Patrols, records and pictures: Demonstrations of Europe in the midst of migration’s crisis

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Abstract
Migration is not readily seen. A vast infrastructure supports its visualization, making migration visible and actionable. Recent scholarship on the visuality of migration has clearly shown how visualizing migration is an integral part of governing it. Concepts and research approaches from Science and Technology Studies (STS) are particularly appropriate when studying these connections between knowing and doing. In this paper, the performativity of visual methods and their data practices are analysed with respect to the monitoring infrastructure of European border management. Three such methods – patrolling, recording and publicizing – are reconstructed through analysis of their histories and their present. Patrolling involves the tactical domination of terrains. Recording involves the production of documentary objectivity. Publicizing involves the pictorial capture of fleeting realities. These methods are irreducibly political. Their political significance is explored through the concept of demonstrative effects that helps to show how methods of visualising migration at once involve specific demonstrations of the European association that is operative in them. These demonstrations make visible what Europe can and cannot do. The so-called ‘migration crisis’ of Europe turns out to be more than political discourse but entangled with the very methods that render migration apparent and governable.

Keywords
Migration monitoring, performativity, Europe, borders, visuality, demonstration

Introduction
Critical dissections of migration politics and the professed ‘control’ of borders by worldly authorities have highlighted the particular, often disfiguring ways in which migration is
rendered visible to us (Amoore, 2013; De Genova, 2013; Feldman, 2011; Follis, 2017; M’Charek et al., 2014; Tazzioli, 2014; Tazzioli and Walters, 2016; Vigneswaran, 2013; Walters, 2009). Such analyses bring out the sovereign, governmental and representational aspects of migration’s visuality, establishing the profound entanglement between visibility of and power over migration and its subjects. Much of this work, and critical border and migration studies more broadly, has benefitted from a performative conception of bordering (Johnson et al., 2011). Here, work on visualization in science and technology studies has proven particularly fruitful (Burri and Dumit, 2007; Daston and Galison, 1992; Elkins, 2001).

In an effort to contribute to this conjunction of inquiries, this article will draw attention to a peculiar effect that comes with performativity: demonstration. Performative effects do not merely bring into being certain entities, but are accompanied by demonstrative effects that escape and delimit enactment. That is, enactment does not merely bring into being entities-as-such – borders, for instance – but thereby demonstrates in the world the particular capacities and tendencies of the actual association for which such entities matter. In Austinian terms: while performatives refer to their own act of enunciation – ‘I hereby’ – demonstratives index that we are dealing with this or that in particular, with an actual and incomplete association and not just any meeting-as-such (cf. Wagner-Pacifici, 2010: 1359–1360). Already by speaking does one demonstrate that it is not just any voice that speaks/acts, but a particular voice being expressed through all the material specificity and precarity of an actual body and an actual life. Demonstration is thereby immanently political as it brings to light, however obliquely, the performative limits of enactment and the possibility of some other way of associating beyond it.

In what follows, I will reconstruct the demonstrative effects of migration monitoring as it has taken shape in relation to ‘Europe’ and its assumption of a ‘migration crisis’. To do so, I will lay out a number of distinct methods through which migration is rendered visible, analyse the performative work that is involved and thereby venture onto the demonstrative effects that come with the monitoring of migration. The analysis will show how monitoring folds back onto the observer, demonstrates it to be a particular association – limited and incomplete – that is observing and thereby drawing it into an engagement with what it seeks to control. Thus, monitoring makes Europe, a people in a place on earth, but never without demonstrating this Europe to be a particular association that could be otherwise.

In order to set up this argument, it is necessary to evade – right from the start – a merely statist conception of migration and its visuality. This will occupy the first section of the argument. From there, it will be possible to reconstruct visualizations and their demonstrative effects not merely as the unintended consequences of state craft, but as actual political problems that pose limits to the liberal government of peoples that this Europe assumes to perform (Balibar, 2006).

The mode of peopling named ‘migration’

What kind of peopling is migration? At hand are not the exercises of population counts, census takings and land surveys. It is not a matter of getting a handle on what is ‘there’ in the first place. Migration is often presented to be a second-order concern. It happens ‘from A to B’, presumably on the basis of A and B having been established already. In more political terms: there is the initial capture of ‘people in the land’, only after which there is ‘migration’ as a kind of stubborn reminder that people won’t stay put (cf. Schmitt, 2006 [1950]). Thus, migration seems to reside in the eye of the beholder and the beholder seems to be the State (Scott, 1998; Foucault, 2003).
This way of thinking migration affords certain advantages. At the very least it does not venture into the confused idea that migration is somehow the invasive act of an intruder, or a fugitive for that matter. Instead, it takes migration to be a name for a variety of events that have been rendered comparable through an ensemble of state practices. Remarkably, these practices first and foremost concern visuality, drawing out regions and bodies along bifurcated lines only to recombine them into ‘border crossings’ (van Reekum and Schinkel, 2017; Vigneswaran, 2013). There are maps to be drawn, persons to be identified, documents to be inspected, terrains to be surveyed, identities to be distinguished, papers to be distributed and events to be captured. These ways of visualizing may compose, along their connections, a hegemonic visuality, enabling certain forms of governing rather than others (Mirzoeff, 2011). This conception of migration at least calls attention to the tendency of particularly close-knit practices to eradicate visual variety and enforce an official vision of migration: you are who the register says you are (Caplan and Torpey, 2001; Groebner, 2007). But is the state, or more generally the problem of the state, nothing more than a matter of felicitously pontificating names? No. With regards to migration, two issues stand out that draw us away from the State-as-beholder (cf. Passoth and Rowland, 2010; Rowland and Passoth, 2015).

First, what would happen if the state truly were an eradicator of doubt? Paradoxically, it would progressively rid itself of investigative capacities: things simply are what the authorities say they are. Government would truly become administration. The nominalism of authority would extinguish the visual capacities of statehood (Dijstelbloem, 2016). Authorities must therefore have ways of keeping errors alive, and with them considerations for adapting names to the world and not the world to certain names. As soon as error has become impossible, data becomes solipsistic (Canguilhem, 1991).

Second, is it actually the case that migration is a second-order concern, emerging only after ‘people in the land’ have been captured in some way? Here, we should consider the extent to which ‘people on the move’ are themselves creating and deploying visualisations of movements and borders (Campos-Delgado, 2017), are already enacting movements from an actual A to an imagined B well before state actors come to enforce their lines of capture (Tazzioli, 2014). What is crucial for the name ‘migration’ to become sensible is not that there are in situ certain boundaries that prevent or encumber movement and across which people nonetheless push forth, but that people anticipate boundaries and to some extent mould their movements accordingly: ‘Bring your passport!’ Borders are technologies of persuasion and terror: a freezing river, an armed guard, a long cue, a menacing look. Yet, as the literature on autonomous movement and border infrastructure demonstrates, any border earnestly tested is eventually trampled under a thousand feet (Andersson, 2015; Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013; Scheel, 2013). Humans have penetrated unimaginably hostile environments. There are no Great Walls. Migration is in the eyes of many beholders all at once, already on the move, and state agencies cannot behold it alone. All the more perplexing is the task of those that compose the cloth of stately authority: not only should they visualize migration, but they should do so with the pretense of oversight.

**Testing Europe: Between data and demonstration**

Varied and ongoing enactments of demographic technique put out a steady stream of population counts (Law et al., 2011; Mair et al., 2015; Ruppert, 2011) and these attempts to administer the technopolitical procedures of citizenship always involve and depend on an ‘other’ that ensures the very possibility of native inclusion – if only as an unspecified and empty category, but often through specific forms of racial difference-making (M’Charek et al., 2014). However, the kind of peopling called ‘migration’ is not merely a matter of
demographics and its particular problems and rhetorics. The question should not immediately be ‘who does or does not become part of Europe through migration?’ but also ‘how does migration demonstrate modes of association of which migrants/migration are, in this sense, always already a part?’ With respect to this latter question, migration does not primarily people Europe through practices of enumeration as migration is, through its varied and contradictory visualizations, also a test in which the capacities and tendencies of an association – ‘Europe’ for instance – are demonstrated (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010). Monitoring migration is also a matter of demonstrating what this Europe can and cannot bring into association.

It is only through long histories of methodological adjustment that ‘migration’ became enacted in the first place, that people could be seen to cross borders (Alderson, 2009; Tazzioli and Walters, 2016; van Reekum and Schinkel, 2017). Methods of migration monitoring do not depict a somehow more rudimentary movement after the fact, but help to carve and craft a world of distinguishable ‘faces’ and ‘landscapes’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 176–191; Olwig, 2008) in which the event of migration becomes possible. Maps, identity documents, diagrams, statistics, satellite images, finger prints and interfaces do not help to discover a bordered world, but rather make up the methodologically crafted materials out of which borders and their crossing exist (Boersma and Schinkel, 2016; Burri and Dumit, 2007). The spaces that are called ‘borders’ and the ‘entries and exits’ that these borders help produce are practical accomplishments, only maintained through an intricate interplay of methods. These methods work to bring kinopolitical objects into being – the migrant, the native, the vagabond, the fugitive (Nail, 2015) – generating the populations and subjectivities that are to be governed and opening up new possibilities of politics (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017). However, the performative work of visualization also evokes certain, often erratic effects of demonstration. Demonstrative effects particularize an association and the actions that are taking place in its name.

Thus, this analysis seeks to resist thinking migration as an after-effect of statehood. Rather, enacting the governable object of migration through visual methods entails the demonstration of an association that is rendered distinct and prior to the apparently secondary and thus invasive movement of ‘migration’. We can develop this perspective by questioning data practices not from the viewpoint of lacking data alignment – against the ideal of interoperability – but in view of its entanglement around worldly events that draw an association in, or what Tazzioli and Walters call the sight of migration (2016). It is in view of such events, themselves only envisioned through practices of migration monitoring that were already operative, that disparate activities and visual materials enter into common configurations. It is only in view of worldly troubles that it begins to make sense to connect a variety of visual materials in one way rather than another. Their entanglement is, as shall be argued, not guided by disinterested reasons of administration, in which case things could be ‘fixed’, ‘optimised’ or ‘harmonized’, but by the ways in which migration monitoring provokes Europe’s demonstration, stages a test of its political possibilities and presents ways of governing those possibilities.

In recent years, a common concern named ‘migration crisis’ became such a worldly event: a far-flung array of movements, anticipations, struggles and interventions concerning the future lives of millions that provoked and accelerated entanglements of data practices into new configurations (Feldman, 2011; Follis, 2017; Heller and Pezzani, 2016). The subsequent analysis of ways in which Europe’s ‘migration crisis’ involved and elaborated data practices is intended to show how, at each step of the way, visualising migration is immediately implicated in the unfolding of events that erratically made up ‘crisis’. Thus, the visual means of migration control continuously create possibilities that can escape their capture.
Visual varieties of migration

Migration monitoring can be dissected into three varieties of visualisation and attendant data work. To accentuate their practical and performative significance, I call these varieties patrolling, recording and publicising. There are other ways of laying out the visual field of migration (see in particular Amoore, 2013; De Genova, 2013; Feldman, 2011; Tazzioli and Walters, 2016; van Reekum and Schinkel, 2017; Vigneswaran, 2013). By using this particular string of concepts, I approach the question of migration’s visuality as a matter of practical accomplishment and not, for instance, in view of the relationship between visibility and governmentality. For the moment, I aim to understand migration monitoring as a question of method, of doing in the midst of confusion (Law et al., 2011). Patrolling, recording and publicising are not activities that authorities undertake to render migration governable per se, but activities that authorities, like anybody else, are forced to continuously draw on as best they can if they even hope to gain or maintain the upper hand in the imaginary institution of migration (cf. Castoriadis, 1997).

In line with Castoriadis’ conception of ‘society’, we can take ‘migration’ to be an imaginary institution in a similar sense: it has no other ground or substance than the practice of instituting it – marking and naming – and yet it must appear as a totality beyond practice. Totalities like ‘society’ and ‘migration’ can only ever be imaginary yet it is precisely imagination that affords a bundling of disparate practices, materials and events under a single name and institute markings appropriate to them. Far from ephemeral, an imaginary conception of ‘migration’ points towards an infrastructural analysis of its visualization. The concepts of patrolling, recording and publicizing aim to provide such an infrastructural view of migration monitoring (Star, 1999). They suggest that migration monitoring happens in, at least, three qualitatively different ways at once, thereby also highlighting frictions between them that would be different when using an alternate mapping of the visual field.

All of these methods employ and produce data, which becomes material in visualising practices at some other place and time in the monitoring infrastructure. Any one practitioner typically draws on all of them at once, while also performing one specifically. It is precisely this mish-mashing of visual methods and materials across the monitoring infrastructure that the concepts of patrolling, recording and publicising are meant draw attention to. Patrolling, recording and publicising are continuously in each other’s vicinity, their data thoroughly entangled, and they are only moderately successful when so entangled. Each will however turn out to be related to ‘crisis’ in particular ways. To discuss these methods separately is an exercise of purification, but one that aims to activate a sensibility for the erratic unfolding of migration monitoring across their differences.

Patrolling: Encountering life in webs of terrains and tactics

With patrolling we immediately risk falling back into a statist view of migration. Indeed, patrolling concerns the tactical domination of space (cf. Nail, 2016). Patrolling engages with terrain and prioritizes it over other spatialities (Elden, 2010). Yet as such, it is also a visual method, a way of gathering materials and reworking space so as to gain some sense of what is happening. Tactical dominance over space is not only aided by visual means but itself affords sight. Felicitous patrolling turns looking around into surveillance. Patrolling is distinct from other methods of visualization in that it demands the arduous traversal of terrains. Nobody is more attuned to the fact that borders are scapes than the practitioners that perform patrols: waves, fields, woods, currents, check points, rooms, corridors, gates, cues, scanner plates and retinas all take time and effort to traverse (Bigo, 2014). What
matters to patrolling is the particularity of their terrains. Patrols try, as best they can, to stake them out. Yet, as border guards acutely understand: patrolling is a symmetrical practice. For every tactic, there is an evasion. For every inspection, there is disguise. Smugglers also patrol and border guards also hide (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2012). And then there are those who wander in borderscapes, neither to dominate nor pass through but to attend to emergencies (Stierl, 2017; Van Gemert, 2016). However, they too cannot help but get caught in the web of tactics.

It is quite clear that patrolling employs data. Patrolling would be practically useless without ample amounts of records of what is happening and where. Its rationale also depends on publically sustained imaginations of migration. Maps are only the most apparent forms of data without which patrols would be at a loss. However, to what extent is patrolling itself a data practice? Although one needs to seemingly stretch the notion of ‘data’ here, doing so does reveal something significant: patrols work to re-organise terrains and make them amendable to their tactical domination (cf. Latour, 1987: 222–228). What is broadly discussed under the heading of border infrastructures (Lin et al., 2017; Shapira, 2013; Xiang and Lindquist, 2014) points to the material work that is done in reshaping terrains to more readily survey and travers them while trying to intercept and arrest travellers (Galis et al., 2016). The lay-out of an international airport forms a datafication of space (Kloppenburg, 2013), as does the specific design of a border fence (Andersson, 2015). Datafication is not meant metaphorically here: space is reworked in such a way that one can come back to it and performs the same exchange of tactics and counter-tactics. Like all data, datafied space lays waiting, presenting a given set of values (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011). Border infrastructures quite literally store long histories of entrained tactics for future deployment. Tactical transactions in borderscapes may become minutely scripted and uneventful, but only become so within a given, datafied arrangement of terrain.

One major aspect of datafication is the way in which it has been used, by EU-authorities and others, to divert selected migratory movements into severely dangerous corridors of travel in the hope to deter migrants from entering European jurisdictions. Harmonisation of visa restrictions, carrier sanctions and control of airport spaces have pushed unwanted migrants to travel to and across Europe by other means: cars, trucks, boats, containerships, on foot (Walters, 2015). This spatial segregation between sanctioned and unsanctioned migrations has been a major constituent of what became Europe’s ‘migration crisis’. ‘Crisis’ was, from this viewpoint, precisely the aim of ‘deterrence measures’ as unauthorized travel was made increasingly dangerous and violent. Yet, such ‘crisis’ – the violence of travel – in turn demands new forms of patrolling that straddle the line between humanitarian care and military hostility (Pallister-Wilkins 2015).

The patrolling of Mediterranean waters and all that has transpired there must be understood as part of this larger reworking of Europe’s borderscape (Van Houtum, 2010). As a data practice, patrolling creates spatially segregated corridors of travel that inscribe and bear the stigma of worthy and unworthy life. This government of migration only became ‘crisis’, in the summer of 2013, as migrants and patrol guards, both caught in an atrocious web of maritime terrains and smuggling tactics, were driven to desperation (Heller and Pezzani, 2016). Of course, the notion of ‘crisis’ served a host of governmental purposes, but in the work of patrols crisis was and is all too real. Patrolling demonstrated, at least to those involved, that migrants would not be deterred no matter how violent the terrain would become. ‘Migration crisis’ demonstrates that Europe cannot be a mere terrain, closed to militaristically patrolled bodies. Or more cynically expressed, only when travel through the most perilous corridors of travel is demonstrated to be unstoppable does migration become, for this Europe, a ‘crisis’.
Far from a point of origin, patrolling is located somewhere in the middle of things. Patrols receive their maps and their orders, check id’s, stare at their camera displays, detain the unauthorized and record these events, but along the way patrols will eventually encounter living bodies and must somehow work with them. This makes patrolling qualitatively different from other modes of visualisation. This is also where symmetry bites back, where patrolling cannot help but become transactional (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017). When the patrol discovers travellers, they cannot help but also discover living bodies and their possible futures (Amoore, 2013). Migration monitoring consists, here, of bodily encounters with people, still alive, who in this very situation of awareness become a response-ability. It is clear that these encounters have all too often turned, under the cover of darkness, into an occasion for expulsion and murder. So much so that refoulement has now been raised to official EU-policy. In no way does this attenuate the problem of bodily encounter in the datafied spaces of patrolling and the necessity of either banning or sustaining the living bodies of migrants. If ‘migration crisis’ is to demonstrate that Europe is not merely an association of bodies that happen to reside at the safe side of a deadly borderscapes, patrols cannot merely discover people-as-cargo but must visualize living bodies that, in being alive, exert some measure of normative recalcitrance, some possibility of a life yet to be lived.

The significance of patrolling in migration monitoring is not that it enacts the ‘really real’ border from which all other visual cues follow, as a kind of everyday sovereignty, but rather the opposite: after all is said and done, migration, clandestine or not, also always happens in webs of terrains and tactics the violence of which cannot be fully contained. Patrols are, in their daily work, made acutely aware of the fact that terrains cannot be surveyed without also encountering and rendering visible the violence of bordering and thus becoming aware of that violence, even if only momentarily (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017; Jones, 2016). Monitoring migration will involve, as part of its daily accomplishment, encounters with living bodies within terrains that are more or less violent, more or less deadly (Topak, 2014). ‘Crisis’ is indeed a governmentally useful term for this violence, but it nonetheless demonstrates a response-ability of Europe. Is this Europe an association of living bodies that happen to still be alive, is living a better life merely the coincidence of being at the safe side of ‘the border’ or does its association involve a responsibility for the living? Whatever is decided on paper and negotiated between authorities will play out, erratically, in the webs of terrains and tactics through which migration also always takes place. Along the entanglements of the monitoring infrastructure, the recalcitrance of living bodies reverberates outward to other visualising practices.

**Recording: Objectified memory and irregular flow**

Migration is, if anything, recorded. In the absence of some form of record, movements to and fro do not amount to anything more than a series of disparate events. In fact, the modernist notion of migration, as a name for a law-like and recurring aspect of sociality, was developed out of statistical studies of parish records and county registers (Alderson, 2009). In close vicinity to the datafication of space and its encounter of bodies performed through patrolling, documentation of what happened – who was encountered where under what circumstances – is produced, kept and shared (see in particular Broeders, 2009). Recording facilitates patrolling, while patrolling feeds recording. It is along this loop that migration becomes a countable, stochastic, enumerated reality. Yet, recording neither stands in the service of patrolling, nor is patrolling a mere means to gather records. The loop never closes into an administrative-cum-logistical block that can be operationally optimized. The question how to configure, let alone inter-operate, both practices only becomes
imaginable when both have already become deeply entangled. It is only when a trickle of
documents, stored and maintained for some local purpose, is put to a calculative exercise in
view of altogether different concerns – the availability of labour, the smuggling of goods, the
descent of populations – that a translocal, measurable and predictable migration is discov-
ered that comes to explain the local numbers. Among the records, migration monitoring is
not an anxious encounter with bodies who put to authorities a responsibility for their lived
circumstances, but the discovery and measurement of *recurrent flows across enduring terri-
tories*. Among the records is where *kinds* of migration are made visible (cf. Hacking, 2007).

Most importantly, this means that records are material for yet more records
(Dijstelbloem and Meijer, 2011). As a data practice, recording is only marginally concerned
with the production of files as such. Without documentation there would be nothing to work
with, but files only become records of migration, pointing beyond the register, in so far as
they can be and are piled together to afford visualisations of *flows*: aggregated quantities of
recorded events happening over measured chunks of time and space. Flows only become
visible and measurable among the records when records are *continuously* brought together to
create yet new records: migrants per day, week, month, year, per border section, know
route, region, member state, etc. In recording, data gathering is not a means to a reachable
end but an activity that only grants vision when pursued without end. The discovery of a
flow doesn’t mean much if one isn’t planning on measuring its rate in the future. Recording
is a matter of continuously compiling and sharing records so as to perform visualisations of
migration flows at a cascade of temporal and spatial scales – territories – across which these
flows are discovered and rendered comparable. For circulation to be recorded, records must
be brought into circulation. Such circulation is the major work of recording. Local, admin-
istrative practices must be organised around translocal hubs. These hubs themselves pro-
duce records – mainly in the form of risk assessments and flow mappings – that are
subsequently broadcast and used to assess what to record, how to record and who to
share these records with (cf. Hayes and Vermeulen, 2012; Pötzscher, 2015).

Memory and prediction do not concern events happening in a patrolled terrain, on the
one hand, and their more or less life-like documentation in a variety of archives, on the
other. For migration in general and migration flows in particular, ‘what has happened’ is
fully constituted by the recording media. Both the identities of moving bodies and the
distinctions between settled territories are documentary entities, rendered visible through
identity documents and Westphalian cartography. There are no untouched events to be
faithfully put to paper. The papers, or lack thereof, are the events. Memory and prediction
are, in migration monitoring, not problems of faithful reproduction but rather documentary
objectivity. The task of recording is not to reconstruct each migratory event as it happened,
but rather to only allow events to enter into record according to carefully crafted methods of
objectification. Such objectivity is developed among the records themselves, through stand-
ardisation of travel documents and cartographic diplomacy (Biggs, 1999; Branch, 2013;
Groebner, 2007). Only then do movements here-and-now become instances of aggregated
flows across spacio-temporal territories.

Here, ‘migration crisis’ is, first, something to be recorded, a host of flows to be measured
at a myriad of locations along the way through haphazardly developed methods that are
continuously reconsidered due to problems of objectification (Carrera and Hernanz 2015;
Franke, 2009). The introduction of ‘hot spots’ is one, major example of authorities, particu-
larly Frontex, seeking to push through new methods of recording in place of ones that did
not produce sufficiently translocal objectivity. Thus, ‘migration crisis’ is, secondly, a
common concern through which recording is re-organised and re-fashioned between local-
ities and hubs. Most pertinent, this is the case because ‘migration crisis’ does not merely
involve unauthorised movements through terrains but also what are deliberately categorised to be *irregular* flows across territories. More than a piece of political discourse that pathologizes certain movements and subjects, the notion of the irregular draws due attention to the problem of bodies who, in their very movements, dissolve the documentary objectivity of migration monitoring (Vigneswaran, 2017). Certain aspects of the autonomy of migrants – their modes of travel and the timing of their movements – disorient the circulation of records that renders migration recordable and predictable (Kaneti, 2015). The very possibility of ‘irregular entry’ keeps demographers up at night, mulling over ‘dark numbers’. Travelling without usable documents and/or without being sufficiently noticed provokes the creation of a third category between the ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ of recording practices. Irregular are precisely those migratory events whose recording is yet to be decided upon fully but are recorded nonetheless (Rozaku, 2017). Thereby, recording the irregular cannot help but demonstrate how the control of migration remains, erratically, dependent on the compliance of migrants in recording: to make themselves and their documents seen, to speak coherently during interviews, to submit to fingerprinting, to bring along and care for the ad hoc documents that MSF, UNHCR, IOM or other authorities create in order regularise the irregular, to forge documents, to destroy documents, to turn undocumented life itself into a political possibility, to say ‘we are here’ (Amicelle et al., 2015; Antonakaki et al., 2016; Pallister-Wilkins, 2016).

Apart from the creation of new risk categories and identity documents, the irregular also concern routes. Irregular flows are the kinds of migration flows that are dissected into routed legs, with each leg of the way attributed a certain risk profile (cf. Frontex, 2017). While migration flows are visualised to move across territorial borderlines as such – from territory to territory – irregular flows are visualised to follow certain possibilities for ‘irregular entry’ along specifically sought out routes that break up into legs. Of course, authorities try to analyse these routes and find points of intervention for ‘border control’, but as recording involves an autonomy of migrants in so far as they are able to struggle over their documentation, migrants and the people they travel with also employ visualizations of routes (Campos-Delgado, 2017; Walsh, 2013). They use clandestine itineraries along which flows are taking place and therefore present more or less risky possibilities for travel (Tazzioli, 2014). The route is not merely a governmental concept, traced by those who seek to interrupt irregular mobilities, but a visualisation of irregular migration sought and followed by those who seek ways of travel, called ‘modus operandi’ by border authorities, not yet fully anticipated.

One of the crucial aspects of Europe’s ‘migration crisis’ has been the ways in which recording effectively enabled a series of interruptive technologies and infrastructures, such as surveillance systems and reception centres, to constitute a network of viable, if severely violent routes of irregular flow (cf. Davies et al., 2017). The moments and circumstances of recording afford possibilities of indecision precisely because recording operates through carefully standardized procedures of documentation that are not merely geared to any one particular situation. Recording creates irregular routes, because at each locale recording affords certain possibilities of becoming irregular, of disrupting the careful work of documentary objectification, and thus of postponing any clear-cut decision between ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ movement. Here too, migration becomes crisis as migration monitoring cannot help but demonstrate certain limits to Europe’s ability to decide upon the events that it is itself painstakingly documenting as part of efforts to control the ‘crisis’.

With respect to recording, ‘migration crisis’ seems to have been provoked by a shift between a situation in which irregularity was predominantly concerned with modes of disappearance – travelling without papers, travelling without being noticed (Cabot and Lenz,
2012; Mountz, 2015) – to a situation in which irregularity became concerned with modes of erratic appearance – becoming part of an emergency, being too many to count, passing check points in large groups, turning cues into protests, collectively rejecting documentation (Baird, 2014; Rijpma and Vermeulen 2015; Spathopoulou, 2016; Tazzioli, 2016). These possibilities, only relatively strategic and deeply violent, nonetheless turn documents, reception centres, railway stations, finger printing devices and the risk analyses of the routes they constitute into a space of recordings through which to chart a route between the validity of authorised travel and the invalidity of rejected access. The infrastructure of recording is constantly prone to becoming an erratic and, indeed, violent infrastructure of movement itself, affording possibilities of disobedience and even insurrection when assemblies of migrants jointly reject or disrupt documentation.

In the midst of this shift concerning the irregular, authorities have reacted in at least three important ways. First of all, EU member states have used the erratic appearance of irregular flows as part of their intra-EU conflict over migration policies. Most notably, Italy and Greece have sought to use irregular flows in attempts to involve other member states into the issue (Heller and Pezzani, 2016; Musaro`, 2017). This has, in turn, hastened a far more centralised data-sharing through EUROSUR and Eurostat, the formation of a supranational border guard authority in Frontex and set precedents for an actually operative Common European Asylum System. ‘Migration crisis’ has further intensified the centrality of specific translocal hubs in the recording infrastructure, both in Brussels (in the European Commission), in Warsaw (in Frontex HQ) and in Tallinn (in eu-LISA’s management of IT-systems) (Tsianos and Kuster, 2016).

The second major response to a situation of erratic irregularity has been a wholesale re-categorisation of irregular flows from a ‘migration crisis’, having to do with unauthorised entries into EU-territories, to a ‘refugee crisis’, having to do with the cynical exploitation of displacement by ‘smugglers’, ‘economic migrants’, ‘terrorists’ and ‘right wing populists’ (see also Carling, 2015). This re-categorisation was immensely important in trying to control the gap between ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ movements as it re-visioned a vulnerable border punctured by irregular flows – ‘migration crisis’ – into a humanitarian catastrophe plagued by its enormity and cynical players – ‘refugee crisis’. Finally, a military response to human smuggling at sea and bilateral agreements with Turkey and Libya were mobilised to more effectively re-rout irregular flows back into Europe’s neighbourhood (Cuttitta, 2018).

At stake in recording are demonstrations of citizenship, of what actually inscribes people into Europe. How is such inscription being administered and its documentary objectivity being sustained? Large-scale developments of ‘interoperable’ systems are animated by futuristic prospects of recording everything that happens ‘at the border’ (Dijstelbloem, 2017; Jeandesboz, 2016). Thus, methods of recording enact and sustain citizenship and its associated counterparts – ‘legal resident’, ‘refugee’, ‘migrant’, ‘alien’, etc. Yet, these efforts to render migration visible cannot help but also bring into view erratic forms of irregularity that persist precisely by being detected and inscribed. With respect to these administrative and statistical operations, ‘migration crisis’ cannot help but demonstrate the autonomy of people in relation to recording: recording itself creates the possibilities of charting an irregular flow, of entering and moving through Europe and, at least, postponing a decision on the right to stay and make a life among its citizens. Migration monitoring cannot collapse this gap between ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ travel without also turning this Europe into an association of people who happen to be recorded as ‘citizens’, whose citizenship is merely an administrative act performed by state officials. Forms of irregularity demonstrate that citizenship cannot be a purely procedural effect of state documentation but is shaped by the arduous attempts of authorities to anticipate, work with and mould the possibilities of
disobedience that recording itself opens up and thus is compelled to recognize and take into account.

**Publicising: Visual metonymy and horrified publics**

If authorities work hard to try and make the data of patrolling and recording inter-operate in a seamless way, while finding a smooth alignment of visualisations to be ever elusive, publicising acts as a constant if unavoidable distraction. To be sure, patrolling, recording and publicising are all methods for ‘making things public’ (Latour and Weibel, 2005). Each performs migration in a specific way by making things visible and setting up a common world for the practitioners involved. Yet, publicity presents a particular kind of problem and a particular kind of data practice. Publicising is a matter of selecting certain pictures over others and trying to adequately construct visual metonymies of migration. The issue is neither to survey terrain or to rout flows, but rather to select and transmit pictures that can stand for an event that will remain, through its fleeting expansiveness, invisible. These pictures may be photographs of terrains or thematic cartographies of flows but their publicisation nonetheless poses problems that are particular to their metonymic construction. What matters is how pictures metonymically capture migration-at-large and allow certain imaginations of migration to become publicized.

One major aspect of publicising is the complex interplay between secrecy and obfuscation, on the one hand, and publicity and advocacy, on the other. Pictures can be seen by some and not by others, but they also enable selectivity by drawing away attention in the very act of – deeply selective – transparency. They actively obfuscate by hypostasising border struggle into naturalised spectacle: ‘look, the migrants are coming!’ (De Genova, 2013). This is how publics could begin to imagine that ‘migration’ is a matter of intrusion. These same pictures nonetheless set up, in the first place, the metonymic experience through which migration becomes a fleeting and expansive event out there in the world. As such, they form a spectrum of possibly antagonistic renderings of what is evidently ‘going on’ and more or less diplomatic advocacy for certain issuefications over others (Marres, 2014).

To say that pictures are a form of data is to stress the material fidelity of pictorial reproductions (Mitchell, 2005a): pictures survive transmission and thereby enable window-like visualizations that are cast from the myriad of places and moments in the event named ‘migration’ to audiences who become publics to that, itself, invisible event (McLagan and McKee, 2012). It is because there is some sense of security that my picture here provides the same visual experience as your picture there that we enter into a public imagination of migration. Much like Benedict Anderson’s synchronicity of imagined nationhood (2006), we now synchronically share an imagination of migration: it is happening as much to me as it is to you. Much of this imagination is, of course, profoundly racist and governmental: it depicts invasion of the national soil and foregrounds the bodily act of movement, strongly inviting the imaginary that migration control equals arresting and deporting the migrant body. Yet, there also exist a great variety of efforts to create alternative depictions of migration in activism, photography, visual arts, critical cartography, journalism and forensics (Dell’Agnese and Amilhat Szary, 2015; Heller and Pezzani, 2012). Broadly put, such pictures are locked in a struggle for attention across a range of digital and analogue platforms as some become highly reproduced icons of ‘migration crisis’ and others are lost to obscurity and material decay.

As a way of depicting the whole by the part, publicising was crucial to the constitution and unfolding of ‘migration crisis’. This not only concerned pictures of ‘the crisis’ – a seemingly endless production and dissemination of photos, flow maps and figures – but
more importantly the pictorial milieu in which something like ‘migration crisis’ could be imaginable: the geo-racial imaginary of ‘Europe’ as the protruding landmass that extends westward out of the Asian continent with its inhabitants of white, secularised Christians (Danewid, 2017; Scott et al., 2017; van Reekum, 2016). Far from a matter of reflection and representation after the fact, publicising further propagated the uncontainable violence of migration monitoring – the encounter of living bodies and becoming irregular through appearance – into pictures of what was happening across and to this Europe. Publicising entails that it is not merely the coast guard who encounters living bodies or the risk analyst who identifies irregular flows but civilian audiences who become publics to the demonstrations of Europe that are part of these visualising practices. The demonstrative effects of patrolling and recording do not merely complicate and limit attempts to authorize state vision for those tasked to ‘manage migration’, but are themselves captured in pictures and become publicized events.

As publics of ‘migration crisis’ came into being, they became co-productive of the unfolding drama: not only as named actors – volunteers, xenophobes, humanitarian assistants and right-wing voters – but also as witnesses to Europe’s political possibilities. Even if patrolling and recording are in themselves symmetrical practices that cannot be entirely governmentalized: publicising explodes any hope of ever closing the logistical-cum-administrative loop between them as it feeds back the demonstrative effects of migration monitoring in the form of publics who become witness to the disconcerting events that sustain a difference between Europe and its outside. If the difference between in and out is to be more than contingency – of happening to reside at the safe side of a patrolled borderscapes and happening to be validly registered by the administrators – the monitoring of ‘migration crisis’ cannot help but demonstrate that migrants will not be terrified into ‘turning back’ and the gap between ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ travel will not be closed. Insofar as they are horrified by what they are seeing, publics are witness to and drawn together by pictures of what sustains this Europe.

The notion of horror helps articulate the undetermined and polyvalent affect that brings publics of ‘migration crisis’ together. Pictures of ‘migration crisis’, enabling the imagination of Europe and its problems, predetermine neither a response of further immunisation or one of emphatic solidarity. They do, however, demonstrate the events of ‘migration crisis’ to be horrific and subsequently publics of those pictures, ‘the European people’, to be horrified. This imagined community of horror is made visible through the very publicisation of ‘migration crisis’ and thereby mediatically sustains a shared problem that Europe must face. Horrific images of ‘migration crisis’ work in this way precisely because they enable a shared impotence and shock, out of which many different and oppositional responses may yet follow.

Indeed, to understand publicization of ‘migration crisis’ in terms of horrified publics does not mean that pictures provoked a popular awakening over the apparent madness of the EU’s migration regime, although this is certainly one of its tendencies. Rather, publicising ‘the crisis’ involved the erratic formation of horrified publics, choruses of a tragedy. These are not only audiences subjected to the feelings of attraction and repulsion typical for horror, but publics that become organised around horrible pictures, that come to recognise a need for collective action in widely transmitted pictures of horrible things ‘happening as we speak’ (cf. Mitchell, 2005b). The horror in these pictures and the publics that form around them do not simply emanate from the particular events cast in them – people in distress, desperate, too many to count, impossible to control – but their depiction of what Europe can and, more importantly, cannot do. This is what specifically draws these publics together. Horrified, publics have organised around a wide array of political priorities, from
‘safe passage’ and ‘welcome’ to ‘close the borders’ and ‘send them back’. Notwithstanding this polyvalence of responses, horror is their common ground.

**Conclusion: Composing and escaping migratory space**

In contradiction to a materialism of borders for which migration is nothing more than a secondary effect of sovereign appropriation, nothing but an after-effect of territorial domination, it is important to emphasise the imaginary institution of migration. Migration is not made to exist because certain entities called ‘states’ intervene and seek to dominate space, distinguishing mobility from migration. Migration is not merely what state officials claim it is. It is not an effect of their decision power. Rather, migration comes into being through a heterogeneous variety of practices, which are to an important extent visual in method and, indeed, authorities seek to dominate. Viewed in this way, the imaginary institution of migration is understood to be an ongoing accomplishment and not merely a more or less accepted determination of state power. The object of ‘migration management’ is continuously generated out of a disparate ensemble of materials, practices, methods and technologies. This accomplishment is ongoing and enduringly incomplete, because migration is not rendered visible through a coherent methodological procedure – one that could be optimized – but produced through a variety of visual methods and related infrastructures and practices. Of course, the name ‘migration’ has ended up in the hands of quite well-connected practitioners – border guards, heads of state, statisticians, party leaders, policy makers and engineers among them – but what they claim to see, know and control is not called into being by the State but pieced together out of data practices.

Practices of visualisation do not only bring into being objects-to-be-governed, but thereby inevitably open up political possibilities that are immanent to certain methods of visualisation. Performative effects are accompanied by demonstrative ones. If certain methods perform migration and the borders that it crosses, then these methods also entail demonstrations of the associations that are bordered in the process. How certain technopolitical practices perform a governable object called ‘migration’ also demonstrates the association that presumes to embody that government.

Crucially, patrolling, recording and publicising remain, each in their own sense, symmetrical practices. They remain methods in the midst of confusion. While trying to ‘follow the migrants’ in a more or less reliable way, migration monitoring involves the progressive entanglement of visual technologies, capacities and authorities scattered across space and time. Their harmonisation is not so much a matter of alignment – alignment to what? – but performed in view of worldly trouble, ‘crisis’ for instance. The visual methods of migration’s government do not merely monitor objects-in-space, but help to compose concerns in light of which all of the arduous monitoring is deemed necessary at all. These concerns orient and entangle scattered practices of visualisation and render ‘what is seen here’ somehow relevant to ‘what is seen there’. Interoperability of migration data is indeed a technical problem, but the difference between interoperability and a confused overload is only resolved in view of common concerns found in but at once projected beyond the data. Of course, an alignment of images remains ever elusive but what drives the ongoing efforts of inter-operation, standardization and comprehension is not an elusive consistency but worldly events in which an association – Europe – stands to be tested. The very sight of migration opens up the question what this Europe can and cannot do. Migration peoples this Europe because it constitutes the events through which Europe demonstrates what kind of association it actually is and will be able to become. Of course, migration has, as one of its axes, a demographic reality – adding and subtracting people from Europe – but only after the sight of migration has
staged a test of the associations that draws in a demographic stock in the first place. Migration monitoring demonstrates what might associate a people in such a way that it can have a problem named ‘migration’, that there is a border somewhere even if its proper place and operation remains elusive in practice.

Migration happens in and through space. Yet, this space is neither homogenous nor readily laid out. Here, migratory space has been dissected along the various methods through which it is visualized. Each of these methods forms a vital part of the performative work that enacts, stabilizes and sustains the mode of peopling that is called ‘migration’. As such, migratory space is in constant need of composition. Only when methods and their performative accomplishments become sufficiently entangled does the statist division between civil mobility and migratory crossing become more or less sensible. From the viewpoint of authorities, this migratory space is in constant disrepair and need of maintenance. The visual methods at play in the government of migration do not add up to a vision that may discount the methods through which sight takes place. The visual methods of migration monitoring do not add up to a pure instrument and remain more or less well-connected. It is therefore always possible to escape migratory space and its current compositions. Authoritative vision never merely visualizes ‘migrants-in-space’, but also demonstrates the associational entity that is thereby occupying and governing this space. In visualizing ‘migration crisis’, Europe is itself also revealed, if only in what this association apparently cannot do, has failed to do. This is where forms of escape, however violent, take place.

Willem Schinkel writes on Walter Benjamin’s crisis thought:

‘crisis as wish image contains messianic traces in the sense that it conjures up an image of what lies beyond both crisis and crisis recovery, which would be a vision of a world economy not governed by a global shock.’ (2015: 48).

Although this analysis has sought to emphasise the political possibilities of recalcitrance, disobedience and shock implicated in the very methods whereby anything like ‘migration’ is rendered visible in the first place, it also argued that these possibilities have, thus far, mainly drawn in horrified publics whose associations do not exceed an anxious awareness of the impotencies of Europe, be it in the provision of dignified refuge or the resurrection of an imperilled sovereignty. At best, it seems, monitoring ‘migration crisis’ has demonstrated Europe to save face, to at least be able to uphold a certain nobility, be it more humanitarian or civilisational. This seems a scant return for the countless destruction of life and immeasurable expense of effort in what could have been patrolled, recorded and publicized differently. What will Europe’s mourning now look like?

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Notes
1. Migration is very often said to be in crisis. I refer here to one particular instance of such crisis talk. See for further treatment of this case and the role of ‘crisis’ in it: Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins (2016).
2. Refoulement refers here to the practice of deporting or ‘pushing back’ non-citizens to a third state’s territories, including its waters, in which those persons have reason to fear for their rights, life or freedoms. In particular, Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention renders refoulement illegal. See in particular: Turkey as a Safe Third Country? https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2016/03/turkey-safe-third (accessed 13 October 2017).

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