

MARGINAL MOBILITY: A HEURISTIC TOOL FOR COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY MOBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Marginal Mobility: A Heuristic Tool for Comparative Analysis of Contemporary Mobilities

This article's mission is twofold. First, it serves as introduction to the present thematic issue, which includes six different case studies discussing contemporary mobile lives across the globe. Second, it presents the concept of marginal mobility, which unifies the thematic issue. The marginal mobilities concept is understood as a heuristic tool for the comparative study of contemporary mobilities. Today various mobile subjects construct their mobile lives in highly comparable manner, as well as share very similar experiences. We argue that what we have at hand are new kinds of researchable entities that challenge the widely shared academic consensus for drawing clear analytical and conceptual boundaries between the mobile subjects from the Global North and South. As the contemporary analytical language of migration and mobility studies lacks an appropriate term for such mobile lifestyles, we prefer to conceptualise them as *marginal mobilities*. According to our understanding, these mobilities can be compared by the following five unifying characteristics: they are highly mobile (1), not entirely forced nor voluntary lifestyles (2) that occur along loosely defined trajectories (3). They generally lack politicized public spheres (4) and they are marked by the sentiments of marginality, liminality and constant negotiation against the sedentary norm of the nation state (5). Comparing different ethnographic cases is therefore important and can offer an opportunity to delve deeper into the cultural logic of contemporary mobile lifestyles.

KEYWORDS: marginal mobility, globalization, emerging mobile lifestyles, marginality, comparative study

IZVLEČEK

Marginalna mobilnost: Hevristično orodje za primerjalni študij sodobnih mobilnosti

Naloga pričujočega članka je dvakratna. Prvič, služi kot uvod v tematsko sekcijo šestih študij primerov, ki se ukvarjajo s sodobnimi mobilnimi življenji po svetu. Drugič, predstavlja koncept marginalne mobil-

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nosti, povezujoč tematsko sekcijo. Koncept marginalne mobilnosti razumemo kot hevristično orodje za komparativno študijo sodobnih mobilnosti. Mnogi mobilni subjekti konstruirajo svoja mobilna življenja na zelo podoben način, pri čemer delijo podobne izkušnje. Menimo, da imamo opraviti z novimi oblikami raziskovalnih entitet, ki izpodbijajo razširjen akademski konsenz o jasnem analitičnem in konceptualnem razmejevanju med mobilnimi subjekti z Globalnega Severa in Juga. Ker sodobni analitični jezik študij migracij in mobilnosti ne pozna ustreznega termina za takšne mobilne življenjske stile, smo jih konceptualizirali kot *marginalne mobilnosti*. V skladu z našim razumevanjem marginalne mobilnosti lahko primerjamo po sledečih skupnih značilnostih: gre za poudarjeno mobilne življenjske stile (1), ki niso niti popolnoma prisilni niti prostovoljni (2) in potekajo vzdolž ohlapno določenih poti(3). Povečini odsotni v politiziranih javnih sferah (4) so zaznamovani s sentimentom marginalnosti, liminalnosti in obremenjeni z neprestanim pogajanjem s sedentarnimi normami nacionalnih držav(5). medsebojna primerjava različnih etnografskih primerov je torej pomembna, saj omogoča poglobitev v kulturno logiko sodobnih mobilnih življenjskih stilov.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: marginalna mobilnost, globalizacija, novi mobilni življenjski stili, marginalnost, primerjalni študij

INTRODUCTION

This thematic issue is the outcome of a seminar on “Ethnographies of Mobility” held at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tampere, Finland, in May 2012. The seminar focused on the numerous contemporary forms of mobile lifestyles that question officially recognized and legally privileged forms of human mobility. Whether the subject is hyper-mobile Westerners¹ or migrants from the global South, these mobilities can be scrutinized only within a larger framework of global economic and technological transformation and production of hierarchies of mobile subjects. The seminar sought to open new theoretical perspectives on these mobile lives with a specific focus on the following themes: a) the interplay between mobile lifestyle strategies and global economic and political transformations; b) new theoretical perspectives for studying mobile lives and mobile subjectivities; and c) production of hierarchies of mobilities and their interplay in the particular landscapes of their encounters. Special attention was paid to the idea of “marginal mobility”, a heuristic tool for comparative study of present day mobilities across the globe, designed by the authors of this introduction. The discussion was provoked by a common presentation of three case studies dealing with different forms of mobile lifestyles among Europeans and Africans in order to test its usefulness for engaging with the analytic as well as terminological aspects of the marginal mobility concept. Marko Juntunen presented the case of economically marginal Moroccan migrants moving between Morocco and Spain, while Špela Kalčič and Nataša Rogelja introduced their accounts of newly emerged nomadic lifestyles among European “houstruckers”² and “liveaboards”³ in the Mediterranean region, moving between Europe, West Africa, and elsewhere. The seminar also featured three further case studies which can be considered within the marginal mo-

1 We use the term “Westerners” as a loosely defined category that commonly refers to people from the more affluent countries of Western Europe, but also from the countries with firm historical, cultural and ethnic ties to Western Europe such as The United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

2 The term “houstruckers” is an etic term referring to Westerners travelling and living in cars, jeeps, vans, caravans, buses or trucks converted into mobile homes (Kalčič 2012). The closest emic term that some of them use to describe their lifestyle is “nomads”.

3 The term “liveaboards” is used as a descriptor referring to the people who have adopted a lifestyle that revolves around living, working and traveling on boats. Liveaboards are a very diverse group and can be found throughout the canals, rivers and along the sea coasts. Some of them cruise continuously, some are permanently moored and some alternate between cruising and mooring.

bility framework and are included in the present thematic issue. Ethnographic works on *ishumar*⁴ Tuareg drifting transnationally⁵ between Saharan states (Ines Kohl), Westerners living between Goa their native countries and often also destinations such as Thailand, Ibiza or Bali (Mari Korpela), and Travellers/Gens du Voyage and Gypsies/Roma in Great Britain, France and Slovenia (Alenka Janko Spreizer) share a common thread (cf. Juntunen, Kalčić, Rogelja forthcoming).

MARGINAL MOBILITY

In the national, supranational and international regimes of mobility and scenarios of development, certain forms of mobilities are characterized by being legal, privileged, and even desired – such as tourism and the movement of skilled professionals, while other forms of human mobilities are marginalised, as they simply remain invisible in these schemes or alternatively they are perceived as undesired or irregular. Each of the selected ethnographic cases in the present thematic issue stands in complex relation to recognised and unrecognised forms of mobility. They overlap significantly with recognised forms of mobilities such as asylum, economic, and circular migrations, international retirement migration, sabbatical tourism, travelling and traditional peripatetic⁶ nomadism. However, we argue that there are numerous criteria which allow us to talk about them as representatives of distinctive types of contemporary mobilities, which are characterized by peripatetic nomadism as an economic strategy, marginality and inventiveness.

We share the belief that it is time to examine critically the mobile lives around us and challenge the widely shared academic consensus for drawing clear analytical and conceptual boundaries between the mobile subjects from the Global North and Global South. We argue that what we have at hand are researchable entities that demand new theoretical reflection from migration and mobility studies. As the contemporary analytical language of migration and mobility studies lacks an appropriate term for such mobile lifestyles, we prefer to conceptualise them as *marginal mobilities*. According to our understanding, these mobilities can be compared according to the following five unifying characteristics:

- the movement is constant, and occurs along loosely defined trajectories
- the mobility is not entirely voluntary nor forced
- the social world is marked by uprootedness and liminality and
- a lack of politicized public space
- the subjects are in a constant process of negotiation with the state bureaucracies that impose a sedentary norm on their lives.

4 The term *ishumar* derives from the French *chômeur*, unemployed person, and was transported into Tamasheq, the language of the Tuareg. Originally it described those Tuareg who gave up their nomadic life and went to the surrounding neighbouring states, above all to Algeria and Libya, to look for a job. In a second step the Tuareg rebels of the 1990s have been attached to that term. Today, *ishumar* refers to a generation of border-crossers whose living conditions have created special mobility strategies (Kohl 2007, 2009, 2010a, b, c).

5 By “transnational” we refer to various forms of interactions and communication that link both people and institutions across the borders of nation-states in increasingly globalized ways (Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanc 1992; Portes, Guarnizo, Landolt 1999; Smith, Guarnizo 1998). A focus on transnational processes and phenomena has enabled anthropologists to understand complex social and cultural processes that reach beyond spatially bounded communities and strictly spatialized referents of social identification. While transnational ethnography has profoundly contributed to the understanding of the ways in which mobility shapes people’s lives, the careful cross-cultural analysis of the contemporary forms of highly mobile lives is a largely unexplored question in anthropology.

6 Nomadism that exploits social rather than natural resources, as in the case of pastoral and hunter-gatherer nomadic societies (Berland, Salo 1986).

Our intention is not to suggest a strict and all-encompassing definition of marginal mobility, but rather to use it as an analytical prism that opens new possibilities for understanding contemporary mobilities that remain largely unaddressed in the academic discourses. We understand the concept of marginal mobility as a heuristic tool that enables comparative study of mobilities in the contemporary globalised world regardless their ethnic, national or geographic provenance and not as the only possible theoretical framework through which different contemporary mobilities can be analysed and explained.⁷

We are also fully aware of the particularities of each different case as well as of structural inequalities among different mobile subjects. We fully acknowledge institutional inequalities between the white Westerners and non-Western or traditionally nomadic people, their unequal class statuses and positions in the migrant regimes, the systems of surveillance, the racist and xenophobic practices and discourses. However we believe that comparing different ethnographic cases can create space for delving deeper into the cultural logic of contemporary mobile lifestyles.

MULTIFACETED MOBILITY

The main motive of the marginal mobility discussion is to demonstrate that at present people from both the Global North and South are responding to increasingly globalized social, political and economic challenges in a comparable manner. Increasing numbers of people are not only migrating, but are taking up highly mobile lives. For example, in the Mediterranean and West African settings that Juntunen, Kalčić and Rogelja have observed, there are many Africans with EU passports but also a considerable number of Europeans who engage in mobile lifestyles and travel between Europe and Africa. Many Europeans who engage in housetrucking or liveaboard lifestyles use mobility to “muddle through” periods of unemployment until they obtain their pensions, or alternatively, they work and use several income-making strategies while on the move (Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). They include a considerable number of people who resort to peripatetic survival strategies, i.e. nomadism that exploits social rather than natural resources, as in the case of pastoral and hunter-gatherer nomadic societies (Berland, Salo 1986). Being without regular income they have to resort to flexible economic strategies: temporary work in marinas and construction sites, periodic work in agriculture while in Europe, distance work through the Internet, and – especially among the housetruckers – transnational trading activities of second-hand vehicles, car parts and consumer goods (Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). These economic strategies are highly comparable to those of the Moroccan men (Juntunen this volume) and other West Africans followed by Kalčić along their transnational trajectories. The Moroccan migrant men in Spain work in the very same unregulated economic niches as the Westerners described above; namely in agriculture, construction and services, and more recently, actively engage in second-hand trade activities that demand constant mobility across the continents (*ibid.*).

The Westerners observed by Korpela, who spend several months every year in Goa, India, also need to work to support their mobile lifestyles. They engage in very similar work strategies as housetruckers and liveaboards. They work, for example, as fashion or jewellery designers (who sell their products in Indian tourist markets), artists, yoga teachers, massage therapists and spiritual healers, or run restaurants,

7 For example, lifestyle migration (LM) has been recognized as a growing and disparate phenomenon with important implications for individuals, societies (Benson, O'Reilly 2009a, 2009b) and places (Hoey 2010). Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly (2009b: 612) defined LM in a broad, working definition as spatial mobility of “relatively affluent individuals of all ages moving either part-time or full time, permanently or temporarily to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life.” Some examples of marginal mobility (Kalčić, Korpela, Rogelja this volume) could also be considered within the theoretical framework of LM, yet there are certain points where alternative perspectives can be added. One of the greatest shortcomings of the LM theory is its focus on mobile people from Global North only, which does not allow comparison with mobile subjects from other parts of the world.

guesthouses or nurseries. During the summers some of them work at festivals around Europe (Korpela this volume).

The trajectories of the mobile subjects of sedentary background presented here (by Juntunen, Kalčić, Korpela and Rogelja) differ from migratory movements (economic, asylum, returning and circular migration) that occur typically along more or less fixed routes, and also do not resemble temporary movements (usually taking place in a limited number of places) such as the movement of tourists or sabbatical travellers (Richards, Wilson 2009). These subjects seem to blur the existing concepts, sometimes resembling tourists and travellers but at other times resembling economic migrants and circular migrants. They are involved in constant⁸ and loosely patterned travel much like traditional peripatetic nomads (Berland, Salo 1986), yet the surrounding context of their lifestyles is that of global modernity.⁹

The mobility patterns of those with nomadic backgrounds (cf. Janko Spreizer, Kohl this volume) have also changed. *Ishumar*, a border-crossing generation of Tuareg, who are originally a pastoral nomadic society, no longer move in traditional nomadic cycles with their livestock, but according to individual choice. Their itinerant mobility between Nigeria, Algeria and Libya, sometimes expanded also to the EU, represents a peripatetic survival strategy created by changed living conditions aggravated by droughts, pollution and increased insecurity produced by international interferences guided by neoliberal economic interests in oil, gas, phosphate and uranium in the Sahara in Sahel region. In large parts of the Nigerian Sahara, nomadic pastoralist activities are no longer feasible for ecological reasons and owing to global economic interests. This is why younger generations of Tuareg have given up the pastoral nomadic life and in search of jobs have started to engage in transnational lifestyles between Saharan states (Kohl this volume). On the other hand, the mobility of traditionally peripatetic European nomads such as Travellers/Gens du Voyage or Gypsies/Roma had to adapt to the control situations imposed on them throughout history by repressive regimes, nation states and local communities. Historically marginalized as socially unacceptable and, being nomads, wrongly understood as people who are constantly mobile, their need for immobile platforms¹⁰ that make nomadic lifestyle possible was ignored, which contributed to diminishing of their mobility or sedentarisation (Janko Spreizer this volume).

In the current era, marked by the Global financial crisis and socio-political instability on one hand and the development of transport and communications technology on the other, it is in fact increasingly problematic to draw conventional distinctions between the actual mobile practices of Westerners versus (by general consensus work- or profit-searching) non-Westerners, as well as between “originally” sedentary or nomadic people regardless their geographic provenance in the Global North or South. Stating this however by no means means that one should be blind to their clearly unequal structural positions.

The ethnographic cases presented in this thematic issue speak about contemporary economic adaptations to challenges brought about by the globalised socio-economic and political situations of originally sedentary or nomadic people of the Global South and North using peripatetic nomadism

8 By “constant” we do not want to say that these people move without ever stopping. Rather we want to stress their enhanced mobility. For most nomadic populations relative levels of mobility and/or sedentarisation are not viewed as opposites. The states of being relatively mobile or static are perceived as particular strategies to be utilized as opportunities warrant and depend on specific conditions (Berland, Salo 1986: 4–5). This also holds true for the mobile subjects discussed here.

9 We use global modernity as a descriptive term that refers to globalized (neoliberal) capitalism and time-space compression through modern communications technology and travel (Giddens 1990; Castells 2000).

10 As discussed below, immobile platforms that enable temporary rests are a condition of nomadic mobility. Ostensibly sedentary activities among nomads such as the accumulation of real property such as land, houses or business establishments do not exclude mobility. While settling down for a time is always considered a possibility, most nomads continue to maintain a readiness for mobility as a viable alternative (Berland, Salo 1986: 4–5; Urry 2003: 126).

as their survival strategy.¹¹ According to Thomas Acton (2010: 7), nomadism is an economic, not an ethnic phenomenon,¹² while its peripatetic version occupies a distinct socioeconomic niche, which is according to Joseph Berland and Matt Salo (1986: 3) defined as “the regular demand for specialized goods and/or services that more sedentary or pastoral communities cannot, or will not support on a permanent basis”. As stated by Berland and Salo (1986: 3), the peripatetic “lifestyle and subsistence pursuit are a systematic response to a ubiquitous resource base”, and each case presented in this issue demonstrates a peripatetic adaptation to a lability or lack of a habitual resource base in the background society. In many areas across Western Europe, the global financial crisis struck the youth and elders hard regardless of their ethnic backgrounds (Erlanger 2012),¹³ and for many Westerners mobility has become a strategy of survival due to economic and existential crises, suppression and feelings of futurelessness with respect to the sedentary life in Europe (Kalčić, Korpela, Rogelja this volume). After the recession of 2008, several tens of thousands of Moroccan migrants in Spain have been forced to take up mobile lifestyles and engage in trade between Africa and Europe (Juntunen this volume). Mobility has always been a crucial factor in making a successful living in the Sahara and the Sahel. However, the recent forms of mobility among Tuareg in Niger go beyond moving with livestock and nomadism regulated through kinship structures. They have resorted to various strategies to overcome the ruptures, changes and modifications of their traditionally pastoral nomadic lives influenced by ecological and economical-political influences, among others to itinerant mobility between Saharan states. Peripatetic mobility across borders has replaced traditional cyclic pastoral mobility and has become a strategy for making a living in insecure times (Kohl this volume).

However, the mobile subjects representing each of these cases reveal that not only mobility and economic strategies but also conceptions concerning reasons to be mobile, relations with the background society, and the public spaces they traverse share similar features upon which it is possible to build a comparative analysis. While such comparison might seem unorthodox, it also cannot be denied that global fields are currently crisscrossed by the trajectories of mobile subjects whose movement challenges academic conceptualizations of mobility. In this regard we fully agree with Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport (2002: 34, 35), who have pointed out that economic globalization has changed the nature of the human mobility and blurred the conventional distinctions between various moving subjects.

The number of social analysts who take mobility seriously and highlight the fact that social lives in the Global era are characteristically mobile has steadily expanded (Sheller 2011: 1; Sheller, Urry 2006: 207). Lives spent on the move are everywhere outcomes of peoples’ responses to social, economic, political, and environmental factors that can occur on multiple levels of association from global to local

11 We want to stress that the nomadism of traditional nomadic groups (be it pastoral, hunter-gatherer or peripatetic) should not be confused with the peripatetic nomadism described here, which refers to a survival strategy and one of the common traits shared by the marginal mobile subjects. The main difference from the “classic” nomads arises from the social structures that organize these mobile people’s lives: the nomadism of traditional nomads is embedded in kinship while the mobile subjects that we refer to engage in nomadism as an individually chosen survival strategy.

12 Within the framework of Roman studies, where issues of nomadism have represented more or less permanent debate, Acton (2010: 8) challenged the culturalist conception which postulated Gypsy nomadism as a cultural feature and/or an ethnic, i.e. racial trait. By referring to the fact that only some Gypsies who live in mixed urban rural societies, where they may provide their services and certain skills, practise commercial nomadism, which is different from the “traditional nomadism” of hunter-gatherers and pastoral nomads (ibid.: 7), he defined nomadism as “the recurrent exploitation of spatially and temporally discontinuous economic opportunities” (ibid: 6). Once a certain place no longer offers opportunities for productive labour, movement is required. Thus, nomadism is particular form of exploitation of resources that are available in a particular territory and is based on circulation of individuals in the middle of social entities which organise access to this exploitation. It is an economic phenomenon which gives rise to culture, but it is not culturally inherent.

13 More than twelve million people are currently facing the threat of falling below the poverty line in the EU. According to EUROSTAT the highest percentages of population at risk of falling below the poverty threshold in the Euro area in 2011 were in Spain (21.8%), Greece (21.4%) and Portugal (18.0%) (EUROSTAT 2011).

(Bauman 1998). The common denominator for these mobile lives is that they are related to time and space compressing communications technology (Urry 2004). People are more aware of their relative position within the increasingly interconnected and networked global reality and are capable of imagining their lives elsewhere. Air travel is an opportunity available to an increasing number of people, widening the sphere of experience and enabling the maintenance of long-distance social relations. Images of success and achievement but also poverty and need are circulated, not only by media, but also by mobile subjects who expose others to the widening sets of meaning (Sheller, Urry 2006).

A central paradox of the present time however is that mobility has become a nearly compulsive part of career-building for educated professionals across the globe, but being on the move has also become a vehicle for “dropping out” (particularly among white Western subjects) from one’s professional career and to adopt an alternative life project, critical of the dominant norms of the society marked by neoliberal global capitalism (Bousiou 2008; D’Andrea 2007; Hetherington 2000; Kalčić 2012; Korpela 2009; Martin 2002; Rogelja 2012). While some take up mobility as a means to acquiring a more fulfilling life, for others movement is not necessarily a desired mode of being, but is rather about the search for a more secure and economically as well as socially sustainable life.

The people presented in the selected ethnographies are characteristically neither entirely free nor forced to adopt life on the road. Rather, they conceive themselves as being “pushed from behind” (Bauman 2001) in a variety of ways and marginalized by the background society. It is practically impossible to classify them under the conventional labels of mobilities as either voluntary (tourism, business travel) or forced mobilities (asylum migration or economic migrants in search of employment or improved economic position). In all six cases the criticism of the dominant norms of the background society is highly shared and accompanied by feelings of uprootedness and liminality.

The Moroccan migrants display a critical and embittered relation with the political and social order of their home society. Many perceive themselves as being completely disregarded and silenced by the official society, and commonly state that they have “no other choice” than to migrate. Particularly those with education and professional skills and thus legitimate claims to a decent social position portray Morocco as a corrupt and morally rotten society run by an elite circle that controls the key political, military and economic institutions. The majority rarely see constant movement as a desired way of being. Life on the road is a reaction to economic constraints, migration regimes and to the marginalization in the labour market (Juntunen this volume).

These mobile subjects also frequently express disappointment with regard to late capitalism. Not only in the abstract sense, but also through lived experiences as the citizens of states which are imposing norms and policies produced by the neoliberal ideology of global late capitalism.¹⁴ Existential crises involving the tension between subjective moral values and the perceived immorality of the social and economic policies within states of origin are common (Juntunen, Kalčić, Korpela, Rogelja this volume). In particular, younger age groups among housestruckers and liveboards perceive themselves as having been being deceived by the empty promises of their homelands, as they had experienced unemployment, blocked career paths and a precarious position in the labour market (Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). On the other hand, Westerners in Goa “often say that they wanted to escape a lifestyle that in their view is dull, meaningless and suppressive to their individual needs” (Korpela this volume). Yet, Korpela states

14 The processes of neoliberalization reach beyond Western neoliberal states. In Morocco the economic transformation dates back to early 1980s. The Economic crisis accompanied by the severing youth unemployment problem and frequent street riots were the major reasons for the palace’s decision to adopt IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programmes in order to boost economic growth. Liberalization and privatization of economy, reduction of public debt and promotion of direct investments and exports was largely implemented and met the interests of global corporations (Catusse 2009). In Niger European military interventions and US-strategies indicating the “War on Terror” camouflage the real international economic interests in oil, gas, phosphate and uranium of the Sahara region (Kohl this volume) and shape at large Tuareg’s everyday life under dictate of neoliberalism.

that "one can also argue that their options in their countries of origin may have been rather limited and moving abroad has thus been a rational choice which has clearly improved their income levels and quality of life" (ibid.). In fact, for those from more prosperous Western backgrounds, constant or regular movement is often portrayed as a positive experience and a conscious choice (Kalčić, Korpela, Rogelja this volume). However, it should be noted that, especially among liveaboards and housetruckers, over time the romantic and idealised visions of the mobile life tend to fade and people become more critical of the fact that mobile life includes sacrificing many of the comforts, secure routines and repetitive social rhythms of sedentary life (Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). Furthermore, transnational mobile lifestyles also involve vulnerabilities such as social "dropping out" in the form of loss of social security, regulated through the sedentary structures of one's background society (Korpela this volume). Rapport and Amit (2002: 37) have also noted that for Westerners uprootedness and liminality may sometimes appear as side products of the mobile lifestyle.

In the case of Tuareg *ishumar*, the route through the Sahara and border crossing between Saharan states among which they navigate "in search of making a fast buck" (Kohl this volume) often ends in a state of permanent liminality. Border crossers pass through three stages which lead them from their original environment into the new one: the first phase of separation detaches them from their homeland; the second, liminal phase of transition is embodied in the border crossing itself, where they are in a transitional state and space; and the third phase of incorporation, the process where they should be integrated into a new environment. Many *ishumar* cross the border without documents and never integrate into the new society, where they continue to be outsiders, while the return to the homeland is problematic as well. Thus in the new environment the *ishumar* occupy a social space marked by liminality and uprootedness that may never end (ibid.). In a similar way, the liminality of European Travellers/Gens du Voyage and Gypsies/Roma is embodied in the "mooring problem". Contrary to mainstream convictions, "moorings configure and enable mobilities" (Sheller, Urry 2006: 3) and are thus prerequisite for the nomadic lifestyle. John Urry defines nomadism as a constant mobility which also includes temporary rests, i.e. "moorings":

Temporary rest and replenishment are a condition of mobility. Overall it is the moorings that enable movements. And it is the dialectic of mobility/moorings that produces social complexity (Urry 2003: 126).

Throughout history, the mobility of European nomadic communities was controlled and regulated with the purpose of their sedentarisation. One of the strategies imposed on them by the Western European sedentary states was the provision of official campsites and on the other side the prohibition of unauthorised encampments outside of these sites. Such regulations contributed to a decrease in the nomadic way of life. Those who are still mobile today have to navigate among complex rules imposing a "sedentary norm" on their lives. In order to be able to fulfil their need for temporary rest and replenishment, outside of countries which provide campsites for nomadic people, they have to resort to expensive tourist infrastructures where they are often rejected due to the stigma accompanying their social identity. Thus they can find themselves in a liminal situation of permanent mobility without a possibility of stop and rest (Janko Spreizer this volume). In fact, the same problem is also faced by newly emerged European nomads living in housetrucks, who have to devise various strategies to evade the sedentary norm enthroned by the rules of the national state (Kalčić this volume).

BEING MARGINAL

The six examples of mobility in this issue deal with mobile survival strategies, i.e. livelihoods, which rely on mobility itself. They also rely on the evasion of the sedentary norm, which brings to the fore the subversive characteristic of mobility related to its capacity of changing perspectives on how things

are seen and done. In other words, they stress the fact that mobility is not solely a physical movement through space but also a mental one. As stated by Papastergiadis (2000: 11), “[m]ovement is not just the experience of shifting from place to place; it is also linked to our ability to imagine an alternative”. The philosophy of subversive mobility that enables an alternative is based in its inclination towards invisibility and apparent insignificance, which results in non-recognition and marginality. And vice versa: many contemporary mobile subjects have been marginalized but have turned their non-privileged position to their own good.

The notion of marginality stands in close relation to these mobilities. First, as social phenomena they have received only marginal interest among social science and humanities scholars. Second, the administrative and political debates on mobilities disregard the fact that the neoliberal states undergoing financial crisis “push” people from both the Global North and South to adopt *mobile* lifestyles. While much has been written about Western citizens who currently *migrate* to different areas because of the shock effect of unemployment, reduced social benefits and services and overburdening housing costs, there are very few contemporary accounts that focus on the fact that many people engage in peripatetic economic strategies that require nomadic movement in transnational space (Kalčić, Korpela, Rogelja this volume).¹⁵ A similar argument can be raised with regard to non-Western migrants, Africans among them, in the countries of economic migration gravity in the past (Juntunen, Kohl this volume). Those leaving e.g. Europe because of the current crisis are usually conceptualised as *returnees* to their countries of origin and their actual mobile practices that occur along shifting circuits of transnational movement are left largely unexplored. Third, these mobile subjects express being marginalised by their background societies. The inventiveness through which they exploit their marginal, i.e. in public life unrecognised and insignificant position, represents an important component of their lifestyle.

In the social sciences and humanities, marginality routinely refers to the outer limits of society and social acceptability but also to lack of social influence, often accompanied by stigmatization and disqualification by dominant social groups. In other words, the notion involves two frameworks, societal and spatial (Gurung, Kollmair 2005: 10), which evoke the ideas of social inequality and the (outer) boundaries of society. Many authors, particularly in geography, have established a strong link between marginality, poverty, vulnerability, lack of civil liberties, weak political representation, and uncertain future (Gurung, Kollmair 2005; Gerster 2000; Coudouel et al. 2004). This understanding about marginality is undoubtedly relevant in many different social contexts, yet detailed ethnographic case studies may bring to the fore serious challenges.

Sarah Green (2005: 2) among others has pointed out that marginality implies a difficult and ambivalent relation to the “heart of the things”. In her ethnographic study of the Pogoni region (Greek-Albanian border), marginality can be understood as the lack of particularity (ibid.: 13). In other contemporary ethnographic accounts of Greece (e.g. Herzfeld 1997; Serematakis 1991), marginality has been closely associated with accentuated otherness, resistance and social critique, together with claims to empowerment. Another option is to approach marginality as an in-between position rather than at the boundaries or peripheries. For Boon (1999), the essence of marginality lies in its un-identifiability. Such a view brings marginality close to Victor Turner’s (1974: 237) understanding of liminality as a “position between

15 While there is a large body of migration and transnationalism studies that explore such cases, they hardly ever deal with the process of mobility itself. Such accounts rather stress the integration processes at a certain location of migration (which we understand as a movement from one location to another and not as mobility itself, which we understand as movement which does not anticipate sedentarism even when in a moment of stillness; i.e. the moment of arrival to a certain location already implies the moment of departure, which anticipates constant mobility and a lifestyle “on the move”). Contemporary accounts of migration and transnationalism also do not challenge the paradigm of distinguishing between mobilities from the Global North and South, which fixes the identities of contemporary mobile subjects into unchangeable, static, culturally bounded and petrified figures (cf. Antoun 2005; Arthur 2010; De Bree et al. 2010; Ehrkamp 2005; Landolt 2001; Oeppen 2009; Portes et al. 2002; Sert 2012).

positions". In a similar way as "liminality", Turner (ibid.: 233) uses the term "marginality" to define the state of simultaneously belonging to two or more social or cultural groups. However, he also stresses the particular ambiguity of the marginal state, which he describes as permanent state of in-betweenness in contrast to liminality, which is a temporary state of being "betwixt and between".

The contextualisation of marginality with fluidity, ambiguity and the lack of boundaries underline the recent interest in marginality and its connection with the postmodern world in general. In this context a kind of postmodern marginality challenges modernity, as the postmodern dwells in uncertainty and a refusal of boundaries (Green 2005). He further develops these ideas by highlighting the fact that in-betweenness and ambiguity are associated with inventiveness and the possibilities of making something new out of making things uncertain (ibid: 4).

All these various aspects of the concept – marginality as accentuated otherness and difference manifested in the form of resistance, in-betweenness, inventiveness, being nothing in particular – are especially useful when we engage in a comparison of the mobile lifestyles presented in this thematic issue. They all communicate about a world of fluidity, ambiguity and uncertainty, but also about subversive inventiveness. As such, these mobile subjects are hard to put in any conventional mobility category, as in a similar way to Turner's marginals they very often belong to two or more social groups simultaneously (1974: 233). In fact, the marginality of these cases demonstrates a sameness arising from similar life strategies (Green 2005).

Unlike many contemporary migrant communities, the subjects of the present ethnographic studies almost never create politicized identities nor politicized public spheres, for the simple reason that they are constructed by individuals and small groupings that are constantly on the move and/or do not aspire to integrate into the host society. The social relations of these subjects have a fleeting and situational character; social weightlessness marks their relation with the social spaces they traverse.

Such identity processes have been explored by several scholars who propose that the period of "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000), marked by accentuated and all-embracing mobility (Sheller, Urry 2006), provides opportunities for new kinds of group formations based on shared elements which may be activities, interests, beliefs or lifestyles (Amit 2002a; Amit 2002b; Amit, Rapport 2002; Bauman 2001; Delanty 2003). These formations are the outcomes of practices of people who are merely "conceptually connected". They do not necessarily imagine their personal commonalities in ongoing and ascribed collective identities (see Amit, Rapport 2002). Individuality plays a significant role in the construction of these temporary communities. They arise out of individuals' search for identity and personal fulfilment through collective participation (Amit 2002a: 16; Delanty 2003: 120–122). These communities are characteristically situational, fluid and composed by people with multiple and simultaneous attachments with several such groupings (Amit 2002b: 16; Delanty 2003: 131).

Economically marginal Moroccans (Juntunen this volume), Tuareg *ishumar* (Kohl this volume), mobile Roma/Gypsies, Travellers/Gens du Voyage (Janko Spreizer this volume), and Western mobile subjects (Kalčić, Korpela, Rogelja this volume) all create distinctively fleeting trans- and multi-national communities that are played out during temporary rests. They engage in a shared lifestyle on the move and exchange experience, information and solidarity. These mobile lifestyles arise out of global modernity which promotes, enables and generates an escape to an alternative *modus vivendi* and experimentation with new communal relations.

The peripatetic liveboards (Rogelja this volume) interact frequently in unofficial marinas, as well as network with their fellow citizens on land, sharing information on proper anchorages and vital resources. Social interactions among housetruckers (Kalčić this volume) take place in shifting and occasional small groupings that simply happen to stop for a few days in the same places. Westerners in Goa create their own community based on face-to-face interactions, shared values, practices and lifestyle (Korpela this volume). Relationships among these Westerners are, however, dispensable, as solidarities within groups are first and foremost purely circumstantial. When individuals move on/away, they often maintain very few, if any, relationships with the people with whom they created a temporary community (Kalčić, Kor-

pela, Rogelja this volume). In the case of Moroccan men, the subjects display equal reliance on individual rather than group effort. The predominant social formation is groups of individuals who interact and get together, yet they are only linked through the fact that they share the same sentiments and motives for being mobile (Juntunen this volume). Border-crossing Tuareg too “do not form politicized public spaces, but merge through life often undesired, partly invisible, and they are always posed at the edge of social, ethnic and territorial boundaries” (Kohl this volume). As Kohl states, ties between *ishumar* and their kin are no longer as important as in the traditional society. They are often weak and loose ones, which “enable them to participate in many worlds without framing a community with fixed boundaries” (ibid.).

The world that we are living in is organised according the sedentary norm. Citizenship and residence grant rights in terms of health care, social security, property ownership, employment, political and legal rights, personal documents, certificates and licences only to those individuals who fulfil this norm. Not living a sedentary life can cause the loss of these rights, and mobile people often bump into rules and regulations made up for sedentary populations, and face limits to their mobility imposed on them through sedentarily-oriented official structures. The mobile subjects presented in the present thematic issue constantly balance their lives between two ends: on one hand it is beneficial to minimize the contacts with the bureaucratic institutions of the state, but in certain situations individuals may need official structures which also provide various benefits and services. For these reasons they devise various inventive strategies that arise out of their marginality/in-betweenness in order to either convince the state authorities that they are fulfilling the sedentary norm or simply evade it.

Together with indirect constraints on nomadic life in many EU countries, legislation directly delimits possibilities for mobility by setting restrictions on camping and mooring. As mooring and parking in official sites can cost several thousand Euros annually, housetruckers, liveaboards, Gypsies/Roma, and Gens du Voyage/Travellers usually stop in areas known for their relaxed bureaucracy, low fares or complete lack of attention of local authorities regarding their stay (Janko Spreizer, Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). The vehicles and boats that the mobile subjects use for housing are also required to fulfil strictly defined criteria regarding fuel consumption, water capacity, hygienic standards and insurance policies, and therefore many housetruckers and liveaboards improvise in order to bypass bureaucratic rules (Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). Outside of Europe, mobile Westerners face a much more relaxed bureaucratic culture; however, most of the countries in which they are moving require various documents such as personal entry visa, country specific car/boat insurance, and a special “pass through permit” for their mobile homes. As many live on extremely limited budgets they are highly motivated to learn how bureaucratic requirements can be loopholed in a cost-effective way (Kalčić, Rogelja this volume). Westerners in Goa consider themselves to live in Goa permanently, but according to the Indian state they are either visiting tourists or conducting temporary business and are thus forced to leave India regularly and travel to their home country in order to renew their visa. Their transnationally mobile life outside of kin and official structures leads to various kinds of vulnerabilities and forces them into negotiations with the existing rules of the world, which predominantly functions according to the sedentary norm (Korpela this volume).

For crossing the borders into neighbouring Saharan states, Tuareg *ishumar* need visas, too. They use the national ID cards and the passport system of the Tuareg-inhabited countries, and order these documents in all of these countries, but often with different names and birth dates. While many of them operate with multiple citizenships, others travel without any documents and cross the borders illegally (Kohl this volume). Currently, many marginal Moroccan migrants in Spain are encountering increasing economic difficulties due to the recession throughout the whole of Mediterranean Europe, and are obliged to return periodically to family and friends in Morocco for survival. A large number of these men have turned permanent EU residence and citizenship into means of broadening the space of the cultural ethos of *dabbar*, i.e. the ability to “arrange” survival strategies and social relations. In many cases involving unemployment and other benefits, these returns occur outside the knowledge of the Spanish authorities (Juntunen this volume).

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

We think that it is very indicative that various mobile subjects currently construct their mobile lives in a highly comparable manner, and that the experiences of the mobile subjects of the six cases included here are all marked by a strong sense of psychic uncertainty and feelings of deception on the part of the neoliberal state. In fact, we think that these marginal mobile lives can be interpreted as the indications of the ways in which the political economy of the free market and privatization currently informs individual subjectivities. Together with our arguments we also insist that there should be room for telling the story of the comparability of contemporary mobile subjects across the globe that reaches beyond the traditional conceptualisations. This story is further elaborated through the six case studies in the present thematic issue, drawing on different aspects of marginal mobility. Let them speak for themselves.

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