originally seen as part of the inquiry.

To understand the role of the interview in European migration research, this chapter first briefly outlines the distinct features of this method within the larger scope of qualitative methodology, and addresses the wider epistemological debate over the interview. Thus, we refer to the interview as a specific method within a broader qualitative methodological approach. This approach is situated at the crossroads of epistemological debates on power-invested knowledge production and the question of how methodology at large, and methods in particular, affect research outcomes and structure knowledge production. We then discuss how interviews have become particularly useful in certain areas of migration research, and revisit some of the main debates around interviewing techniques and roles within the interview setting, as well as the implications of these choices for research outcomes and data analysis. We have chosen to focus on and draw examples from the ethnographic traditions of interviewing, without undermining the wide use of interviews in a variety of disciplines exploring migration issues. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some challenges of interview use and data analysis, and suggests further potential contributions for more collaborative and reflexive research.

10.2 Outstanding Challenges and Complementarities of the Interview as a Method Within Qualitative Research

In the migration field, the interview as a method rarely stands on its own; it is often combined with other methods, such as participatory or non-participatory observation, focus group discussions, or oral history and life-story data collection, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the issues (see Morawska in this volume). Depending on the research purpose, there exists a great variety of interview formats, each adjustable to the needs of a particular inquiry, context and interview settings.

The most common *format-based typology* divides interviews into *structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews* according to the rigidity of the interviewer's guidance on conducting a conversation with the respondent. Thus, the most structured interview often resembles the survey type, with all questions being written down in advance and duly asked at the interview appointment. Semi-structured interviews precondition a more open interview outline, which is often guided by the research interest or a particular topic of enquiry. Here, the interviewer ensures that respondents remain close to the topic, but often leaves enough space for the interviewee to open up the discussion and introduce connected topics, thus making it more exploratory in nature and cooperative in terms of knowledge production. Unstructured interviews are often a "luxury" of more observational and participatory research, where the researcher is able to spend sufficient time with the respondent and hold conversations in which it is the interviewee who largely structures the conversation. Depending on the type, interviews can contain *open-ended* or "*yes/no*" *questions*, each offering different opportunities for data collection and interpretation.

As with other methods, it is crucial to bear in mind the type of data to be collected in an interview setting. Charmaz (2006) speaks of intensive interviewing as a form of "in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience" that paves the way for interpretive inquiry (2006: 25), and juxtaposes it with informational interviewing used to collect exploratory data. Another distinction between the types of data sought is generated by how the individual narratives and reflections revealed in the interviews relate to the respondent's own life, often at the centre of the inquiry. Accordingly, the literature identifies "life-story," "oral history" and "biographical" interviews. As a specific form, "expert" interviews explore claimed expertise or entitlement to represent, say, an institutional position or reflections thereon, in addition to collecting information not easily obtained from written sources. In each case, an interview embraces a conversation, in which the interviewee shares her/his experience, opinions, memories, and knowledge, while "the interviewer is there to listen, to observe with sensitivity, and to encourage the person to respond" (Charmaz 2006: 25–26). As such, this calls for special reflexivity around power dynamics in such a setting, and a high ethical benchmark (see Iosifides, Chap. 6 in this volume, in particular Sect. 6.4).

Not dissimilar to the other qualitative research methods such as focus groups, observation, and discourse analysis, the role of the researcher becomes an integral component of the method, be it through proximity of the contact established and the level of intimacy reached in an interview setting, or through a symbolic role the interviewer might (in)voluntarily represent by her/his association with a certain class, gender, nationality or race. The success of the interview as a method can depend on any or a combination of the above factors, in addition to being affected by the location, timing and setting of the interviewing process. It therefore requires particular reflexivity concerning the researcher's positionality when conceiving, collecting and interpreting data.

The interview method is often critiqued for collecting unrepresentative and free-floating interpretive data, even in post-positivist social sciences. What does it then mean that data collected at the interview should not be taken at face value? The interview should not be used primarily to collect "hard facts", but rather to guide a researcher through relevant issues in the field, collect data about lived experiences, knowledge, opinions and perspectives, and links between the individual and the collective that will help the researcher to understand and draw her/his conclusions about the field or a specific research question. Even expert interviews on the most seemingly neutral and technical details of events, laws, decisions, and so on, include implicit opinions, silences, accents, and reasoning that rarely render information "pure facts". In return, the interview method offers the richness of experience and thickness of ethnographic data that cannot be reached solely via the researcher's observation, discourse analysis, or the regulated format of a focus group. In all its manifestations, the interview is used as a method that allows for a reflexive mastering of research, sensitive to the transformation and adjustments of the original design in the light of new information and discoveries (Charmaz 2006). It is not surprising that the interview has become integral to the grounded theory approach, in which it is incorporated into step-by-step adjustment of the research design and conceptual advancement throughout the research process (see more on grounded theory by Barglowski in this volume). We will now discuss the specific way in which the interview has been instrumental in developing new paradigms in European migration studies.

Such considerations can help significantly while structuring interviews and choosing the type of questions to be asked. Understanding the purpose of the interview in research design is crucial: does it serve to obtain expert opinion, demonstrate an opinion, convey a lived experience and perspective, or explore the potential issues in the field? The interview structure will significantly depend on the researcher's level of access and positionality in the field; in certain situations, it is better to try to establish contact with the respondents by letting them lead the conversation, and occasionally try to guide it in a certain direction. This interview style grants a greater sense of empowerment and control to the respondent, who can choose her/his own words to articulate their experience and knowledge, without the need for such experience being framed in the researcher's agenda and words. In other settings – and this is more common for expert interviews –, a well-(semi-)structured interview can make a good impression on the interviewed expert in the field and also

ensure that the researcher covers all aspects of the problem. In both cases, it is important to remember that conducting an interview not only helps to acquire information or opinion, but also opens up neglected areas and directions in the research design, and points to directions and issues overlooked by the researcher. It is thus better to avoid survey-like "yes/no" type questions, and instead use questions that leave the interviewee enough freedom to shape the direction of the inquiry, rather than following a rigid structure proposed by the interviewer.

10.3   When and How Can Interview Techniques Serve European Migration Research?

In the context of qualitative migration research, the interview has been frequently used to: (a) access vulnerable populations, especially those with liminal regularity or functioning within the grey areas of economic and legal status; (b) provide an open-ended research agenda that can swiftly adjust to and incorporate new issues and directions that emerge during the research; and (c) provide an avenue for more cooperative research in which the respondents' perspectives and interpretation are incorporated more directly into the research outcomes, which can ultimately lead to the co-production of knowledge. We will now briefly summarise some examples of these three main applications in European migration research.

10.3.1   The Interview as a Tool to Reach Vulnerable Migrant Populations

Interviews became a key methodology when researching individuals with liminal legal status, or undocumented migrants (Wills et al. 2010; Ruhs and Anderson 2010; Anderson 2000). Furthermore, there are many other reasons that make a migrant population particularly vulnerable, or difficult to reach or survey. For example, it is often extremely challenging to reach people who have a perfectly legal status, but work in precarious settings in which their lifestyles and daily routines are severely affected by demanding work conditions and schedules. Conducting research with means other than the interview can prove very difficult in sectors such as night shifts and live-in domestic service, logistics centres, food processing farms, construction sites and seasonal agricultural jobs. The volume *Global Cities at Work* edited by Wills et al. (2010) focuses on the role of employment and immigration regimes in creating what the authors term a new class division of the low-paid migrant workers who keep London afloat, using interviews with workers in five low-paid sectors: cleaning, hospitality, construction, domestic care and food processing. Combined with historical analysis, the book succeeds in showing not only migrants' individual lives and trajectories, but also offers a sharp critique of the emergence of low-paid

economy in a global city, with issues of race, gender, ethnicity, and immigration status reinvented in such labour market divisions.

The interview continues to play a major role in exploring the vast and fast-growing care- and domestic labour market in Europe (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000; Keough 2016; Cuban 2013; Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck 2011). Here, the interview as a method helps not only to access migrant populations (mostly women) working in the shadows of private homes and closed care-institutions, but also, importantly, helps to untangle the meaning and practice of "love and caring mix with power and agency in the labour-for-money exchange" (Keough 2016: 31) that characterizes this job sector, one that is usually hidden from the public gaze. A further example of interview usage in research into stereotyped or stigmatized forms of migrant labour is Irene Peano's investigation into sex work (2013), which reveals the complex world of labour bondage and support networks within Nigerian prostitution networks in Italy. Van Liempt and Bilger in this volume discuss puzzles and methods of qualitative research conducted among 'smuggled migrants'.

For all the above-mentioned migrant workforce sectors and groups in Europe, organizing a focus group, conducting a survey or accessing the workplace for observation, is often next to impossible. Because the interview is flexible, it can be conducted at a convenient time or on neutral territory, where the respondent feels safe to express her/his views without repercussions. The interview allows the researcher to delve into respondents' experiential and interpretative worlds, and to account for the shifting situational practices, networks and identifications specific to the combination of precarious work and migration. In such research areas therefore, one has to be particularly aware of the interview conditions, place and time, all of which can affect the respondent's degree of openness.

10.3.2 The Interview as a Method That Allows Researchers to Develop an Open-Ended Research Agenda

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews in particular can be used to keep a research agenda open-ended and allow respondents to hint at possibly omitted areas of inquiry. This approach is often used in the exploratory or research design stage, but not only here; in fact, it often becomes integral to building new perspectives. In their insightful volume *Women Migrants from East to West: Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe,* Passerini et al. argue that "the interviews provide us with theoretical reconsideration of the assumptions attached to the term migration" (Passerini et al. 2007: 3). The authors thus stress the role played by the interview as method in shaping the transnationalist turn in migration scholarship in the 1990s, and "understanding migration practices in cultural, political, civic and economic terms" (2007: 3). Using interviews and life stories with Bulgarian and

Hungarian migrant women, and Italian and Dutch native women, the authors employ a unique, targeted use of the interview as method: the academic team makes use of the very same interviews collected during the research, but interprets them from different perspectives in each chapter. Explaining their methodological choices, the authors remind us that "the cultural stratifications of memory, ideology and experiences converge to compose complex narrations that correspond in an indirect way to the complexities in the social processes of geographical mobility" (2007: 6). With this interpretive work, the authors create a finely tuned picture of subjectivities situated in specific institutional and inter-subjective settings, and the encounters between migrant and native women.

A further example worth highlighting is a recent research with Polish fathers in Ireland and Poland. Conducted by female researchers who responded to the neglect of fathering experiences in transnational migration, this research focused on "fathering narratives, practices, and projects of migrant men" (Kilkey et al. 2014: 178), utilizing inquiry design and questions typically used in researching motherhood and its transnational practices. The study shows that when asked the same questions usually asked of women, men do reflect on and actively engage with issues of distant fatherhood, despite the relative silence in migration studies on these issues (Kilkey et al. 2014). These examples reveal one of the main advantages of the interview as a method: it creates possibilities for expanding and refining one's original research agenda, adding previously unnoticed elements into research design, while gaining a fresh perspective on the roles and perspectives of the actors.

10.3.3 Action Research and the Interview as a Part of Complex Representations

The interpretive nature of data collected through interviews, and the need for close cooperation with the respondent, have been highlighted by advocates of collaborative and action research. In these endeavours, the voice of the respondent is incorporated as an integral part of knowledge production, so that the researcher can make a direct impact on the respondent's situation. Accordingly, interviewing can be used as a platform for interviewees' more direct claim-making, or sharing a political standpoint or insider's knowledge on their "side of the story." It is not uncommon for such research to be combined with forms of communication other than written texts to facilitate wider social outreach. Examples of such interview use in European migration research are many, and most of them aim at foregrounding the autonomy of migrating and mobile populations, articulating political voice and alternative forms of organisation, and generating mobilization and solidarity. Such projects carry the potential for the interviewer to challenge existing migration and border regimes, labelling and fragmentation of the integrity and rights of migrating individuals, and elevating the migrants' voices to the contested politics of mobility (Squire 2011; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013).

There are a growing number of collaborative projects that use interviews to bring the voice of the respondent closer to a wider audience. Often, these are textual-visual, video and interactive online projects that also push disciplinary boundaries and help represent populations which otherwise remain silent or of weak voice. Here, it is worth mentioning a number of quite diverse projects. The London-based cooperative *Angry Workers* and Labournet TV used filmed interviews with workers, activists and trade unionists to document and support the labour struggles of migrants in Italian logistics centres (Ditching the fear, 2015). The visual-textual project *Work is Elsewhere* followed 16 mobile workers of different backgrounds moving across Europe from their homes to their workplaces. The in-depth interviews with each migrant, their families and co-workers built a base for the narratives, accompanied by professionally-shot photographs. Interviews also became the basis for at least two archives of migrants' voices and memories in Europe. One project, *Narratives and Images from the Lives of Migrants in Greece* (2004–2008), created a photo album of Albanians taking part (or contributing photographs from family albums), and uses excerpts from their interviews to illuminate their experiences of work, the historical transformations of the region, and migration histories. Another more recent project, the *Archive of Migrant Memories* (started in 2012), uses films made by migrants in Italy, and specifically Lampedusa, as a way to coproduce video memories about or by mobile people.

European migration research has shown a rise in the number of such projects since the so-called refugee crisis, when it became particularly important to create platforms for more collaborative knowledge production about mobile populations. *Syriani in Transito* is a photo-textual project that collects the stories of young Syrian refugees. The interactive online project *I am a migrant* features video portraits and interviews with successful immigrants across the world. Problematic as they may seem from the methodological perspective, these projects combine a variety of media, including film, animation, photo-exhibitions, interactive online documentaries, and emotional cartographies of the migration routes and urban landscapes. While we do not claim here that interviews played a central role in all these projects, we include them as an intriguing inter-disciplinary and inter-media exercise in which interviews were combined with other methods beyond a strictly academic research purpose (see a rich discussion on media and digital technology based research on migration by Leurs and Prabhakar in this volume). The various ways of using interviews and interview techniques in such projects can serve as a sensitive way to engage migrants in political and social struggles, build bridges within communities and help people process their experiences in a more positive, affirmative way.

10.4 The Role of the Researcher in the Interview and Interpretation of Collected Data: Epistemological Questions

The interview's methodological strength stems from the rich potential of a one-on-one conversation with a respondent, and the opportunity to refocus and adjust the scope of inquiry as the interview unfolds. These are possible, however, only due to the prominent role of the researcher throughout the interview: from deciding on the scope of the inquiry, through the selection of respondents, setting the "rules" and structure of the interview, to devising the questions, and registering, storing and interpreting the respondents' data. All this indicates the influence of researcher's position on the nature and scope of data, and its analysis. This is not to say that the researcher's position undermines the credibility of research or produces purely subjective results; it is, however, essential to be aware of and reflect upon the researcher's role and position in all major stages of the research.

While multiple methodological and conceptual attempts exist that speak constructively of the power dynamics within interview settings and data interpretation, in migration studies, the main epistemological debates centre on the concept of the researcher as an insider or outsider to the researched group (Song and Parker 1995; Ryan 2015; Williams 2015; Chereni 2014; Carling et al. 2014). The most influential critics have addressed specifically: (a) the role of the ethno-national lens (Amelina and Faist 2012; Glick Schiller and Caglar 2009; Carling et al. 2014); and (b) the role of gender (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000, Mahler and Pessar 2006, Passerini et al. 2007) in constructing insider or outsider categories. Other scholars of the insider/outsider dilemma propose the establishment of "multiple positionalities" to challenge the fixed constructions of "insiders" versus "outsiders" in the research process (Ryan 2015). These positionalities may be found through reflecting upon gender, age/generation, parental status and migratory experiences, as well as the intersections of these, for both the interviewer and interviewees.

10.4.1 Who Is an Insider or an Outsider in an Interview, and How Does It Matter?

The presumption in migration research that the interviewer is an insider (belonging to the same ethnic or national group) rests heavily on the methodological nationalism perspective and the ethnic lens (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003, Glick Schiller and Caglar 2009). Accordingly, when a researcher shares the same ethnic or national background as the researched group or individual, it is assumed that s/he becomes an insider to the perspectives and/or social positions of the researched. This,

allegedly, helps to obtain more intimate and authentic knowledge. The transnationalist perspective denounces the centrality of nation-states' territorial and institutional boundaries in shaping the migrants' and researcher's identifications, and theorizes the importance of the simultaneous and multiple embeddedness of transnational migrants in various roles and groups across borders (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2008, 2011; Caglar 2007). Amelina and Faist (2012) emphasize the rigidity of the ethnic lens-based approach and call for de-naturalizing the assumed roles based on nationalities through reflexivity and multilocality (2012). The authors suggest that the multilocality approach encourages not only research in multiple locations, but also a multiplicity of perspectives and belongings (religious, political, and/or social), all of which can guide situational activities and representations when interviewing both migrants and non-migrants (Amelina and Faist 2012).

Song and Parker (1995), focusing on the methodological implications of conducting research among Chinese immigrants in Britain, express their frustration with the oversimplified categorization of insider/outsider in migration research, arguing that it hampers research on at least two levels. On the one hand, it neglects diversity within groups to which both researcher and the interviewee belong, while on the other, it "obscures the diversity of experiences that can occur between the researcher and the researched" (Song and Parker 1995: 243). In their conceptual-methodological reflection on conducting research with their co-ethnics "beyond the insider–outsider divide in migration research", Carling et al. (2014) advocate for a more nuanced approach to personality in research settings and propose a "third position" typology. This conceptual move broadens the range of the researcher's engagement and complicates the insider-outsider dichotomy. The proposed typology encompasses the positions of "explicit third party, honorary insider, insider by proxy, hybrid insider-outsider, and apparent insider" (2014: 1), all of which are based on the characteristics and markers of identity that are actively managed and manipulated in an interview or research setting (on challenges of categorisations see Jakobs in this volume).

Carling et al. (2014) describe how their Polish-born researcher, conducting interviews with Tamils in Norway, was first perceived as an ethnic outsider, but could gain interview access to a Tamil female respondent due to the fact that the former was visibly pregnant. The authors analyse the situation as shifting the "entire dynamics" in the setting: "This rather insecure informant became the experienced mother and older woman who could offer valuable knowledge and advice to the young researcher. The change in power relations in the interview context later spilled over into discussion of topics that were central to the research question" (2014: 19). Other studies have similarly emphasized that none of the single identities is sufficient to secure the insider position, with gender, class and age being among most significant markers. Different aspects of identification can become more prominent than others in an interview setting, thus making it essential not to cement methodological specifications according to social categories, but to incorporate them into the research design with critical reflexivity. Further, sophisticated gender reflexivity should not be limited to addressing the embodied gender experi-

ence in an encounter between individuals. It also helps facilitate a discussion of gendered regimes at large, that is, the organisation of social relations, situations, and positions assigned according to gendered hierarchies, in which both interviewer and interviewee are embedded and conditioned.

We argue that understanding the interview encounter as flexible, situational and dynamic should inform research design and data interpretation. It is difficult for the researcher to encourage collaboration, to discover what is at stake for the interviewees, and to bring forth their situational narratives in an interview setting. It is also challenging to move beyond these situational encounters in the analysis, and understand what generates situational narratives. Each encounter brings a new negotiation of roles, and requires continuous checks and accountability on the distribution of social positions assumed in an interview (for a detailed methodological discussion, see the qualitative study with Zimbabweans in Johannesburg by Admire Chereni 2014).

10.4.2   *A Dynamic Approach to the Identity of the Researcher*

In her reflections, Ribbens (1989) calls the interview "an unnatural situation" in which there is an imbalance between one person speaking at length about their lives and experiences, faced with another person, just briefly introduced, and "collecting" the information. Several authors advocate for managing, rather than simply assuming, one's perspective and role in the interview situation. This embodies an important shift towards reflexivity as a main "check point" in the research, where neither the role of the researcher nor that of the interviewee can be assumed. Ryan (2015) proposes a concept of "multiple positionalities" and suggests that "interview processes should be understood in terms of the dynamic rhythms of multi-positionalities" (2015: 2), rather than an encounter between insiders and outsiders. Razon and Ross (2012) and Ryan (2015) use the metaphor of a "power dance" in the research encounter, where "the interviewer is trying to place the interviewee, but at the same time, the interviewee is also trying to position the researcher" (Ryan 2015: 5). In this dynamic approach, gender and ethnicity, age, class and religion, are not "standalone dimensions of who we are", but "ingredients in a complex and active mix of identities" (Ryan 2015).

To remain reflexive about power relations without becoming lost in the fragmentation and detail of a situational identification and encounter, we find two concepts particularly fruitful. One stresses the issue of empathy, referring to "*how we listen*" (Ribbens 1989: 586), while the other centres on *performativity*: here we refer to Hochschild's (1983) interpretation of deep acting. Based on her reading of Erving Goffman and Konstantin Stanislavski, she explains how we attune our social interactions based on our beliefs and situational encounters. Reflecting on her multi-year research with migrants from Polish and Irish backgrounds in the UK, Ryan (2015) emphasises the role of empathy and rapport in an interview setting and data analy-

sis. She approaches both empathy and rapport as active notions, requiring negotiation "through positionalities of gender, age/generation, parental status and migratory experience as well as nationality" (2015: 2). She argues that "interview processes should be understood in terms of the dynamic rhythms of multi-positionalities." She argues that this approach enables researchers to be reflexive about the contingency of empathy, understanding and rapport that constitutes an interview situation. Further, "these need to be continually negotiated across layers of power differentials" (Ryan 2015: 3).

In migration research, telling a story (that is, performing a narrative of migration) plays a prominent role: it often becomes indispensable for the very possibility of mobility. Thus, in case of applications for visas, residence permits or asylum, success can be attained only when the applicant tells a story "recognizable" to the bureaucratic machine. A simplified narrative needs to be learnt, performed, and embodied. Performativity in this case enters the domain of what Hochschild calls "deep acting" (1983), when the individual trains her/his own feelings to believe and feel in a certain way. The presence of a researcher enquiring into one's migration story can often be (in)voluntarily identified by the interviewee as representing certain power structures, which can trigger a specific line of self-representation.

These two notions of how we listen (empathy) and how we tell our stories (performativity) offer a less-well explored but nevertheless intriguing line of thought beyond the insider/outsider debate. It has been noted that even being an ultimate insider can trigger a distance between the researcher and the researched. Certain forms of performativity can be viewed as a matter of shared understanding, thus leaving the performed roles unexplained. This caveat resonates with the notion of "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 1997) as "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (1997: 3). Such intimacy can render certain topics taboo, in fear of violating a culturally shared sense of propriety, and thus lead to starker, more clichéd responses. By the same token, being a "perfect outsider" can trigger a certain freedom from the assumed shared norms, or open up new paths and agendas for research or the interviewee's personal interpretation.

10.5　The Interview Within Research Design, Interview Data Processing and Interpretation

10.5.1　Mapping and Adjusting

In a qualitative inquiry, research design often presents a variety and combination of methods; it is therefore important to approach time and other resources in a strategic way, leaving enough room for data processing. Ideally, a research project starts with mapping out the field, or even a pilot research project. It is during this stage that

interviews can help to sharpen, broaden, or change the direction of the research inquiry based on preliminary findings. However, researchers often do not have the luxury of a pilot, and it is during the empirical research, or even afterwards, that they realise that the data points in a different direction, or that some questions remain unasked. It is therefore important to plan time for the *adjustment of design* and data-gathering methods. Adjustments can be pursued through repeated interviews with key (or the most interesting) respondents, or a follow-up Skype interview or correspondence, which is more likely when researching mobile populations. Such interviews are often called clarification or follow-up interviews, and while these sessions do not need to be as formal as the original interview setting, they usually aim to cover new ground that remained unnoticed during the first interview.

Adjusting research design can be a tricky and time-consuming process, which rarely reaches the methodology part of papers, and remains invisible in the final reporting. Each research adjustment tells its own stories of dead-ends and unexpected findings. For this reason, in this final content section of our paper, we turn to examples from our own fieldwork to exemplify some of the points. In particular, we will draw on an unpublished doctoral thesis available online, "Beyond Motherhood" by Olena Fedyuk (2011), in which over 80 semi-structured and life-story interviews conducted with Ukrainian domestic and care workers in Italy in 2007–2008 constituted one of the main data sources. Thus, in her methodology section, the author takes a specific epistemological position in saying that when conducting research with migrants, researchers often recount "success stories" by default, that is, those who made their migration project real, despite losses and hardships along the way. While researching such stories, we must pay equal attention to the silences around experiences, and to the gaps in narratives, closures and taboos in discussions. The author points out that her own position as a young Ukrainian woman in the field made it impossible for her to talk to her female respondents' husbands, most of whom were in their 40s and 50s. Similarly, the author discusses that when wanting to interview and compare mothers and children within one migrating family, she could only obtain good access and a trusting relationship with either the mother or the child, but never both. These frustrating fieldwork closures initially seemed to upset the research design for interviewing family units, yet pushed the author to rethink not only her access strategies but also the meaning of taboos within transnational families. It specifically led her towards one of the central themes in her thesis: the "politics" within the transnational family, in which the preservation of distance and performance was essential to maintaining peace within relationships affected by years of distance. It became key to exploring the unevenness of transnational connections and how members of these families negotiate their positions within internal hierarchies (Fedyuk 2011).

It is during these follow-up sessions that a researcher might come across new interpretations of their research problem, or a different research question altogether. These are, however, in a sense, true findings that make a research particularly innovative and practical. Without fearing productive adjustment, we suggest two

strategies for adoption in research design and management. The first is to draw as detailed and thorough a picture of the research site/field as possible before the empirical research starts. This may involve outlining the main actors in the field (not only the group in the focus of the research, but possibly other actors and institutions that may affect the respondents' lives) by conducting a couple of exploratory expert interviews with actors or other scholars in the field. Drawing a map of such actors has multiple advantages: it can help to identify and access relevant respondents; it helps draw areas of interview inquiry towards the spheres of interaction between the actors; it can give a different perspective on the stories collected in the process of interviewing migrants; and it helps forge a more meaningful connection between the researcher and the field.

Second, we would like to emphasise the importance of *reflexivity* during data collection. By this we mean a critical questioning of the data, the conditions and circumstances under which it was collected, relationships in the field, and the positioning of the researcher. For this, we find it invaluable to keep a field work diary, where a researcher can note all particulars of the interview settings and encounters. Not only can this be an invaluable guide to later interpretation of the data, but, in some cases, can throw light on a specific interview setting or circumstances which can help analyse data, or even become data in itself.

10.5.2　Data Processing

The technical details of working with interview-generated data are discussed in various widely-accessible manuals (for example, Saldaña 2009). In brief, researchers are advised to record complex and longer interviews. Transcribing interviews is time-consuming, yet immensely useful, or in most cases, essential for data interpretation. The researcher should carefully consider whether s/he needs to transcribe an entire interview, or only selected portions that are highly relevant to the research question. Depending on experience and typing capacities, it is fair to suggest that 1 h of interview material takes at least 4–5 h to transcribe, but for beginners, the ratio could be 1:10.

Transcribed interview texts should be further processed for interpretation. Coding is an instrument for organizing and sorting data, a first step towards interpretation. Codes are used to label, compile and organize qualitative data. Codes may take the form of words, numbers or symbols assigned to particular points in the interview transcripts. Codes speak to the conceptual framework, research questions, or themes which derive therefrom. The coding scheme could be refined by adding, collapsing, expanding and revising the coding categories.

Increasingly sophisticated software programs, such ATLAS.ti, NVIVO, and QDA Miner, have been created to cope with the diversity and consistency of data collected in qualitative research. When applied mindfully, these programs help researchers through data analysis stages such as coding, grouping by themes, singling out patterns, and better and faster search management for quotes, themes and

codes.[1] However, it should be noted that software-based qualitative data analysis neither reduces the amount of data interpretation, nor does it make it more "objective". In principle, processing qualitative data from interviews using sophisticated software programs is very close to what was earlier done manually. Within the breadth of the recorded or transcribed material, a researcher needs to identify codes that reflect on the key research questions and themes, and then, within those, s/he needs to sort and organize the data relevant for those questions. Using software allows the researcher to group, compare, and relate the processed data in a faster and more comfortable manner than before.

Data collected in interview settings could be enhanced and enriched by a further combination of methods, including field observations, surveys, and focus group discussions. These efforts do not have to lead to verification of the information. Contrasting, cross-reading, and relating interpretations of differently-generated data are seen as the best avenues for the most productive use of interview-based information. Widely-used handbooks on qualitative research offer valuable guidance on diverse qualitative research methods, including more conventional and novel ones (for example, Denzin and Lincoln 2017).

10.5.3 Data Interpretation

Interpreting interview data is one of the most challenging aspects of the interview as a method; much of it, however, is embedded in reflexivity concerning the same epistemological questions and power dynamics that accompany the interview setting. Passerini et al. (2007), when elaborating on the oral history research they conducted among Italian, Dutch, Hungarian and Bulgarian women, reflect on the complex process of data analysis and interpretation: "The texts, which then form the data for our analysis, are thereby constructed by multiple interventions; first, the construction of the sample, itself through networks of different subjects, then the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, then the action of transcribers and translators, and finally the viewpoints of the reader in trying to analyse the account" (Passerini et al. 2007: 11). This detailed reflection on the layers of (in)voluntary interpretations underline how important it is for researchers to remain open and reflexive about each level of interpretation.

What can we achieve with reflexivity as an active research stance? We can: (a) avoid stereotypical and clichéd portrayals of the researched groups; (b) give the interviewees the opportunity to maintain their voices and views in the final representation of data (Amelina and Faist 2012); and (c) maintain awareness of data collection as an active process in which the positions of both researcher and interviewee are socially constructed and embedded. Such an ethical approach to the interview

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[1] A useful review and guidance on the most often-used software-based qualitative data analysis tools can be found at: http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/research/researchcentres/caqdas/support/choosing/ (Accessed 18 December, 2017).

method ensures that the findings of a qualitative inquiry are also understood as situational and influenced by the mutual positioning that interview encounters yield.

10.6 Conclusions

The European migration context offers a particularly diverse background for studies of human mobility. The dense overlap of national and supra-national political organizations, resulting in multi-layered migration, employment and welfare regimes, create a context in which migration *per se* cannot be sufficient to understand the experience of mobility, integration results, the sources of inequality for individuals and families with an immigration background, and the paths to overcoming such inequalities. It is important to consider and incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives in migration research, and use combined methodological toolkits which inform the findings and clearly address the main research questions outlined in the research design. The interview method can provide a flexible format for incorporating inquiries from a wide angle of perspectives, be it gender or citizenship studies, cultural studies or geography, religion or urban studies. The design and choice of the interview itself thus depends on disciplinary interests, research objectives, their role in the broader research design, and combination with other methods.

This chapter has demonstrated that in the European migration context, the interview is increasingly used as a research design component in a variety of areas and disciplines that enquire into human mobility. In particular, we have focused on the use of interviews in researching marginalised or vulnerable groups, in research settings where accessing informants using other qualitative methods has proven particularly difficult. We have also emphasised that the interview, often combined with various media formats, has been increasingly used as an advocacy tool, and as a first step towards collaborative research and knowledge co-production. Epistemological debates on the interview as a method cause us to rethink the division in which the interviewee is a source of raw data, and the researcher has the analytical capacity and expertise to turn this into data. As we have highlighted in Sects. 10.4 and 10.5 of this chapter, the researcher's position is just as situational, affected by positionality and vulnerable to contextual subjectivity as that of the respondent. This calls for special reflexivity on the setting and positionality of actors and power dynamics within the interview setting. In Sect. 10.5, we focused on the importance of open-minded and critical evaluation of data collected through interviews, and the possible need for revision vis-à-vis the original research objectives and evaluation. A reflexive approach helps us examine whether the data really does answer the questions posed, which new and previously ignored research directions it opens up, and whether the original research design requires further clarification and adjustment. Only through integrating all these steps into data collection and interpretation can the interview fully realise its methodological potential.

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Chapter 11
Focus Groups in Migration Research: A Forum for "Public Thinking"?

Annalisa Frisina

11.1 What Are Focus Groups? Why Are They Useful for Migration Research?

The Focus Group[1] (FG) is a social research method widely used in contemporary qualitative research. It is based on the *interaction among participants* in a *small group* (usually 7–10 people) *produced by researchers* with the *aim of gaining scientific knowledge*. Led by two researchers, one investigator *facilitates the discussion* based on topic guidelines, while the other observes – above all addressing his/her attention towards body language (Frisina 2010). The groups are constructed based on a *sample design* with attention to their composition, since this provides the key to the necessary *comparisons* that need to be made (Barbour 2007).

   As the researchers' primary task is to choose the best way to use FGs to answer a specific research question and to justify their choice, researchers should adapt, borrow and combine different approaches of doing FGs. However, if researchers choose the qualitative side of social research, aiming at generating in-depth analyses, "redefining existing categories" and, above all, being "attuned to understanding the voices of social actors and immigrant groups, especially the ones who lack

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[1] The origins of FGs date back to the sociologist Robert K. Merton. In 1941, a US government agency commissioned studies to learn about the media's influence on citizens and Paul Lazarsfeld mainly used individual interviews. Dissatisfied, he called his colleague Merton to observe a research session and he suggested they try to involve several people in an "interview" (a "focused interview"). Thanks to Lazarsfeld, this method was then widely used in market research, while in social research it was long overlooked after Merton himself kept his distance. Only in the eighties did the FG return to the social sciences and since then, the areas and the ways they have been used are more common and varied.

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means of participation and representation in mainstream society and politics"
(see Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, Chap. 1 Introduction), they need to put first some
methodological options. Doing FGs in qualitative research[2] involves opting for *low
standardization* (keeping in mind that the theme presented for discussion to the
participants will be *context-sensitive*). In the research, it is also important to main-
tain *low directivity* (*researchers restrict their power* to define the contents of the
discussion). Finally, regarding topic guidelines with questions for group discussion,
a *low level of structure* (the *outline of the topics to be discussed will be flexible* and
the questions asked to participants present low constraints) is preferable[3]

While interviews excel at eliciting "private" accounts, FGs give researchers
access to the narratives and arguments that participants present in group situations,
whether these are peer groups or researcher-convened groups of strangers. The
added value of FGs compared to individual interviews is that not only do they allow
the researchers to listen in to accounts about everyday experiences, but researchers
are also able to observe the *interactional context* in which these accounts are
produced. If we follow conversation analysts' invitation not to listen naively to the
voices of social actors while thinking one has "direct access" to their experience, it
is very useful to observe what happens in the interaction and to study the actions
through which the taken for granted world is reproduced.

FGs are used to understand the *process* of creating *consensus* and *dissent* via
interaction (Frisina 2010). FGs allow researchers to investigate how hegemonic[4]
representations are formed, how they are negotiated, and how they can change.
Moreover, especially within collaborative or participatory research with marginalized
social actors, FGs may offer a "safe space" for generating counter-hegemonic
discourses.

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[2] FGs have most frequently been used within the context of quantitative studies for developing and
refining research instruments. One of the most common uses of FGs is during the exploratory
phase of a research project. In many cases, they are integrated in a multi-method design with other
quantitative/qualitative methods.

[3] FGs may have different levels of standardization, directivity and structure, like interviews (Bichi
2007). When the goal is answering a "how much…?" question, doing an extensive study, reaching
a statistically representative sample, involving a high number of people and groups, it is preferable
to choose high standardization/directivity/structure. However, in depth studies – which try to
answer "how…?" and "what…?" questions, including a limited number of cases, people, groups –
allow researchers to carefully study meaning-making and to understand diverse cultural frame-
works of social actors.

[4] According to Stuart Hall's reading of Antonio Gramsci (see Hall and Mellino 2007), hegemony is
the combination of functional strategies in the maintenance of the status quo, thus, to the interest
of those in power. Nevertheless, hegemony is the unstable because the construction of consensus
is always imperfect and the common sense is inevitably shaken by tensions. So, by hegemonic
representation I mean that one which reinforces the hierarchy of power (whether it is about gender
or class or race, etc.). By counter-hegemonic representations, I am referring to discourses call into
question the common sense and the social hierarchy that it produces.

Focus groups have been appreciated for different reasons:

- For generating high quality and interactive data, for offering the possibility of theoretical advances regarding the co-construction of meaning between people in specific social contexts, for addressing ethical concerns about power and the imposition of meaning (Wilkinson 1998)
- For being contextual and less-hierarchical (reducing the influence of the researcher), for emphasizing the *collective* rather than the individual and fostering free expression of ideas, and for encouraging people to speak up (Madriz 2000, 838).

11.2 Why Are Focus Groups Useful for Migration Research?

If a crucial feature of qualitative migration research is to offer a critical assessment of social and political reality, FGs can be considered forums for "public thinking", where controversial issues (border/mobility, diversity/citizenship, integration/participation and discrimination/racialization) are discussed. As we will see in this chapter, research with FGs does not include only migrants. FGs are very useful in studying the interactions of migrants (and their descendants) with the host society (i.e., public and private actors). FGs may provide a space for *questioning* taken for granted points of view and experiences, they may generate processes of "consciousness raising" and transform personal troubles into *public issues* (Mills 1959).

Moreover, if all migration research is comparative (Bloemraad 2013), using FGs is a particularly suitable method for making comparisons (see next paragraph on how to construct groups).

Finally, if we are especially interested in European migration research, *considering Europe not only as our empirical field, but also reflecting on its specific historical cultural legacy*[5], FGs can be a useful method for trying to decolonize research practice (Tuhiwai 2012) and not to reproduce (racial) oppressions in the way we approach our research subjects (Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi 2008). Particularly for migrants arriving in countries "polluted" by racial power relations

[5] As the historian-sociologist Gurminder Bhambra (2014) stated, we need to connect the emergence of the modern world and the history of Europe with dispossession and enslavement, colonialism and empire. As European migration scholars, we need to delink our knowledge construction from the "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2007), which reproduces colonial hierarchies, often through cultural racialization of migrants. While the post-racial doxa suggests that racism is external to European identity (Lentin 2014), Erel et al. (2016) problematize this, and propose to explore in detail how migrations and racializations are co-constructed in differentiated, dynamic and complex ways.

with a long colonial history[6], FGs can be a "safe space" for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences.

How to construct the groups? How to do comparative migration research with FG (Sect. 11.3)? How to prepare and to facilitate group discussion? How to ask questions and engage participants in collaborative migration research (Sect. 11.4)? How to interpret discussions? How to analyse the everyday naturalization of nation, ethnicity and race (Sect. 11.5)? How to communicate FG research results and to whom (Sect. 11.6)?

Each section is devoted to a specific methodological issue and shows its relevance for migration studies. Section 11.3 is on research design/sampling and on the place of FGs in comparative migration research. Section 11.4 is on preparing a creative questioning route for discussion and on facilitating FGs within collaborative/participatory migration research. Section 11.5 is on FG analysis and on the de-naturalization of nation, ethnicity and race. Section 11.6 is on the communication of FG results and on the importance of engaging civil society for a more "public" migration research.

Finally, each section includes at least one "box" with a European migration research example: Box 11.1, which focuses on the relations between citizens living in the French-speaking part of Belgium and asylum seekers, is a useful example for learning how to build groups and how to make territorial comparisons. Box 11.2, which highlights the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Italy after 9/11, is useful for understanding how to use the narratives of "stories to be completed" to facilitate group discussion. Box 11.3, which concentrates on the public self-representations of young people with and without a migrant background in the North East of Italy, is useful for understanding how to use photo-elicitation in FGs within participatory action research. Box 11.4, which centres on the discursive construction of national identity of Austrians, is useful for appreciating Critical Discourse Analysis approaches for interpreting FG discussions and learning the critique of the naturalization of nations. Box 11.5, which features young people with and without a migrant background and religious education in Italian public schools, is useful for understanding the importance of including the processes of agreement-disagreement and identification-differentiation among group participants in FG analysis. Box 11.6, which presents an example of a back-talk FG after an ethnography with young Muslims of Italy, is useful in showing the importance of discussing results with research participants and in considering the back-talk FG as a follow-up tool in migration research. Finally, Box 11.7, which highlights reproductive health and access to local welfare for migrant women in Padua, Italy, is useful for reflecting on scientific knowledge for whom?/for what? and for learning how to use FGs with

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[6] Even if the migrants were never directly colonized by the metropolitan country they migrate to, at the time of arrival they are racialized in similar ways to the colonial/racial subjects of empire that were already there. Present racial/ethnic hierarchies are linked to our histories of colonialism. Racism is a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of western capitalist/patriarchal/colonialist modernity. Migration studies have often underestimated the significance of *race and racism in processes of migrant incorporation* (Grosfoguel et al. 2015).

participatory video to communicate results to wider audiences and to engage civil society in a public discussion on the crisis of the Italian welfare system.

11.3 How to Build the Groups? How to Do Comparative Migration Research with FGs?

Sampling is the keystone of good qualitative research design. FG participants are *selected*[7] through a *purposive sampling strategy,* which aims at reflecting a *diversity of cases* within the population under study. The question of how many focus groups to hold[8] is determined by the *comparisons* that the researcher wishes to make, keeping in mind that comparative migration research entails the systematic analysis of a *relatively small number of cases* (Bloemraad 2013).

Since FGs have the group as the main unit of analysis, it makes sense to ensure that *group members share at least one important characteristic* and the classical composition for FG research is made up of "homogeneous" groups to facilitate comparison. For migration researchers, this means being self-reflexive and very careful about *how the groups are built and how to match moderator/facilitator and group*[9] *without reproducing the processes of ethnicization/racialization of migrants and their children.* The important characteristic shared by the group (and the moderator/facilitator) is not necessarily linked to migrants' national belonging or ethnicity. With FGs European comparative migration researchers can learn from the limits of the North American tradition of comparative migration studies, which very often contrast different migrant groups in the same geographical location, assuming that national origin, ethnicity, and race *fundamentally* matters (Bloemraad 2013). Rather, according to Amelina and Faist (2012), migration scholars are invited to avoid "naturalizing views" of ethnicity and nation and thus not select ethnicity or nation as dominant categories relevant for setting up the research organization. "Methodological transnationalism" (*Ibidem*) encourages us to step out of cultural traits based on belonging to one nation-state/ethnicity/race/religion. Rather, the shared characteristic for building groups could be gender or class/position in labor market, or patterns of mobility, condition of exit, legal status, age at migration, or length of stay, depending on the research question.

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[7] Recruitment strategies can take two routes. They can either be "top down", using lists of names provided by local organizations or by resorting to public announcements in newspapers and social media, or "bottom up", through informal social networks, gatekeepers or direct knowledge with some preliminary fieldwork. In either case, the motivation of the participants remains key to generating interesting data.

[8] Moving in the path traced by the theorists of Grounded Theory (GT), one cannot answer the question on the number of focus groups needed a priori.

[9] As Encarnacion Gutierrez-Rodriguez pointed out (Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2010), in her focus group experience with domestic workers from Latin America, she told them about her family background – her mother was a domestic worker from Latin America in Germany – but she realized the fragility of an assumed commonality. The Black feminist perspective of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) helps us to recognize the complexity of "matching a facilitator/moderator and a group" by acknowledging the multiple positionalities emerging during the research process.

Another classical composition of FGs is made up of groups of people who do not know each other in order to facilitate self-disclosure and reduce the risk of ethical complications related to the right to privacy of each participant. In fact, the facilitation of groups made up of existing groups involves some difficulties for the researchers (i.e., avoiding allusions in FGs which after are difficult to analyze), but working with "natural groups" can be very useful to respond adequately to specific research questions. Thus, variations and adaptations are always possible and there are many ways of making comparisons in migration studies. However, contrasting groups is always crucial, because by making comparisons between cases "we can decenter what is taken for granted in a particular time or place" (Bloemraad 2013: 29).

The next example (Box 11.1) shows a migration research:

- Which is based on "territorial comparisons"
- Which constructed "heterogeneous groups"
- Where people sometimes knew each other/met outside the research, because they lived in the same local context.

Box 11.1: The Welcoming of Asylum Seekers in Belgium (Gsir et al. 2004)

The research question is about social relations between citizens living in the French-speaking part of Belgium[10] and asylum seekers. The investigation explores the ways in which everyday interactions are built and pays attention to representations of asylum seekers. The study uses in-depth interviews and FGs[11], it is comparative and six locations includes in the sample: municipalities with reception centres for asylum seekers (Fraipont, Brussels/Petit-Château, Rixensart) and places where there are no reception centres (Sainte-Marguerite headquarters in Liège, Bockstael quarter of Brussels, Ottignies). The purpose is to analyse the influence of the presence or absence of the centres on the representations of applicants for asylum, including the daily interactions between the inhabitants of these places and asylum seekers. The use of focus groups is motivated by the desire to investigate how the representations of asylum seekers are formed and how they change. The FGs are used to observe interactions between institutional actors (mayors, policemen, directors of shelters ...), associations (non-governmental organizations, sports associations, cultural ...), ordinary citizens and asylum seekers[12].

(continued)

[10] In Wallonia and in Brussels.

[11] The interviews serve to explore the personal views of different actors involved in local and federal policies on asylum. The focus groups allow us to understand the influence of the local environment.

[12] A reflective summary of this innovative research helps us to grasp what may be difficulties of this type of sampling design. The asylum seekers struggled to get their voices heard in the group interactions and their criticism of the management of reception could hardly be expressed in a semi-public context like focus groups, where they were few in number. Often, there were two asylum seekers, in some cases one, out of between 7 and 9 people.

Box 11.1 (continued)

For the choice of sites with reception centres, the researchers created the following classification: *organized opposition* (places where there is opposition from municipal authorities, and/or segments of the population through demonstrations and petitions, etc.); *open* (locations where no protests occurred and where there have been public demonstrations of solidarity, in the form of gifts and other voluntary initiatives); *indifferent* (no clear public stance, either for or against the reception centre).

In each of the six identified local contexts (with or without a shelter), two 2-h FGs were carried out a week apart. The first identified interactions, positive and negative, towards asylum seekers, and the second, going back to the topics discussed in the first focus group, elicited possible solutions to problems regarding the reception of asylum seekers. Each time a larger number of participants than expected were invited, allowing for no-shows (which always occurred for various reasons).

The research showed that social relations are shaped by the presence/absence of reception centres for asylum seekers. Where there were centres, the expression of suspicion towards asylum seekers became more palpable and the inhabitants felt "downgraded", afraid that their homes would lose value. In addition, it was found that factors that promote positive interaction between asylum seekers and the local population included the existence of a voluntary sector, the good will of local political authorities, good management of the centres, the presence of children of asylum seekers in public schools.

11.4   How to Prepare and to Facilitate a Group Discussion? How to Ask Questions in Collaborative Migration Research?

The researchers have to prepare topic guidelines with care and have to reflect seriously on which communicative moves are the most appropriate to support the interactions between participants and to allow dissent to emerge. So how should they prepare the discussion questions?

The secret to concise guidance, through which we can focus on the main topics to be discussed, lies in their construction. First, the *keywords* which summarize the main points to be discussed have to be identified. To avoid dispersion, it is fundamental to limit the number of keywords. If the issues are particularly complex, the option to hold discussion groups "in stages" in which connected issues are addressed with the same group in several meetings (usually two or three) should be kept in mind. Second, it is useful to *rank the points in order of importance* and then study the chronology of their presentation. A consolidated strategy is funnelling: the most important topics should be placed in the centre of the discussion session, then tentatively addressed "mid-meeting" (which will normally last an hour and a half[13]),

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[13] For an hour and a half of actual discussion, two should be expected. In fact, it takes time for the ceremonies of reception and departure and to cushion the lateness of some participants.

after the participants have become acquainted with each other and they begin to explore the topic. Preparing an outline of questions allows us to ponder how we should address the participants, so as not to impose our ideas or use inappropriate terms; to give rhythm to the group work and to use their time profitably.

The fundamental task of researchers is not to monitor the group, but to support it and guide it. The terms used for this task of discussion management are three: *leader* (maximum directivity), *moderator* (average directivity), and *facilitator* (minimum directivity). The preferred option is facilitation and, according to Putcha and Potter (2004), the practices to be implemented to facilitate group discussion are learned and are essentially three: to generate informality; to generate participation; and to generate a variety of viewpoints. Generating informality means keeping the space frame sufficiently large (Goffman 1981), in which they direct the focus group participants, so they are not obsessed with the "keeping of face" (that is, of their good reputation), especially if it comes to focused interaction among "outsiders". Even the physical space plays its part, so it is better, for example, that it looks like "a living room rather than an office" (Putcha and Potter 2004: 39). To promote the participation of the research subjects, it is important to create the group discursively, addressing and putting questions to a plural subject. To create a variety of opinions, it is fundamental to hook into the participants' body language, to recognize any emergent dissent which, before being said and made explicit, is often communicated more "softly", indirectly, through the body. Communicative activities are in fact multimodal: in addition to the verbal exchanges, it is necessary to observe/listen to interactions beyond the words, opening up, so to speak, all our sensory channels. In my opinion, the bodies of the participants should be considered as an active part in interactions and it is interesting to observe what they *do*, how they contribute to building and negotiating the meaning of group discussion. A second researcher is needed to take notes systematically, listening and observing the bodies in the group discussion. The observer can help the facilitator to note the hinted at dissension and to recognize the conflict in the discussion, which is often expressed obliquely through body language. It is said that silence is consent, but silences in the group discussion should not be trivialized and silent-dissents must be recognized and explained. If we consider culture as a battlefield (Hall and Mellino 2007), in which different meanings and different versions of the world are competing, then through focus groups we can study that consent is never given once and for all, and the common sense that daily life is made of is challenged by subjectivity that arises actively against what is given.

Let us now look at two research examples on how to do creative questioning (using stories or images as questions) and engage participants in a more collaborative research process. Box 11.2 shows how to use the narratives of "stories to be completed" to facilitate group discussion, and Box 11.3 shows how to use photo-elicitation in FGs within participatory action research (PAR)[14].

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[14]There is a growing interest among migration researchers in developing PAR with migrants (Francisco 2014). PAR typically begins identifying a group that is oppressed by systems of exploitation, racism, sexism and other social structures and helps the marginalized group(s) experience

Box 11.2: The Relationship Between Muslims and Italian Society After 9/11 (Allievi 2009)

The research question concerned the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims and the impact of Islamophobia after 9/11. The larger study included focus groups in the UK, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. The Italian research team was composed of Stefano Allievi, Annalisa Frisina and Luca Trappolin. We created nine FGs in three different cities (Rome, Padua and Milan). In each group, a theme was developed though three meetings – in an arc of 15 days – in the same discussion groups. In the case of Milan, for example, the theme was "places and actors of social transformation" (Frisina 2009). The profiles of the participants included actors who had personally lived the changes associated with migration (a daughter of Jordanian-Palestinian immigrants born in Italy; an immigrant parent of the Muslim faith; a partner of an Italian-Somali couple; an activist in community centres from Ecuador…) and actors who work in places of marked cultural and religious diversity (teachers in secondary schools with a significant number of students of foreign origin; a director of an Afro-Italian theatre company; cultural mediators in health care and education; trade union activists…).

Exercises of daily imagination

In the discussion, we introduced some "exercises of imagination to think about cases that had not occurred, but could have occurred" (this was my way – as facilitator – to invite participants to discuss).

Exercise 1: "Youth and Sport"

> *In an amateur volleyball team, there is a 15-year-old Italo-Egyptian girl; she is the best player and the captain of the team. The period of the tournaments comes round, but her parents do not want her to travel with the team and play in public. In your opinion, what will the girl do? What do you think the others will do, that is, her parents, coach, teammates, the parents of her teammates?*

With the first stories finished, some elements proposed by participants[15] were used to go on with the discussion.

(continued)

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empowerment by calling attention to racism, discrimination and other social structures responsible for the conditions they face. PAR with migrants (Rodriguez 2013) explores the causes that make migrants vulnerable and restores the legitimacy of immigrants as civic actors with the right to demand better conditions.

[15] In particular, an Italo-Palestinian practicing Muslim girl was taken as the starting point and how the clothing issue had been resolved in her case was narrated – through the flexibility of her volleyball coach – who did not require her to wear tight short shorts – and the solidarity of her teammates, who were playing away when they put on white bandannas. The girl indeed habitually wore a hijab, the Islamic headscarf, but in volleyball matches wearing this new – more inclusive – uniform of her team of white bandanna and baggy knee-length shorts.

Box 11.2 (continued)
Return to Exercise 1

Imagine that, despite her teammates being very supportive of the Italo-Egyptian girl, their parents enter forcefully into the discussion and rebel against the common front of the girls. Some parents say things like "we are not Taliban, we cannot dress our girls like them!" What can be done? How can these conflicts be prevented or managed?

From the FG several discourses emerged that represented a part of Italian society in crisis, because of its growing cultural and religious diversity. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to present the following narrative to the group:

Exercise 2: "Religious Diversities in Public Schools"

We are in a primary school on the outskirts of Milan, and a second grade teacher, who has two Arab children in her class, raises the problem of how to celebrate Christmas. She decides, this year, not to make nativity scenes, despite the fact that in the school there is a tradition of a contest in which a prize is given to the most beautiful nativity scene. This decision is explained to children as a sign of respect for their companions of other religions and the kids talk about it with their parents. What do you think will happen? We are not asking you to say what you would do, but imagine what would happen, based on your own experience.

In this second case as well, we took the elements proposed in the daily stories of the participants to propose this follow up.

Return to Exercise 2

Imagine the case in which different groups ask for a space to celebrate their religious festivals: what would happen? In our system, may schools decide the days off? What do you think would happen if the school calendars were changed for intercultural reasons?

Box 11.3: FGs in PAR and the Use of Photo-Elicitation: Unpacking Photovoice (Frisina 2011a)
Recently, the boundaries between focus groups and workshops in PAR have faded and those methods overlap when the making of data arises from the usage of photo/video-elicitation, or art-based/activity-based processes (Carretta and Vacchelli 2015). PAR, and with it the techniques that it employs as workshops, have been criticized for being excessively empiricist and lacking theorization. The process of data generation and the power dynamics existing between researchers and participants need to be more

(continued)

Box 11.3 (continued)

problematized[16]. When I investigated how groups of young people with and without a migrant background[17] construct visual self-representations to present in the public sphere in Veneto[18], I preferred to replace workshops with focus groups and to *unpack photovoice[19] into three different research methods*, so as to facilitate the complex process of analysing the data generated and to promote greater *reflexivity*.

First, I started with *image-making*, calling research participants to make pictures on three themes ("Self-portraits/Portraits of a new generation"; "People/places in the town I live in that make me feel (in)secure"; "Being/feeling a citizen, being/feeling a foreigner") and to write a brief comment on each photo.

Second, I used *photo-elicitation within serial FGs.* Photo-elicitation helped reduce the directivity of the researcher, replacing verbal questions with "visual questions" (the images produced by participants were presented to the group without their corresponding verbal comments). FGs allowed me to investigate the negotiation of meaning of images and to grasp how *seeing differently* emerges *contextually*. Reconstructing the *photovoice* process through repeated FGs[20] was useful in developing a more reflexive research practice: how should the researcher interact with participants, what role should (s)he play in the group? Wang's (2006) option can be traced back to a *leading* of the group while I find *facilitation* more fruitful. Wang's method is known under the acronym SHOWeD (*What do you See here? What is really Happening? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this situation exist? What can we Do about it?*). The emphasis on what is "really" happening and

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[16] However, there are some examples of how workshops can be used reflexively in migration research. See Yvonne Riaño (2015), on a Minga biographic workshop with highly skilled migrant women. She proposed to acknowledge both commonality and difference in the process of negotiating research partnerships and she argued for a more complex understanding of privilege and power.

[17] I adopted a *daily multiculturalism* perspective to study young people (Harris 2009) to overcome the idea that diversity is something (problematic) which (white, autochthonous) adults must manage and challenge the assimilationist assumptions which see the nation as pre-existent, a well-defined reality in which these young people should "integrate". It is rather a question of bringing to light the daily micro-practices of producing differences and contesting dominant representations of "us".

[18] As I am interested in the use of diversity as a political resource – to legitimate relations of power and exploitation, or to carry out social critique and demand change – I believed that Veneto, with its strong presence of the Northern League political party and high percentage of children of migrants in public schools, was an appropriate empirical context.

[19] It is a visual PAR which promises to enable people to define for themselves and others, including policy makers, what is worth remembering and what needs to be changed Wang (1999).

[20] I developed six FG sessions (for each of the five groups of young people) and each lasted about 3 h.

Box 11.3 (continued)

the discursive construction of an "us" (militant) –which questions the structural causes of daily inequality/discrimination to become subject of change – can be traced to Freire's pedagogy of liberation, which the researcher recognizes as her source of inspiration. I preferred simply asking "What do you see?" for each photo and I performed my role as facilitator getting participants to share their different points of view.

Third, I did *participant observation* during the cultural events when (a selection of) pictures and narratives made by participants went public (to understand whether and how *photovoice* empowered the participants).

Starting from this research experience, I argue that FGs with photo-elicitation within PAR can become *reflexive forums* on sensitive issues of public interest, where citizens with and without a migrant background feel the tensions in the dominant representations of "Us" and "Them", reflect collectively on how Otherness can be negotiated (Frisina 2014).

11.5   How to Interpret Discussions? How to Analyse the Everyday Naturalization of Nation, Ethnicity and Race?

The researchers' memories and notes are not enough; each focus group should be recorded[21] and transcribed[22] in order to produce a systematic coding of the empirical documentation produced[23]. Making sense of focus group data through developing a coding framework is a complex process, which involves generating a provisional

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[21] If we have taken care of our social relationships with participants by building trust and negotiating informed consent in the early stages of the research, the presence of a video camera will be accepted during the discussions.

[22] The perfect transcription does not exist, because it's still a selective process, even when, hopefully, it is reported back word for word of both the participants and the facilitator (it is "verbatim").

[23] The corpus to be analysed is formed substantially by group discussion transcripts, but also includes the notes of the observer on body language taken during the focus groups; exchanges in the debriefing between research subjects and researchers (feedback on the context of the focus groups) and between the facilitator and observer (feedback on facilitation/on the data generation process); furthermore, if there are any, any communication that took place with the participants outside of the focus groups (for example, in e-mails) and any memos (notes of researchers in all phases of work in the field).

coding frame[24], revising it, modelling coding frameworks, arranging codes in a hierarchical order and showing the links between subcategories. To do this, there are several software programs[25] which can be used as a complement, not a substitute for researchers' skills. Rigour is achieved through a systematic and iterative process, whereby coding categories are continuously subjected to review in light of disconfirming examples to identified concepts and patterns. It is important not to rely on the topic guide to furnish coding categories and to include "in-vivo" codes (more descriptive, which use participants' words) as well as "a-priori" codes (more interpretative, rooted in our theories). But what constitutes the encoding process? As Boeije says (Boeije 2010: 75–76), these are mainly two types of activities:

- Segmenting the texts (in this case, primarily the transcripts of discussion groups), annotating these segments with codes, and then creating categories (and subcategories)
- Reassembling the segments so that they acquire meaning from a certain theoretical perspective and make it possible to adequately understand the phenomenon studied.

One issue that remains controversial in the analysis of FGs is how to account for the interaction and not only perform a thematic analysis of "what" the participants discussed.

Since the 1990s, critical discourse analysis[26] (CDA) has been developed to investigate how social inequalities are reproduced or challenged *through* discourse. CDA can be very useful for interpreting FGs in migration research (see van Dijk, Chap. 13 in this book). This analytic approach has proved particularly suitable for studying the daily construction of nationalism, its exclusionary effects on certain social groups or the rise of populism in Europe and the discriminations against migrants.

Since a recurring theme is the construction of us-them, through discursive strategies that usually characterize the "we" positively and the "others" negatively, in analysing FGs we should ask: how are people named? To which category are they retraced? What qualities and characteristics are attributed to them? What rhetorical and argumentative tools are used to justify and legitimize the inclusion or exclusion of some "others"?

The following research examples show how CDA can be used for interpreting FG discussions and unmasking everyday naturalization of nations and racialization of migrants (Box 11.4) and how to include interaction in FG analysis, taking into consideration the processes of agreement-disagreement and identification-differentiation among group participants (Box 11.5).

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[24] Any section of text can be assigned as many codes as you think are appropriate. I suggest reading Kathy Charmaz on Constructivist Ground Theory (Charmaz 2006) to learn how to work on "emerging" categories.

[25] www.atlasti.com, www.qsrinternational.com for NVivo, www.maxqda.com, www.transana.org

[26] For a great introduction, see Wodak and Meyer (2016).

Box 11.4: Discursive Construction of National Identity of the Austrians (Wodak et al. 2009)

The main sampling criterion was linked to political and territorial differences. So, six groups were constructed: the formally non-Austrian Viennese group; the Viennese group of a proletarian district (Simmering); the group from western Austria (Vorarlberg); the group from southern Austria (Carinthia); the Eastern group (Burgenland) and the rural Austrian group (Styria). From the focus groups, two main discursive strategies emerged, influenced by the political leanings of the group and the different regional contexts in which the meetings were held:

- Conservative strategies of the construction of national identity: assume and emphasize the historical continuity with the nation's founding fathers; proceed to black and white pictures, which prefigure disastrous scenarios if citizens become "accomplices" to the change; pride as a result of a rhetorical defence of "our superior values to be preserved";
- Transformative strategies in the construction of national identity: emphasize the differences between "then and now" and between "now and tomorrow"; using the rhetoric of "changed circumstances", "the history teacher who teaches us ..."; pride as a product of the discourses of what Austria can become (an "example" for Eastern Europe or for the whole of Europe).

An interesting aspect that emerged from the analysis is the group telling of everyday stories (beginning with anecdotes about things that happened to other people) as a way to revive prejudices towards migrants and citizens of foreign origin. Instead of the usual disclaimer "I'm not a racist, but ... (racist speech)", a story with a moral racist was used (in a nutshell: "they" are inferior and therefore exploitation is justifiable), putting the tellers at a distance for what only was "reported" without any direct implication of responsibility.

Box 11.5: The Making of Religious Pluralism from a New Generational Perspective (Frisina 2011b)

Italian society continues to be seen as homogeneous in religious terms and the teaching of the Catholic religion in state schools is a pillar of the historical and cultural heritage of the Italian population. However, profound changes have been underway, with migrant families settling in the country and their Italian-born offspring attending Italian state schools. How do they feel about religious education at school? How do they view the Italian model of secular-

Box 11.5 (continued)

ism and religious pluralism in Italy? What do they see as *Italianness*? I organized and facilitated seven focus-groups[27] with young people with and without a migrant background in secondary schools in a northern Italian town[28]. From the discussions, students' demands for change from a generational point of view emerged (seeing beyond education *into* religion, creating new horizons for religious pluralism in Italy). In the analysis of the focus group transcripts, I considered how the contents of the discussion were related to the way the participants interacted with one another. The discussion groups reproduced the "Catholic norm" (the assumption that Catholicism is the glue of Italians, a "standard" considered part of a "we"), but also highlighted the tensions in the dominant representation of *Italianness* based on a common religion. I reproduce below one coded sequence.

Davide (Italian, 18 years old): *"Migrants want to change our rules.... Well, some people say that we are becoming a multiethnic society…I am against people arriving here and wanting to remove the crucifix from the classrooms, to change the Religious Education lessons…We Italians are Catholic, even if I am not a believer…It is our cultural heritage, our roots"*	Multiethnic Italy vs. Catholic Italy We
Said (born in Italy, of Moroccan origin, 20 years old): ((he coughs and clears his voice)) *"Yes, but I feel Italian, Moroccan and Muslim. I know that for some people that sounds strange, it is too much, but not for me and not for many young people like me"*	Disagreement between Italian-Moroccan-Muslim Other We
Lorenzo (18 years old, Italian, born in Italy): *"Maybe to impose is the wrong word to use, but there are Muslims who are not like you* (he turns towards Said) *and I don't know if we all agree …* (he glances around with a questioning look)"	Disagreement You "exceptional" Muslim
Dina (19 years old, of Egyptian origin, in Italy since she was a year old):*"It doesn't bother me personally …I mean, even if I'm surrounded with crucifixes, they can have no influence whatsoever on my point of view, even if Italy is a country where…the prevalent religion is Christianity…"*	Disagreement Muslim identity resisting the Catholicism which prevails

[27]Another focus group was conducted in Milan with young people who were active in religious associations: they included Jews, Waldensians, Catholics and Muslims. Each of these eight focus groups consisted of ten people, with girls and boys in balanced proportions, between 17 and 21 years old in the seven focus groups in Mantova and between 21 and 29 years old in the focus group of Milan. The majority were born and/or brought up in Italy and their parents came from Morocco, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Albania, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Salvador and Brazil. The focus groups were also attended by a minority of youths with Italian parents (about one in five with a migrant background). Each focus group session lasted from 2 to 3 h.

[28]I chose Mantova because it is a medium-sized town that ranks first in the region for the proportion of foreign students in its total school population.

In group discussions, as in everyday life, social actors use different forms of socially shared knowledge and bring it into play in the conversation. But the focus group is a particular form of dialogue, it is an institutionalized space for dissent and for change (the facilitator introduces the discussion encouraging divergent views to be expressed and supports the discussion by asking for examples and clarification for oblique dissent, stimulating a more direct comparison). The focus group, therefore, appears to be not only a valuable method for investigating how the social order is maintained throughout, but also to study the cracks, tension, ambivalence created by the discursive practices of daily resistance against various sources of normativity. In migration research, this method can be useful to understand how multiple belongings (ethnic, national or religious) are constantly negotiated and to explore the daily confrontation between the nationalistic binary logic "either/or" *vs* the "both/and" transnational logic of multiple memberships (Amelina and Faist 2012, p. 7).

11.6 How to Communicate FG Results and to Whom? Public Sociology and Migration Studies

A distinctive feature of qualitative research is the construction of texts presenting the results. In these texts, the perspective of those who have done the research is supported by the *voices of the participants*. In the case of FGs, there will be extracts of discussions, so it is important not to make a list of points of view (as if they were separate individuals, like in interviews). Researchers should report at least three exchanges from the discussion (as was done, for example, in the extracts cited in Box 11.4) to be able to reconstruct the interactive context of the group.

Following the proposal of a more reflexive sociology (Melucci 1998, pp. 22–31), it is desirable to practice writing up the results in various ways for different audiences, thus, not merely writing for the scientific community.

As qualitative migration researchers (De Tona et al. 2010, pp. 3–4), firstly, we are called to be *reflexive* (positioning ourselves in the research process and being responsible for the power imbalance in the relation researcher-researched) and to recognize the reflexivity of research participants (they are also able to reflect on and question the research process). Secondly, to respond to ethical and political challenges concerning contemporary migration, we need to be attentive to *open dialogues with civil society*.

If it is true that the neoliberal turn of the European Union "produces more and more deaths among the migrants who attempt to arrive, less naturalized and more precariousness for regular migrants" and that the fears of the "other" are constantly stoked by a media-political racism and increases the victimization of migrants (Palidda 2015, p. 97), it becomes urgent to reflect on scientific knowledge "for whom?".

Michael Burawoy (2005) called for a "public sociology", defending civil society against the domination of market and state and having civil society actors as its first audience. I think that this could also mean restoring the legitimacy of migrants (and their children) as civic actors and creating "safe spaces" to listen to their right to demand better life conditions.

In the concluding part of this chapter, therefore, two examples on how to involve civil society actors more extensively will be described to show:

- The importance of discussing results with research participants and to consider back-talk FGs as a follow-up tool in migration research (Box 11.6)
- How to use FGs and participatory video in order to communicate results to wider audiences (Box 11.7).

Box 11.6: "Back Talk Focus Groups" as a "Follow Up Tool" in Migration Studies (Frisina 2006)

After 3 years of participant observation in the organization Young Muslims of Italy[29], 50 non-directive interviews with children of immigrants who were born or raised in Italy and three FGs among young Muslims (both militant and not), I decided to present the main results of my research: identification with Islam emerges through interaction and is only one of many forms of identification for these youths. In their everyday life, these youths resist dominant securitarian and islamophobic frameworks through a range of tactics and strategies. Some of these youth used the current discourses on Islam as a resource for participation, sometimes with the risk of transforming diversity into a "profession". I drew together the most motivated and active of the research participants to question my interpretations in a FG. It was an opportunity to include them in the reflexive knowledge making, which cannot be an individual job, but is a dialogic practice to be exercised in a phase of "meta-research" (research on research). I distinguished three different types of opinions that emerged from the FGs: dissent, agreement, and suggestions. Drawing on this experience, I think Back-talk FGs can be useful for three main reasons:

- They stimulate the reflection of the researchers by allowing them to generate new data
- They empower participants by giving them a greater role in the research process
- They ensure responsible dissemination of potentially sensitive issues to a potentially diverse and highly politicized audience.

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[29] For more see, www.giovanimusulmani.it e https://www.facebook.com/GiovaniMusulmanidItaliaGMI/

Box 11.7: "As Human Beings and Citizens": Discussing Research Findings Through a Video (Frisina 2017)

The research was part of the European project *Welfare and values. Migration, gender and religions* and the Italian case study focused on reproductive health and on access to local welfare for migrant women in Padua. A video was produced to communicate research results to a wider audience. We worked together with intercultural mediators and welfare workers to organize FGs with migrant women from Nigeria and Romania. As the title of the video "As Human Beings and Citizens" suggests, it is a double invitation from migrant women. That is asking welfare workers to treat them fairly "as human beings", but also calling on other women in similar social conditions to act as people with rights – "as citizens". They refuse to be viewed through the dominant and disempowering charity framework as above all needy and destitute people.

We organized four FG sessions. In the first, we discussed how to use the camera and we preferred to opt for a participatory video (Milne et al. 2012). The goal was to listen to women talk about their everyday experiences, and thus generate reflexive knowledge during the process of communication, rather than focus on the final product (the video). We visited a Romanian association and a Nigerian beauty shop to recruit women, both regular and irregular migrants, to take part in the FGs and video. The three sessions, which were filmed, consisted of a discussion of the Padua case study research findings that the participants considered the most relevant to themselves and their experiences. The video includes a number of discussions on the limits of universalism and the gender conservatism of the local welfare system in Padua, as illustrated in everyday and personal stories about reproductive health.

This chapter introduced what FGs are, illustrating how to build groups, how to prepare, facilitate and then interpret discussions, and finally how to communicate research results. It offered arguments in favour of using FGs in migration studies, because they offer a forum for "public thinking" and discussing controversial issues. This approach fits well with comparative migration research, it engages participants in collaborative research, it helps to question the everyday naturalization of nation, ethnicity and race. Finally, the chapter focused on Europe, not only as an empirical field (it included several European migration research examples), but also as a specific cultural legacy (i.e. considering how to decolonize research practice and reflecting on scientific knowledge "for whom").

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Chapter 12
Participant Observation in Migration Studies: An Overview and Some Emerging Issues

Paolo Boccagni and Mieke Schrooten

12.1 Introduction

Participant observation and ethnography, at large, are an everyday staple for researchers in migration, ethnic and mobility studies. Even only an overview of the key ethnographies done so far, within national and disciplinary boundaries or across them, would call for a chapter in itself. Nonetheless, there is relatively little of a systematic methodological elaboration around the merits, pitfalls and prospects of ethnography in migration studies (major exceptions including Falzon 2016; Fitzgerald 2006; Glick Schiller 2003; Iosifides 2011). In this chapter, we first sketch out some guidelines on the methodological development of participant observation, on its theoretical underpinnings and on its relevance to this research field. Participant observation should be distinguished from pure observation – that seeks to remove researchers as much as possible from the actions and behaviours they investigate – and from pure participation – that has also been described as "going native" or "becoming the phenomena" (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002; Jorgensen 1989). Rather than choosing one of these two extremes, participant observation aims to find a balance between both. It is important that researchers are aware of their particular place on this "continuum in the degree of observation and participation" and reflect on the impact of this position on the kinds of data collected and the sort of analysis that is possible. As a key ethnographic technique, participant observation is uniquely placed to refine the theoretical understanding of migration as it invites people to adopt the perspective of migrants themselves. Moreover, research based on

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participant observation allows dynamics of power, agency and politics to be theorized from below.

As human mobility automatically involves multiple locations, the use of participant observation in research on migration and mobility challenges the classical understanding of this method as an in-depth study of a closed locality. In contrast to the classical idea of a "taken-for-granted space in which an 'other' culture or society lies waiting to be observed and written" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, p. 1), the everyday lives of many individuals more often than not transcend the geographical locations in which classical fieldwork took place, challenging ethnographers to include these social spaces in the demarcation of their fieldwork sites (Schrooten 2016). Appadurai (1991, p. 191) has formulated the consequent challenge for ethnographers in the following terms:

> As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and re-configure their ethnic "projects", the ethno in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapes – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogeneous.

In the second part of this chapter, we discuss, at least at a preliminary level, some of the recent methodological developments in ethnographic research at large – and in participant observation more specifically – that have attempted to break away from practices of local, "bounded" and confined ethnography, such as multi-sited ethnography and online ethnography. In doing so, we combine our respective sociological and anthropological backgrounds. This is a very common instance of the relevance of ethnography across disciplinary fields (such as anthropology, sociology, geography, communication studies and history), and of their mutual intersections – all the more so in an inherently interdisciplinary research area such as migration studies.

12.2 Participant Observation as a Research Method

Participant observation has become the almost identity-giving method for ethnography, although it is certainly not the only one that is being used by ethnographers. Individual or group in-depth interviews, informal conversations, taking fieldnotes, artefact analysis, and many other things may all be part of ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnography, and participant observation as a core part of it, have their own genealogies in any disciplinary realm. The research method is often referred to as "the hallmark of cultural anthropology" (Spradley 2016, p. 3), but is also a common feature of qualitative research in a number of other disciplines. The first anthropologist to write about using participant observation as a research method was Frank Hamilton Cushing, who spent four and a half years as a participant observer with the Zuni Pueblo people around 1879 (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002; Sanjek 1990). Other important early anthropologists who used participant observation were Beatrice Potter Webb (in the 1880s), Bronislaw Malinowski (in the 1920s) and

Margaret Mead (in the 1920s). Although other anthropologists had carried out ethnographic fieldwork before him, Malinowski's (1922) discussion of his participation and observation of the Trobiands still serves as the fundamental description of the method:

> Soon after I had established myself in Omarkana Trobriand Islands, I began to take part, in a way, in the village life, to look forward to the important or festive events, to take personal interest in gossip and developments of the village occurrences. (…) As I went on my morning walk through the village, I could see intimate details of family life. (…) I could see the arrangements for the day's work, people starting on their errands, or groups of men and women busy at some manufacturing tasks. Quarrels, jokes, family scenes, events usually trivial, sometimes dramatic but always significant, form the atmosphere of my daily life, as well as theirs.

When it comes to sociology, the ritual starting tends to be fixed around the twenties at the Chicago School of Urban Sociology. There is a famous quote by Robert Park that nicely captures the spirit of this methodological engagement:

> You have been told to go grubbing in the library, thereby accumulating a mass of notes and a liberal coating of grime. You have been told to choose problems wherever you can find musty stacks of routine records based on trivial schedules prepared by tired bureaucrats and filled out by reluctant applicants for aid or fussy do-gooders or indifferent clerks. This is called "getting your hands dirty in real research." Those who thus counsel you are wise and honorable; the reasons they offer are of great value. But one thing more is needful: first-hand observation. Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit in Orchestra Hall and in the Star and Garter Burlesk. In short, gentlemen *[sic]*, go get the seats of your pants dirty in REAL research.[1]

Being "there", and observing the patterns of everyday life close to the actors engaged in it, are highlighted as a valuable strategy of data collection, whatever the context at stake. What makes this strategy unique is a researcher's "close observation of and involvement with people in a particular social setting", thereby relating "the words spoken and the practices observed or experienced to the overall cultural framework within which they occurred" (Watson 2010, p. 205). To put this in just slightly different terms, participant observation is

> a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture. (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, p. 1)

Whatever the combination between the roles of observer and participant (Whyte 1979; Platt 1983), participant observation is the privileged research tool of ethnography. The latter is first of all a theoretical approach that borrows from such diverse backgrounds as ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and grounded theory (Atkinson et al. 2001); second, it can be appreciated as a discipline in itself, cutting across the boundaries between sociology, anthropology and geography, as much as organizational studies, cultural studies and social history, to make the most obvious examples; third, ethnography stands for a textual product – the outcome of empirical data collection – and a way of writing, even a genre in its own right (Emerson et al. 2011; Van Maanen 2011).

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[1] Unpublished 1920s quote from Robert Park, in McKinney (1966, p. 71).

What sets participant observation apart from all other ways of doing research, then, is an embodied and extended presence in the social world of those being studied. Social life as it is being lived, rather than only as it is reported by informants (often in ephemeral, artificial or ad-hoc settings), is its fundamental concern. To be sure, this methodological option can be integrated with several others, such as in-depth interviews, life history interviewing, survey research or review of documents and texts, to name a few. What is distinctive of it, anyhow, is a significant degree of researcher participation and involvement in the ordinary life of the social group under study. This can produce insights and findings relevant to a variety of research questions, falling somewhere in a continuum between two ideal-typical stances: a fundamentally naturalistic one, concerning how people live their lives in a given context, influencing and being influenced by the latter in distinct ways; and a more open-ended and interpretative one, regarding what sense they make of their social environments and how a given phenomenon is constructed, negotiated and reproduced by those involved with it, given the relevant external factors. Individuals, social relationships, groups and broader socio-material assemblages are all potentially appropriate units of analysis, to be appreciated in their mutual interactions. The crucial point has however to do with the definition, and then the empirical limitation, of the research *field*.

Ethnographically speaking, a field may well correspond to one or more specific *places*. However, it may also amount to a relatively consistent set of social relationships and circumstances, relevant to the group under study, whether produced by proximate or distant forms of interaction. More than "a pregiven entity", an ethnographic field is "something we construct, both through the practical transactions and activities of data collection and through the literary activities of writing fieldnotes" (Atkinson 2015). Even when the field overlaps with a material environment, it is ethnographically meaningful not only as a physical infrastructure, but also through the ways in which it is "brought into being" by the social actors that co-produce the phenomenon to be studied. In a slightly different understanding, which follows Bourdieu's metaphorical use of the word, a field stands for any sort of situated, relatively well-bound social arena, defined by a structure of competing pressures, tensions and interests.

In practice, ethnographic fieldwork unfolds along a number of relatively well distinct steps, participant observation being invariably the central and pivotal one. Five research phases can be helpfully sorted out, as follows:

1. *Before the field.* Ethnographers have typically an exploratory and open-minded stance – which is not, however, an empty-minded one. Some theoretical elaboration, based also on pre-existing research, is necessary from the outset, lest ethnography turns into mere description. Why – a researcher could wonder at first – is an ethnographic option appropriate to her interests? Or at least, what aspects of them could be fruitfully addressed ethnographically? Similar questions are of help in delimiting the field and collecting preliminary information about it. Since the very beginning, however, ethnographers' attitudes should be flexible enough to fine tune with the social actors' ways of defining their situation.

Instead of fully-fledged hypothesis, "sensitizing concepts" could be sketched and tried out, to be then better developed, refined, or possibly replaced through fieldwork, following a cyclical rather than linear research design.

2. *Accessing the field.* Gaining respectful, trust-based, hence effective access into the expected research field is critical to all that comes next. This may entail, particularly in community or organizational research, close interaction with informants holding central positions in local hierarchies or networks. Along this critical transition, handbooks invariably emphasize the influence of trust, reputation and sensitivity. They tend to be less emphatic, though, on two equally critical conditions: first, researchers' skills in managing interpersonal relationships, or their "ability to build mutually supportive relationships with subjects" (Whyte 1979); second, the need for them to figure out and negotiate what "return" their counterparts may expect. That said, how many people should be contacted and followed at first, and then all over fieldwork, is hard to set or predict in advance.

3. *Staying in the field.* Here comes participant observation as intensive engagement, whatever the degree of participation, the variety of participants, the foci of observation and the underlying driving questions. In practice, observation may involve participants' accounts as much as their tacit understandings, practices and mutual interactions, with all of their emotional and moral underpinnings. Background settings and all sorts of objects in use are also a major concern for observation. That said, whenever ethnography has a more than descriptive remit, it involves an attempt to infer some insight into the distribution of social resources – knowledge, power, prestige, etc. – that is embedded in the field in question. Ethnographers, warns Atkinson (2015), "are interested in that is told explicitly, and what is withheld, what is regarded as 'tellable' and what is treated as ineffable". Put otherwise, "truth-telling" is not necessarily the key stake of ethnography, as opposed to "the social management of informational and moral states" – how things are said and made plausible to which publics, following which cultural conventions, etc.

There are at least two more issues that emerge quite invariably during participant observation. These have to do, first, with the need for multi-sensorial involvement – what is seen, or heard, being not exhaustive of the sensuous wealth of stimuli and insights an ethnographer can reap from the field; second, with the need for an unusually flexible and open-ended attitude, regarding both one's own role and position in the field and the limited scope to control the development and temporality of field events. "Learning in (and out of) the field", as Van Maanen (2010, p. 220) put it, "is uneven, usually unforeseen, and rests more on a logic of discovery and happenstances than a logic of verification and plan. It is the unbearable slowness of ethnography".

4. *Getting out of the field* is the following, invariable step – an often contended and not necessarily complete or irreversible one. Against the attendant questions of "Where", "When", and "How", it is once again hard to set criteria in advance, unless there are stronger external constraints. What is clearly important is a degree of theoretical saturation, whereby researchers seem to be seeing, hearing,

or feeling the same again and again, with little or no new "evidence" or insight. In practice, exiting the field still entails a variety of relational, emotional and ethical dilemmas to be negotiated on an individual, case-by-case basis.

5. *From fieldwork to textwork* is the last key transition – one without which ethnography can hardly aim at public scrutiny and scientific relevance. This means to make the most, over time, of the notes ethnographers should take as close as possible to the relevant events or interactions. Fieldnotes are a matter of incremental and open-ended cumulation, albeit increasingly driven by the search for recurrent themes and patterns. As fieldwork itself amounts to much more than words only, visual tools and ICTs have an increasing potential to affect all steps of the ethnographic process – including data assembling and writing. They can hardly replace, though, researchers' autonomy in deciding which observation items should be included in the fieldnotes, and why; nor in working out a balance between a merely observational style of note-writing and the reflexive collection of their own thoughts, feelings and reactions. In either case, fieldnotes seem bound to make for an irremediably partial and selective account (Fine 1993; Emerson et al. 2011). Whatever the ways of collection, codification and analysis, they are never simply data that reflect what "really" happened out there. Instead, they are affected by the personal circumstances of ethnographers and by fieldwork contingencies, even while being driven by the aim to figure out more general theoretical dimensions, beyond the specific events at stake. Having said that, ethnographers' claim to achieve a distinctive *societal* significance (Burawoy 1991) – different from, but not lesser than, *statistical* significance – is not without its critics (e.g., in sociology, Goldthorpe 2007).

Based on these methodological remarks, we can now approach the specific relevance and implications of ethnography for migration studies.

12.3   Participant Observation in Migration Studies

Since Malinowski, anthropologists have attempted to understand how individuals move "in and through social systems" (Fortes 1971, p. 2), but active engagement with human movement and mobility in anthropology is a more recent phenomenon (Brettell 2003; Salazar 2013). Much of the research carried out by social and cultural anthropologists during the first half of the twentieth century paid little attention to human mobility as many ethnographers were working with a bounded concept of culture and a static structural-functional theoretical paradigm (Brettell 2013; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). They mostly portrayed societies across the globe as bounded, territorialized, relatively unchanging and homogenous units (Salazar 2010, 2013; Tsing 1993; Vertovec 2010) and cultures "as essentially immobile or as possessing a mobility that is cyclical and repetitive [...] Those with culture are expected to have a regular, delimited occupation of territory. If they move, they

must do so cyclically, like transhumant pastoralists or kularing sailors" (Tsing 1993, p. 123).

Since the second half of the twentieth century, however, mobility and mobility-related topics have gained a prominent place in anthropology and in other social sciences. Whereas in migration studies the actual interest is less in movement then in departure and/or arrival (involving issues of uprooting and integration), "mobility" has become a keyword of the social sciences, delineating a novel domain of debates, approaches and methodologies regarding processes of movement in a broader sense (Adey et al. 2014; Cresswell 2006; Salazar and Jayaram 2016; Urry 2007). In the last few years, plenty of ethnographies of mobility have been carried out, focusing on, among many others, migrant trajectories (McKay 2012; Schapendonk and Steel 2014), the everyday lives of migrants (Holmes 2013; Lucht 2013; Smith 2006), families who are divided across borders (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2013; Dreby 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001), migrants' involvement in transnational politics (Fitzgerald 2004; Ghorashi 2003; Levitt 2001), the experiences of marginalized minorities (Agier 2002; Van Meeteren 2010), and the meaning of "home" and domesticity (Gielis 2011; Giorgi and Fasulo 2013; Levin and Fincher 2010).

Anthropologists were among the first scholars to propose "a transnational perspective for the study of migration" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992), drawing attention to the fact that migrants' social practices occur almost simultaneously on the territories of more than one national state. This approach challenged previous, rather localized assumptions about identities, and focused on the relationships between places migrated from and to. As such, participant observation has been a driver of conceptual innovation, as the concept of transnationality would have never come to us without it. Criticizing the taken-for-granted equation of society with the nation state, the so-called "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003), the transnational approach argues that "national organization as a structuring principle of societal and political action can no longer serve as the orienting reference point for the social scientific observer" (Beck and Sznaider 2006, p. 4).

In the study of transnational migration, ethnographical research distinguishes itself from social survey research, another area of measurement in applied social research, in a number of ways. Firstly, whereas other social scientists generally generate deductively inferred hypotheses that are then verified during research, ethnographers continually question, explore and reformulate systematic explanations of the relations between variables, and even the choice of variables, during research. This enables them to change research questions as new situations that were not expected within the initial set of assumptions present themselves (Glick Schiller 2003). For example, in her PhD research proposal on Brazilian mobility, Schrooten did not refer to the Internet as a possible research site. However, soon after her fieldwork started, she decided to make it one of her central fieldwork locations as Brazilian migrants often mentioned the Internet and other social media as the most important media for keeping in touch with other Brazilians, both inside and outside Brazil. Likewise, the development of ethnography may significantly question one's previous theoretical assumptions. Boccagni (2011, 2016), for instance, spent a long

time tracing the relevance of transnational ties in the everyday lives of Ecuadorians in Italy, only to find out that such ties were far more "fragmented" (Menjivar 2000), and not always so fundamental, as his pre-fieldwork literature review might have suggested.

Secondly, the practice of participant observation, or of ethnographic research more generally, collects data of a different nature than those collected by other methods (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002). Evidence provided on the basis of a survey is emic data, a respondent's self-presentation and, thus, "front stage behaviour" (Goffman 1999). Yet, people's behaviour does not always correspond to the opinions they consciously articulate (Giddens 2013; Turner 1991). Participant observation ascertains the typicality of behaviour from on-going observations, over time and within a range of contexts, of what people do, differentiated from what they say that they do (De Munck and Sobo 1998). As such, it is well suited to delve into people's daily lives well beyond their self-presentations (Boccagni 2012; Glick Schiller 2003).

This point is particularly important in the study of human mobility, as there are many reasons for the discrepancies between self-reported responses and the actual behaviour of migrants. Respondents might deliberately not report certain activities that are considered suspect or illegal. For example, if they obtain financial support from the state, they may report that they don't receive any financial help from their transnational networks nor send remittances themselves, as they know this could lead to the refusal of the payment of allowances and benefits.

But also, unexpected situations may lead to a difference between the aspirations people have and their actual circumstances. Much has been written, for instance, on "return" as an initially very clear, expectedly short-term aim of migration – one that, however, often tends to be postponed and even to blur away over time. In our research, we met numerous people whose trajectories were very different from what they had expected when they left their country of residence. Many respondents' narratives show that their (on-going) (im)mobility is often an unintended process and a phase which might end, but could just as well start over depending on circumstances (Withaeckx et al. 2015). For many non-EU immigrants, who initially settled in Southern-European countries, for example, further migration was prompted by the need to seek better opportunities and life circumstances by a subsequent move further north. For many of them, this new migration was unintended, as they had lived in Southern Europe for numerous years and had expected to settle there permanently. Another example is that of transient migrants, who follow an expectedly linear migration trajectory with a specific destination in mind, but for a variety of reasons spend some time in other locations before moving on to their desired destination – as long as they reach it at all. African asylum seekers moving onwards from Southern Europe are a case in point (Belloni 2016). These – and many more – movements illustrate that contemporary processes of human mobility are heterogeneous and varied in terms of purposes, trajectories and durations. Methodologies that continue to work under assumptions of migration as a unidirectional, purposeful and intentional process from one state of fixity (in the place of origin) to another (in the destination) fail to capture much of the complexity of these processes. This makes

particularly crucial an ethnographic effort to follow them up over time – as opposed to one-shot techniques of data collection, including in-depth interviews.

Deciding how much to participate or not in the life of people being studied is no easy judgement. Although these topics call for a much broader debate and are not specifically related to participant observation, we want to draw attention to some issues that might play an important role in this judgement. On the one hand, it is important to realise that there are limits to participant observation, not at least so when engaging in certain activities may be illegal, dangerous to the ethnographer, or both. On the other hand, there are occasions during which the researcher faces the decision about whether or not to intervene in a situation; not at least so when they face dilemmas that become difficult ethical issues (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002; Rynkiewich and Spradley 1976; see also the Chap. 15 by Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger in this volume).

12.4 On the Relationship Between Ethnographers and Their Counterparts

As the instances above suggest, the relationships between ethnographers and their research subjects are particularly critical to participant observation. This is particularly salient in migration studies, and can be appreciated at all the steps of the ethnographic process: while negotiating access to the field, which is very much a matter of gaining trust (or at least respect) of its members, and then of negotiating mutual views and expectations over time; during one's stay in the field, as the quality of the data collected – hence the validity of an ethnographer's claims – is affected by informants' attitudes and willingness to cooperate, no less than by one's insight and ability to be "in the right place, in the right time"; while leaving the field, during textwork and in publishing research findings, which may raise delicate issues in acknowledging informants' contribution.

A focus on interpersonal relationships in fieldwork entails revisiting the distinction between *insider* and *outsider* research, where the former points to "situations in which the researcher shares membership in a social group with the research participant" (Nowicka and Cieslik 2014, p. 6; see also Carling et al. 2014). At stake is also the variable degree of similarity and proximity between ethnographers and their subjects, as it is constructed, enacted and negotiated over time, primarily (but not exclusively) along ethno-national lines. In practice, there is nothing obvious in the conditions under which an ethnographer acts and is perceived like an insider or an outsider to field members. Most notably, the increasing number of ethnographers with an immigrant background, or with the same ethnic background as their counterparts, is a desirable development in itself. However, it needs not result in automatically better or deeper ethnographic engagement. The very divide between insiders and outsiders is more blurred and context-specific than the distinction between ethnic majorities and minorities would suggest. It is ultimately a matter of

Table 12.1 Specific markers of a participant observer that may influence her insider/outsider status (Carling et al. 2014, p. 45)

	Markers of archetypical insider/outsider status	Apparent to informants	Possible for researchers to adapt in the field	Possible for researchers to communicate selectively to informants
Name	X	X	x	x
Occupation and title		X	x	x
Gender		X		
Age group		X		
Physical appearance	X	X		
Clothing style	X	X	X	
Parenthood				X
Visible pregnancy		X		x
Language skills	X	X		x
Language used	X	X	x	
Cultural competence	X	X		X
Sustained commitment	X	X		x
Religion	X			X
Migration experiences	X	X		X

NB: **X** stands for "relevant"; *x* stands for "context-specific"

boundary-making, where relevant boundaries can involve also gender, age, class, religion and so forth. All of these variables turn out to be more or less salient markers of researchers' "positionality", and are subject to more or less intensive forms of "identity management" on a case-by-case basis. Even so, reflecting on the evolving position of ethnographers vis-à-vis field informants is a source of insight in two major respects.

To start with, it stimulates reflection on the weight and consequences of their mutual perceptions and categorizations. In other words, researchers' positionality mirrors the potential transition from principled differences – those associated with categories such as ethnicity, gender, class, etc. – to the more minute and personal markers of difference that are negotiated between researchers and informants. Carling et al. (2014) develop a fascinating argument around this, by showing how several "markers of status" (Table 12.1) may make field relationships more or less

inclusive, symmetric, ultimately sustainable.[2] Of course, none of these markers is necessarily predictive of researchers' positionality. Taken together, though, they do provide a map for investigating ethnographers' attempts to negotiate the "right mix" of proximity and distance vis-à-vis their subjects. They are also telling of the social factors that most likely affect the mutual engagement between researchers and informants; hence, at least indirectly, the outcome of ethnography itself.

In the second place, focusing on the insider/outsider identity of ethnographers, and on their interface with ethnographic informants, is instrumental to still another reflexive step: interrogating the identity, roles and purview of field members themselves. The latter can take up a variety of roles over the course of ethnography – "simple" *informants*, *gatekeepers* or *cognitive mediators,* but also, potentially, *co-producers* of ethnography as a collaborative effort in which (some key) informants parallel the role of researchers themselves (Boccagni 2011). In fact, the underpinnings of field relationships may amount to much more than the traditional and relatively shallow "rapport". The "essential affinity between observer and observed" (Marcus 2007) can be acknowledged and pave the way for a progressive and empowering approach to fieldwork (Lassiter 2005). If and when such a collaborative approach is enacted, significant issues of authorship – who is the writer of what, on behalf of whom – are also likely to emerge.

Overall, revisiting ethnographers' field relationships is not simply a background question for purposes of external accountability – i.e. to follow formal protocols, rules of funding agencies, etc. Nor should it be discarded as an ethnographical form of navel-gazing. Instead, the point is that interpersonal relationships, as they are negotiated all over fieldwork, have major epistemological and ethical implications. There is much to be gained from a reflexive stance on one's evolving position in the field, on its prevalent perceptions among informants, on the influence of the latter on data collection, elaboration and even ownership. Having said this, the emancipatory or politically-oriented potential of ethnography should not be overestimated either. As luring as the labels of "active", "collaborative" or "participatory" are, they are unlikely to be frequently adopted by immigrant informants – unless for a self-selected minority of them. As much experience shows, providing *potential* space for their active engagement may well be enough to define a good-enough ethnographic practice. For the bulk of field informants, respectful listening, sensitive acknowledgement and the promise of a more nuanced understanding of their life circumstances are not an irrelevant return for their (mostly limited) involvement.

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[2] As these authors sum it up, "who we are as researchers, and in relation to our informants, is interpreted through social categories on the one hand, and specific markers on the other. These markers are linked to the researcher's person and behaviour. They vary in terms of their visibility to informants, the researcher's ability to modify them, and the possibilities for communicating them selectively" (Carling et al. 2014, p. 48).

12.5   What Next? Multi-sited Ethnography, Online Ethnography, and Beyond

Classical ethnographic research relied on long-term and intensive investigation of one particular place or a local situation, aiming to understand another way of life from the native point of view. Yet, human mobility is a key example of a phenomenon that is irreducible to the scope of a closed, territorially based and fully controllable ethnographic field, as it involves multiple physical, social and symbolic locations, whether simultaneously or over time. One of the basic aspects of a transnational approach is to consider the simultaneity of transnational practices taking place in multiple localities. The development of a transnational approach to migration was interestingly paralleled with the introduction of "multi-sited fieldwork" (Marcus 1995), a new strategy of data collection that encouraged researchers to investigate transnational units of reference in a variety of fields, including migration-related ones. Differing from a merely comparative study of localities, the "multi-sited fieldworker" quite literally follows people and their connections and relationships across space. Much has been written, by now, both on the potential of multi-sited ethnography and on the challenges it typically faces (see also the Chap. 3 by Russell King in this volume). The latter include reconciling breadth and depth of analysis, coping with the huge costs it may entail (hence the need for teamwork and collaborative research designs), and finding strong theoretical grounds to justify site selection (Hannerz 2003; Hage 2005; Falzon 2016; Marcus 2012). After all, the most complex and innovative task for multi-sited ethnography is not only staying somehow in more *sites* at once (e.g. via Mazzucato's (2009) "simultaneous matched sampling"). As important and elusive is observing the interpersonal *relationships* being cultivated between them, and the underlying material and immaterial infrastructures (Boccagni 2016).

Multisited ethnography allows researchers to identify the empirical field as deterritorialised by, for instance, studying migrants' online communities or the use of new media in transnational relationships (Madianou 2016; Madianou and Miller 2012; Pink et al. 2015; Schrooten 2012). Studies of migration have been particularly important for challenging assumptions about the "degree to which geographically dispersed agents experience a sense of physical and/or psychological proximity through the use of particular communication technologies" (Milne 2010, p. 165). Scientific attention to the variety of ways through which digital media and technologies can be used to create a sense of presence over space and time is related, in turn, to another emerging development in the ethnographic study of migration: digital ethnography, also known as virtual ethnography, and most commonly online ethnography, which extends traditional ethnography to settings where interactions are technologically mediated (see also the Chap. 14 by Koen Leurs and Madhuri Prabhakar in this volume). Like its traditional counterpart, online ethnography generally aims to produce a "thick description" of the behavior in a culture or community. This makes it distinct from other methods such as online interviews, content analysis or web usage mining.

Moving ethnography online requires some adaptations of the method, as many aspects of this online environment are very distinct from those of face-to-face settings. The fact that online communication is often automatically saved and archived, creating permanent accurate records makes researchers able to easily observe and copy these interactions. The enormous amount of available data forces online ethnographers to make explicit choices about the delimitation of their research question, the place and duration of online data collection and the way data will be analysed.

Moreover, the nature of online data is rather different from the data obtained through a face-to-face ethnography. An online ethnography provides mainly textual and visual material (such as the use of pictures, page layout, videos and so on). In these kinds of interactions, body language is absent or replaced by emoticons or text. At the same time, the role of mediated oral communication, with a possibility of visual access to each other is also increasing. Instead of focusing solely on the written word, ethnographers are thus required to also integrate visual aspects of data and to develop a new set of skills and methods of data collection.

Another obvious difference with conventional ethnography is the way researchers can make an entrée into the community they want to study. Although the problem of how to present oneself also exists within traditional ethnography, the challenges involved in obtaining access differ, as ethnographers cannot rely solely upon their physical presence and personal interactional skills (Garcia et al. 2009; Mann and Stewart 2000).

Online ethnographic research has also raised a number of ethical questions. The specificities of this research setting necessitate a re-examination of the institutionalized understandings of research ethics. Although in the emerging literature some concrete guidelines can now be found of how to conduct ethical research online (Bull et al. 2011; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2010; Schrooten 2016; Wilkinson and Thelwall 2011), an internationally accepted framework for online ethnographic research ethics does not as yet exist.

Overall, multi-sited and online ethnography are different ways of addressing what is arguably the key challenge for the ethnographic study of transnational migration: catching social practices on the move, the associated circulation of a variety of resources, and the interaction between physically proximate, present or visible life environments and their remote, absent or invisible counterparts. The issue, in other words, is to appreciate the influence of migration on geographically distant, but socially interdependent sets of phenomena, and to do so in ways as close as possible to the evolving pathways of migrants themselves. Further connections with the emerging set of mobile methods, as well as with those advanced within "global ethnography", are arguably necessary to expand further the potential of participant observation for migration studies.

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Chapter 13
Discourse and Migration

Teun A. van Dijk

13.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces some discourse analytical methods for the study of migration. It should be stressed from the outset, though, that *discourse analysis is not a method*, *but a broad, multidisciplinary field of study of the humanities and social sciences*, a field that therefore should rather be called *Discourse Studies*. This field has emerged from developments since the mid-1960s, initially in anthropology, (socio)linguistics, literature, semiotics, cognitive psychology and sociology, and later in social psychology, history, law and communication. Strangely, political science is one of the few disciplines in the social sciences that has not witnessed such a popular development, although many if not most political phenomena are discursive. Today, after more than half a century, Discourse Studies is a broad cross-discipline, with thousands of books and articles, half a dozen journals and conferences on many specialized topics (for general survey to the whole field, see Tannen et al. 2015; for introduction see Van Dijk 2011; for further references, see below).

In this field, *many methods are used*, such as analysis of context, gestures, sounds, syntax, meaning, rhetoric, speech acts, interaction, conversation, narrative, argumentation or genres such as news reports or parliamentary debates, each, again, with more specific methods and approaches. In general, these methods study different *structures* and *strategies* of text and talk. Besides these more *qualitative* methods, there are more *quantitative* methods, such as corpus linguistic methods to study vast text corpora, experimental methods in the psychology of discourse processing, or ethnographies for the study of discourse in its social and cultural contexts. Qualitative methods of discourse analysis are different from traditional content

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analysis, which is generally based on quantitative treatment of *coding* of discourse expressions, using ad hoc codes, that is, without an explicit theory of discourse structure (but see Chap. 5 for qualitative content analysis; for general studies of methods of discourse studies, see Titscher et al. 2000; Wodak and Meyer 2015). This chapter will be limited to only *some methods of qualitative discourse analysis*, also since other methods are discussed in other chapters of this Handbook.

The general theoretical framework of this chapter, as well as of my other work, also on racist discourse, is a multidisciplinary approach called sociocognitive discourse studies, which links a systematic analysis of discourse structures with an analysis of societal structures via a cognitive interface (for recent summaries, see e.g., Van Dijk 2015a, b). My studies on discourse and racism are part of a broad academic perspective of Critical Discourse Studies, focusing on the study of discursive domination and discursive resistance against domination (Fairclough 1989, 1995; Van Dijk 2008b; Wodak and Meyer 2015).

13.2   What Is Discourse?

Outside of the field of Discourse Studies, it is often asked to *define* discourse. Such a definition, however, is implicitly provided by all theories of the field, studying the many *properties* of discourse. In the same way, sociology does not provide a definition of society, but only describes and analyses a myriad of properties of societies. A summary of these different properties of discourse may, however, be taken as a complex "definition":

- Discourse is a form and unit of language use
- Discourse is an ordered sequence of words, sentences or turns – each with its own structures
- These sequences express coherent sequences of local and global meanings
- The performance of these meaningful sequences in a communicative social context accomplishes speech acts and other forms of social action.
- Discourse is form of communication
- Discourse is a multimodal message (spoken, written, images, sounds, music, gestures)
- Discourse is a form of social interaction
- Discourse may instantiate a social relation, such as power, domination or resistance
- Discourse may be a political action, such as a speech in parliament or party propaganda
- Discourse is a cultural phenomenon, such as a conference paper or editorial
- Discourse is an economic commodity or resource (it may be bought or sold, e.g. as newspaper or book, or represent a form of power).

Each of these very general definitions (and there are more) may be further specified, as we did for the definition of discourse and a form of language use. Thus, discourse as social interaction may be further defined in terms of speech acts such as promises and threats, or in terms of the many structures of conversation, such as openings, closings or interruptions.

There are many *genres* of discourse, such as (many sorts of) informal conversation, news reports in the press or on television, parliamentary debates, party propaganda, many types of legal (laws, interrogations), political (speeches of politicians) or educational (textbooks, classroom interaction) discourse, advertisements, Twitter or Facebook messages, and so on. As we shall see in more detail below, these genres are defined in terms of the properties of the communicative situation or *context*, such as Who, When, Where, for Whom and How the discourse is used, as well as by their style or meanings. These genres may also be described in terms of the *type* of discourse structure, such as argumentative, narrative or other "schematic" structures that define the overall "format" of text or talk. For instance, editorials in the press and parliamentary debates usually feature different structures and strategies of argumentation, and everyday storytelling usually is organized by narrative structures. News reports in the press have their own specific schematic structure, consisting of Headline, Lead, Recent Events, Comments, etc. Similar schematic (super) structures may define many other conventional discourse genres, such as scholarly article or court trials. Depending on context, discourses may have a more or less formal *style*, defined by the selection of words or the structure of sentences. Thus, parliamentary debates have a more formal style than conversations among friends, although both are forms of social interaction. We shall come back to these different properties of discourse and discourse genres below.

Since discourse can be defined in as many ways as shown above, Discourse Studies as a field is typically *multidisciplinary*, and not limited to more "linguistic" approaches. Conversation Analysis, for instance, is based on a more general, sociological study of interaction. And Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the study of the discursive abuse of power (as in racist or sexist discourse) or the resistance against such domination (e.g., by antiracist or feminist discourse) also studied in political science. Ethnographic approaches may combine a study of discourse genres and their style, with complex analysis of the sociocultural situation, who (may, must) speak, when, to whom, on what occasion, in what circumstances and with what social or political functions and effects.

The notion of discourse is sometimes also used in a more abstract and hence vaguer sense, for instance, as a general philosophical or political system, such as the discourse of modernity – sometimes written with a capital D: Discourse (Gee 1999). Philosophical approaches to discourse usually deal more with ideas (as expressed in discourse) than with the detailed structures of text and talk (for instance, in the work of Foucault 1980) and do not offer systematic methods for the analysis of such structures.

Finally, the term "discourse" is not only used as a specific instance of text or talk, but also in a more *generic* sense, such as a class of discourses associated with

a social context. For instance, "political discourse" refers to a whole class of different genres of political discourse, such as parliamentary debates or party propaganda. Thus, below we speak of Migration Discourse, and thereby refer to a large class of all discourse genres of/about migrants or migration. If not in this generic sense of a class of discourse genres, in this chapter discourse is only defined and analysed as a specific instance of language use, communication or interaction, for instance a specific news report, a specific debate in parliament, or a specific everyday conversation.

13.2.1   Migration Discourse

The complexity of discourse as a linguistic, social, political and cultural object or phenomenon also characterises migration discourse, which represents a vast *class* of *different discourse genres*. The *class* of these genres is primarily defined in terms of their *reference*, that is, what they are *about*: the many aspects of migration as a social and political phenomenon. Other general classes of genres of discourse are, for instance, political discourse, media discourse or educational discourse.

News reports, editorials, parliamentary debates, laws, or everyday conversations are among the many discourse genres that may be about migration in general, and related phenomena, such as migrants (Them), autochthonous peoples (Us), causes of migration, integration, xenophobia, discrimination, racism, immigration policies, and so on, in particular.

Migration discourse not only may be *about* migration or its many aspects, but also be a *constituent part* of migration as a phenomenon, as would be the stories of migrants, as well as parliamentary discourse preparing immigration policies. Contemporary discourse studies emphasise this fact, namely that discourse is not just a form of language use, but also a form of *social and political (inter) action*. Thus, migration as a social phenomenon not only consists of (groups of) participants, institutions, many types of social and political (inter)action, but also, quite prominently, of many genres of migration discourse as social and political acts and interaction.

After the more general introduction about Discourse Studies as a field, as well as its objects and methods, and a brief general characterisation of Migration Discourse as a class of discourse genres, let us now proceed with a more systematic method for the study of migration discourse.

Although most studies of migration take place in the social sciences, the last two decades also have witnessed many discourse analytical studies of migration, in general, and of racist discourse, in particular. Instead of reviewing these studies, we will focus in this chapter on some of the methods used in such research (some books on migration and racist discourse are, for instance, Bañón Hernández 2002; Blommaert

and Verschueren 1998; De Fina 2003; Hart 2015; Henry and Tator 2002; Hill 2008; Jäger 1992; Jiwani 2006; Korkut 2013; Lloyd 1998; Niehr and Böke 2000; Prieto Ramos 2004; Reeves 1983; Reisigl and Wodak 2000, 2001; Rubio-Carbonero and Zapata-Barrero 2017; Van der Valk 2002; Van Dijk 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993, 2009b; Wetherell and Potter 1992; Wodak and Van Dijk 2000; Wodak 2015; Wodak et al. 1990; Wodak and Richardson 2012; Zapata-Barrero 2009; Zapata-Barrero and Van Dijk 2007).

Genres and Contexts of Migration Discourse

There are many ways to engage in qualitative discourse analysis. Specialized studies may directly focus on just one aspect of discourse, for instance the structures and uses of pronouns, metaphors or argumentation. A more general methodology for the study of migration discourse, as presented here, proposes an overall, systematic introduction to various *levels* and *dimensions* of discourse *structure* and its *uses* and *functions* in the social and political *context*. This means that only a few of these structures, among hundreds of others, can be dealt with here.

One of the first theoretical and methodological tasks when studying (migration and others) discourse is to establish what *genre* of discourse one is analysing. Above, we already mentioned some of these genres, such as stories of migrants or parliamentary debates. But obviously there are many more genres of migration discourse, such as:

- Media discourse: news reports (press, TV, radio, internet); editorials; interviews (see Chap. 10); reportages; cartoons; letters to the Editor
- Political discourse: parliamentary debates, bills, policy documents, party programs, speeches of politicians
- Legal discourse: bills/laws; international agreements; treaties; police discourse; crime reports; interrogations; trials
- Educational discourse: textbooks/lessons, classroom interaction, teacher-student interaction
- Administrative discourse: interactions with officials; forms; applications
- Social movement discourse: official declarations, meetings protests, slogans, conversations among members
- Internet discourse; websites, blogs
- Artistic discourse: novels, poetry, theatre, TV shows and soaps
- Personal discourse: everyday face-to-face conversations; letters, e-mail messages; internet participation (Facebook, Twitter, Chats).

Since there are many dozens of discourse genres of and about migrants, in this chapter our examples will be limited to only a few genres, such as laws, parliamentary debates, news reports and textbooks. By way of example, we have chosen some of the discourses related to the U.K. Immigration Act of 2016.

Contexts

To define the discourse genres mentioned above, one may distinguish between *contextual* and *textual* characterizations. The latter were more common in traditional discourse and literary analysis and shall be dealt with below. Today, it is recognized that important distinctive features of genres must be in terms of the *communicative situation,* because discourse genres are, first of all, a type of *social activity*. Such communicative situations may be characterized by a few main and secondary categories, as follows:

- Time/Period
- Place/Space/Environment/Institution
- Participants
- Social identities, e.g., ethnic identities, origin, etc.
- Communicative roles: speaker, recipient, etc.
- Social roles, e.g., politician, teacher, police officer, judge, etc.
- Social relations, e.g., of domination (power abuse), cooperation, resistance
- On-going (Inter)Action
- On-going discourse
- Speech acts (e.g., assertion, question, promise, accusation)
- Other social acts (e.g., cooperation, protests, etc.)
- Personal and social cognition
- Goals of the current interaction
- Shared and mutual generic knowledge (common ground) of participants
- Shared social attitudes and ideologies about migration.

With this schema, a first definition of a discourse genre can be given. For instance, a parliamentary debate takes place in Parliament as an Institution, usually in a parliament building, at a specific day and time, during so many minutes, hours or days, with participants in their role as politicians, MPs and members of political parties, and with national, ethnic or gender identities, representing voters, participating in a complex interactional discourse (a debate), controlled by the current Speaker/Chair, in various speaking roles, performing various speech acts (assertions, questions, accusations) as well as several social and political acts, such as governing, legislating, representing the people – and possibly defending or discriminating against minority groups – with several social and political goals, e.g. to limit immigration.

Such discourse and social acts are based on shared knowledge about migration, as well as attitudes and ideologies about migration or minorities. The content/meaning and structures of such parliamentary debates, as well as of other migration discourses, is to be specified separately, as proposed below, but it will generally be about some migration aspect or event. A similar *contextual definition* may be given for any of the other migration discourse genres.

For participants to write or speak appropriately in these variable communicative situations, they must adapt their text or talk to this situation, and they can only do so when they know, that is, *mentally represent what is currently relevant in such a situation*. Hence, contexts as they influence discourse are a special kind of personal,

mental model, a *context model* – which may be slightly different for each speaker, so that also misunderstandings may arise (for details about contexts, context models and contextual analysis, see Van Dijk 2008a, 2009a). This context model exercises the overall *control* in the production of discourse, and makes sure it is *appropriate* in the on-going communicative situation.

The *relevance* of such a contextual analysis of genres of migration discourse is shown by the fact that the discourses in many ways show or manifest aspects of the context, such as by adverbs or phrases of time and place (*today*, *in the past*, *here*, *in this country*, etc.), personal and possessive pronouns (*I, we, they, our*), descriptions of roles and identities (*as MP*, *as member of party X, as citizen of country Y*), goals (*I want to show that*..), or knowledge (*we all know that*…). More generally shared knowledge of the participants is *presupposed* (old) information in discourse (see below), or as a basis for deriving (new) *implications*.

Discourse structures thus signalling an aspect or parameter of the context are called *deictic* or *indexical* expressions. Thus, in the speeches of a parliamentary debate, we not only find assertions or questions about migration, but also large fragments that are about the current debate, about the speaker or about the other MPs and their roles and identities.

Contextual Racism

As we shall see below, at all levels of discourse, but also at the context level, structures may be expressing or functioning as a form of racism. Thus, the same discourse theme, such as "problems of immigration" may make a parliamentary speech (more or less) racist depending on the identities, relations and goals of the participants, for instance with the goal of limiting immigration or helping migrants, or spoken by members of a progressive, pro-immigration party or by an MP of an extreme right-wing party (see also Chap. 3).

Themes and Topics

Once we have established the genre and the more detailed contextual parameters of a migration discourse, we may focus on the various structures of text or talk themselves. We do so first by an analysis of the themes and topics of discourse, that is, their general, *overall meaning.* Topics are theoretically described as semantic macrostructures, consisting of macro propositions that semantically subsume and control the lower level meanings (propositions) of the sentences of the discourse (Van Dijk 1980). A practical way to define these macro propositions is to *summarize* a paragraph or whole discourse in the form of a few simple sentences. Such topics are typically expressed in the headline of a news report or the title and abstract of a scholarly paper, but we also may do so at the beginning of a story or conversation: "Yesterday I had an accident and…".

Topics not only are fundamental because they subsume the local meanings of a discourse, but also because they are the information that is generally best remembered by the recipients. We may forget the details of a news report, but have better memory for the overall topics. If a news report is about an immigration event, for instance, many refugees drowning when crossing the Mediterranean, we may later forget the details, or how many refugees drowned, but may remember the most important information, that is, the information at the top of the mental model we construe of the event by interpreting the news report (Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). In other words, macrostructures of discourse may correspond with macrostructures of mental models, and these may be used as a condition for social action, including discriminatory practices.

Topics also allow a methodological short-cut when one wants to analyse a large number of discourses about migration, such as news articles or parliamentary speeches. Instead of analysing the complex local structures (see below) of such discourses, we may study only their topics by summarising these discourses in a few sentences. These may feature such categories as Time, Place, Participants in various identities and roles, as well as the global action or event (as we did for the structure of context above). Although such summaries do not provide all details, they at least provide a global idea of the meaning of a larger corpus of text or talk.

Although there is no explicit theory of themes, as there is for topics defined as semantic macrostructures, themes are concepts that define classes of discourses. Thus, all discourse genres we have mentioned above share the overall theme of migration. Or they may be about refugees, about the current elections or about the racism of the extreme right. Whereas a topic, as defined, characterizes a *specific* discourse, as is the case for its expression in the headline of a news report, a theme may define a large number or sequences of news reports. Thus, each concept of a macro proposition (e.g., refugees, arriving by boat, drowning, etc.) may constitute a theme of many articles. In everyday practice, we use themes to refer to what a discourse is *about*, e.g., refugees, the elections, or racism. In research, theme-concepts may be used as a criterion for the selection of discourses for a corpus, because they are about the same phenomenon.

Here are a few examples of topics as expressed in titles, headlines and summaries of migration discourses:

(1) Immigration Act 2016
An Act to make provision about the law on immigration and asylum; to make provision about access to services, facilities, licences and work by reference to immigration status; to make provision about the enforcement of certain legislation relating to the labour market; to make provision about language requirements for public sector workers; to make provision about fees for passports and civil registration; and for connected purposes (Initial Summary of the U.K. Immigration Act of May 12, 2016).

This summary of the U.K. 2016 Immigration Act condenses a bill of 236 pages (nearly 90,000 words) into a summary of 66 words, e.g., with such very general concepts as "access to services, facilities, licenses and work". Human Rights News summarises some "key changes" of the same law in "plain English":

(2)
Employers who hire illegal migrants and the workers themselves face criminal sanctions. Migrants who do not have permission to be in the UK can have certain privileges revoked. For example, their bank accounts can be frozen and their driver's license can be seized. It will soon be a criminal offence for a landlord to knowingly rent premises to an illegal migrant. If found guilty, the landlord can face up to 5 years in prison. This law will take effect when the Secretary of State creates regulations that state the law's 'start date'. (http://rightsinfo.org/immigration-act-2016-plain-english) (May 31,2016)

We see that a summary (of a law, news, etc.) may very well be subjective, for instance as a critical comment – which focuses on the social consequences of the new law (criminal sanctions, etc.). Crucial is that such summaries, rather than detailed text, generally are best remembered by the readers. See also the following headline and summary of a news report in the *Guardian*:

(3) Immigration to UK hit record levels prior to Brexit vote, data shows
Record level of immigration, at 650,000 people, driven by a historically high inflow of 84,000 EU citizens before referendum.
Immigration to Britain reached 650,000 – its highest ever annual level – in the run up to the EU referendum, fuelled by record numbers of European migrants coming to work in "the jobs factory of Europe", official figures reveal (Guardian, 1-12-16).

We see that whereas the headline uses the more general notion of "record levels", the first (topical) sentence (and the rest) of the news reports specify the more precise numbers. Incidentally, news about immigration is replete with numbers (e.g. of arrivals), which may also have a rhetorical function, when emphasising the (vast) numbers of immigrants, a rhetorical ploy called the "Numbers Game" (Van Dijk 1991; and see below).

The next day, on December 2, 2016, the *Sun* published an editorial with the following headline about the same theme (a Government report on immigration statistics):

(4)
Shocking immigration stats reveal we have no control of our borders – and the government must do more to cut down numbers (Sun, 2-12-16)

This is no longer a summary of the facts, as in the news, but a summary of the *Sun's opinion* about immigration. Apart from the strong appraisal word "shocking", notice the presupposition (see below) that we have no control of our borders, and the deontic modality (see below) in the recommendation of what the government "must" do.

Schematic Superstructures

Whereas topics or semantic macrostructures define the overall meaning of a discourse, discourses also have an overall superstructure, a schematic form or format. Some of the categories that constitute such superstructures have already been mentioned above, such as the Title, Abstract or Conclusions of a scholarly article, or the Headline and Lead of a news report, as we have seen for the *Guardian* and *Sun*. These schematic categories define the overall organisation of text or talk, for

instance in what order its components occur, and which components are part of higher level components. For instance, the Headline and Lead of a news report are both part of the initial Summary of the news report. Superstructures are often conventional for a discourse genre, as is the case for most news reports or scholarly articles. Even informal conversations may have some more or less conventional schematic categories, such as Openings (e.g. by Greetings:. *Hi*) or Closings (by leave-taking: *Bye*!).

The U.K. Immigration Act is structured in nine parts, each consisting of several chapters (such as Chap. 2, "Illegal Working") which, again, have sub-categories (such as "Offences") – all with summarising titles.

There are superstructures that play a fundamental role in the organization of everyday discourse genres, as is the case for narrative structures of storytelling, or the argumentative structure of debates, editorials or other opinion discourse. For instance, the classical narrative structure of an everyday story may be summarised with the following categories: Orientation, Complication, Resolution, Coda/Conclusion roughly in that order, with an Evaluation (such as "I was so afraid"), which may occur anywhere in the story (Labov 2013). Similarly, an argumentation typically consists of different types of general or specific Premises, followed (and sometimes preceded) by a Conclusion (for detail about the structures of argumentation, see, e.g., Van Eemeren 2014).

Schematic superstructures characterise types of discourse structure or whole genres – more or less independently of their meaning. This means that methodologically they may appear to be less relevant for research focusing on content. Thus, all MPs in a parliamentary debate make use of argumentation structures – including fallacies – whether they are in favour or against immigration or any other aspect of migration. Being in favour of or against immigration, thus, is an element of *meaning*, not of *form*. In other words, superstructures of discourse, as such, may not be racist or antiracist – only their "contents".

However, because superstructures are about overall order and organisation, they may make their global meaning (topics) more or less *salient*: as we have seen above, the meaning of a headline may represent the top of the macrostructure of a text and of a mental model of the text, and hence tends to be better recalled. The same is true for Abstracts and Conclusions of discourse genres. More generally, superstructures organise discourse segments, and hence organise the macro propositions (topics) that subsume the meaning of such segments.

In empirical research of migration discourse it is, thus, not only important to establish overall meanings, but also their order to position in discourse. Indeed, many readers may only read (and hence remember the information expressed by) the Headline or Leads of news reports, or the Title, Summary or Conclusions of scholarly articles.

Local Meanings

Besides the study of the overall meanings (topics, themes) of migration, most relevant for qualitative discourse analysis is the study of its "local" meanings, which are the meanings of words, sentences or sequences of sentences.

Traditionally, both global and local meanings are represented as propositions, consisting of a number of arguments referring to things or people, and a predicate, referring to a property, relation, action or event, as in the proposition "The voters elected a right-wing president", where 'voters' and 'president' are arguments, and 'elected' is the main predicate, and 'right-wing' a lower level predicate modifying 'president'.

Today, such propositional meanings are also represented as more complex conceptual schemas. For instance, in the proposition just mentioned, the argument 'voters' should be inserted in a schematic category Agent, whereas 'president' would be part of the schematic category Patient, and 'elected' part of a category Action. Probably, the underlying mental models that represent the meaning of a sentence or whole discourse, or the situation it is about, may be organised in terms of such a schema. Similarly, at the level of words, one may also use schemas to represent individual word meanings or concepts. For instance, the concept of 'president' is a complex schema consisting of various categories defining 'politician', 'head of state', etc. (for detail, see studies of cognitive linguistics, e.g., Croft and Cruse 2004; Hart and Lukes 2007).

Observe that this propositional *meaning* is independent of the syntactic form of the *sentence*, which might also be expressed by a passive sentence "*A right-wing president was elected by the voters*". As is the case for superstructure categories, also the syntactic structure of a sentence may make specific meaning elements more salient, indicate whether some aspect of the meaning is already known or expected (the "focus" or the sentence), or whether something new or unexpected is being communicated (the "comment" of the sentence). In this way, one might hide or mitigate the negative actions of dominant groups, for instance in headlines such as "*Black student killed by police*," or even simply "*Black student killed*," as has been found in many studies of racist discourse (Van Dijk 1991, 1993; see also the first study of critical linguistics: Fowler et al. 1979).

As a concrete example of local meaning, see, for instance, the following paragraph consisting of two sentences in the *Guardian* article mentioned above:

> (5) *The immigration minister, Robert Goodwill, responded to the figures by saying the British people had sent a very clear message that they wanted more control of immigration. He renewed the government's commitment to getting net migration down to sustainable levels in the tens of thousands. (Guardian, 1-12-16)*

The first sentence consists of various clauses expressing a hierarchical structure of underlying propositions about the response of the minister, talking about the message of the people and the content of that message, with the minister and the (cited) people as Agents of various actions. Obviously, such a first semantic analysis in

terms of propositions and their structures (which itself needs to be refined) requires further critical analysis, e.g., by describing the minister as pretending to speak for "the people", and interpreting the numbers in terms of the Conservative Governments policy to limit immigration. Other such semantic aspects of this article and other texts will be mentioned below.

With these basic notions of semantics, we may now proceed to study a potentially large number of meaning aspects of discourse, only some of which will be briefly summarized here because they offer methods for relevant qualitative discourse analysis.

Modalities

Propositions, representing meaning, can be modified in many ways, typically so by different kinds of modality, such as those of *necessity* and *possibility* (alethic modalities), or what is obligatory or permitted (deontic modalities). For instance, alethic modalities may be expressed by adverbs such as *probably*, or auxiliary verbs such as *may*, *might* or *must.* Thus, the proposition about the election of a right-wing president may be expressed in modal sentences such as "*Probably the voters will vote for a right-wing president*", or "*The voters may elect a right-wing president*". Similarly, deontic modalities may be expressed in such sentences as "*The refugees must leave the country*" or in "*The refugees may stay in the country*". In the *Guardian* article, we find, for instance, the following example:

> (6) *Some early data from after the Brexit vote suggest that some migration to the UK may be decreasing. (Guardian, 1-12-16)*

Both the verb "suggest" and the modal auxiliary "may" express that the conclusion drawn from the numbers is not certain (according to the *Guardian*). In a more critical perspective, one may find that other newspapers, typically the right-wing tabloids, tend to omit such "cautious" modalities, and present the numbers and their consequences as "facts" about "massive" immigration. An opinion article in the *Guardian*, in a rare intertextual commentary (May 13, 2016 – the day after the 2016 Immigration bill was sanctioned into law) about other newspapers, speaks of the "Hysteria about immigration statistics" referring to an article in the *Sun* headlined *Shock new figure revealed. Great migrant swindle.*

Even from these few examples it is obvious that modalities play a fundamental role in discourse, if only because they may signal what is more or less sure, what information we may believe and, in general, about the incidence of social events and situations in society, or what people must or may do – all relevant aspects also of migration. Whereas media discourse thus typically features alethic modalities about what is or may be the case, political discourse may be more normative, and feature deontic modalities signifying what migrants must or may do.

Implications

Propositions may be explicitly expressed by sentences and discourse, but also remain implicit. Such implications can nevertheless be construed by the recipients by *applying their shared knowledge* of the world. A political discourse may explicitly say that refugees *may not stay* in the country, and recipients may then infer that refugees *must leave* the country, even when that is not explicitly said.

More generally, because of such plausible inferences based on world knowledge, the interpretation of a discourse is not limited to the propositions that are explicitly expressed, but also includes the most plausible implications that can be derived from the explicitly expressed propositions. In more cognitive terms, we may say that the complete, subjective meanings of a discourse as assigned by speakers or recipients, is in their mental model of an event or situation. By general pragmatic rule, only some of the propositions (schemas, concepts) of such a mental model need to be expressed in discourse, namely the information that is as yet unknown and cannot be inferred by the recipients.

Methodologically, implications are important in semantic discourse analysis because they represent meanings that are construed in their mental models by all language users with the same world knowledge, that is, the members of the same epistemic community, but speakers may claim they never actually *said* what was implied. That is, implicit meanings can be denied – a *deniability* that may be crucial in many forms of political discourse about a sensitive theme such as migration. Similarly, implications may play a role in many forms of *manipulation*, for instance when not all recipients are aware of all implications of a discourse. See, for instance, the beginning of the speech of (then) UK Home Secretary Teresa May (at present Prime Minister) presenting the 2016 Immigration Bill in Parliament on October 13, 2015:

> *(7) If we are to continue building an immigration system that is fair to British citizens and people who come here legitimately to play by the rules and contribute to our society, we must ensure that it is balanced and sustainable, and that net migration can be managed. When properly managed, immigration enriches this country, as we benefit from the skills, talent and entrepreneurial flair that people bring to our society. But, as I said in my recent speech, when net migration is too high, and the pace of change is too fast, it puts pressure on schools, hospitals, accommodation, transport and social services, and it can drive down wages for people on low incomes. So we must achieve the right balance, rejecting both extremes of the debate, from those who oppose immigration altogether to those who want entirely open borders. That is why, since 2010, we have worked to build an immigration system that works in the national interest, one that is fair to British taxpayers and legitimate migrants, and tough on those who flout the rules or abuse our hospitality as a nation (Teresa May, House of Commons, 13-10-16)*

On superficial reading, such a discourse expressing positive opinions and attitudes about immigration ("immigration enriches the country," etc.) and about the governments immigration policies and laws ("fair", "balanced"), are typical forms of positive self-presentation of much ideological discourse. But an expression such as "people who come here legitimately" politically implies that illegal immigrants do not contribute to our society – and that the law will have provisions to punish them.

The metaphor "who play by the rules" has the same implications – representing immigration as a game between government, citizens and immigrants. Similarly, "when properly managed, immigration enriches this country", implies that if *not* properly managed (implying as provided by the law) immigration does not enrich the country.

The first sentences, thus, function as the first part of a disclaimer, beginning with positive self-presentation, followed by *but* in line (5) introducing all the negative aspects of badly managed (implying: controlled) immigration. These negative consequences themselves are, however, formulated in terms of euphemisms "pressure on schools, hospitals, …", but imply what most MPs and other citizens will understand by its political implications: less place for Us in schools, hospitals, etc. – information that is the typical second part of the disclaimer: a negative representation of *Them*.

Presuppositions

Another fundamental aspect of the meaning of discourse are its *presuppositions*, that is, propositions that are assumed to be true in order for another proposition to be meaningful. More generally, presuppositions represent the knowledge shared by speaker and recipients (often called *Common Ground*) and which is *relevant* for the production and interpretation of a (fragment of) discourse. For instance, in the example of the election of a right-wing president, it is presupposed that there is a president and that there are voters – and such presuppositions may be *marked* in the text by the definite article *the*. More generally, linguistic presuppositions are those propositions that are "triggered" by specific discourse structures, such as factive verbs (*to realize, to discover, to regret, to stop* or *to continue*), some adverbs (such as *even* and *also*) or the position of clauses, e.g., initial that-clauses, as in the sentence *That the voters elected a right-wing president, has serious political consequences,* where the initial that-clause expresses (a proposition referring to) a known fact.

As is the case for implications, also presuppositions may be used to manipulate the interpretations (mental models) of the recipients, typically so in media and political discourse, which may refer to "the criminality" of migrants, thus presupposing that migrants are criminal. More generally, thus, presuppositions in discourse may be used to manipulate the knowledge and other beliefs of recipients – they signal that some fact is known to be the case, even when it is not. That is, they may function as oblique assertions, which are assertions that are not explicitly made, but indirectly.

In many discourses, such presuppositions are innocent, e.g., when we mention "the waiter" in a story about a restaurant, we presuppose that there is a waiter on the basis of our knowledge about restaurants. Similarly, we may routinely talk about our father, apartment or car, without first asserting that we have a father, apartment or car.

In the example of Home Secretary May in the debate of the UK Immigration Bill, we find such a presupposition (a′), triggered by the verb "to continue" in sentence (a):

(8)
(a) If we are to continue building an immigration system that is fair to British citizens.
(a′) We are building an immigration system that is fair to British citizens.

The paragraph following the paragraph of Teresa May we have cited, begins as follows:

> (8) Over the past five years we have taken firm action to reform the chaotic and uncontrolled immigration system we inherited, and to ensure that people are coming here for the right reasons.

This sentence presupposes that we (the Conservatives) inherited a chaotic and uncontrolled immigration (from Labour). Notice that she does not explicitly assert this about Labour's system, but presupposes it, as a generally known fact or shared opinion – a typical example of oblique assertion by presupposition. This is typical for assertions that are controversial and can thus be hidden or made less prominent when expressed as a presupposition.

Actor and Action Descriptions

Migration discourse typically mentions "migrants", as well as "ourselves", "our country", "the nation", "taxpayers" or "British citizens", as we have seen in the debate fragment of Teresa May above. One of the prominent properties described in the semantics of discourse is the way the actors or participants are referred to and described. Indeed, such discourse may mention "migrants", "immigrants", "refugees" or "foreigners", in general, or "Syrians" or people of other nationalities, in particular. The references may be generic (all migrants) or specific (a particular migrant), whether or not with proper names. Further analysis of the way actors of events are described may distinguish between actors by their functions (MPs), their membership of groups, their nationality, their gender, age, profession, and so on (for a detailed system of actor description, see Van Leeuwen 1996).

A systematic analysis of the way actors are described in immigration discourse provides insight in underlying attitudes about immigrants, e.g., when U.K. tabloids used to describe refugees as "scroungers" who abuse of welfare provisions (Van Dijk 1991). The same is true for the description of their actions, for instance, when Teresa May metaphorically describes them as "flouting the rules" or as "abusing our hospitality" (a description that itself presupposes that "we" are hospitable).

These *qualitative* and critical analysis of actors (Us vs. Them) in migration discourse may be further elaborated by a more *quantitative* approach using frequencies of occurrence, as was also typical in traditional Content Analysis. Today, such a more quantitative analysis is provided by various methods of Corpus Linguistics (see, e.g. Baker 2012), in which we may also show how and how often a word co-occurs with other words in the same data lines of a corpus, for instance, if the word "immigrant" typically co-occurs with "illegal".

In the debate on the Immigration Bill, consisting of 4385 different words, the most frequent (277) word used to describe (any) actor, but especially the immi-

grants, is the generic word "people" and the pronoun "they" (and "their"). The most frequent (128) adjective is "illegal", which may apply to immigrants or their actions. More specifically, the MPs use the words "migrant(s)" (84), "workers" (72), "children" (42), "immigrants" (40), "individuals" (27), "asylum seekers" (19), "refugees" (17) and "students" (16). The adjective/noun "criminal" is also relatively frequent (33). Description of Us, besides the indexical references to MPs and the Government, are obviously with the (political) pronoun "we" (451) – the most frequent word after "I" (606) and "have" (453), are mentions of "landlords" (84) and "employers", specifically targeted by this law.

Further Semantic Analysis

We have mentioned only a few properties of discourse typically studied by a semantic analysis of local and global meanings. Depending on the aims of a research project, the genre of discourse, the size of a corpus or the time or expertise of the researcher, there are many other aspects of meaning that may be studied. For instance, a study of metaphors (such as "waves" of refugees) may tell us something about the threatening mental models of migrant discourse. We may describe migration events at various levels of generality or specificity, higher or lower granularity (more or less vague or precise, with more or less details at each level), and so on. An epistemic analysis may focus on the way knowledge is expressed, implied or presupposed, as we have seen above (Van Dijk 2014).

Ideological Analysis

Especially a more critical study of migration discourse typically also engages in a study of the way ideologies are expressed. Ideologies are fundamental, socially shared mental representations of social groups: racists, anti-racists, pacifists, militarists, feminists, sexists, neoliberals, socialists, and so on. They are typically organized by polarization, (good) in-groups vs. (bad) out-groups, a polarization that may also be expressed in discourse, e.g., between (good) Us vs. (bad) (Them), as we have seen in the examples above. Ideologies represent the characteristic identity, actions, aims, norms and values of a group, and may control more specific attitudes, e.g. about immigration, integration or adaptation of migrants (or other attitudes, such as abortion or the death penalty). These more specific attitudes, in turn, may influence the personal mental models of (e.g. migration) events of the members of an ideological group. And depending on the communicative context of a discourse, these ideologically based (and biased) mental models may finally influence the way discourse about such events is expressed. We see that between fundamental ideologies (e.g. of racism) and actual racist text or talk, there are various levels of socio-cognitive analysis.

13.3 Conclusion

Migration is a complex socio-political phenomenon that has been studied in most of the humanities and social sciences. One fundamental way to study migration is to analyse the properties of the many forms of text or talk of or about migrants. The multidisciplinary field of Discourse Studies, prevalent in all the humanities and social sciences since the 1960–1970s, offers sophisticated theoretical and methodological frameworks for a systematic and explicit study of migration discourse. Beyond traditional Content Analysis, and more explicit than popular Frame Analysis today (but see Chap. 5), the quantitative and especially the qualitative methods of contemporary Discourse Studies offer insight in the many ways migration discourse is structured, how it expresses underlying mental models, attitudes and ideologies, and what social and political functions such discourses have in society.

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Chapter 14
Doing Digital Migration Studies: Methodological Considerations for an Emerging Research Focus

Koen Leurs and Madhuri Prabhakar

14.1 Introduction: Researching Migration in the Digital Era

"Electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present"; this diagnosis was reached by Arjun Appadurai two decades ago (1996, p. 4). In Europe and beyond, this observation has only gained further pertinence. Media and communication technologies have historically played a crucial role in the lives of migrants. It is well documented how migrants have historically maintained transnational networks through letters, newspapers, radio, satellite television and the telephone. However, in recent years, both the scale and types of migration and digital networking have drastically changed (e.g. Georgiou 2006; Madianou and Miller 2012). While migration remains one of the most challenging life experiences one could face – which technology cannot magically solve –, the increasing global adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has altered a variety of migration dynamics. This transformation is twofold. It includes a growing reliance on digital technologies for top-down governmental border control, surveillance and migration management by state authorities. Secondly, smart phones, social media platforms and apps are used by migrants as new channels to access information, resources and news; for purposes including communication, emotion-management, intercultural relations, identification, participation, political protest and sending/ receiving remittances. The rapid developments in migration that happen in conjunction with the spread of ICTs raise considerable theoretical, methodological and ethical challenges. Hence, in this chapter, we focus particularly on methodological concerns in the emerging research focus of digital migration studies.

The growth of migration and ICTs are unprecedented and the two increasingly affect one another. While the number of expatriates is estimated to have reached

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56.8 million by the end of 2017 (Finaccord 2014), globally, over 65 million people were forcibly displaced in 2015 (UNHCR 2016). Both voluntary and forced migrants are increasingly digitally "connected migrants" (Diminescu 2008), who live in one place, but use mobile devices and social media platforms to conduct their lives across the world. While e-passports, iris scans and on-board airplane wireless internet facilitate the lifestyle of the global elites zipping in and out of Europe, for 'irregularized migrants' Europe remains the deadliest destination in the world. In 2015, over one million people reached Europe by sea, while an estimated 3784 people died. Even worse after the closure of the Aegean route, in 2016, alongside 387.895 sea arrivals, 5143 people died/went missing. Indeed, with 186.768 arrivals and 3116 deaths/missing persons in 2017, the route most people are currently taking from Libya to Italy, is more expensive and risky than the route from Turkey to Greece (IOM 2018). Nearly 2000 official entry ports and 60,000 km of land and sea borders are increasingly managed through digital technologies, and 'irregular migrants', for example, experience 'smart borders' entirely differently from expats. At the Mediterranean Sea, their phone signals may be traced by drones and satellites that are part of the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur). Upon arrival, they may be coerced to have their fingerprints scanned so that an algorithm can decide upon their futures on the basis of the European Dactyloscopy (EURODAC) biometric database (Leurs and Shepherd 2017).

Alongside connected migrants, recent buzzwords including "e-diasporas" (Diminescu 2008), "mediatized migrants" (Hepp et al. 2011), refugees' "information precarity" (Wall et al. 2015), "digital diasporas" (Everett 2009), "smart refugees" (Dekker et al. 2017), "digital deportability" (Trimikliniotis et al. 2015) and migrant "polymedia" (Madianou and Miller 2012) signal the emergence of a new research focus which can be labelled as digital migration studies. This chapter aims to contribute to this research area by offering methodological considerations to qualitatively study migration in, through and by means of the internet. There is need for such an intervention that spans the field of migration, anthropology, sociology, geography, media and communication studies. Although there is growing attention for migration and ICTs, a general "paucity of research" on the topic remains (McGregor and Siegel 2013, p. 2), this area is particularly "under-researched" in the field of migration studies (Oiarzabal and Reips 2012, p. 1334). In media and communication studies, the impact of ICTs on migrants in Europe also remains relatively uncharted (Ponzanesi and Leurs 2014; Leurs and Ponzanesi 2018). These gaps urgently need to be addressed, as the "information migration society" may offer new opportunities, but also constructs a "new distribution of power" (Borkert et al. 2009, pp. 32–33), particularly in the context of forced migration and digital connectivity (Leurs and Smets 2018).

For example, the UNCHR estimates over two-thirds of refugee households living in urban settings – which is the case for most forced migrants in Europe – have access to an internet enabled phone (2016, p. 14). Across Europe, Syrians have set up Facebook groups and pages that arguably function as a 'Trip advisor for refugees'. Facebook pages like 'هنا هولندا' (Syrians Netherlands, nearly 82.000 likes) and Facebook groups 'البيت السوري' (German Syrisches Haus, 44.000 likes) and 'دليل السوريين الاحرار في السويد' (Liberal Syrians guide Sweden, 11.000 members) are digital diaspora communities that could be of significant importance for

discounting rumours, informal language learning, and interacting with fellow members of the host society (Dekker et al. 2018). However, there is little reflection and empirical study of how such digital practices may facilitate possible socializing, integration, bonding and bridging capital, empowerment through amplification of their voices, information needs, or could result in possible disempowerment, isolation or segregation.

While literature on forced migration and ICTs in particular is scarce, publications reflecting on methodologies of studying connected migrants are virtually non-existent. Indeed, while notions such as digital and e-diaspora are increasingly strongly theorized, "much less literature addresses methodological issues in diaspora research, particularly in the field of media and communication" (Smets 2018). Therefore, this chapter offers reflection on how we can do digital migration studies. We advocate a social justice perspective, which means we recognize the importance of critical theory and empirical data to document and challenge unjust power relations. As an emancipatory starting point, we seek to acknowledge "migrants are digital agents of change" (Borkert et al. 2018). Although digital divides alongside axis of geography, gender, age, class, race, nationality, and generation persist and unevenly shape access, ownership and use, attention for the situated everyday experiences of migrants is vital to bring about societal change. Digital migration researchers are, for example, well equipped to counter dominant stereotypes that portray refugees as culturally handicapped and unable to handle advanced technologies (O'Malley 2015).

Intended as an introduction to an emerging field, this chapter provides an extensive bibliography spanning across varying disciplines. As a red thread, we focus our discussion on methods for doing digital research on migration in Europe that may accommodate a commitment to social justice. Both in working with elite migrants and with marginalized communities such as refugees, we believe there is no future for digital migration studies that is inattentive to offline/online power hierarchies. Our argument is structured as follows: below, we first offer a statement of the emerging research area. Drawing on Candidatu et al. (2018), we have mapped the field by distinguishing between three paradigms (1) migrants in cyberspace; (2) everyday digital migrant life; (3) migrants as data. Doing digital migration research requires scholars to synthesize methods used in these three paradigms. We offer suggestions on how to do so by discussing the methodological research principles of *relationality*, *adaptability* and *ethics-of-care*.

14.2   Digital Migration Studies: 3 Paradigms

Digital migration studies encompass work conducted across media, cultural and communication studies, internet studies, information studies, migration studies, ethnic, diaspora and racial studies, transnationalism, gender and postcolonial studies, anthropology, development studies, geography, border studies, urban studies, human-computer interaction, science and technology studies, law and human rights. Digital migration studies have been influenced by evolving scholarly perspectives,

foci and accompanying methodologies and tools, as we discuss in greater detail elsewhere (Candidatu et al. 2018). Variations reflect developments in the broader field of internet studies (see Table 14.1). The three paradigms of digital migration studies we discern are (1) migrants in cyberspace; (2) everyday digital migrant life; (3) migrants as data.

These three paradigms display varying degrees of centring digital technologies as the main object of their studies, what can be called "digital-media-centric-ness" (Pink et al. 2016a, pp. 9–11). The critique of media-centrism alerts us to the degree in which specific technologies, platforms or devices are foregrounded or de-centered. We argue technologies can never be considered as inseparable from other

Table 14.1 Digital migration studies paradigms

Paradigms	Exemplary studies	Theoretical frameworks	Methodological approaches	Merits	Critiques
I. Digital-media-centric cyber culture studies approach: *migrants in cyberspace*	Markham (1998) Gajjala (2004) Everett (2009) Bernal (2014) Frouws et al. (2016)	Cyberspace Cyber culture Cyber communities	Humanities/ hermeneutical methods including discourse analysis, but also virtual ethnography	Pioneering, agenda-setting, development of virtual ethnography and cyber-research ethics	Utopian, celebratory, lacking contextual awareness
II. Non-digital-media-centric ethnographic approach: *everyday digital migrant life-*	Miller and Slater (2000) Georgiou (2006) Madianou and Miller (2012) Zijlstra and Van Liempt (2017)	Mediation and mediatization Everyday practices Offline embedded online	Social science methods pre-existing the internet: e.g. Ethnography, participant observation, interviewing	Context-sensitivity: Material, social, symbolic, economic and emotional awareness	Descriptive, small scale, particularistic
III. Digital-media-centric digital approach: *migrants as data*	Diminescu (2008) Kok and Rogers (2017) Messias et al. (2016) Sharma and Booker (2017)	Actor-network theory, new materialism, posthumanism	Digital methods; 'born digitally' data-driven approaches	Data-driven, medium-specificity, cross-platform analysis	Flat ontology, lack of emancipatory ideals; ethical questions and privacy concerns

Adapted from Candidatu et al. (2018)

(offline) material, historical, emotional and contextual factors. The three paradigms mapped above co-exist simultaneously and single studies can draw on multiple paradigms.

14.2.1 Paradigm (I) Migrants in Cyberspace

Internet studies came of age with a digital-media-centric focus on cyber space communities in the 1990s. This paradigm approached – the by then largely text-based – cyberspace as a distinctive virtual space. Drawing especially from humanistic and hermeneutical interpretative techniques, researchers theorized how people were able to leave their physical bodies behind and experiment with their gender, racial and national identity somewhat irrespective of their situation in the offline world. Illustratively, in her 1998 book *Life online: Researching real experience in virtual space*, Markham reflects on the sense of identity, presence and community that people establish online through written text-based interactions. Importantly, Markham quickly realized it was unethical to only be a "distanced observer" of how "others" interacted in virtual spaces from her comfortable position behind her screen (1998, pp. 24–25).

Scholars interested in migration and diaspora further developed this paradigm by raising greater awareness of how offline cultural differences are similarly manifested online. In the early 1990s, Gajjala initiated research on the "cyborg diaspora" of the *South Asian Women email list* (SAWnet). Gajjala participated herself, but over time also announced to fellow participants she was researching the mailing list as part of her dissertation work. This declaration lead to heavy debates, protest and refusals to be researched by some list posters, reminding us of the intricate researcher-researched relationships that also exist online (Gajjala 2004, pp. 19–28). Bernal's long-term observation of content posted on Eritrean portal and discussion websites like *Dehai.org*, *Asmarino.com* and *Awate.com* documents how users imagine belonging to fellow users in diasporic communities (2014). She argues how people in the diaspora form an "online public sphere" and through "infopolitics" protest violence and repression by the Eritrean state (2014, pp. 8–9).

In their recent study, Frouws et al. (2016) take a virtual ethnography approach to observe the use of social media among migrants and refugees from the Middle East and from the Horn of Africa who are heading for Europe. They draw from Arabic and Somali language internet searches conducted on platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in 2015 and 2016, using various keywords to find postings around the topic of irregular migration, such as 'Tahriib' in Somali. Based on a discourse analysis, they look for recurring themes in order to present a typology of ICT used along mixed migration routes which they support with screenshots of posts they located on Facebook groups, Tweets and YouTube channels. In sum, this pioneering paradigm innovatively foregrounds the digital cultural production of migrants. Additionally, although the term cyber has gone out of fashion scholars in this area continue to raise attention for the construction of digital identities and further developed virtual ethnography and cyber-ethical research practice.

14.2.2   Paradigm (II) Everyday Digital Migrant Life

In contrast with the first paradigm, the second paradigm is non-digital-media-centric as it takes online-offline relationships as its main unit of analysis. Rather than taking digital practices as a starting point, in this strand scholars combine fieldwork in physical places with observing digitally mediated practices. In their study on internet use among Trinidadians, Miller and Slater famously note "if you want to get to the Internet, don't start from there" (2000, p. 5). Instead, they conducted ethnographic work on topics ranging from sex, religion and commerce to personal relations in diverse settings, including cybercafés, businesses, middle-class houses and squats in Trinidad, as well as websites, e-mail and chat sites frequented by Trinidadians living abroad. Through semi-structured interviews, unstructured discussions and observation in café's, clubs, schools and community centres in New York and London, and by collecting visual media materials, Georgiou explored the role of media in the diasporic identity construction of Greek-Cypriots. She shows that media consumption of migrants can only be understood in its broader social, spatial and temporal context as part of everyday spaces including domestic, public, urban and transnational connections (2006). Madianou and Miller (2012) took a similar multi-sited ethnography approach in their study of the role of mediation during prolonged separation between Filipino mothers in London and Cambridge and their children living in Manila and elsewhere in the Philippines. Observing and interviewing mothers and children in the UK and the Philippines, they advocate that acknowledging the "human context for media use" is essential to understanding the mediated relationships between migrant women engaged in "distant mothering" of their "left-behind children" (Madianou and Miller 2012, pp. 2–3). Recently, research approaches aiming to understand digital mediation as a feature of material and embodied lived experiences, practices and our broader social worlds, are further developed as distinct methodological apparatuses, including "digital ethnography" (Pink et al. 2016a) and "digital sociologies" (Gregory et al. 2017). These initiatives seek to flesh out qualitative internet research methodologies that acknowledge that "no one lives an entirely digital life" (Miller and Horst 2012, p. 16) and technologies, media and the internet do not exist in isolation from, but shape and are shaped by everyday social life. In this spirit, Zijlstra and van Liempt (2017) drew on trajectory ethnography to study the use of smartphones among Afghan, Iranian and Syrian migrants during their border crossings and travels from Greece and Turkey onwards to Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. They update the mobile method of trajectory ethnography by following informants through a combination of offline and digital observations through time. From this paradigm, we learn that digital migration studies scholars should approach contemporary migrant experiences of communication and mediation as situated in distinctive power-ridden social, cultural, historically and localized settings.

14.2.3 Paradigm (III) Migrants As Data

Migrants are increasingly datafied (Leurs and Shepherd 2017). As an example of a conservative or reactionary approach to digital migration, European governments aiming to manage migration top-down are increasingly tapping into big data; not only are biometric databases augmented and interconnected with the aim of more efficient border control, authorities also scrape and analyse social media data to predict migrant flows and circulate specifically targeted deterrent information campaigns (Broeders and Dijstelbloem 2013). Internet researchers are also critically exploring the "datafied society" through engaging with new possibilities for "studying culture through data" (Van Es and Schäfer 2017). The turn towards data-driven research and digital, computational methods is accompanied by a return to digital-media-centric understandings of the Internet. In terms of data collection, this has led to a shift where researchers, in the words of Rogers, "follow the medium" (2013, p. 24) and repurpose computing techniques as research tools – such as the ones developed at the University of Amsterdam's *Digital Methods Initiative*[1] – to "diagnose cultural change and societal conditions by means of the Internet" (Rogers 2013, p. 21).

Media and migration scholars have used computational methods including issue mapping, hyperlink and network analysis to study digital migrant connectivity. Diminescu's pioneering *e-Diasporas Atlas*[2] project consists of a longitudinal mapping of 27 e-diasporas and 8.000 migrant websites (Diminescu 2008). Alongside building the important open-source network visualization tool *Gephi*,[3] they offer interactive graphical visualizations of the corpus, in addition to archiving raw qualitative empirical open data such as texts, videos, interviews gathered in the research. Kok and Rogers (2017) queried local domain search engines (google.co.uk, .nl, co.ke, .se, .dk, .no, .ca and .com) for Somali diaspora related keywords and imported search results in *IssueCrawler,* a network visualization tool.[4] They also queried Facebook in the search box for pages of self-identifying Somali groups, the search result pages were "liked" in order to be able to extract data from these pages using the Facebook research tool *Netvizz.*[5] On the basis of scraped data, they argue that digital practices of Somalis in the diaspora operate as a new multi-territorial process of "transglocalization" (Kok and Rogers 2017, p. 23). Messias et al. similarly draw on quantitative pattern detection of web data, in this case the "places lived" section of 22,578,898 geo-coded Google+ social media profiles to develop "new theories of international migration" (Messias et al. 2016). In their study of racist and anti-immigrant posts on Twitter, Sharma and Brooker deploy the concept of "assemblage" to untangle relations between "human (social media users), social phenomena (race

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[1] http://digitalmethods.net/

[2] http://www.e-diasporas.fr/

[3] https://gephi.org/

[4] https://www.issuecrawler.net/

[5] https://apps.facebook.com/netvizz/

and racism) and the non-human (digital technologies and devices)" (Sharma and Booker 2017, p. 464). They draw on the methodological device of *Chorus*,[6] a tool developed to carry out social science research with Twitter data (Brooker et al. 2016).

In sum, this paradigm invites migration researchers to consider drawing on new tools and techniques to gather computational data generated by users. From this paradigm, we also learn that digital practices take place in distinctive digital settings: we need to be attentive to medium-specificity: what are the affordances, norms and usages of Facebook and how do they differ from platforms like Twitter, Instagram, blogs, and discussion forums? Having mapped digital migration studies into three paradigms, below we reflect upon how to do digital migration studies in practice. For this purpose, we draw on our social justice oriented model to propose the research principles of relationality, adaptability and ethics-of-care. These principles offer guidelines to operationalize the paradigms of migrants in cyberspace, everyday digital migrant life and migrants as data respectively.

Relationality

Publications on media and migration commonly offer snapshots that fix the dynamic process of digital diaspora formation in time and space. However, local intercultural relations and transnational diaspora formation are always in process. Connected migrants are situated across online and offline contexts, spanning here and there, across platforms, communities and borders, at the intersections of enabling and constraining power relations shaped by nationalism, race, gender, age, class and religion (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2018). In response to paradigm 1 (migrants in cyberspace), we propose relationality as a first principle to achieve greater sensitivity in our research for how practices of migrant connectivity are often paradoxical, and always processual and interlinked.

Digital migration studies scholars should take into account the specificity of digital mediation while approaching it as inherently related to broader human processes. Conceptually, the "M.E.A.L.S" theoretical touchstones are helpful to develop this principle further (Losh 2015): rather than transcendental, digital technologies are *material*; rather than disembodied, digital technologies are actively *embodied*; rather than neutral, technology use solicits *affective* responses; rather than efficient and labour saving, digital technologies involve *labour*; rather than universal, digital technologies are distinctly *situated*. Specifically in the case of migrants, a dialectical understanding of the relationship between people and digitality draws our attention to how connected migrants are always involved in a continuum of simultaneous processes of "*encapsulation*" – maintaining a sense of collective identity with fellow members of a bounded diasporic community – and "*cosmopolitanism*" – bridging local intercultural differences by engaging with various communities different to their own (Christensen and Jansson 2014). Starkly put, migration scholars commonly focus on transnationalism, whereas, for example,

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[6] http://chorusanalytics.co.uk/

geographers, ethnic, racial and urban studies scholars study local cosmopolitanisms. However, it is urgent to combine attention for transnationalism with sensitivity to how migrants relate to local cultural diversity (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2018). In methodological terms, the relationality principle may be operationalized through combining qualitative and quantitative data; multi-sited and multi-temporal ethnographic research, taking, for example, different physical locations as possible entrypoints, in combination with research across digital platforms.

First, an example of a relational approach to combining qualitative and quantitative data: for their seminal *Mapping Refugee Media Journeys* project, Gillespie et al. (2016) conducted interviews with Syrian and Iraqi refugees about their social media and smartphone use along their journeys to Europe, and combined these findings with quantitative social network analysis of Facebook groups and Twitter networks. Second, an example of how to account for how digital migration may revolve around both agency and disempowerment: studies commonly champion how diasporas tap into ICTs to digitally challenge home-country regimes by voicing concerns, financing advocacy groups, challenging human right records and documenting atrocities (e.g. Koinova 2010). However, researchers have to account for complexities and contradictions through non-digital-media-centric-ness. ICTs not only offer tools for contestation, but recent research by Moss shows authoritarianism is also a networked force of "digitally-enabled transnational repression": for example, in the case of the Syrian diaspora, anti-regime activists who fled to the US and the UK experience "networked authoritarianism" and feel they have to censor themselves online as a result of the digital presence of pro-Assad-regime (Moss 2016, p. 13). To detail experiences among migrants, Moss conducted Skype and offline face-to-face interviews with transnational activists about their experiences of state oppression before and after migration, and their decision to publicly identify as activists using ICTs or not.

Third, a relational approach to study across time and space is non-linear and comparative: for example Donà initiated a study on Rwandans in London, which she expanded to Brussels, Togo and Uganda (2014). In Rwanda, she observed dynamics at government-sponsored ingando (solidarity camps) and "itorero" (cultural schools). Additionally, she engaged in what she terms "netnographic e-transnationalism" by observing postings and comments on sites and Facebook pages of initiatives like Rwandan Youth for Change (RY4C), the Rwanda Youth Patriots/UK and the Rwandan Youth Information Community Organization (rYico. org). Fourth, a relational approach to offline and online dynamics is exemplified in Zijlstra and Van Liempt's trajectory ethnography: starting from Europe's borderlands towards North-Western Europe, they combined interviews, offline and online observations of border crossings and onward journeys of irregular migrants (2017). Fifth, a relational networked understanding of stakeholders that shape migrant connectivity is important. For example, Gordano Peile studies the political economy of migrant connectivity (2013). Drawing on in-depth interviews, she compares narratives of low income Moroccan and Ecuadorian migrants with narratives of marketing spokespersons of five telecom providers that target migrant customers. Finally, a relational approach that acknowledges the affordances of various media platforms

is important: on the basis of in-depth interviews with Syrian asylum migrants, Dekker et al. (2018) argue that various applications and social media platforms including WhatsApp messaging, Facebook groups, Viber video-chat and navigation are used simultaneously, and they note each plays a distinct role in migration decision-making.

In sum, the relationality principle can be operationalized by combining both qualitative and quantitative data gathered through online and offline methods, working across online platforms and offline field sites, being attentive to various stakeholders in the field, and sharing attention for embodied experiences and medium-specificity as well as transnationalism and home-making.

Adaptability

In her book, *Internet ethnography. Embedded, embodied and everyday*, Hine concludes "If ethnographer for the internet is not the sexiest job of the twenty-first century, according to *Harvard Business Review,* it is at least a challenging one in terms of the range of skills and *level of adaptability* required" (Hine 2015, p. 189, our emphasis). Adaptability is particularly strongly needed for digital migration research. As a way to operationalize paradigm 2, i.e. "everyday digital migrant life", we believe adaptability is required because of a combination of unstable factors: (1) the ever-changing population of expat and forced migrants; (2) their means and routes of migration; (3) shifting policies and practices devised to control migration, in combination with (4) an ever changing ICT and social media landscape and (5) continuously changing (digital) methods. A high degree of flexibility is required for researchers to be open towards following people and phenomena across locations and platforms and be receptive to unexpected outcomes and insights. Therefore, room for adaptability needs to be built into digital migration studies research designs. Being attentive to user practices across preferred platforms, digital migration researchers constantly need to learn to become competent users of new digital environments. From "newbie" to a platform, there will be a period one needs to familiarize oneself with the technical terms and conventions. We will make mistakes and we will be reprimanded for it by fellow users and communities. However, it is important to write about such experiences and to make those processes generative for a social justice oriented politics of knowledge production.

How can we ensure a degree of flexibility in our research design? It has proven to be effective to draw on approaches that allow participants to research, share and map out their own media use practices. For example, Hepp et al. (2011) operationalized their study of the German Moroccan, Russian and Turkish diaspora by collecting empirical data in Berlin and Bremen. Working with members of each diaspora, they focused on everyday media use patterns. For this purpose, they engaged in semi-structured interviews and asked participants about their experiences of migration, identity formation and media use. They triangulated interviews with techniques that warrant a degree of adaptability: (1) network maps: pencil and paper drawings of individual communicative networks; (2) two-week media diaries and (3) materials shared by informants and photographs of private and public media use locations (2011).
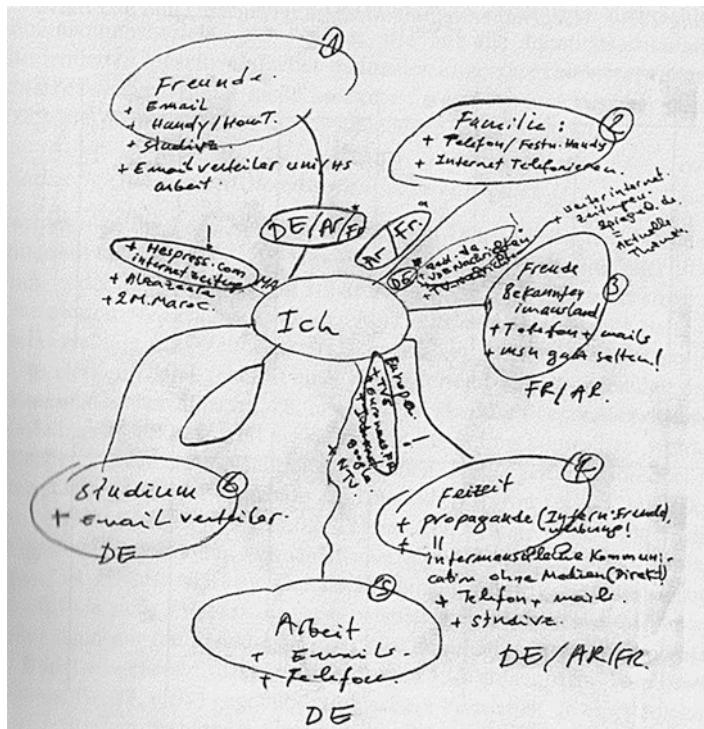
Fig. 14.1 Network map Ilias, 11 December 2008 (Hepp et al. 2011, p. 227)

For example, Fig. 14.1 shows the ego network map of Ilias, a 28-year-old Moroccan-German young man. Through the mapping exercise, we get insight about the following connectivity practices. He (1) combines e-mail and his mobile phone to connect with his friends in German, Arabic and French; (2) uses Arabic and French to speak over the phone and voice-over-IP chat (Skype) with family; (3) uses phone, e-mails and instant messaging with friends living in the diaspora; (4) combines German, Arabic and French to consume entertainment; (5–6) uses German while calling and e-mailing at work and at university. Such descriptive hand-drawn maps can be quite useful in characterizing the various roles connected migrants play, including assessing opportunities and constraints, for example, by exploring what resources including "economic", "social" or "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1986) they can and cannot access. The maps inform us about the degree of encapsulation within the Moroccan diaspora in Germany and abroad, alongside processes of cosmopolitanization as we see how Ilias bridges across difference at the local and national level.

Contact lists – for example, on a mobile phone or social media friend lists, can also be used to initiate network mapping exercises. They provide input to conduct a qualitative ego-network analysis (researching the nodes in the network to whom ego is connected). For example, to understand the meaning of the mobile phones in

everyday lives in rural and urban Jamaica, Horst and Miller asked research partici-
pants to share their phone contact list and used it to elicit responses. They invited
informants to share details for each contact, including the kind of relationship, the
frequency of calls and messages, when they last spoke and what they talked about
(2005). The first author of the present chapter created ego-network diagrams based
on Facebook friendship networks (Leurs 2017). In a study with a diverse group of
young Londoners from working, middle and upper-middle class families, he visual-
ized the friendship networks of those young people who had a Facebook account.
During face-to-face interviews, he would visualize the networks together with
informants using the commercial but freely accessible Facebook application
TouchGraph Facebook Friend Graph. Research participants were asked to login
and open the Touchgraph application. Then, the application's algorithm searched
for degrees of similarities between groups of friends, and colour coded befriended
Facebook contacts who shared similar Facebook user practices into clusters.

Figure 14.2 shows the Facebook friendship visualization of Gabriel, a 15-year-
old girl "originally from Malawi", who had been living in London for 2 years with
her mum who is employed as a nanny. The diagram does not indicate on the basis
of what kind of similarities clusters were formed, therefore, visualizations lend
themselves very well to have informants research their own networking practices.
This way, the friendship network visualizations are useful to elicit reflections of
transnational, national and local networking practices. The top two clusters and
upper right cluster are school friends in London, which triggered her reflection on
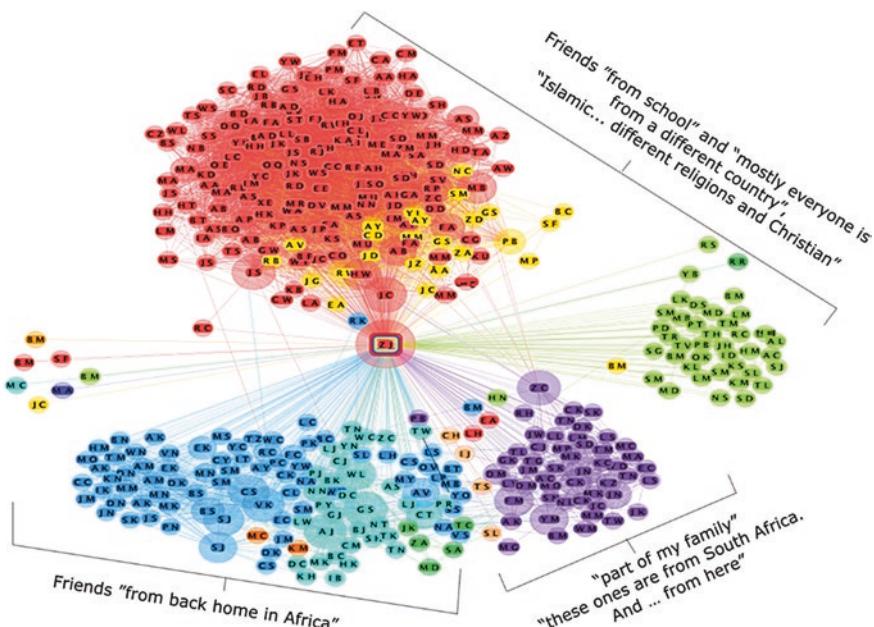
Fig. 14.2 Facebook friendship visualization Gabriel, 15-year-old

the multi-racial composition of her neighbourhood and school. The cluster at the bottom right involves family in London and her dad and sisters who live in Malawi and South Africa. "It's kind of like living in one mode and then the other people living in another world and there's a big huge gap between those two worlds". Using Skype, Viber, WhatsApp and Facebook, she remains in touch, she reflects: "it kind of feels like you're in their world and you can finally see them and talk to them and hear their voices and everything so it's quiet really good". The two clusters at the bottom left were also important: "the whole African continent I have friends there. Places like Madagascar, Mauritius, you know the islands and everything". Transnational connectivity not only revolves around Skype, e-mail or calling. Gabriel, for example, also plays multi-player games using her X-Box console with friends living locally as well as in South Africa and Malawi, if the connection is good ("if it connects sometimes, because sometimes it doesn't and sometimes it does"). This last empirical example indicates that in a "polymedia" environment (Madianou and Miller 2012), an array of platforms with distinct medium-specific affordances are appropriated for often unintended uses. Therefore, it is highly unlikely to envision all possible digital practices prior to engaging in empirical qualitative fieldwork and we recommend digital migration researchers to dare to leave room for unexpected results.

Ethics-of-Care

In response to paradigm 3 (migrants as data), we insist digital migration studies demand a thorough reconsideration of research ethics. For example, as digital practices are increasingly understood through the lens of data, computational approaches are commonly idealized. Big Data, as the new privileged mode of knowledge production, elevates quantitative over qualitative data approaches. For example, Halfpenny and Proctor (2015) elaborate the ways in which "e-methods" and "e-research" connote both "electronic", but also "enhanced" research methods. Before accepting the "objectivity" of Big Data methods and datafication, one must keep in mind that data based technology and human experience are mutually constituted. "E-methods" and "e-research" methods are always culturally mediated methods and are not devoid of different forms of cultural prejudices and discriminations, for example, visible in the choices researchers make, and the tools that do the data scraping, cleaning, sorting and analysis in one way rather than another. Although the promise of unobtrusive observation and, for that matter, "Big" data collection, makes us believe otherwise, knowledge production about digital practices is always already distinctly situated, partial and shaped by prior frameworks and knowledge.

Especially for digital migration studies scholars, the faith in quantification to accurately represent and predict the movements of population groups, for example, should be questioned, particularly given the colonial knowledge systems based on metrics that rationalized the existence of inferior races and territories that could be ruled, dominated and exploited. In this light, digital technologies and data are increasingly used as new modes of surveillance, migration management and border

control. For instance, in their study of "digital deportability", Trimikliniotis et al. reflect on how migrants perceive, negotiate with and resist the *European Dactyloscopy* (EuroDac) fingerprint database. Their ethnographic field involves digital networks and offices and camps across the Istanbul, Nicosia and Athens border triangle (2015). As social justice oriented digital migration studies scholars, we should therefore be attentive to everyday experiences and be "concerned first with social problems (social inequalities, race, gender) and then with technology" (Gregory et al. 2017, p. xxi). We argue that computational methods, especially when deployed uncritically, are incompatible with researching marginalized and vulnerable groups including migrant populations.

A first reason is because qualitative researchers commonly accept that people's awareness, understanding, trust and consent to participate are prerequisites for conducting research (see Chap. 15 by Van Liempt and Bilger in this anthology). Within a mixed-methods setup, when (participant-)online observations are combined, for example, with 1-1 interviews or focus-groups, individual permission can be obtained. However, while doing digital migration studies, awareness and consent could fall into a grey zone. For example, research based on virtual ethnographic methods runs this risk. Scholars interested in digital-media-centric observing and archiving interactions in a given platform could easily fall into a role of invisible 'lurker'. While doing research in the digital domain – although we realize it affects the observed dynamics –, we consider it essential to explicitly participate and make our presence as scholars known to the people we are studying. Formally, the Terms of Service (TOS) agreements that users agree to when signing up to social media platforms grant corporations and researchers permission to obtain and research personal data. However, we are convinced this cannot be equated with obtaining informed consent. Of course, in many instances, big data studies revolve around large scale pattern detection, but, in principle, often individual users can be identified in large scale data sets. For example, neither Messias et al. in their study of geo-coded Google+ profiles (2016) nor Kok and Rogers in their above-mentioned study on Somali Facebook use (2017), informed users about their data being included in a study. Whereas researchers in the first study can claim they did not directly interact with the users involved, this does not hold for Kok and Rogers, as they had to "like" Somali community groups in Facebook in order to gather Facebook data. They, however, do not discuss the ethical implications of their data gathering procedures. Readers are left wondering whether they setup a research account or used their own private Facebook account to carry out this study. Also, we do not know whether they announced their presence as researchers on these groups. In addition, as discussed in the section above, the first author made use of the Touchgraph application to make Facebook friendship diagrams with young Londoners. However, after Facebook changed its data retrieval and reuse policies and Application Programming Interface in spring 2015, Touchgraph could not be used any longer. The fleeting nature of digital platforms raises questions about our duties as researchers to be accountable, and to ensure replicability.

Qualitative researchers always engage in complex relationships with informants, as researcher-researched relationships are commonly not equally balanced, but

hierarchical (See Chap. 6 by Iosofidis and Chap. 15 by Van Liempt and Bilger in this anthology). We, digital migration studies scholars, should remain attentive to such dynamics, even though digital methods may appear as disembodied, distanced and disengaged. To achieve a sense of reflexivity, sensitivity and accountability of our complicated position as researchers and the broader research cycle, we propose the principle of ethics-of-care. Drawing from a feminist ethics-of-care that revolves around attentiveness, responsibility and competence (Tronto 1994), we direct attention to the need of a responsive relationship between digital migration studies researchers and researched migrants and their digital practices. As mentioned above, digital platforms are also characterized by oppression and disparities pertaining to real human subjects. Ethics-of-care begins from the premise that, as humans, we are inherently responsive, relational beings and the human condition is the one of interdependence (Barnes 2012). As a researcher, one must keep that essence alive throughout the research cycle. This entails taking accountability for our research not only by taking responsibility of our research, but taking consideration of the consequences of our research on the researched subject or group (Leurs 2017, compare also with Fedyuk and Zentai, Chap. 10 in this anthology). This is particularly urgent for migrants who are subject to discrimination and racism, even more so for forced or undocumented migrants who live highly precarious lives. In mobilizing an ethics-of-care, we, digital migration researchers, do not remain disembodied, detached nor disengaged from our informants. For example, even though in theory they could hide behind their screens and engage in digital observations, Zijlstra and Van Liempt, in their work with vulnerable forced migrants, for example, shared a phone, clothes and a roof, as well as information about travel routes and destinations with their informants (2017, p. 179). There is no perfect solution to manage unequal relationships with informants, but managing expectations is of crucial importance, particularly in working with vulnerable groups. We, as researchers, should be transparent about the aims and consequences of our scholarship, and we should refrain from making promises we cannot keep.

To begin to operationalize ethics-of-care in the practice of digital migration studies, we find inspiration in this call to action by Pink and colleagues on the future of data-ethnographies:

> We need to ask, amongst other things, what data futures would be preferable, and what role can we play as ethnographers in creating future alterities that acknowledge the relationship of data to the messy everyday life contexts where it is made and used. (2016b)

Alternative futures for digital migration data have recently been articulated by various consortia of journalists, researchers, and activists, for example, by combining large and small-scale databases. Alternative digital storytelling initiatives include the19MillionProject.com, that combines large scale Humanitarian data exchange with individual migrant testimonies; themigrantsfiles.com and missingmigrants. iom.int databases archiving data on deceased and missing migrants across the world. More in-depth initiatives include Massimo Sestini's attempt to annotate his aerial photography of refugee boats at the Mediterranean (which won the General News 2nd prize during Word Press Photo 2015) with personal experiences of individuals

on those ships; Migrantvoice.org, a migrant-led initiative aimed to strengthen the voice, representation and participation of migrants in the UK and the first author's work around the smart-phone as a "personal pocket archive" (Boussaid and Boom 2016). For his research, publications and dissemination of research findings he invites participants to reflect on the content of their own smart-phone pocket archives. On connectedmigrants.sites.uu.nl, he publishes short video-portraits. In these participatory videos, young connected migrants reflect upon and curate their own pocket archives photos, videos, music playlist and app preferences. This approach is also taken up in the *#MyEscape / Meine Flucht*, a 90-min documentary aired on the German Westdeutschen Rundfunk consists entirely of mobile phone footage shot by forced migrants on their way to Europe and is narrated by migrants themselves (WDR 2016).

In mobilizing ethics-of-care in our qualitative digital migration studies, key questions to consider include: are researched populations aware of being studied? Can they give consent, and can they refuse? Can they share their opinion about their own data? What are the benefits and harms of gathering, cleaning, analysing and possibly publically storing data? Can individuals be identified? What do we do when informants want to be identified or included under their own names, for example for advocacy purposes? Are populations informed about research outcomes? How can we appropriately care for research subjects by adapting our design to the personal and geopolitical context of research subjects? Should we, researchers, be content to rely on third party research tools that change constantly, or should we build our own tools? How can we ensure we draw on digital data to represent migrants not as an a-historical homogeneous group, but as a dynamic heterogeneous assemblage of people? How can we combine "big" and "small" data to render visible agency, capabilities and contradictory experiences and perspectives? What does digital migration studies for social justice looks like in practice? Do our digital migration studies document and improve precarious situations, vulnerability and subordination or do they risk exacerbating these conditions?

14.3   Conclusions

Digital migration studies are an emerging research focus that seek to understand the relationships between migration and digital connectivity. Together, they shape the "Janus-faced feature of our contemporary times, one necessitating the other". In the words of Naficy: "means of transportation generally take us away to other lands", while "communication media reconnect us to earlier places", but also to "new places and times", which is important to "re-imagine new possibilities" (2007, p. xiv). These two key processes of contemporary cultural globalization warrant greater scrutiny, particularly in the context of Europe. Europe appears to be crumbling down in the current moment as a result of the Brexit vote, the election of Trump in the US and travel bans for migrants from majority Muslim countries and, of course, the so-called 'European Refugee Crisis'. This is illustrated by hoaxes and

fake news messages on these themes that serve as popular clickbait on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As media outlets seek to address these 'post-Truth' conditions, populist, xenophobic, islamophobic, racist and neo-nationalist rhetoric and sentiments have grown excessively across social media. Meanwhile, the number of internal and external European borders proliferates, and digital data are used for surveillance and migration management. Digital migration studies are concerned with such 'bottom-up' digitally mediated processes, such as transnational and local networking and connectivity, diaspora organizations, identity construction, radicalization, discrimination, activism, protest and solidarity. In addition, it is also concerned with 'top-down' digitally mediated processes of migrant management: border control, surveillance and control systems for population movements, and information provision for general audiences.

In this chapter, drawing on Candidatu et al. (2018), we have mapped the emerging research area of digital migration studies. We have distinguished between the following approaches: (1) migrants in cyberspace; (2) everyday digital migrant life and (3) migrants as data. This description of paradigms might indicate a linear development of the field, but publications show that the three paradigms are all currently in use and combined. In response to these three respective paradigms, we have subsequently offered three principles that migration scholars may want to be aware of when using and working on ICTs in their research designs. These are important to operationalize social-justice oriented digital migration studies projects. First, we have advocated for a perspective of relationality to emphasize that online and offline everyday migrant life experiences, as well as platforms, geographies and transnationalism/localism are interlinked. Secondly, as researchers, we should be prepared to adapt to constant changes in the technologies, practices and field sites that we are studying. Finally, as researchers, we should embrace an ethics-of-care while conducting our research, as vulnerable and precarious human subjects should have real consequences for our research. These principles for doing digital migration studies serve as reminders that the internet is not a destination where migrants can go to, rather, migrants are already always immersed in information and communication technologies with paradoxical and unexpected consequences.

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Part IV
Significant Requirements Before Embarking

Chapter 15
Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas in Research Among Smuggled Migrants

Check for updates

Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger

15.1 Introduction

The following contribution reflects on important methodological and ethical concerns when considering fieldwork with individuals considered to be vulnerable and hard to reach. As an example, we point to challenges when conducting fieldwork with smuggled migrants in The Netherlands and Austria (Bilger et al. 2006; van Liempt 2007) and while supervising other fieldwork studies dealing with smuggled migrants in Canada (van Liempt and Sersli 2013), in Lebanon, Pakistan, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary (Optimity Advisors, ICMPD, ECRE 2015) and in Turkey and Greece (Zijlstra and van Liempt 2017). When we started our empirical research in 2002, the literature on human smuggling only offered two discourses: the economic (Salt and Stein 1997) and the criminal (Chin 1999; Schloenhardt 2001). Today, there is much more variety. There are studies looking into the role of social networks in human smuggling (e.g. Antonopoulos and Winterdyk 2006; Herman 2006; Staring 2004; Zhang 2008), the human rights perspective is getting more attention (e.g. Bhabha 2005; Gallagher 2002; Morrison and Crosland 2001; Nadig 2002; Obokata 2005) and there are studies looking into gender dynamics within smuggling processes (Ahmad 2011; Donato et al. 2008; Peixoto 2009; Sanchez 2015; Schrover et al. 2008; Zhang et al. 2007). Overall, much more emphasis is put nowadays on migrants' experiences and perspectives than when we started

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our research in 2002. At the time we were among the first to collect data on under-standing human smuggling processes with smuggled migrants in Europe.

For a considerable time, our research project did not find support or funding because of the method we envisioned. It was doubted whether conducting inter-views would result in accurate and sufficient information on the characteristics of an 'illegal' business such as human smuggling—and smuggled migrants were assumed to be incapable of providing insights into the social organisation of human smug-glers and the smuggling organisations which had taken them to Europe. It was argued that they would never openly talk with researchers about sensitive issues such as human smuggling. Lee (1993) argues that studies into sensitive topics reveal questions around the kinds of research that are regarded as permissible in society and the ability of the powerful to control the research process.

In the end we succeeded in convincing the funding body and some of our col-leagues of the importance of interviewing migrants who had, themselves, gone through the experience of being smuggled. Through exploring their knowledge, experiences, evaluations and strategies, we were able to nuance stereotypical beliefs and common knowledge on human smuggling processes—something which is vital.

Today, more empirical research is conducted with affected migrants (both from an academic point of view, as well as in policy reports: see, for example, Optimity Advisors, ICMPD, ECRE 2015; UNODC 2011), which is important both because the way in which the persons involved talk about their own experiences might reveal interesting discrepancies in regard to pictures portrayed in public discourse (see also Cornelius 1982; Liamputtong 2007) and because it allows us to explore the perspective from within and to gain the depth and quality of information needed to provide a realistic picture of certain migration processes, causes and dynamics. This, of course, applies not only to irregular migration or human smuggling but to all research exploring vulnerable individuals' perspectives. Such an approach, how-ever, entails very particular methodological and ethical considerations and demands specific sensitivity and accuracy (Duvell et al. 2008; Lee 1993; Liamputtong 2007; Mauthner et al. 2002; van den Hoonaard 2002).

15.2   Migrants' Own Perspectives

As many asylum-seekers had been smuggled at some time in their migration pro-cess, we initially started to look at asylum application interviews or protocols of asylum hearings. However, as the purpose of these interviews is to decide on whether or not a person qualifies as a refugee as defined in the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, data collected by asylum authorities mainly contain information on the reasons for seeking asylum and the motives for leaving a country. Some attention is, however, also paid to modes of travel and routes taken but these data are less detailed. Still, when such data are at all accessible, the major problem when using them for researching individuals' migration processes is the setting in which the

information is provided. The way in which this information is collected has an effect on the quality and reliability of these data. The applied techniques of interrogation are *inter alia* targeted to find inconsistencies within flight biographies. An example of the kind of pressure and its possible consequences which asylum-seekers may experience was provided by an Iraqi woman who was interviewed in The Netherlands:

> I had the feeling they wanted me to make the story simpler than it was. I constantly had the feeling I was forgetting important details. And the most horrible thing was when I talked about painful events – they did not want to know how it must have been for me. They said they had enough information now. They did not even comfort me.

While this example shows that this kind of interview favours especially those able to express themselves in a clear way, it also shows that interviewees are afraid of not providing the 'right' information and therefore of lacking substantial grounds for asylum. As the applicants' narrations will be used for a negative or positive decision on their application for asylum, this might easily lead to the concealment of details or to 'adjustments' in respondents' own narrated flight biographies.

Another often-revealed example was the negative experiences people had with official interpreters translating their flight stories for the authorities. Some of our research participants emphasised that, now that they spoke some Dutch or German, they were shocked about how their interviews had been translated. Issues that were of real importance to them were communicated as if they were minor details, while other things were blown up out of proportion so that they themselves sensed that they had lost control over presenting and interpreting their own lives (see also Doornbos 2003). In order to get an insight into flight stories not produced under such pressure, we decided to look at narrations collected by civil society organisations legally assisting or accommodating asylum-seekers. Regardless of the fact that these stories were most probably conducted in a less-interrogative way, they were, nevertheless, also collected mainly for the organisations' own purposes. Hence, these documentations were also incomplete in respect to our research question. Besides, the organisations we contacted emphasised that, as asylum-seekers might not be familiar with the role of these organisations (whether they are part of the asylum system or not) and, in their bid to receive asylum, may be unclear as to what to talk about and what not to talk about. After reviewing these data sources and the respective available data, we were even more encouraged to conduct interviews ourselves in order to gain insights into the specific phenomenon of human smuggling. However, it was clear that the issues addressed above would also affect our work. Why would an asylum-seeker talk less attentively and carefully to a researcher than with an immigration officer, a translator or any other 'public' person?

This chapter deals with methodological and ethical questions around research involving vulnerable migrants, with a particular focus on the interlinked flows of irregular migration, human smuggling and refugee migration. It will address issues such as gaining access, building up trust, and reciprocity. However, when touching upon 'illegal' or semi-legal activities—as is the case in the above-mentioned fields—ethical questions also clearly need to be addressed.

15.3 Ethical Issues

For a long time, ethical issues relating to research that involved human subjects were limited to the field of medical studies (Duvell et al. 2008; Mauthner et al. 2002). The first international code of ethics to protect the right of people from research abuse was drawn up in 1949 as part of the Nuremberg Code. Other Codes of Ethics are the 'Declaration of Helsinki' (1964) and the 'Belmont Report' (1978). More recently, the European Commission funded the RESPECT project with the aim of developing standards more particularly for socio-economic research in the European Union. The project has developed a Code of Conduct for carrying out research in the social sciences based on a synthesis of the contents of a large number of various existing professional and ethical codes of practice. However, the criteria that are defined, such as informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, seem not to be much of an issue to research where there is a reciprocal relation between the researcher and the researched (Christians 2005; Ferguson 1993). In research that has broken down the walls between subject and researcher and which understands research subjects as participating agents carrying knowledge and interpreting their own life worlds, ethical concerns of justice, fairness and moral actions go far beyond rigid sets of rules and guidelines. In some cases, researchers have to be aware of the fact that obtaining certain information would automatically turn them into 'bearers of secrets'—as being in possession of information that could prove to be very harmful for the respondents, sometimes without even being aware of it.

Most of the ethical guidelines available for migration scholars refer to very *general* regulations, such as confidentiality and privacy, the assessment of benefit versus harm, informed consent and the duality of roles (Knapik 2002). They still bear the hallmarks of medical research and life science. In this chapter we argue that general ethical guidelines and recommendations are important but often not enough. There are a number of ethical choices that need to be made when reaching more sensitive areas for which the general guidelines may not have an answer.

15.4 How to Build Up Trust in a Context of Mistrust?

A prerequisite for every successful qualitative interview is the building-up of a trustful relationship between interviewer and narrator. 'Trust' is of particular importance when researching a sensitive topic. At the same time, building up trust between the researcher and the researched when the topic is sensitive is difficult. For a number of reasons, those engaged might not be willing to talk about their past experiences or current situation with an unknown person like a researcher who, if not an insider, can hardly relate to the narrators' experiences. Throughout our own research process it became evident that, for our respondents—who had all had to either flee from dangerous situations or migrate irregularly—trust and mistrust represented decisive factors accompanying them throughout the whole migration process, from the time

before departure until the time of arranging for a life at the point of arrival. Therefore, trust and mistrust have a significance that is hard to compare with the standards which an 'outsider' interviewer is usually acquainted with. As a consequence, anyone who asks questions about the interviewees' lives and, more specifically, about their migration process, may be approached with suspicion and show great reluctance to share certain crucial information.

In order to carry out a successful irregular migration process, a migrant depends on being able to trust the various agents, be they travel facilitators, passport brokers or other brokers. As the smuggling process is dangerous in many ways, the person concerned is forced to trust different agents when 'en route'. In a continuous balancing act, migrants time and again have to decide whether to trust a person or not; sometimes they even find themselves fully at the mercy of strangers (e.g. co-travellers, accommodating persons, border officials, smugglers, etc.). Thus, trust and mistrust are key factors in migrants' survival strategy, and can actually be the difference between life and death.

'Mistrust' and 'suspicion', however, play an important role with regard not only to the migrants but also to all actors involved. Migrants themselves are also mistrusted and often intensively questioned from many sides (Hynes 2003). En route, mutual mistrust between smuggling agents and their clients is a widely observed phenomenon. Secrecy, too, is a very important tool in order to keep 'control' over the clients of smugglers (Bilger et al. 2006). With the increase of mobile technology—in particular GPS, messenger services and social media—the control over migrants by smugglers has changed to some degree as technology allows for more independence for migrants. Information on smugglers is shared quickly between migrant networks but, in certain contexts, migrants may also travel (parts of the journey) on their own (Optimity Advisors, ICMPD and ECRE 2015; Zijlstra and van Liempt 2017).

On arrival, asylum hearings are important contexts in which a culture of suspicion is created because migrants are intensively questioned from many sides (see also Hynes 2003). Furthermore, migrants often find themselves isolated, discriminated and excluded from society in the country of arrival and, subsequently, they often mistrust their environment. Researchers are not exempt from this setting. On the contrary, already the term 'research' in itself might be something that raises suspicion among research participants (see also Smith 2002). Although it is crucial to understand why and how individuals develop mistrust towards certain groups of persons or specific situations, unfortunately this fact is often not taken into account while doing research among these specific groups (Hynes 2003).

However, how do you build up trust if you do not know what or whom your respondents are actually mistrusting? Besides agreed ethical standards of guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, building up trust requires researchers to understand the situation in which respondents find themselves. It also requires researchers to establish personal contacts with possible respondents. As well as the use of open interviews, informal settings in which respondents feel more comfortable, can talk freely about their experiences and do not feel urged to touch upon topics they do not want to talk about, might help to gain their trust.

The private surroundings in which most of our interviews were carried out helped to provide the necessary privacy and trust in a safe and suitable atmosphere. Single-person settings were considered the most appropriate when narrators worried about losing their anonymity with others being around. Expressions like 'Don't talk to the others about it!' reflected their fears. Small-group settings proved to be the most appropriate for couples, families or groups of friends. In such cases, one of the narrators would usually be more outspoken than the others, marking the beginning of the conversation, which made it easier for the others to follow this example. For reasons of privacy, too, in many cases, we decided not to tape-record the conversation. For the same reason, in some cases only fragmentary notes were taken during the conversation; however, these notes (including interviewers' memories of the conversation) were written up immediately after each interview.

In our research, every effort was made to keep the interview as informal as possible and to have the comparatively long conversation-like interview of 90–180 min in places atypical of the interview situations in which respondents had previously found themselves. A quiet environment was chosen, if possible one suggested by the narrators themselves, such as in their home or places of accommodation, NGOs, coffee-house, school, etc. Interviews were strictly based on the voluntary participation of the respondents and were carried out either with one individual or in small group settings consisting of a maximum of two or three persons, depending on the respective narrators' readiness to talk. If necessary, some individuals were interviewed several times. The method we followed was the 'problem-centred' interview, which aims 'to gather objective evidence on human behavior, as well as on subjective perceptions and ways of processing social reality' (Witzel 2000: 1). To maintain the focus, a basic interview schedule containing major topics to be touched upon during the interview was applied; this gave the respondent an opportunity to explore his or her experiences with as little encumbrance or interference by the interviewer as possible.

In the preparatory phase, interviewers were trained to carry out 'embedded questioning' (Cornelius 1982: 396). Narrators were encouraged to depict whatever came to mind with regard to the topic of interest. In so doing, the narrators were in a position to stress and highlight selected facts of vital importance to them, portray them accordingly and determine the order in which the topics were discussed. Providing this freedom turned out to be crucial, taking into consideration that many respondents, due to the situation they were currently in, had been exposed to continuous and sometimes intimidating questioning by administrative bodies, the police, the asylum authorities, medical doctors, etc. and, consequently, might simply be tired of talking about themselves or might be induced to share their experiences only as and when they felt in control of their own definitions of the self and their current situation. In addition, most interviews were carried out in the respondent's first language and transcripts and/or protocols were then translated afterwards.

15.5 Triggering Memories in an Ethical Way

Another important aspect in this context is the problem of the triggering of painful memories during an interview and the issue of how to deal with the situation when painful biographical events are recalled which, even unintentionally, open or reopen a hidden psychological wound. In this case, the researcher's role becomes even more difficult as the interview can have a profound effect on the well-being of the narrator, who had perhaps never mentioned these issues before (Knapik 2002). Research projects in which counselling tools were used taught us that emotional release is greatly helped by a process that begins by simply taking turns of equal length to listen to each other (van den Anker 2006). The open character of the interviews also the narration stream to be more flexible, as it is left to the narrator to decide which topics to explore more and which to touch on less. Malkki (1995) argues that building up trust may, in the first place, be related to the researcher's willingness to leave some 'stones unturned' and to learn not to probe further when this is clearly not wanted.

For those interviews which we did not do ourselves, the interviewers were carefully selected and specifically trained before going into the field. Great attention was paid to the choice of location—which was left up to the narrators to choose—and to other aspects that might have an impact on the atmosphere of such a setting. In addition, every single interview was reviewed in terms of potentially difficult dynamics and used as a basis for the improvement of subsequent talks.

15.6 Accessing the Research Population

The decision on whom to interview is not only determined by methodological considerations relevant to the respective sample logic or of questions relating to accessing a somewhat hard-to-reach population. Interviewing migrants who can talk about their irregular migration process from their own experience also raises a number of ethical considerations when these persons' residential status is of a 'fragile' or temporary nature (e.g. such as during the asylum determination process or when remaining undocumented—see also Duvell et al. 2008). For fear of being 'detected' or identified, these migrants might be particularly hesitant in talking about their personality or their (irregular) migration process. In our research, asylum-seekers, for example, were theoretically comparatively easy to locate as they were usually housed by the public care system. However, while still in the asylum determination process, their 'insecure' legal status often deterred them from participating in the research project. Besides, the fresh memory of the official interview during the asylum procedure, we assumed, could have impacted the interview process considerably. We therefore also included persons who were *not* going through the asylum procedure at the time of the research but who had already obtained refugee or any

other legal status, were rejected asylum-seekers or were smuggled migrants living undocumented in the host country. In this field, researchers need to pay particular attention to how they gain access to research participants and whether their methods are ethically correct. Identifying research participants as belonging to a certain target group might actually harm them in terms of the quality and duration of their future residence in the country (see also Dahinden and Efionayi-Mäder 2009). Working with undocumented immigrants requires extra care.

Aside from established methods of making contact with research participants such as snowball sampling (Atkinson and Flint 2001), using gate keepers (Bloch 1999) or site selection strategies, another potential source of contacts is the members of the research team themselves. In all of our projects, researchers worked together with bi- or multilingual interviewers who had personal contacts with potential respondents, friends and relatives who met the selection criteria of the target group (migrants who had been smuggled) or who could make direct contact with individuals from the target group. In this way, the interviewers themselves become 'part of the immigrant kinship–friendship network in the research community' (Cornelius 1982: 387). Despite methodological risks particularly in regard to objectivity (Bloch 1999), the advantages in terms of access and openness were considered to be more important for our research. Ellis and MacGaffey (1996) point out that, when doing research into groups who are difficult to access and where there is a high degree of suspicion towards the 'outsider', it makes much more sense to involve a collaborating 'insider' in order to gain access to these networks. The 'insider' is also part of the network and is in possession of extended personal contacts within the researched population. Co-nationals or co-ethnics might find it easier to empathise with the narrator's position and be more likely to build up trust and thus identify risks that might negatively affect research participants, either when contacting the interviewees or during the interview itself. This became obvious, during the course of our interviews, in expressions like '*You know how it is…*', '*As you know, we…*' and '*You might understand why…*' used by several individuals when talking to co-national or co-ethnic interviewers.

However, sharing the same ethnic background may also make the respondent somewhat suspicious because such interview situations run the risk of touching upon sensitive political, social or cultural issues of which the individual interviewer may not be aware. It might be precisely the 'outside' position of the researcher that induces the narrator to speak more freely about certain aspects of his or her experience which are usually not easily discussed within their own community. The interviewer's position as an 'outsider' might also prove to be an advantage in situations where a certain suspicion towards the narrator's co-nationals or co-ethnics is to be expected.

In our research, for example, one West African woman was not willing to talk with the co-ethnic interviewer, since she worried that sharing her experiences would be seen as betrayal and information revealed would be spread in her own community. All our interviewers were therefore carefully prepared to deal with possibly emerging problems of bias and confidentiality. Self-reflection and reflections of the general interview atmosphere were of specific importance. Furthermore, all

interviews carried out were discussed again and questions raised by the person ana-lysing the interview in order to avoid misinterpretation. Indeed, several times it turned out that some aspects were taken for granted by the interviewer, who did not ask for any explanation. In such cases, it was very useful to have the possibility to go back to the respondents and ask for clarification.

15.7 Why Did Migrants Participate in Our Research?

We assumed that many of our participants would not—or would not easily—speak about their experiences during their migration process in detail due to their vulner-able position. Surprisingly, they did not refuse because they did not want to talk about the human smuggling process as such. The decision not to participate was instead related to the fact that these persons had been questioned many times already about their migration process and were tired of talking about it. This was especially the case for those we had contacted through organisations or other gatekeepers. Indeed, in line with the above-mentioned difficulties with regard to contacts chosen by gatekeepers, in our research some potential partners were being approached for the third or fourth time, either by journalists or by researchers. Reduced to the status of research subjects, they were just tired of speaking about their migration history over and over again. This hesitation was supported by the fact that, during our first fieldwork period (2002–2004), 'asylum' was highly politicised, both in Austria and in the Netherlands, as more restrictive legal changes were in preparation. More recent fieldwork in 2015 was conducted by Zijlstra and van Liempt in the context of the current 'refugee crisis', with an even wider shared concern than before that par-ticipation in research may lead to actions against smugglers and thus restrict access to smugglers' services (Optimity Advisors, ICMPD, ECRE 2015: 18).

Nevertheless, more than 100 men, women and families who had been in contact with human smugglers at some time during their migration process were actually interested in talking about their experiences with us. With the aim of better under-standing their narration strategies, the question of why they actually *had* decided to participate was of specific importance. It was assumed that particular expectations in terms of benefits if they participated might be reflected in their respective narra-tion streams. To understand these expectations was considered vital in order to detect certain biases in the narration strategy, which could then explain why certain aspects might have been specifically amplified while others were not touched upon.

Asked about their participation, the answers provided were manifold. Whereas, for some, the tense political climate at the time of conducting interviews deterred their participation, for others, it was exactly this very climate that encouraged them to take part. Participation was envisaged by arguing that they would like to make their story public (through research or journalism) so that the wider community would know about what was actually going on in the migrants' countries and why they had come to Europe. In these cases, the narrator would try his/her best to pres-ent the migration process in the way that would best draw attention to their difficult

lives. While some had decided to participate due to the presumed scientific relevance of the research, for others the interview meant a social event more than anything else. This was especially true for participants who felt lonely and liked to chat about their lives. Many respondents also expressed their surprise that an 'outsider' was interested in their situation; interestingly, the interviewer simply showing interest in the migrants' biographies turned out to be in complete contrast to the official interviews to which they had been subjected. In addition, some narrations were likely to be amplified by strategies of self-promotion. The most obvious example in this sense was, for example, the outspoken desire to become very close friends or even marriage partners with the interviewers.

Others asked for legal advice. In these cases, the interview was clearly centred around topics concerning the asylum system and applications or 'illegal' stays. Some people even presented the tons of paperwork and correspondence they had had with the official authorities and asked the researchers for opinions on their case. Thus, it was particularly important to be very open, right from the beginning, about the limits the migrants could expect when participating. In every single case and with every individual concerned we made sure that we could refer them to qualified experts. Researchers in this field must be aware that the relation between the researcher and the respondent, even if trustful and close, is not equal and is clearly influenced by inequalities of rights, legal and economic position, gender and/or psychological position. Sometimes, researchers might deliberately be provoked on certain topics in order for the migrants to determine what the reactions of 'native' citizens might be. Like the young man who played with his 'fake' identity by showing a forged identity card: '…don't you believe me, don't you think I am a British citizen? Why not? It could be possible, couldn't it?'

As Glazer (1982) notes, participants have their own reasons for agreeing to be interviewed and many are able to set limits on what information they provide. Participants had their own reasons for participating; talking about their lives was a vital part of reality for many participants who had to present themselves repeatedly in certain ways in order to be able to survive or to reach their goals. Nevertheless, when it came to more personal aspects beyond their 'official identity', it became more difficult, just as Cowles notes: 'Even those subjects [*sic*] who appear to be open in their responses to the research activity may become, in the midst of their participation, increasingly hesitant or evasive when they realize that they are revealing information that they would rather not have exposed' (Cowles 1988: 171). Thus, while a lack of respect for someone's dignity might also be expressed by being overprotective, on the other hand every effort should be made to provide the necessary space for research participants to present their lives in their own way. In this regard, ensuring an unstructured, conversation-like interview environment in which participants could talk freely, 'embedded questioning' and the private surroundings in which the interviews took place all proved to be very helpful in more than just a technical sense.

15.8 Official and Unofficial Representations of the Self

When certain migrants give accurate information about themselves and their travels, this might endanger their current position and future options. In migration research, the topic of (re)presentation is most prominently discussed in studies on asylum migration. Although extensive empirical evidence shows that refugees perceive their identity to be very different to that ascribed to them by the institutionalised refugee determination system, surprisingly little is known about *how* refugees present themselves within this context. Zetter (1991) raises an interesting point by arguing that refugees may be interested in the label they are given by others. They may also object to it. In recognising that others often categorise them negatively or incorrectly, he argues that it is exactly this labelling which, on the other hand, entitles them to certain rights. Presenting their case in line with what immigration officers expect to hear can thus be beneficial for them. These aspects, however, do not concern refugees or asylum-seekers only. Migrants who had moved irregularly, who had used smugglers to migrate or, in particular, who continue to stay undocumented in the country of destination, have good reasons to present and represent themselves in a certain way in order to be able to organise their survival, e.g. in order to find work, get access to health care, etc. These conditions influence the way in which migrants present themselves and may lead to a constant adaptation of narrations according to the requirements imposed on them in a given situation. Often migrants who had moved irregularly and/or were asylum-seekers not only need to organise the biographical aspects in a predetermined way but, consequently, have to shift between various representations. Memory has to revert from an 'unofficial' identity to an 'official' one.

Thus, smuggled migrants, who run the risk of being interviewed by officials (police, medical doctors, etc.) at any time, might be biased in an interview situation and therefore might choose to provide only scarce information or information of only limited use. Most obviously, narrators would highlight certain biographical aspects while other aspects (those which might have negative consequences for their lives if openly revealed) might either not be touched upon in detail, not revealed at all or adapted accordingly. This situation calls for an even broader focus by analysing not only *what* is presented and what is *not* presented but also *how* migrants present themselves and their individual migration journey. In order to analyse the data collected, it seemed useful to understand more about *why* and *when* our respondents could possibly have kept certain details back or adapted their narratives.

This specific dilemma calls for a very accurate and ethically sound approach by the researchers, because it could destroy the trust that was built up with respondents. Several participants confirmed the need to talk carefully about their lives. The Dublin regulations may serve as a good example of how a certain legal regulation may have an influence on a narrated biography. Without some modifications or secrecy in descriptions of the route or of the specific countries through which the migrant had transited, he or she would not be allowed to stay in the country of arrival, but would be sent back to the 'safe third country' through which he or she had passed. This may explain why, often, only little or no detailed information is to be found on the final

part of the migration trajectory collected by the official immigration authorities. As a consequence, explanations on the route may be similar to the following, which originated from a database containing information on first asylum hearings:

> I came with a direct flight to an unknown place, and then I was brought with a white car of an unknown type to an unknown place. I don't know what countries we passed. I was dropped at an unknown place, somewhere and now I am here.

Details on the routes taken were sometimes kept back in our interviews, too—interestingly, usually for other reasons, just like this Eritrean woman who shared her worries with us:

> I won't tell you the exact name of the mountain where we were hiding; it is a famous place, you might want to know about it, but there are more people to follow and I do not want to betray them.

At the time of our conversation, this woman was no longer going through the asylum procedure, so there was no need for her to hide information concerning the route she had in order not to jeopardise her potential admission; nevertheless, she still had good reasons for holding back this information. Taking into account migrants' social realities helps to place the information revealed in context. However, researchers must also be aware that, in their conversations, interviewees may recall the situation in which they found themselves previously; they may thus have built up a certain expertise in presenting themselves in particular ways.

This active use of different ways to present their identity and biographies can have severe complications when analysing the data. They might offer information which shows clearly that the event cannot have happened as suggested. 'We were landing with the boat in Milan', as stated by a male respondent from Guinea, cannot have happened simply because Milan is not located close to the sea. However, there might also be information offered which is much harder to identify or where, for various reasons, some details are simply not clearly remembered not considered relevant by the narrator. In order to be able to deal with this kind of information, a first step is to reflect on why certain information is, or is not, provided in this way: did the person just not remember it clearly or did he/she confuse the location with another through which he/she transited? Was he/she instructed by someone to give this answer? Is it the easiest way not to disclose anything that might be difficult to talk about? All these questions were discussed at length both within the research team and with respondents, if the dynamics of the conversation allowed. In any case, researchers should be prepared to not receive the answers to such questions but to revert instead to a reflective analysis process.

15.9   Analysing Different Representations

In a second step, the issue then is how this kind of information should be valued and processed: should we just ignore the details of the story? Should we take the whole narration as a 'constructed' story? Should such information just be taken as

it was stated or should the meaning behind it be questioned? We do not have a clear and universal answer to such questions but it is definitely a personal and ethical consideration which needs to be considered and balanced for every single case. In this regard, the key to the analysis is to understand that information is actually provided under certain circumstances and, supposedly, with particular intentions or expectations by the respondents. In our case, interviewers were instructed to also critically reflect on their own performance, as well as on the specific circumstances of the particular interview. This could have had an effect on the information that was provided and on the way in which it was offered. Examples of this are the duration of the interview, the description of the place in which the interview was carried out, the general atmosphere, those present, interruptions and disturbances, the impression of the emotional state of the narrator, impressions of how the interview progressed and the interpersonal interaction, obvious particularities in the interview, etc.).

With regard to the analysis and evaluation, it is important to be aware of the specific political framework within which certain migrants are navigating in order to understand their potential narration strategies. Revealing certain details or drawing conclusions without critically reflecting on them not only provides a distorted picture in a wider context but may also have negative consequences for the participants. Thus, researchers should be aware of their power over the distribution of knowledge. Taking basic ethical implications into account is not a straightforward process but a balancing act, with difficult choices to be made. In our view, the increased attention given to research involving vulnerable persons has not yet been adequately translated into corresponding publications on ethical challenges in the study of migration. The relative scarcity of these publications reflects the dilemma caused by the multidisciplinary nature of migration studies; however, it may also reflect reservations about emphasising the fact that there are serious dilemmas related to empirical research with vulnerable migrants (Bilger and van Liempt 2009).

In our specific research area, which touches upon several levels of irregularity, the problem of dealing with anonymity, confidentiality and privacy may concern not only research participants but also those, such as gate-keepers, supporting them as well as any other person in contact with potential participants. It should be recognised that insensitive treatment in regard to 'privacy' can potentially harm not only individuals but also groups or even a community as a whole. In our study, the fact that a failure to ensure confidentiality may cause harm to the reputation of the research community if it became apparent that insensitive interviewing by the researcher might have consequences for other researchers. Some potential participants and gate-keepers refused to participate, referring to the bad experiences they had previously had with researchers interested in their lives—we were informed that, after information from their interviews had been processed, participants did not find that their input was reflected in the write-up by the research team. On the contrary, research results also referred to in the media and policies had, at the very least, cast a poor light on the interviewees and their communities. This last aspect is directly linked to the ethical rule of 'balancing the harm and the benefits', where it is the researcher's obligation to strive to

'minimise harm' and 'maximise benefits' for their research subjects. Thus, when carrying out research on a topic like human smuggling, the more sensitive aspect is the striving to minimise harm.

Information gathered in interviews can quite easily be used by third parties, be it against the respondents themselves or against any other actors involved. Thus, it should be recognised that researchers and participants alike may not always see the harm and benefits of a research project or may not see it in the same way. This therefore places extra demands for accuracy and sensitivity on researchers, who must try to understand the views of the potential or actual research subjects from their perspective. This is of particular importance in conversation-like interviews as, in such settings, the researcher is actively seeking to obtain very private information. Thus, the principle of 'informed consent' turns out to be rather complex, as the potential effects of participating are not easily predictable (see also Bilger and van Liempt 2009). Of course, participants must have the right to make an informed decision and to hear a full explanation of the research project in order for them to then decide whether or not to participate. Interviewees should be able to stop the interview whenever they want and our interview technique was clearly aiming for participants to present their own interpretation of specific events and to reveal only what he or she wanted to at any particular moment. Contact details were also left for everybody in case they wanted to reverse their participation and back out from the project, even after the interview had taken place. However, already at an early stage of data collection we realised that asking interviewees to sign a consent form was counterproductive to our efforts to build up trust. Why are we, the researchers, asking for them to sign a document? What could this document be about? We did guarantee anonymity, but did not ask people to sign a form which would require them to reveal their name and sign the form.

15.10   Conclusion

Qualitative research with smuggled migrants proved that incorporating their experiences was not only feasible but was considered important for building up knowledge of a topic on which insider knowledge was largely missing. Precisely by exploring the knowledge, experiences, evaluations and strategies of those who had themselves been involved were we able to nuance stereotypical ideas and common knowledge on human smuggling processes. This also seemed to be reflected in the alleged beliefs about who can provide information and who cannot, who has a say and who has not. Such an approach, however, entails very particular methodological and ethical considerations and demands specific sensitivity and accuracy. There are generally three kinds of relationship where the failure to safeguard ethical guidelines may cause harm: (1) to the relationship of trust between the researcher and the interviewee, (2) to other individuals or groups and/or (3) to the reputation of the research community.

Existing ethical guidelines are formalistic recommendations which are often not enough of a guideline for the difficult choices that need to be made in research with vulnerable migrants. During our fieldwork, for example, we realised that a narrative may not simply be the story of a life but rather a conscious or unconscious strategy for self-presentation and a legitimisation of an interviewee's projections for the future. Researchers in this field need to be aware that, apart from an often-traumatic experience, external structural factors such as the respective migration and integration policy framework, have an impact on how vulnerable migrants present and represent themselves and their migration journey in an interview situation. It is difficult for researchers to know how irregularity in migration processes is influencing the individual narratives and how to deal with these findings in an ethical way.

While discussing ethics, it is vital to acknowledge that they are not an 'afterthought' (Miller and Bell 2012) or something that only needs to be considered at the moment when the research proposal is evaluated. Ethical issues need to be raised and reflected upon from the conceptualisation of the research until the placement of the results in the public arena (Glazer 1982). They should be an ongoing part of research and we hope that this chapter will serve as a starting point for such a discussion.

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Chapter 16
Research-Policy Relations and Migration Studies

Peter Scholten

16.1   Introduction

Migration research has evolved rapidly as an interdisciplinary research field over the last three to four decades. Until the 1980s, studies of migration were relatively scarce and generally fed into generic disciplines as in particular sociology and anthropology, rather than in the conceptualization and theorization of migration per se. Take, for instance, Thomas and Zaniecki's (1926) study on Polish migrant peasants in the United States that contributed to a broader functionalist perspective on societal assimilation. Especially since the 1980s, more and more scholars from a broader range of disciplines developed an interest to migration, and directly related also to the process of migrant incorporation (see also Chap. 4, this volume). Nowadays, migration research is a broad international and strongly institutionalised research field with scholars from various disciplines (Brettell and Hollifield 1994; Bommes and Morawska 2005).

The evolution of migration research as a research field, defined here more broadly as a field of study on migration itself as well as migration-related diversity and immigrant integration, has been shaped by many factors. Besides the growing prominence of mobility and diversity as a social fact, the broader social and political environment of this research field has played a particular role. On the one hand, the political sense of urgency around migration and diversity has provided many opportunities for migration research to have an impact on policymaking and on societal discourse more in general. Take, for instance, the many expert-led government committees and knowledge brokers that have laid the foundation of migration polices in many countries. Even today, migration researchers are a prominent voice in the public debate around issues like the refugee crisis or radicalization, and a broad

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range of institutes has evolved operating at the boundaries of science and politics to contribute to 'evidence based policymaking.'

On the other hand, the political and broader social setting has also influenced the development of migration research itself. Developments in the world around us, including trends and events as well as for instance funding structures, can influence how we do migration research. Some even speak of 'coproduction' of knowledge, which means that the policy environment exerts influence on the types of knowledge paradigms that emerge, or perhaps those that do not emerge (Entzinger and Scholten 2015).

In terms of qualitative research, this mutual relationship can impact research in direct as well as indirect ways: it can influence the type of questions migration scholars ask (and perhaps do not ask), the concepts and theories they use (or disregard) and how they relate to policymakers in doing research and in disseminating research findings. For instance, Favell (2003) has argued that research-policy relations in the past sustained a so-called 'integration paradigm' that framed academic discourses in terms of 'integration', while at the same time legitimizing government interventions in terms of integration. The mutual relationship between research and policy will affect quantitative research as well, as for instance visible in the very lively debates on how and why to collect data on factors such as ethnicity (Simon et al. 2015).

This chapter provides a conceptual and analytical framework for making sense of research-policy relations and the impact on both research and policy. First, an overview is provided of different ways of configuring the *research-policy nexus*. Distinguishing various ideal-types helps making sense of the diversity in research-policy relations that one can encounter in practice. Secondly, *knowledge production* is discussed, with a particular emphasis on how research-policy relations might have influenced knowledge production in migration research over the past decades. Thirdly, the attention shifts from production to *knowledge utilization*. This includes distinguishing between various types of knowledge utilization (Fig. 16.1).
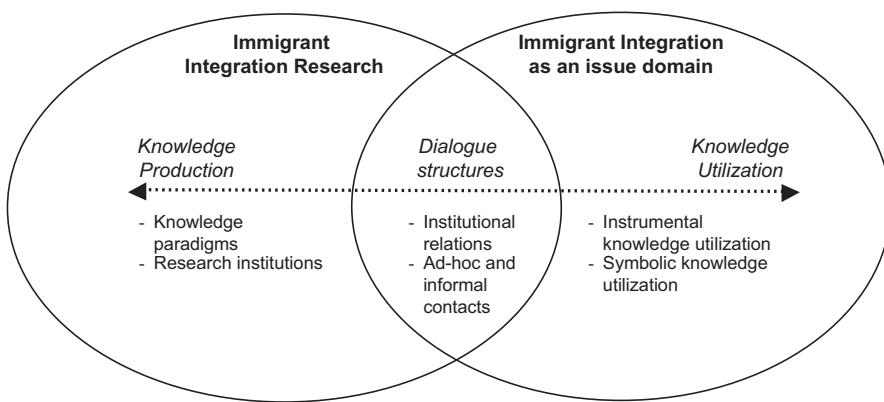

Fig. 16.1 The three main aspects of research-policy relations (Scholten et al. 2015)

Finally, the chapter will explore implications of these insights for how to engage in *research-policy dialogues* as a migration scholar. What lessons can be drawn from studies in the abovementioned framework; how to contribute to reflexivity on behalf of migration scholars when engaging in research-policy relations? Here also a connection will be made to sociology of science literature which provides important insights on how scholars are also actors in the definition of different types of research-policy relations, knowledge production and utilization.

16.2 Configurations of the Research-Policy Nexus

There are very different ways of configuring relations between social science research and politics, both on a normative and an empirical level. Often, debates on research-policy relations are highly normative and mobilise specific models or 'discourses' of how research-policy relations *should be* configured. Policymakers sometimes complain that the research they receive is insufficiently instrumental, thereby discursively mobilizing a model in which social science research should be instrumental to policymaking. Or researchers mobilise a model in which they enlighten policymakers ("speak truth to power") as real academics, whereas in practice their research may often be ignored or perhaps only very selectively used.

One discourse that has obtained particular prominence is 'evidence based policymaking' (Sanderson 2002). This suggests that policymakers make use of evidence from research when designing or implementing policies or in decision making. The concept is, however, rather abstract as it says little about whether it was the evidence that confronted and eventually made policymakers take specific actions, or whether it was the policymakers who actively searched for those knowledge claims that were most convenient to their plans. It also says little about how this evidence was used in policymaking, whether it was used in a direct and instrumental way or for instance in a more symbolic way, and whether it involved actual relations between researchers and policymakers or whether policymakers had other ways to obtain evidence for policymaking.

Hence there is a need for a clearer framework to study how research-policy relations actually are configured in empirical practice. In this context, a distinction is made between various ideal-type research-policy relations that differ on two dimensions (Scholten 2011; Hoppe 2005; Wittrock 1991). First, whether either research or politics has primacy in mutual relations. Is it research that puts new issues on the agenda or gets to develop innovative policy solutions, or is it politics that gets to select those knowledge claims that it sees fit and ignore others? Secondly, whether there is a sharp distinction between the roles of policymakers and researchers or whether their roles are more or less entwined. For instance, to what extent are scholars actively engaged in policy processes, or do scholars rather stay in the so-called 'ivory tower' protected by scientific objectivity?

Four ideal types are often distinguished in the literature. First, the *enlightenment model,* which is perhaps the most classical model of how scientists see their

relationship to other realms such as politics. In the enlightenment model, the academic does not directly engage in policy processes, but contributes to the development of public knowledge and to defining policy problems via traditional academic means (such as books, articles). There is a clear differentiation in roles and academics assume a role of primacy in mutual relations; they are conceptual and theoretical 'brainwashers', whose concepts and knowledge gradually creeps into society and determines how policymakers act (or do not act). Enlightenment can take place through quantitative as well as qualitative research, but specific to qualitative research can be the impact of key concepts that are developed in social science research. Think, for instance, about how key concepts as assimilation or social capital have framed public understanding of migration and diversity, or how key readings such as Putnam's "Bowling Alone" has been read so widely that it becomes part of common public understanding of communities and diversity.

In the *technocratic model*, research also assumes primacy in research-policy relations, but does so in a much more direct way. Technocracy means that the roles of research and policymaking are hardly distinguished, and that scientists can, to some extent, take over the role of policymakers and politicians. They do not only produce knowledge, but are also involved directly in the production of policies. Often this type of research-policy relations is associated with depoliticisation. Take, for instance, the many cases where expert committees laid the foundation of government policies. For instance, expert committees such as the Cantle committee led the foundation of the UK's community cohesion policies, or in the Netherlands the Scientific Council for Government Policy provided a direct impetus to key policy turning points at several moments over the past decades.

Thirdly, in the *bureaucratic model,* it is rather politics that is on top and research that is on tap. In this model, the roles of research and policymaking are sharply differentiated, with research producing 'facts' and policymaking taking normative decisions based on the facts. This 'fact-value' dichotomy creates a sharp boundary between both worlds; scientists are not supposed to engage in any value laden debate and therefore stay far from actual political decision making. In many countries, there are statistics offices that produce data in relation to migration and diversity; research (Simon et al. 2015) shows that often these offices produce data in a way that is in accordance with the particular social and political environment in which they operate. One example is the taboo on ethnic statistics in France in contrast to the custom of producing ethnic statistics in the UK and in the Netherlands. Think also about (qualitative) policy evaluations, for instance using the multiple-stakeholder analysis approach to find out whether actors perceive a specific policy intervention as successful, rather than in itself attributing new idea for alternative interventions.

Finally, in the *engineering model,* the roles of research and politics are once again more entwined, but politics preserves clear primacy in mutual relations. This will often mean that politicians and policymakers actively 'pick and choose' those scholars and those knowledge claims that they see fit for a particular purpose. For instance, if politicians have already decided to pursue a certain course of policy action, they may search for research that can help to substantiate this policy action and to make sure that it is properly implemented. This type of boundary configuration can also

Table 16.1 Theoretical models of research-politics relations

		Coordination or relations	
		Scientific primacy	Political primacy
Demarcation of roles	Sharp	*Enlightenment model*	*Bureaucratic model*
	Diffuse	*Technocratic model*	*Engineering model*

Adapted from Scholten (2011), Hoppe (2005), and Wittrock (1991)

involve the deployment of research as a form of 'political ammunition.' This can involve qualitative as well as quantitative research, depending on the type of ammunition that is required in a specific setting. In qualitative research, comparative methods are often used to this aim, to find out what works in what section and to transfer clear policy lessons (policy diffusion, policy transfer) wherever possible (Table 16.1).

These ideal types help to develop a better understanding of the diverse types of research-policy configurations one may encounter in practice. They are ideal types, which means that in practice one is more likely to encounter blends of different types, or 'in between' types. Take, for instance, the fact-value distinction in the bureaucratic type, which will never be 'pure' in empirical practice; the choice of what type of facts to produce and which facts to ignore is in itself a normative decision (see also the normative debate on the role of ethnic statistics in migration research). There may be differences between countries in terms of the models of research-policy relations that have developed and institutionalised historically. In some countries, such as France, with a very state-centric and politicised policy process, there may be a stronger political primacy in mutual relations, often leading to either a bureaucratic or engineering configuration. Other countries, such as the Netherlands and, to some extent, also the UK, have a strong tradition in directly engaging research in policymaking (technocracy). However, in practice, various models will often coexist in particular policy settings.

The various ideal types can also involve different configurations of qualitative and quantitative research. For instance, much work has been done on how ethnic statistics helped sustain government interventions via a bureaucratic model, providing the 'facts' so that to sustain specific political 'values'. But qualitative research can apply to all four configurations as well. Think of how phenomenological or ethnographic research can contribute to unique new insights and thus contribute to enlightenment. Or how qualitative research can help develop policy interventions as in the technocratic model, which, according to Favell, has been the case in the context of the so-called integration paradigm. Or qualitative research such as multiple-stakeholder analysis that provide the facts for more normative evaluations of policies. Or qualitative approaches such as social action research that can provide ammunition for or against specific government interventions.

Furthermore, developments in the broader social and political context can lead to important changes in the type of boundary configuration that emerges. One such development that has manifested itself throughout Europe over the past decade or so is the growth of political contestation, or politicization, of migration and diversity. Research shows that politicization does not lead to a deconstruction of research-policy

relations, but rather to a reconfiguration of types of relations (Scholten and Verbeek 2015). In particular, it leads to the emergence of the two types with relative political primacy, the bureaucratic and engineering models. At the same time, relations that match the enlightenment or technocratic models met with increasing contestation; a process of politicization of research took place in which the credibility of scholars was frequently put on the line. In the Netherlands and the UK, this led to frequent accusations against scholars who had been involved in policy developments in the past, for having been 'biased' in favour of the now much despised multicultural policy model (Scholten 2011). Caponio et al. (2015) show that this also led to competition within the academic world between scholars from various research paradigms that now increasingly had to compete for attention in the politicised setting.

A particular role in the constitution of specific types of research-policy relations is played by organisations that operate 'in between' or 'on the boundaries' of research and politics. In the literature, these are also described as '*boundary organisations*' (Miller 2001). In the field of migration research, many different boundary organisations exist at the European and the national level as well as (on a more limited scale) at the regional and local levels. Notable examples in the field of migration and diversity policies are the Migration Policy Institute, the Migration Policy Group, the Migration Policy Center and the Center for European Policy Studies. These boundary organisations can operate in terms of various of the models discussed above, such as enlightenment or engineering ones. Another specific type of boundary organisations involves 'independent commissions' that are often installed on an ad-hoc basis and for a limited duration in response to events or developments that induce governments to gather new knowledge and information (Boswell and Hunter 2015). Especially the UK has developed a tradition to install such independent commissions after events, such as ethnic riots in UK cities in 2001 and the terrorist attacks in London in 2005 (ibid).

In sum, the type of research-policy nexus may also have influence on developments in both the fields of policymaking and that of research itself. It may affect patterns of knowledge utilization, for instance with promoting direct and instrumental forms of knowledge utilization in the technocratic model, whereas the engineering type would promote more symbolic and indirect forms of knowledge utilization. And it may affect knowledge production in the field of research, for instance, by privileging specific research actors, knowledge claims or institutes, or in contrast by ignoring others. This can affect the type of questions that scientists ask, the type of knowledge paradigms that emerge and the type of methods that are used. In the following two paragraphs, these two forms of impact will be discussed more in depth.

16.3   Knowledge Production

A key lesson to be learnt from the sociology of sciences and the sociology of knowledge is that social scientific knowledge is not produced in a social vacuum (Gieryn 1999). Some speak of 'co-evolution' or 'co-production' of knowledge in interaction

between social scientists and their broader social and political environment (Jasanoff 2005). The opportunity structures that a policy context offers in terms of influencing policy making will in turn also influence the field of migration research in terms of methodological, theoretical and disciplinary developments.

In terms of qualitative research, there are many examples of how research-policy relations have impacted migration research. Speaking of the notion of coproduction of social scientific knowledge, various migration scholars have pointed at the key role of the nation-state as a 'constitutive frame' for the development of migration research, especially in the 1980s and 1990s (Thränhardt and Bommes 2010). This would have promoted a national 'container view' without much regard for similar processes in other settings. Furthermore, it would have induced an orientation on contributing to problem solving rather than on theoretical development of migration research as such. Favell (2003) captures this in terms of the coproduction of an *Integration Paradigm* in migration research, between, on the one hand, policymakers interested in instrumental knowledge for promoting integration and, on the other hand, researchers with a strong policy – rather than theoretical orientation.

This account of the national coproduction of the Integration Paradigm is particularly illustrative for how the concepts and theories that migration researchers use develop in specific social and political settings, and will also carry tacit assumptions from these settings. In this case, one of such tacit assumptions is that there is an instrumental need for integration of newcomers within nation-states. Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002) have taken this argument even further by arguing that this coproduction has led to a tendency of '*methodological nationalism*' in migration research. According to them:

> nation state building processes have fundamentally shaped the ways immigration has been perceived and received. These perceptions have in turn influenced, though not completely determined, social science theory and methodology and, more specifically, its discourse on immigration and integration (ibid, pp. 301–302).

Indeed, various scholars have emphasised how migration research often tended to reify specific *national models of integration* (Bertossi 2011; Scholten 2011; Bertossi and Duyvendak 2012). A national model would involve a nationally and historically rooted approach to migrant integration, which would be strongly institutionalised in national policies and would determine the national discourses on migrant integration. Examples include the French Republicanist model of integration, the British race relations model, the American 'salad bowl', or the multicultural model that would have typified Dutch policies for a long time. These national models are also manifested amongst others in the labelling of migrants or in the ways of data collection in those countries. For instance, in the UK migrant communities were often framed as 'racial minorities', in the Netherlands as 'ethnic minorities', in Germany as 'foreigners' and in France there was a taboo on labelling migrants as that would conflict with the colour-blind Republicanist model.

Similarly to the coproduction of knowledge at the national level, there is evidence of a similar process of coproduction, but then between European institutions and migration scholars. Geddes (2005) speaks of the coproduction of migration as

a European problem, where migration scholars help problematise migration (and diversity) in such a way that a European response would be necessary. Geddes and Scholten (2015) show how this relationship between the EU and migration research is also substantiated by various funding schemes (such as the European Integration Fund, and the European Asylum and Migration Fund). These funds are often designed to bring together scholars to work on issues of relevance to the EU's agenda. In turn, this has promoted a focus amongst migration scholars not only on comparative research, but also on those questions and those issues that are of particular relevance to Europe.

This coproduction is, of course, not limited to qualitative migration research. In fact, the production of statistics on migrants (or '*ethnic statistics*') has always taken in a central position in the discussion on coproduction of migration research. Some countries, such as the UK and the Netherlands, have long traditions in collecting so-called 'ethnic statistics', or statistics that monitor the social, economic and cultural position of migrant groups or 'minorities.' How these countries collect data reveals remarkable differences. These are related, for instance, to what categories are applied (minorities, migrants, foreign-born, race) as well as how the data is collected (public census, classification based on official populations statistics). Some countries, such as France, have always fiercely opposed monitoring based on ethnicity or race. These consider 'ethnic statistics' as opposed to the colour-blind orientation that may be expected from governments, or consider ethnic statistics as social constructions that may have a performative or labelling effect that leads to the exclusion rather than inclusion of minorities.

The collection of ethnic statistics has been object of fierce debate within academia as well as in politics. A key criticism from academia is that by collecting data based on ethnicity (or culture or race), researchers inadvertently legitimise government intervention based on these categories (Favell 2003). Collecting numbers on specific ethnic groups leads to a reification of the image that these ethnic groups really exist. Subsequently, the attribution of 'problems' to those groups, for instance by showing that school drop-out rates are higher amongst specific ethnic groups, legitimises government intervention (Rath 2001). Such government intervention may then again label or even stigmatise those groups as 'problematic' also in public and political discourses. Also, many sociologists have objected that ethnicity, race and culture cannot be seen as clear markers of groups, as they involve social constructions (what does ethnicity really mean?) and often reveal remarkable internal diversity within these groups (the Asian populations involve many very different groups with different beliefs, cultures and social and economic backgrounds).

However, others have contended that the absence of data on the position of migrants and minorities may also legitimise ignorance towards the problems that migrants often face. For instance, Amiraux and Simon (2006) argue that the absence of ethnic data in France has legitimised a 'non-policy' towards migrants. Amongst others, the absence of ethnic data makes it hard to address discrimination problems, especially institutional discrimination or racism which can only be identified with help of relevant data. In the Netherlands, ethnic statistics have also, for a long time,

been used to finance primary schools, with schools receiving more funds for every child from an ethnic minority group.

Efforts have been made to overcome the methodological nationalism in the collection of ethnic statistics, and design a more comparative approach. European projects such as PROMINSTAT and COMPSTAT have been developed in close cooperation with the EU to do precisely that. Also, the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) has been developed in collaboration with the EU, to get more comparable indicators on migrant integration policies. However, here too an element of coproduction is manifest, with the EU particularly interested in promoting some form of policy convergence by means of facilitating mutual learning, in an area where the EU does not formally have strong competencies.

A recent review of the development of migration research as a research field (Scholten et al. 2015) shows that especially over the last decade or so, migration research has strongly internationalised. This evolution of international research networks such as IMISCOE (International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe) and the growing interest in more comparative research (Bloemraad 2013; Saharso and Scholten 2013) have played a key role in this regard. Steered by such international comparative research, the field of migration research has increasingly developed its own theoretical orientation as a research field, with its own body of literature, network events and even training programs such as PhD training facilities and various international masters programs throughout Europe.

16.4   Knowledge Utilization

A third aspect of research-policy relations that is discussed in this chapter involves knowledge utilization. Here, three basic questions can be asked; knowledge utilization in what way, of what, by whom and when? Concerning the question of how knowledge is utilised, Christina Boswell (2009) distinguished between two types of knowledge utilization: instrumental and symbolic knowledge utilization. *Instrumental knowledge utilization* means that knowledge is used directly in policy-making for instrumental purposes, such as designing better policy alternatives, taking a better decision, making sure that policies are implemented and to evaluate past policies. This type of knowledge utilization speaks most closely to the notion of 'evidence based policymaking'. *Symbolic knowledge utilization* involves a type of knowledge utilization in which knowledge is not used directly for the development of new or better policies, but indirectly for other purposes related to the policy process. Boswell differentiates two types of symbolic knowledge utilization. First, *substantiating* knowledge utilization means that knowledge is used primarily to substantiate specific policy claims or ideas. This means that knowledge and expertise is selected from the available stock in order to lend support, credibility or authority to an already existing policy claim. A particular kind is to use research as a form of political ammunition in political debates and conflicts. Secondly,

legitimising knowledge utilization does not so much lend support to a specific claim, but to a specific actor involved in the policy process. For instance, actors can mobilise knowledge and expertise as a mere symbolic act to claim authority in a field or to simply illustrate to others that they are taking a policy problem very serious and hence mobilise knowledge. The mere existence of government-associated research bodies on migration and integration, such as the BAMF in Germany, helps to legitimise the role of (specific parts of) governments in intervening in migration and integration. A particular form of legitimizing knowledge utilization involves the so-called 'fridge' function of research. When confronted with a wicked or contested policy problem, policymakers and politicians may be tempted to temporarily remove the problem from the agenda by announcing 'further research.' This allows them to buy more time to solve the contested issue (for instance, until after elections), although eventually, of course, the findings of the research will come out, possibly at a more convenient moment.

Besides instrumental and symbolic knowledge, there is also a lot of '*non-utilization*'. Much research never finds its way into the policy process, either because it never trickles through or captures attention of any actor (when the enlightenment knowledge creep does not take place, for instance), or because it is consciously ignored. There are many examples of studies that are never utilised because they are seen as too counter-intuitive or framed as 'fundamental science', or sometimes because the message they bring is 'unwelcome'. Policy scientists have defined the strategy of ignoring research as a form of 'negative feedback', or conscious efforts to prevent policy change. In some cases, this also involves the discrediting of studies as 'poor' or 'biased'; this involves a form of 'boundary work' that we will discuss more in detail later.

However, knowledge utilization is more complex than these different types. It can also involve very different *types of knowledge claims* that are utilised in the first place. Here it is important to reflect about differences between the various types of dialogue structures discussed earlier. Very different types of knowledge claims can be involved in the different ideal types. The enlightenment model mostly speaks of conceptual and theoretical knowledge, sometimes to be described as 'fundamental scientific knowledge', which gradually finds its way into general societal and political discourse through what Weiss (1986) described as 'knowledge creep'. Think about books and concepts that academics produce, such as 'assimilation' or 'social capital' or 'citizenship', which have eventually become part of migration discourses. The bureaucratic model mostly speaks of information or data provided by scientist, which moreover should fit into existing political and societal discourses in order to be utilised in the first place. Think about the role of ethnic statistics that we discussed earlier. The technocratic model rather speaks of applied knowledge, so knowledge that is directly relevant to policymaking. Finally, the engineering model mostly also speaks of applied knowledge, but then puts primacy on the policymaker to selectively pick-and-choose those strands of expertise that he or she sees fit.

Furthermore, knowledge can be used by very different *types of actors*. It can be used by policymakers directly involved in policymaking. This is often the case with government-associated advisory bodies or expert committees that have as a primary

function to bring together researchers and policymakers. Such contacts often also emerge in a more ad-hoc and informal setting. However, this may also involve other types of actors involved in policymaking in different ways. This includes political actors, such as politicians that like to refer to specific research findings in order to substantiate their policy claims, or political parties that seek to bring in academic expertise more systematically, for instance via party think tanks. Furthermore, interest groups and lobby organisations are actors that will often use academic knowledge, but only if it helps to substantiate their claims.

The *timing* of knowledge utilization can also matter significantly. Knowledge utilization can take place in very different parts of the policy cycle with different implications. For instance, during the policy stage of agenda setting, knowledge can be used instrumentally to capture attention for specific problems, or symbolically to boost specific policy ideas or actors. Take for instance the role of research in signalling institutional discrimination and subsequently putting this notion on the policy agenda; most European countries now have formal policies regarding institutional discrimination. Similarly, both types of knowledge utilization might apply in the stages of formulating policy proposals and actually taking policy decisions. Knowledge utilization during the stage of implementation often tends to follow a bureaucratic model, where, for instance, the information or data produced by research is used to monitor policy practices and effects. Finally, evaluation is a stage where knowledge utilization often plays a crucial role. However, in that stage as well, utilization can be instrumental to policy change and learning, but also symbolic, for example, the choice for specific evaluation methods that may or may not reflect critically on a policy. For instance, an evaluation of the effectiveness of integration policy can be done in a narrow sense by measuring the effects of a given policy, but also in a broad sense by analysing the perceptions of multiple actors on these policy effects; both designs might deliver very different evaluation outcomes!

Strongly related to the concept of knowledge utilization is the concept of 'learning' or 'policy learning'. Learning is commonly defined as the adjustment of specific beliefs in response to new knowledge, information or experiences. In practice, however, patterns of knowledge utilization can be studied empirically, but whether learning has taken place often remains a more subjective and normative question. For instance, where some claim that a policy may have changed in response to new research, others may claim that external factors such as economic crisis were the cause of policy change and research was only there to substantiate those changes. Hence, the notion of learning or 'policy learning' is hardly used in the study of research-policy relations.

16.5   Engaging in Research-Policy Dialogues

The three dimensions of research-policy relations discussed above (dialogue structures, knowledge production and knowledge utilization) may help scholars to make sense of the role they play or can play on the research-policy nexus. A key assertion

in this chapter is that there is a strong mutual relationship between these three dimensions. What type of dialogue structure emerges will affect patterns of knowledge utilization as well as knowledge production in the field of research itself. If a dialogue structure puts strong primacy on politics on the research-policy nexus, this will create an opportunity structure for specific knowledge claims and will promote (often more symbolic) forms of knowledge utilization that fit political purposes. Or, when sharp boundaries are established between the role of academics and policymakers, knowledge production may occur more independently and driven by disciplinary and theoretical questions, but possibly resulting in non-utilization in the context of societal and political discourses.

The take home message from this analysis should not be that scholars should refrain from engaging in research-policy dialogues. Yes, as scholars we should always be aware of how such relations affect what we do, the theories and methods we use, the questions we ask, or perhaps even more importantly, the questions that we do not ask. But no, research policy relations do not need to be perverse to our work. The idea of 'boundaries' between research and politics meaning that there is a strict separation between both worlds, a sort of impermeable wall, is blatantly simplistic and potentially harmful to the development of a good social scientific understanding of the phenomena we are studying. Especially with strongly policy-relevant topics like migration and integration, relating ourselves to the policy environment can be of vital importance to our (fundamental) scientific research; ignoring the policy context would mean missing out of a very significant factor in how contemporary societies perceive and respond to migration and diversity. Furthermore, there is, even to academics, still value to actually contributing to societal discourses and public responses to migration and diversity.

However, a strong argument has to be made for more reflexivity on the part of scholars when engaging in research-policy dialogues (see also Chap. 6, this volume). Rein and Schon (1994) have made the case for '*reflective practitioners'* in policy dynamics. This means that actors should always be at the same time aware of the substantive contribution they make as well as the role and position that they take, and the implications that the interaction of roles and substance can have for themselves as well as for others. Scientists should also be 'reflective practitioners' when engaging in research-policy dialogues. A better understanding of the interconnections between boundary configurations, knowledge production and knowledge utilization should equip them with the conceptual tools for being 'reflective'. It is this reflective attitude that enables scholars to be critical not only to policy, but also their own roles, while at the same time not isolating themselves from the social dynamics that are so important to social sciences. It is this reflective attitude that should constitute a 'social boundary' between research and politics that does not involve retreat in an Ivory Tower, but rather as a mental or intellectual layer in our social behaviour.

What could be harmful to this reflective attitude is what has been described in the literature as the '*problem of institutionalization'* (Scholten et al. 2015). When research-policy relations 'institutionalise', actors on both sides of the relationship can develop a mutual dependency. For instance, researchers or research institutes may become dependent on funding from the policy environment for their existence,

and will thus also be more likely to address those questions that are policy-relevant. The other way around, policymakers will receive knowledge and information from one specific type of actors and probably one knowledge paradigm only. Both factors do not promote a mutual critical attitude, let alone 'reflexivity'.

In fact, in various countries there have been, over the past, cases where such interdependencies have led to the development of networks or 'discourse coalitions' involving specific scholars, institutes and policymakers. For instance, in the UK, a 'race relations industry' (Bourne 1980; Small and Solomos 2006) would have developed in response to the close cooperation between research and policy. As a consequence of the close cooperation, the race relations paradigm would have emerged and been reproduced as the dominant integration model in the UK. Similarly, in the Netherlands, a 'minorities research industry' would have emerged (Essed and Nimako 2006; Rath 2001) that in a similar way reproduced a specific 'national model' of minority integration. According to Rath, this not only reproduced this ethnic minorities model, but also legitimised both academic research to 'ethnic minorities' as well as government intervention in the position of these minorities.

Finally, a reflective scholar working on the research-policy nexus should also be aware of social processes within academia that may be triggered by research-policy relations. In the sociology of sciences, various types of so-called '*boundary work practices*' are defined (Gieryn 1999), which involve patterns of social behaviour that actors develop to define 'boundaries' between research and policy as well as prescribe proper ways of mutual interaction. Awareness of such practices will again contribute to the reflexivity of scholars working on the research-policy nexus. One boundary work practice involves the monopolisation of a specific model of doing science or making policies by developing a specific relation with actors and capital in another field (Entzinger and Scholten 2015). For instance, with aid from other fields, actors can strengthen their position within their own field or alter the rules of the game in their favour. Alternatively, boundary work can be aimed at the expulsion of specific actors, by redrawing the boundaries of a field so that specific actors are excluded (for example, depriving researchers of their scientific credibility). Or, boundary work can involve expansion, which occurs when actors that support a specific knowledge paradigm or specific values or ideas about proper research manage to expand that paradigm or those beliefs into other areas as well (ibid, p. 17). Finally, boundary work can be aimed at strengthening the autonomy of research versus other spheres, like politics and policymaking. Autonomy does not mean that fields are not interrelated. Jasanoff (2004) has shown that "keeping politics near but out" forms a very effective strategy for research institutes to strengthen their authority by being involved in policy to some degree.

16.6 Conclusions

This chapter shows how the relationship between research and policy in the field of migration does not only matter in terms of having a societal impact, but can also matter to the development of migration research itself. Perhaps because migration

research (in a broad sense involving research to both mobility and migration-related diversity) is a research field rather than an academic discipline, it has been particularly susceptible to developments in the broader social and political setting. The more broadly felt sense of urgency around issues related to migration and diversity, such as the recent refugee crisis in Europe, but earlier also the rise of intra-EU mobility or the increase of labour and family migration in the late twentieth century, has always been an important impetus for migration research. But also the politicization of migration has provided opportunities as well as challenges for migration research.

The central argument in this chapter is that the type of research-policy relationship (or boundary configuration) also matters to knowledge production in the field of migration research as well as to patterns of knowledge utilization in broader society and politics. There is a broad variety in research-policy relations, which has been captured in four ideal types; enlightenment, technocracy, bureaucracy and engineering. Each of these types can impact knowledge production within the field of research in specific ways. For instance, we have seen that under the bureaucratic model a tendency has evolved to collect data or statistics on migration in accordance to very specific national models. Finally, we have seen that the type of research-policy nexus that emerges can also matter to patterns of knowledge utilization. Whereas the technocratic model assumes a rather instrumental form of knowledge utilization, other models can lead to more symbolic forms of knowledge utilization, either to substantiate already existing policy discourses or to legitimise the position of specific actors in the policy process (see also Chap. 13, this volume).

The development of migration research has at various moments been strongly influenced by its relationship to the broader policy environment. We have seen that the politicization of migration throughout Europe has triggered a transformation in types of research policy relations, particularly in the direction of bureaucratic and engineering models that involve more political primacy. We have also seen that, in the past, conceptual and methodological developments in migration research have been at least partly constituted by the perspective of nation states, leading to what is described as 'national models of integration'. Such national models would, for a long time, have constrained the more comparative and theoretical development of the field. In some countries, even very specific networks or 'discourse coalitions' emerged around such national models involving specific policymakers as well as scholars. Finally, we have seen that behind the discourse of 'evidence based policy-making', much migration research is used symbolically rather than instrumentally. In some cases, deploying migration scholarship has helped to depoliticise or temporarily remove contentious topics from the policy agenda.

However, observing that research-policy relations has had an important effect on the development of migration research does not per se mean that migration scholars should from now on refrain from engaging in research-policy dialogues. Rather, it requires more reflexivity on the part of scholars in terms of how their relation to the policy setting may also affect their own research. The conceptual toolkit presented in this chapter, derived largely from the sociology of sciences and policy sciences, should help scholars develop higher consciousness on research-policy dialogues. Furthermore, it requires the absence of any form of structural interdependencies

between research and policy; the institutionalization of privileged research-policy relations is likely to promote paradigmatic closure and absence of the mutual critical attitude that is required both for policy innovation and good social science research.

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