

Conclusion: Endurance and Exhaustion

‘Just imagine a cage and a bird. You are a bird, and you fly all around. If you don’t have any hope, it means all the world is a cage. Now I understand why people get crazy, use drugs and do bad things.’ (Interview with Jamal in Switzerland 2014)

Jamal seemed hopeless at the time of the conversation from which this quote is taken. He was in a refugee camp in Switzerland awaiting the authorities’ decision on his asylum claim. He had nothing left to lose, he said to me, and he had no more energy. He made a circular motion with one of his index fingers, indicating that he had travelled around a lot. Then he referred to another camp resident who seemed to have problems with his mental health and was acting strangely. Jamal expressed a fear that he might be in a similar state like this man in a few months. He said that maybe the next day the police would come and deport him to Greece. Yet, in the same conversation, Jamal also told me that he was one of the few refugees who were still hopeful after so many years of living on the move and after so many failed attempts to find a safe place to live. As a metaphor for his feelings, Jamal described a bird that flies around in a cage, probably beating its wings against the bars again and again, but still it does not stop flying. This image symbolises the mobility of many of this book’s protagonists within (and beyond) Europe, who are repeatedly held up by border controls, by the lack of financial resources or by state-imposed containment, but who at the same time persevere despite the instability and precarity imposed on them. ‘Undesirable’ migrants have to show endurance when trying to realise their migration projects. They are striving to find a solution, and it is not least their capacity to bear harsh living conditions that poses a challenge for migration governance.

The collected narratives show how migrants with a precarious legal status face the struggle of navigating different dimensions of the European migration regime: finding ways to cope with demeaning, racialised and

gendered representations they confront, navigating a maze of illegible and restrictive legal frameworks, resisting the constant threat of arrest or detention, and manoeuvring through and around ambivalent information. What does this navigation and these individual practices, tactics and pathways tell us beyond enabling us to hear the individual stories of people often portrayed as ‘flows’ or ‘masses’? What do their complex, interrupted and seemingly erratic journeys reveal about the European migration regime? What can we conclude from the observation that migration control always remains incomplete?

Narratives of individuals’ interrupted journeys within and beyond Europe have guided this book, illuminating the complex interrelationship between individual migrant practices and tactics on the one hand, and attempts at migration control and structural marginalisation on the other. It was important for me to give descriptions of migrants’ complex routes the space they deserve, to prioritise them within the individual chapters and to reflect them in their (always incomplete) entirety, rather than just using short interview fragments that are immediately analysed. I believe that by considering the extensive temporal and spatial scope of these journeys, we can learn not only about certain consequences of the contemporary migration regime, but also about migrants’ agency, which cannot be captured if we only focus on certain phases of the migration process, such as departures, border crossings or arrivals. When we primarily pay attention to ‘border spectacles’ (De Genova, 2002), much of the everyday silent violence goes unnoticed, as does migrants’ endurance of such harmful effects.

Most of my interlocutors were still in Europe when I last spoke to them. Although many of them did not have a valid residence permit for the particular country they resided in, they had not left the European territories. Migrants will keep arriving and finding new loopholes to enable them to cross borders and challenge their forced removal, no matter how high the walls and fences will be that aim to keep unwanted migrants out of Europe, or how ‘smart’ technologies will become at identifying the ‘undeserving’ from the ‘deserving’ or with how much hostility European states will try to deter newcomers. Does this mean that migration policies have simply failed to deport these unwanted migrants, who are publicly represented as ‘tricksters’ or ‘bogus refugees’, to their countries of origin? What do these observations tell us about migrants’ agency and their capacity to resist migration control attempts? What are the consequences of the migration regime for individuals who have very little chance of being recognised as refugees, people in need of protection or so-called hardship cases?

In this conclusion, I first revisit some of the central messages of the previous chapters, which highlight that migrants’ everyday forms of resistance are always entangled with state attempts at mobility control and show how this leads to a situation in which both migrants and law enforcement actors have

disruptive power in relation to the respective other. Second, I argue that it is the endurance of migrants that poses a great challenge to the ‘fantasies’ (Coutin, 2015) of migration ‘management’. I then contend that states react to such everyday resistance by trying to transform migrants’ perseverance into exhaustion that will eventually persuade ‘undesirable’ migrants to return – or will turn them into docile labour. The final section concludes that it is within such ‘politics of exhaustion’ (Ansems de Vries and Guild, 2019) that we must locate and render visible the violence of contemporary migration governance that is inflicted upon migrants.

Interrupted journeys – disrupted control

This book has built on the migration regime literature that seeks to understand migration control practices through the complex entanglement of actors, laws and discourses within ‘asymmetrical spaces of negotiation’ (Eule et al, 2018). Although several publications have analysed the migration regime from an ethnographic perspective (see, for example, *Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe*, 2007; Hess, 2012; Eule et al, 2019), only a few studies have explicitly focused on migrant tactics as a disruptive element of the smooth functioning of migration control practices. Migrants take an active part in the constitution of a migration regime by disturbing or openly contesting states’ attempts to ‘manage’ their mobility. Their creative practices of circumventing law enforcement that either immobilises them or pushes them into undesired mobility thus eventually forces regulations and attempts at control to be amended.

Throughout all of the chapters, I have clarified various aspects of these entanglements and have therefore contributed to the migration regime literature by shedding light on different dimensions of the European migration regime that non-citizens with a precarious legal status have to cope with. By doing so I have brought different theoretical perspectives – ranging from those used in gender, postcolonial and mobility studies to those used in the literature on the anthropology of the state and the law – into conversation with the migration regime literature. All of these different dimensions that migrants have to navigate contribute to shaping and challenging migrants’ journeys and tactics and ultimately the formation of the contemporary migration regime.

The first two chapters of this book have provided an introduction to the conceptual, methodological and policy contexts in which these interrupted journeys develop. In *Chapter 3*, I have argued that the migration regime largely rests on racialised and gendered images of the ‘undeserving other’ that allow a legitimising of the consolidation of a ‘human hierarchy’ (Mayblin et al, 2020) which grants rights and privileges to some and discursively justifies inflicting state violence on others as well as depriving them of

their rights and making them the subjects of precarisation. I have argued that male (Muslim) migrants with a precarious legal status are particularly ‘de-vulnerabilised’ and deemed to be the least deserving because they are depicted as threatening intruders. Distancing themselves from these images and creating new self-representations are ways for migrant men to react to such negative representations that manifest in the implementation of state law and permeate people’s personal lives. [Chapter 4](#) has demonstrated how people at risk of deportation use their mobility as a resource when they go into hiding or when they move to another country to secure access to support structures. In turn, states similarly capitalise on mobility in their attempts to control people’s movement, such as when they subject people to deportations within and beyond Europe or when they shift them from camp to camp. Hence, states react to migrants’ subversive mobility by enforcing mobility themselves, a vicious circle ultimately resulting in a condition, which I have called ‘stuck in mobility’. [Chapter 5](#) has shed light on how the migration regime remains utterly illegible and arbitrary and on how migrants have to resort to informal knowledge, including ‘rumours of rights’ ([Eckert, 2012](#)), to navigate the uncertainties they encounter. Access to information is very limited for marginalised migrants, and they need to find ways to make sense of the constantly changing legal frameworks and recent changes to how law is implemented, as well as the opportunities to move and work. Rumours help to obtain and transfer essential – but always unreliable – knowledge. States react to such informal channels of knowledge transfer by limiting access to communication tools and trying to impede the spread of rumours, for instance through information campaigns in countries of origin, which deny the veracity of rumours that might trigger more undesired migration. Finally, [Chapter 6](#) has zoomed in on concrete practices of everyday resistance in relation to the law and has shown that disenfranchised migrants develop different tactics that can be aimed at both avoiding the implementation of laws against them and appropriating laws to gain an advantage from them. However, migrants often get entangled and lost within legal procedures when trying to legalise their presence, simultaneously feeling trapped by the law, which yet again underlines the asymmetrical nature of negotiations among actors within the migration regime. These examples all point to the mutual interdependencies of migrants’ tactics and states’ attempts to control the presence and mobility of non-citizens deemed unworthy of protection or residence rights.

On the one hand, *Navigating the Migration Regime* has thus emphasised how migrants’ journeys are continually interrupted by state control practices, such as when they are rerouted due to deportation, or they are put on hold due to detention and stays in refugee camps. Interpersonal relationships are challenged when restrictive policies and stigmatising discourses put strains on people’s personal lives. Desires and aspirations are dampened and hopes

are diminished as the precarious and unpredictable living conditions render planning for the future almost impossible.

On the other hand, migrants with a precarious legal status have disruptive power when they challenge states' attempts to control their mobility as when they go into hiding to avoid detention or deportation, when they find loopholes in the law or use regulatory frameworks to their advantage, or when they conceal their identities in order to circumvent modern technologies of identification. Such subversive practices then trigger reactions of law enforcement actors who seek ways to refine their policies or the ways in which laws are implemented in an attempt to better control these subversive practices. This highlights the regime's characteristic of constant 'repair work' (Sciortino, 2004) that operates in an emergency mode instead of providing any long-term solutions.

Yet, whereas migrants' everyday acts of resistance disrupt the facile 'management' of people's 'unruly' and delegitimised mobility and presence, these acts of resistance do not fundamentally change migrants' marginalised position. The current set-up of European nation states forces disenfranchised people to grasp at whatever straws they can find. The mutually disruptive dynamics thus have very different implications for the actors concerned. Where do these observations leave us in our analysis of the power relations within the migration regime?

This book has foregrounded everyday acts of resistance by individuals rather than collective political struggles that demand more rights for refugees and migrants. Indeed, my interlocutors' accounts were rather devoid of stories about involvement in collective political mobilisations. Their high level of mobility, the transnational space they inhabit and their short-term inclusion in local political contexts render embeddedness in such networks difficult. My interlocutors' everyday acts of resistance are thus rather 'noises' that are made in response to the managerial discourse of policy makers (noises that can easily be overheard or ignored by those in power) than 'voices' that potentially have the power to fundamentally change the political landscape of Europe (Dikeç, 2004; Swerts, 2021). These noises interfere with the smooth implementation of law and blur the image of states having the requisite powers to thoroughly manage their respective populations. Hence, these disruptions contribute to the overall messiness and illegibility of the migration regime and to the ongoing refinement of migration control rather than to the overthrowing of the system.

Similar to proponents of the autonomy of migration approach (Moulier Boutang, 2007; Papadopoulos et al, 2008; De Genova, 2017b), I took migrants' practices and their border struggles as starting points from which to investigate and theorise the migration regime as well as to consider how migrants' actions force the control apparatus to constantly adapt, transform and reorganise itself (Scheel, 2019). But I have refrained from depicting

migrants' resistance to migration control practices as heroic as this would underestimate the disempowering and violent effects of migration and border control on marginalised individuals. Whereas the autonomy of migration approach sees potential for political change as arising from migration at the margins of the state, I have expressed my doubts about a too romantic reading of migration as a force triggering fundamental changes. Even the collective struggles of illegalised people and their citizen allies have been shown to fail to cause real disruptions to the political order – among other reasons because they lack homogeneous shared intentions and are often simply ignored by those in power (Swerts, 2021). Instead of framing individuals' everyday resistance as a trigger for radical changes to Europe's socio-political mapping to occur, I have interpreted them as challenges to states' 'fantasies' (Coutin, 2015; see also Lindberg and Edward, 2021) of smoothly 'managing' migration. Following de Certeau (2002) and Scott (1985), I understand migrants' everyday acts of resistance as (always risky) attempts that may – or may not – help to prolong their stay in Europe and that might eventually also lead to legalising their condition. The disruptions I have described here are silent, imperceptible acts of non-compliance with states' regulatory frameworks. Acknowledging the incompleteness of governing projects as a result of migrants' everyday disturbances does not, therefore, necessarily imply radical changes to the structural violence resulting from global inequalities. Also, this incompleteness does not indicate that governing projects have no effects – maybe these effects just differ from their officially declared intentions.

Whereas 'moments of autonomy' (Mezzadra, 2007) were certainly manifest in many of my interlocutors' accounts, I am more interested in the long-term understanding of how we can conceptualise migrants' agency vis-à-vis elaborate migration governance. Taking such a perspective allows us to capture how the contemporary European migration regime results in migrants being exposed to permanent temporariness, precarity and uncertainty, as the lengthy and interrupted journeys presented in this book bear witness to. The autonomy of migration approach fails to grasp the lasting power imbalance at play, which keeps migrants in a waiting position and sustains stark inequalities between those who are seen to belong and those who are defined as undeserving of legal, social and economic inclusion. Thus, in the long run, the 'autonomy' of migration seems to have little effect on changing the regime's highly unequal structural underpinnings. I agree with Tuckett (2018: 5) and contend that whereas migrants' everyday tactics and practices might 'offer individual migrants certain opportunities, they also reproduce the structural inequalities they are attempting to overcome'. It is this long-term dimension that I have sought to grasp in this book by giving migrants' lengthy journeys considerable space. It seems essential to add such a perspective to the often incidental, emergency-related and

nation states' centred thinking of much policy making that neglects the fact that many migrants have been en route for years, a fact which challenges inclusion and participation both in their host countries and their countries of origin. The longevity of precarity causes me to frame migrants' agency less as autonomy and more in terms of migrants' persisting endurance to bear constant insecurity, marginalisation and precarity.

Enduring long-term legal precarity

When migrants arrive in Europe, they often face a long, uncertain journey through Europe's bureaucratic and legal maze. Taking migrants' interrupted journeys spanning time and space as a starting point for analysing the European migration regime allows an acknowledgement of the many steps and lengthy periods preceding the arrival of individuals in a given context and a consideration of the continuing instability and socio-legal marginalisation that may lie ahead. Such a perspective is essential to fully comprehend the persistence of legal precarity that many people are forced to endure. Jamal, for instance, had been on the move for more than a decade; he had experienced deportation to his country of citizenship, had struggled his way back to Europe and had suffered severely from the cyclical experience of repeatedly losing legal claims to regularise his presence and from having to leave yet another place to avoid another deportation. Just like him, Eymen, Walid, Rachid and Adama (and many others I spoke to) had also moved and were displaced from country to country, or from accommodation to accommodation, forcing them to repeatedly readapt to new places, implying also that their legal situation was always changing. Some of them had obtained a temporary residence permit only to have it withdrawn again. Others had worked informally under exploitative conditions and lacked any job security, leaving the asylum system being one of the few alternatives available so they could meet their basic needs. But applying for asylum is often only another short-term solution preceding yet another move into illegality, such as when an asylum claim is rejected. These observations emphasise the persistent instability and temporariness that was common to all narratives informing this book.

A secure legal status is increasingly difficult to obtain and keep (Ellermann, 2020), forcing people with an insecure legal status to be extremely patient and put up with long-term uncertainties. More and more countries issue only short-term residence permits while making access to permanent residence or even citizenship exceedingly difficult. Examination of such temporalities in migration governance reveals that migrants are enduring legal, economic and social precarity for longer and longer periods of time. Griffiths (2017: 53), for instance, points to the fact that in 2017, it took 30 years of 'extreme uncertainty' to qualify for indefinite leave to remain in the UK if 'any of

a person's residence was unlawful' – in contrast to it taking less than half that time before 2012. Importantly, the precarity resulting from a tenuous residence status persists even after eventual regularisation, and people have to still spend a great deal of effort and time on their 'paperwork' (Chapter 6) to avoid the expiration or withdrawal of their residence papers. Hence, legal trajectories do not always lead towards a more secure residency – even some residents and naturalised citizens can lose their status (Ellermann, 2020). This becomes particularly evident in the issuing of temporary documents, which pushes people to continually prove that they have 'earned' their right to stay (Wyss and Fischer, 2022). This 'spread of legal precarity and temporariness' (Ellermann, 2020: 2470) therefore coincides with requirements which are conditional on how useful migrants are in the labour market, forcing non-citizens to continually verify their 'integration', which is primarily assessed according to their economic performance (Matejskova, 2013). Many people remain in a state of 'temporary admission' and stuck in long-term insecurity, allowing states to limit their financial allowances while simultaneously blaming and eventually punishing recipients for not 'integrating' well enough (Borrelli et al, 2021b). This also deflects attention from the fact that the state-imposed 'precarious inclusion' (Rytter and Ghandchi, 2019) renders participation in the labour market, social life and educational programmes particularly challenging, permitting only the fittest and most resilient to succeed (Wyss and Fischer, 2022).

The mobile life stories presented in this book testify to the ongoing effect of contemporary migration governance on people without a secure right to remain, but likewise shed light on the incredible endurance many of them display. As Brigden and Mainwaring (2016: 407) note, '[m]igrants themselves view stopping, waiting and containment as part of the journey to be endured'. Many of my interlocutors had the same painful experiences of repeatedly having to start all over again in a new place and of living through the repetitive and cyclical nature of trying to find a new 'chance' only to realise that it soon develops into another failed attempt to improve their situation. They expressed the fear of developing mental problems as a result of the negative psychological consequences of repeated rejections of legal claims or of unsuccessful endeavours to find or keep employment, however precarious (Chapter 4). Yet my interlocutors' accounts also demonstrate that many of them do not give up and do not consider returning to their country of origin to be a viable option – despite the 'violent conditions' (Laurie and Shaw, 2018) they are continually forced to navigate. This perseverance often baffled me, given states' efforts at deterrence. In Chapter 5, I have pointed to the importance of hope when dealing with such unsettled, uncertain and precarious living situations. Having hope of finding a way to legalise one's status and being able to secure one's livelihood often prevails; it helps people to bear their unsettled living conditions. Perhaps one of the

biggest challenges to the smooth implementation of migration laws is in fact migrants' ongoing endurance of the violent conditions that are put in place to make them leave.

The tireless efforts by migrants to climb up the ladder towards more secure living conditions are reminiscent of those required for a Sisyphean task. Although I emphasise migrants' agency and the challenges that states face regarding putting migration policy goals into practice and hence controlling and rendering unwanted migrants' presence in Europe difficult, I do not want to claim that migration control is entirely dysfunctional. Instead, I think it is essential to highlight that its effects may lie less in being able to control human movement in a planned way than in reproducing racialised and classed inequalities.

States' efforts to turn migrants' endurance into exhaustion

The fact that migrants' endurance of adverse circumstances is a challenge for law enforcement is reflected in the seemingly frustrated state responses to the presence of thousands of rejected asylum seekers whom states are unable to deport for different reasons (Chapter 2). In order to 'convince' these 'non-removed persons' (Rosenberger and Küffner, 2016) to leave the country, states increasingly resort to penal interventions (Bhatia, 2020), deny them the right to work while simultaneously limiting their access to social support (Ataç and Rosenberger, 2019), and shelter them in poor and isolated accommodation where only minimal support is provided (Chapter 2; see also Lindberg, 2020). Governments across Europe continue to introduce new policies that contribute to the creation of 'hostile environments' (Canning, 2017) targeting unwanted migrants. On the one hand, these policies are aimed at preventing access to European territory by anyone attempting to enter without the required permission, and on the other hand, the living conditions of those who are already in Europe are rendered 'intolerable' (Suárez-Krabbe and Lindberg, 2019) pressuring them to leave on their own. A central component of these state strategies is the upholding of a general state of precarity that keeps many migrants in an indefinite waiting position and renders their bodies and lives exploitable. Migrants' endurance must therefore be understood not only as a way of resisting repressive practices of migration control, but as a direct consequence of state policies that keep migrants in this liminal state. It is the result of the lack of any meaningful solution to their condition of being 'stuck'. Importantly, the introduction of 'incentives' for 'voluntary return' (Webber, 2011) and the 'politics of deterrence' (Poertner, 2017) are strategies that aim at *turning migrants' endurance into exhaustion*.

All of these strategies are captured well in what Ansems de Vries and Guild (2019: 2157) term the 'politics of exhaustion', which refers to the 'felt

effects of the stretching over time of a combination of fractured mobility, daily violence and fundamental uncertainty'. The term describes how migration governance strategically causes feelings of hopelessness, tiredness and stuckness among those with a precarious legal status. As my interlocutors' narratives have confirmed, they are continually kept in a state of protracted uncertainty, which has a severely exhausting effect on them, resulting in feelings of powerlessness. Still, many of them are forced to endure the hostility and the precarity of the living conditions they encounter because of the lack of an alternative solution.

There remains the question of the intentions behind these strategies of deterrence and exhaustion that appear to be somewhat frustrated responses to migrants' persisting endurance of hostility, precarity and instability over long periods. But should these state responses necessarily be framed as frustrated?

Migration policies have indeed been shown to fail at fulfilling their proclaimed objectives, resulting in a gap between policy goals and policy outcomes (Cornelius et al, 1994; Castles, 2004). This so-called implementation gap is mirrored in the inability of states to prevent migrants from arriving in Europe or in the previously mentioned incapacity to deport all individuals who have received a deportation order. But policies do not simply fail, and it makes little sense to look only at the *official* goals of policies; instead, the *actual* effects of those policies must be analysed.

On the one hand, the rhetoric of firm migration control helps states to uphold the image of a capable nation state with sovereign power that protects its citizens from outsiders (Kalir, 2019), who are variously framed as threatening perpetrators or welfare scroungers undeserving of protection and a right to stay (Chapter 3). On the other hand, enforcing precarity and uncertainty onto these ostensibly unwanted migrants facilitates commodifying them into a cheap, exploitable and docile labour force, as many scholars have argued (for instance, De Genova, 2002; Harrison and Lloyd, 2012; Basok et al, 2014; Wyss and Fischer, 2022). Above all, the migration regime creates (fluid and contested) legal subjectivities with highly differential access to security, rights and mobility (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). Legal statuses (and the lack thereof) are powerful tools for disciplining the population, and the issuing of increasingly precarious and differentiated residence permits keeps migrants in a subordinate position. This contributes to the reproduction and cementing of social inequalities that are based on intersecting social divisions like class, nationality, legal status, gender and race. De Genova (2002: 429) argues that it is precisely the perseverance of unauthorised migrants that makes them an obedient labour force: 'it is not difficult to fathom how migrants' endurance of many years of "illegality" can serve as a disciplinary apprenticeship in the subordination of their labor, after which it becomes no longer necessary to prolong the undocumented condition'. Endurance therefore represents a way for migrants to 'wait out

the state’ (Eule et al, 2019) and a challenge to the implementation of law *as well as* an advantage for states and industries, which can capitalise on these exhausted bodies who might only be rewarded with more rights if they prove their economic utility.

As I met most of the interviewees at times when they were registered as asylum seekers, these exploitative working conditions are likely to have been less prominent in the collected narratives than would have been the case had I taken a different research approach. Yet most of the people I talked to had spent periods of time being registered in state institutions and bureaucratic procedures as well as periods of time when they had lived out of the sight of the state and had worked informally in restaurants, construction sites or in the agricultural sector before the precarity of these working conditions forced them to engage in onward mobility. At the same time, several of my interlocutors were relegated to the informal labour market after their claims for asylum were rejected. Therefore, this book has also shed light on how the exploitation of disenfranchised migrants is closely interrelated with a restrictive asylum regime.

The invisibility of and indifference towards silent forms of suffering

Navigating the European Migration Regime has foregrounded the creative and subversive tactics that migrants with a tenuous legal status use to muddle through an illegible maze of laws, actors and discourses and, above all, to confront migration control attempts targeted at steering their mobility. Public discourse, state actors and politicians frequently frame migrants with a poor chance of obtaining residence permits as ‘tricksters’ ‘with excessive agency’ – and thus as ‘cunning rational-choice actors using various modes of deception’ (Scheel, 2020: 2) to make their way to and through Europe and to abuse the welfare systems of European countries. Male migrants in particular are denied vulnerability and are depicted as threatening perpetrators (Chapter 3). This is visible in the fact that even many migrant support networks capitalise on the image of vulnerable women and children who deserve more protection and support, thus reinforcing the agency of men and their lack of deservingness while simultaneously concealing state violence. Such representations are highly productive as they facilitate the obscuring and legitimising of the harm inflicted on disenfranchised non-citizens. They thus contribute to justifying harsh policies targeting ‘undeserving others’ who are represented as unworthy of protection and even of having elementary rights.

Both activists and researchers have mapped and raised awareness of the violence migrants experience when taking dangerous routes to cross borders, when being pushed back during border crossing attempts (Border Violence Monitoring Network, 2021), when being deported (Gibney, 2013;

Drotbohm and Hasselberg, 2015) or when being subjected to destitution and physical assaults in refugee camps (Topak, 2020; Amnesty International, 2021). Importantly, it has been indicated how such violence is often displaced to remote places far away from public attention, allowing European countries to maintain the image of liberal states upholding humanitarian values (Isakjee et al, 2020). But it is essential to acknowledge that violence within the migration regime is not only obscured when it is moved to spatial margins of the state and to places outside the realm of public visibility; violence is similarly obscured when it is inflicted in small doses over a long period of time. The violence imposed on migrants should thus not only be seen in terms of direct and physical violence, but also in the long-term consequences of lengthy periods spent in limbo-like and uncertain conditions, of being prevented from making plans for the future, of being denied a stable living situation and of enduring legal precarity.

Recently, scholars have started to theorise these ‘silent’ forms of violence (Galtung, 1969) inflicted on non-citizens. Structural factors leading to the exposure of certain groups of people to a heightened risk of destitution, homelessness, psychological distress and marginalisation (Mayblin et al, 2020) are understood as forms of violence which are ‘normalised’ and ‘legitimised’ (Davies, 2019) by a public discourse on undeservingness and justified by refined legal frameworks (Abrego and Lakhani, 2015), thus obscuring their harmful effects. Galtung (1990: 291) speaks of ‘cultural violence’ that makes such ‘structural violence look, even feel, right – or at least not wrong’. It is not least legal procedures, experienced by migrants as illegible and arbitrary, that contribute to masking and normalising such structural violence that manifests in people’s unequal life chances. Hidden, everyday forms of violence that unwanted migrants are subjected to in Europe have also been theorised in reference to Nixon’s (2011) concept of ‘slow violence’, which refers to ‘violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space’ (Davies, 2019: 2).

The exhaustion my interlocutors expressed as a result of constantly being uprooted and exposed to precarious living conditions can indeed be understood as a form of violence manifesting not necessarily in direct physical harm but in the accumulation of repeated uprooting, enforced mobility and state abandonment, which results in long-term instability and uncertainty. They feel that valuable time in their lives has been wasted – indeed, their time is ‘stolen’ (Bhatia and Canning, 2021b) – when they are treated as if their lives, aspirations and fundamental needs do not matter. Postcolonial scholars have pointed to the racial underpinnings of such indifference when ‘some human lives are worth less than others’ (Mayblin et al, 2020: 108). Such state negligence and exclusion are experienced as exhausting, or as Jamal expressed it: ‘[T]here is no more power [in me]. There is nothing left.’ Like him, others were also afraid of the severe psychological repercussions of

the ‘violent conditions’ that restrict their potential and put them in a state of misery (Laurie and Shaw, 2018), even to the point where they expressed suicidal ideations. As Eymen said in the very first quote of this book, like many others, he had left his country of origin with a lot of energy and many plans and aspirations. The long-term experience of being stuck – or ‘frozen’, as he called it – by his illegal status, however, had prevented him from ‘giving more’ and realising his full potential. Making individuals live in limbo for many years when they are not allowed to work yet sufficient state support is not granted has severely harmful effects on them.

The multiplication of incidents of neglect, rejection, uprooting and marginalisation over a long period of time is what my interlocutors’ accounts of their lengthy journeys have testified to. It is this temporal dimension, the persistence of precarious inclusion that constitutes this slow violence as a systemic part of the European migration regime; state violence within the migration regime does not just consist of forms of complete exclusion or banishment, such as detention or deportation.

Silent and invisible forms of violence are more difficult to locate and name, however, because they express themselves in the in-between spaces, in the emptiness of ordinary, everyday elements of life, and in long-term uncertainty, precarity and marginalisation. Slow violence often remains ‘out of sight’ (Davies, 2019), and it is therefore more difficult to discover it and be scandalised by it, thereby allowing states to stay inactive and deflect responsibility towards those who are marginalised (Davies et al, 2017).

The life stories presented in this book point to different aspects that facilitate the invisibility of slow violence and its harmful effects on marginalised migrants. First, Chapter 3 has demonstrated that (particularly male) migrants with a precarious legal status are classified as being neither deserving nor particularly vulnerable, which legitimises the denial of state care. Those who are portrayed as undeserving are more likely to be under the radar of law enforcement agencies rather than benefiting from the welfare functions of the state, as they are portrayed as potentially dangerous, fraudulent or abusive. Such discourses allow the responsibility for migrants’ suffering to be shifted onto themselves; they are blamed because of their presence, which allows the violence they experience ‘to appear self-afflicting’ and ‘as of their own making’ (Isakjee et al, 2020: 1756).

Second, the high degree of involuntary mobility my interlocutors exhibit (Chapter 4) contributes to them remaining unseen by individual nation states that could eventually be claimed to be accountable for people’s destitution or for (rare) cases of regularisation, such as when a person has stayed for a considerable amount of time in a country. This involuntary mobility provides an additional opportunity for states to ignore the suffering of migrants and deflect responsibility. The mobility of my interlocutors thus implies that many of them do not receive even the minimal ‘caring’ dimensions of the state,

not least because of policies such as the Dublin Regulation that facilitate such state negligence. In addition, the hypermobility that some of them are subjected to makes it difficult for them to be included in social networks that might allow collective politicisation against state-induced suffering.

Finally, migrants with a precarious legal status are pushed to the margins of the state *spatially*, such as when they need to hide from law enforcement agents or are sheltered in remote and fenced-off refugee and detention camps; *socially*, as their unstable lifestyle disrupts social relations; and *legally*, because the illegalisation excludes individuals from accessing fundamental rights. Hence, ‘border violence is obscured by the concealment and displacement of violence to spatial [and, as I add here, social and legal] “peripheries” where they are less likely to be detected’ (Isakjee et al, 2020, 1752). All these factors enable states to turn a blind eye to the suffering of marginalised non-citizens. Such negligence or indifference towards migrants with a precarious legal status concurs with what Davies and colleagues (2017) have called ‘violent inaction’, denoting states’ failure to respond to human suffering and instead deliberately ignoring the needs of certain marginalised groups of people.

The invisibility of this slow violence and not least the unspectacularity of the suffering make it difficult to politicise these harmful conditions. Indeed, the violence is deliberately opaque ‘so that we do not see the violent act or fact, or at least not as violent’ (Galtung, 1990: 292). Demonising the ‘undeserving other’ – here, young male migrants – legitimises the violence at play and makes it more difficult to bring attention to it. There is thus an essential need to find ways to identify and render visible such silent forms of violence that are always at risk of remaining unnoticed and normalised by those not affected.