Punctuated temporalities: Temporal borders in student-migrants’ everyday lives

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Abstract
The punctuation of time through visas and residence permits intimately affects temporary migrants’ everyday lives. The temporal forms of control engendered through the global border and visa regime and their impact on fragmenting lived time have received little attention in comparison to the extensively studied spatial aspects of migration, particularly in the research context of mobility conceptualised as skilled migration. By drawing on in-depth interviews with migrants holding a temporary student status in Finland, the article examines the ways in which temporal borders bring about punctuated temporalities among non-EU/EEA student-migrants. Moreover, it demonstrates how the time limits of the student permit offer fruitful ground for the production of a low-paid labour force and how temporal borders assist in hierarchising this labour force in terms of mobility and rights. The article contributes to the sociological literature on migration and precarious labour markets by emphasising the analytical relevance of examining temporal borders as engendering a hierarchising function of the border regime and the role of temporal borders in facilitating the production of precarious migrant labour.

Keywords
Borders, migrant labour, residence permits, student migration, temporal borders, temporality

Introduction
Time and temporality function as crucial tools of mobility control (Andersson, 2014; Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths et al., 2013). Contemporary migration regimes are increasingly concerned with time rather than solely with spatial relations (Baas and Yeoh, 2019), which is reflected in the increase of temporary migration schemes and fast-track migration procedures (Könönen, 2019; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013).
This article analyses, from the point of view of wage-working non-EU/EEA student-migrants in Finland, how the one-year temporary student permit connected to the EU-border regime shapes the student-migrants’ lives in terms of studies, work and mobility. Student migration offers a fruitful angle to the study of temporary migration schemes, as student permits often are issued on a temporary basis and student migration constitutes an ever-expanding form of migration, both in Finland and globally. Moreover, researchers (e.g. Ginnerskov Dahlberg, 2019) have pointed to the assumption of student mobility constituting a privileged form of migration associated with frictionless border crossing. Consequently, the impacts of the border regime on student-migrants’ everyday lives have received only limited research attention.

The article critically engages in the research on migrant temporalities and claims, through the notion of temporal borders (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013), a more focused analysis of the temporal effects of the border regime on student-migrants’ lives. It asserts that through an analytical focus on temporal borders, we can come to terms with the ways in which temporary residence permits punctuate migrants’ lives and how this plays into the momentary inclusion of migrant labour under capital’s productive structure. Through an analysis of this punctuated temporality, which differentiates temporary migrants from migrants with continuous permits and even more so from non-deportable citizens, the article offers a twofold contribution to the sociology of migration and precarious labour. First, by highlighting the pivotal role of temporal forms of control over student migration, it contributes to the study of how the border regime creates hierarchies of mobility and rights by engendering punctuated experiences of time among temporary migrants. Second, temporal borders offer an analytical angle to examine the ‘politically hidden’ (Robertson, 2014: 1916) interconnection between student migration and wage labour and contribute thus to the analysis of the production of precarious migrant labour in contemporary global capitalism, in which the quest for flexible migrant labour becomes central (Robertson, 2019b) and where control over people’s time is key (Harvey, 2010).

The article begins with an overview of time and temporality in migration research in order to ground the theoretical framework of temporal borders. This is followed by a section on student migration in a Finnish context and a method section. The analysis is divided into three parts. First, it demonstrates how the time limits associated with the temporary student permit give rise to punctuated temporalities in the working student-migrants’ daily lives. Second, the analysis accounts for the temporal borders engendered through the student permit, which produce experiences of entrapment and posit non-EU/EEA student-migrants as a flexibly available labour force. Third, the impact of the Schengen visa regime in decelerating the movement of non-EU/EEA student-migrants is accounted for, pointing to the logic of coloniality of migration (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018) inherent in the border regime. The analysis is brought together in a concluding discussion.

**Analysing temporal borders**

The time-related aspects of migration have been discussed from various perspectives, highlighting the individual and collective experiences of time and the temporality of the
life course (e.g. Cwerner, 2001, 2004; Stevens, 2019), often from the standpoint of asylum seekers and irregular migrants (e.g. Brux et al., 2019; Griffiths, 2014; Rotter, 2016). The temporality of migration from the point of view of student migration and migration conceptualised as skilled migration is more limited in extent. Recent contributions have provided insights into migrant nurses’ experiences of waiting in Norway (Vaughn et al., 2019), highly skilled professionals’ waiting for residence permits and their temporary loss of mobility in Sweden (Allen and Axelsson, 2019; Axelsson, 2017), and the interrupted academic careers of Chinese academic returnees (Wang, 2019). Moreover, the lived experiences of time among student-migrants in Sweden (Nilsson Folke, 2018), the experienced arrhythmia of educated precarious migrant youth in southern Europe (Marcu, 2017) and the shaping of life and work experiences of temporary student-migrants through visa categorisations in an Australian context have been examined (Robertson, 2013, 2014; Robertson and Runganaikakulo, 2014). Additionally, Collins and Shubin (2017) have discussed the conceptualisation of global student and youth migration within a framework of compartmentalised time while bringing forth complexities of student-migrants’ everyday lives stretching beyond standardised migrant categorisations. Moreover, Baas (2015) has demonstrated that student-migrants gaining permanent residency have experiences of temporariness and that permanent residency might facilitate transnational lifestyles and regular border crossing.

Building on research concerning precarity and temporariness (Griffiths et al., 2013; Robertson, 2014; Stevens, 2019) and the temporality of migration control (Allen and Axelsson, 2019; Andersson, 2014; Brux et al., 2019; Cwerner, 2004; Tazzioli, 2018), this article argues for a focused analysis of time constraints engendered through the border and visa regime and the effects on the everyday lives of student-migrants, thereby generating a productive encounter between research on temporality, borders and student migration. It approaches the temporary student permit as an extension of the global border and visa regime and focuses on the temporal effects rooted in the student permit that materialise in the student-migrants’ everyday lives. I stress the link between the student permit and the border regime in order to point out that the control of migrants through visa and residence permit policies not only designates the movement of people, but also defines rights and work opportunities beyond the geographical border (Anderson, 2010). Hence, the article approaches borders in their differentiated and dispersed form, which according to Balibar (2002: 85), constitute a grid over the social space instead of bordering a space only from the outside.

In order to grasp the temporal implications of the temporary student permit and the border regime it is connected to, the article develops the concept of temporal borders, previously assessed theoretically (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 133), in relation to more general temporal boundaries among Brazilian immigrants in the UK (Cwerner, 2001) as well as with regard to asylum seekers in the EU (Tazzioli, 2018). Tazzioli (2018) considers the multiplication of temporal borders as techniques for hindering access to the asylum system, by which migrants’ autonomous temporalities are disrupted at the same time as identification procedures and forced returns are hastened. I develop the notion of temporal borders by emphasising the time limitations that, on the one hand, are inscribed in the legal framework of visa and residence permit regulations and that, on the other hand, arise in the practicalities of renewing the student permit and living within the legal
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framework set by the permit. Thus, the first aim of this article is to analyse the temporal effects of the border and visa regime on student-migrants’ quotidian lives in particular by focusing on the control over and through time (Tazzioli, 2018: 14).

Borders not only hamper and facilitate movement, they also play a key role in producing the time and space of contemporary global capitalism, as border regimes affect the political and juridical structure of labour markets (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). In addition to producing differences in time and space, borders embody a productive aspect from a temporal standpoint. Migration used to be rendered productive by territorialising movement through, for example, such regimes as the guest worker programme and the workers’ hostels associated with it (Castles and Miller, 2003; Papadopoulos et al., 2008). However, research has pointed to the centrality of regulating the speed of mobility and making migration compatible with a broader regime of temporal control (Andersson, 2014; Papadopoulos et al., 2008). Productivity then, rather than being achieved only through spatial arrangements, is brought about through the regulation of the pace and the extent of mobility (Allen and Axelsson, 2019: 120; Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 199) and by including migrants in the temporal regime of global labour (Karakayali and Rigo, 2010). Hence, the second aim of the article is to examine how temporal borders in the student-migrants’ everyday lives play into the functioning of contemporary global capitalism and its quest for flexible labour (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Robertson, 2019b).

Having discussed the twofold aim of using the concept of temporal borders – that of analysing the experiences of time constraints inscribed in the student residence permit and arising from it and the implications for the production of a flexible labour force – the next section provides further context to the study of student migration to Finland.

The temporary student permit

Visa regimes are often concerned with time: the length of the stay, the allowed number of work hours and the pace of processing visas (Ćwerner, 2001; Robertson, 2019a). Temporary permits are increasingly issued to prevent migrants from permanent settlement and to respond to short-term labour market needs (Helander et al., 2016; Könönen, 2019; Rudnick, 2009). Even if the purpose of temporary migration schemes is to hamper permanent residence, a temporary status may develop into de facto permanent residence over time (Bauböck, 2011; Stevens, 2019), blurring boundaries between permanent and temporary (Robertson, 2019a).

Work-related migration to Finland is often mediated through temporary permits (Helander et al., 2016). Moreover, international students constitute an important group of temporary migrant workers in Finland (Helander et al., 2016; Könönen, 2019; Maury, 2017) who, as in several other EU states, are granted temporary residence permits. However, student-migrants are seldom conceptualised within the group of temporary workers, although research indicates their crucial role particularly in low-paid labour markets (Liu-Farrer, 2009; Maury, 2017, 2019; Pan, 2011; Robertson, 2013, 2014).

The number of foreign citizens in Finland has undergone a 10-fold increase since 1990, reaching a total of 258,000 in 2018 (4.7% of the overall population), while those persons with a foreign background totalled 400,000 people in 2019 (13.8%) (Statistics Finland, 2019a, 2019b). In 2018, there were 21,640 international students (7.4% of all
students) enrolled in higher education (EDUFI, 2019), most of whom live in the metropolitan area (EDUFI, 2019). The number of issued student permits has grown steadily over the past 10 years, increasing from 3196 first permits in 2006 to 6842 in 2016 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2008, 2018). In 2019, the number had dropped to 5246 permits, with a higher rejection rate in particular for applicants from Bangladesh and Nepal, for whom approximately 60% of student permit applications were negative (Finnish Immigration Service, 2020), probably due to the introduction of tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students in 2017. That same year, 9461 first work permits and 10,251 first family permits were issued (Finnish Immigration Service, 2020). No encompassing statistics of wage-working non-EU/EEA student-migrants in Finland exist. Research findings indicate an employment rate of around 50% among international students, both during their studies and after graduation (Laine, 2017; Shumilova et al., 2012), while employees at the Finnish Immigration Service estimate an 80% employment rate among those with a student permit (interview data) compared to a rate of 50–60% among Finnish students (Saari et al., 2013).

The Finnish temporary student permit requires a secure means of support, in the year 2019 set at €6720 for one year. This sum is also required when renewing the residence permit, either in the form of savings or demonstrated through employment. The holder of a student permit is not entitled to the Finnish social security system and is required to have private health insurance. Moreover, work 25 hours a week during the semester and full-time during holidays or as an internship included in the degree requirements is allowed. After graduating from a Finnish higher education institution, the graduate can apply for temporary one-year residence to find employment and, upon finding employment, is eligible for a work permit without labour market testing (Finnish Aliens Act 301/2004). Furthermore, the student permit has long-lasting implications for future Finnish citizenship. In the citizenship application, which commonly demands a five-year stay in Finland, a stay on a B-type permit counts as only half the time. Thus, the typical four-year stay on a student permit to complete a degree counts as only two years and requires an additional stay of three years on an A-type residence permit, or even longer if the stay is continued on a B-type residence permit. (Finnish Nationality Act 359/2003.)

Methods

In-depth thematic interviews (N = 33) were conducted in English with wage-working, non-EU/EEA migrants holding a student permit in 2017 and 2018 in the Helsinki region. To find research participants, I sent interview requests to Facebook groups and university email lists, in which I explained my research interests concerning the working experiences of migrants holding a student permit in Finland. I limited participation to only bachelor’s and master’s degree students since doctoral students’ legal status varies depending on the amount and source of income. Additionally, I conducted a combined expert interview with the national chief administrator of student permits and the national chief administrator of work permits to discuss contradictory information concerning the process of permit renewal that arose during the interviews with the student-migrants.

The interviews with the student-migrants focused on the decision to come to Finland, the route into higher education, the immigration system and experiences with work and
discrimination in everyday life as well as subjective goals. The research participants brought up in particular the constraints of living with a temporary student status. The interviews on average lasted for 80 minutes, which for those participating in the research was valuable time that could have been spent working, studying or relaxing. However, many chose to be interviewed in order to discuss the complicated situation faced by non-EU/EEA students in Finland. All research participants gave permission to use the anonymised interview data for the research and were reminded about their right to withdraw from the research at any stage. The transcribed interview files were anonymised by using pseudonyms and by replacing the names of places with broader territorial indications.

Most of the research participants had made their decision to study in Finland because of free tuition, as compared to the higher costs of more desirable destinations, such as the US or the UK (see also Eskelä, 2013; Shumilova et al., 2012). Others had based their decisions on personal connections to Finland or interest in a specific study programme, while a minority initially had migrated for work or to seek asylum. Some had considerable work experience and previous degrees, while others had resorted to the student route for lack of other options. The interviews included 15 women and 18 men between the ages of 21 and 35 who on average had spent two to three years in Finland. They came from North and South America (3), Eastern Europe (7), South-East Asia (12), South-West Asia (5), North Asia (3) and Africa (3). The fields of study of the research participants included law (2), political sciences and communication (6), international business (7), technology (11), hotel, restaurant and catering services (2) and social and health care (5). However, some of the research participants conducted studies in several fields and some had previous degrees both from Finland and abroad. The data have been transcribed, categorised following the reoccurring topics of borders, labour and precarity, discrimination and subjectivity and analysed using thematic content analysis.

While encompassing a diverse range of areas of origin and studies, the extensive effort of securing a legal status unites the experiences of the working student-migrants from different regions. Thus, a focus on the legal status of the non-EU/EEA student-migrants provides an instructive analytical angle that extends beyond a mere focus on student-migration between two nation-states (cf. Liu-Farrer, 2009; Pan, 2011; Valentin, 2015) while avoiding a methodologically nationalist framing of identity within the boundaries of ‘nation’, ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’ (Tran and Gomes, 2017). Among the research participants, the field of studies seemingly had little influence on their possibilities of accessing a desired labour market area during studies, while a lack of fluency in Finnish was experienced as the main hindrance to finding suitable employment (Laine, 2017; Maury, 2018). Several of the participants from Africa or the Middle East discussed experiences of racism in everyday situations, while a few, mainly American participants, discussed their white privilege. Hence, the data provide richness by capturing the experiences of a group of migrants from varying backgrounds living within the constraints of a one-year temporary permit, nuanced in particular by social structures of race, ethnicity and nationality. The article weaves together the issues of temporality that permeate the data, capturing the numerous ways in which the temporal aspects of the border regime engender time-related consequences among non-EU/EEA student-migrants living and working in Finland.
Punctuated temporalities

The data give rise to images of student-migrants pressed between schedules: someone catching the rare night bus to arrive on time for a night shift delivering newspapers, then arriving at school early in the morning to take a shower before an engineering class, as another keeps an eye on the time while cleaning each hotel room – 18 minutes per room – after a day filled with legal studies and a third spends the week serving fast food for a couple of days and working unpaid on other days for a start-up developing an app in between attending classes in marketing. While the work experiences are diverse, common for the student-migrants is the everyday concern with time and taking on work to be able to renew the one-year student permit. International students experience working alongside taking classes as the most inconvenient aspect of studying in Finland (CIMO, 2018), while the primary reason for undertaking work is the need to fulfil the economic requirements of the student permit and, consequently, to continue studying in Finland (Maury, 2017, 2018).

Despite the fact that most student-migrants described coming from a middle-class background, few received direct financial support from their families. The most common types of jobs among the research participants were housekeeping, news delivery and restaurant work. Out of 33 participants, only four had not worked in the low-paid service sector. However, around half of the research participants had at some point during their stay in Finland worked in their own field of studies, but most often in partly or completely unpaid internships or as poorly paid workers in start-ups in the fields of technology and business. Thus, service work often supports student-migrants materially, while more cognitively oriented work experience is acquired in the form of unpaid internships (Maury, 2019).

Isaac, who had previous degrees in the field of tourism and catering and was currently undertaking studies in engineering, described a common story of tight schedules between school, work and free time:

During this period, it wasn’t easy combining school with working in [the Post Office]. You work in the midnight; you wake up in the midnight. You didn’t sleep, then you have to go to the lecture at 8 o’clock next morning. Most of the time we do sleep in the class, but then once you know that that is the price – you have to go to school and renew your permit – you have no choice and you have to adjust to it. (Isaac, West Africa)

Working in the delivery service for the post office implies working at night and sleeping during classes, Isaac explained, reflecting the common feature of anti-social work hours among migrant workers (Axelsson et al., 2017; Maury, 2017). Isaac, however, described night-time work as unavoidable if he was to successfully renew his student permit. The tight schedules between school, assignments and work often become tiring and psychologically draining for student-migrants as deadlines pile up and yet they need to ensure that they can renew the permit. Keeping up with the pace required to make enough money and earn enough study credits makes it arduous for student-migrants to improve their situation by finding a more suitable job or the right networks to access more desirable areas of the labour market. The spatio-temporal restrictions (Ahmad, 2008) placed
on holders of a temporary student permit form a dividing line between the potentially deportable student-migrant who often works to make a living in unstable employment relationships (Eskelä, 2013; Maury, 2018, 2019) and the citizen-student for whom work with the objective of obtaining both experience and income in more stable forms of employment in work corresponding to their field of studies is more common (Aho et al., 2012; Saari et al., 2013). In addition, the need to advance in studies at the pace required makes the holder of a student permit particularly prone to stress due to various tasks in multiple localities, compared to temporary migrant workers who usually do full-time work in a certain field or for a certain employer (Anderson, 2010; Axelsson et al., 2017).

The time-related stress is infused by the possibility of not having one’s student permit renewed and the associated possibility of deportation, both of which constantly remain in the back of the student-migrants’ minds. According to Alex from North America, renewing the student permit ‘was quite stressful ’cause each time you go to apply for another year, there is always the potential that your application will be rejected’. The concern with the possible rejection is not only a question of having sufficient financial resources, but also a question of staying within the 25-hour limit of allowed work hours per week. As Helen, a student from Eastern Europe, said: ‘you should count hours, it’s 25 hours a week, and they check it per period so, you can do 40 hours one week and 10 the next, but you should be careful’. The need to count the hours of work was also brought up by Nihad, who described the unpredictability of her employment as follows:

The days I have to work, I start at nine o’clock in the morning, depending on how much work they’re going to give me. I finish on a good day at three–four o’clock and on bad days it can go to six o’clock. I have a permanent part time contract. The hours shift; according to my contract they can give me work 5–37.5 h/week, but as a student, I’m only allowed to do 25 hours. –(Nihad, North Asia)

Nihad noted that it was the managers who decided how many hours of work they would offer while it was up to her to make sure that she did not exceed the hour limit. Both Helen’s and Nihad’s experiences of dealing with time limits and the unpredictability of contemporary precarious labour markets demonstrate how a narrow space for influencing one’s work arrangements is produced, highlighting the production of a low-paid labour force through the temporal aspects of migration control (Anderson, 2010).

The research participants also discussed the issue of temporal migration control in relation to the one-year length of the student permit. Nhat depicted the temporary residence permit as a leash for controlling the working student-migrants:

It’s really tempting, when you are making so much money, to put aside your main thing which is studying. . . . So, to renew [the permit] every year is like a leash to keep foreigners back, like reminding us [that] you are here for studying, not for working or anything else. (Nhat, South-East Asia)

Nhat’s description demonstrates that the yearly renewal process prevents student-migrants from working too much and functions as a reminder of the purpose for which the student permit was granted. The temporary one-year residence permit, together with its requirements for renewal, appears as a temporal border (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013)
that shapes the ways in which student-migrants experience being controlled and kept on a ‘leash’. The yearly renewal of the permit engenders fear of losing one’s job, which often leads student-migrants to become stranded in the low-paid sector, as many of them consider it too risky to look for other jobs in a situation where the student permit holder is not covered by social security in Finland. Thus, the temporal borders of the student permit give rise to punctuated temporalities among the student-migrants, where yearly permit renewal and part-time work chafes at their ability to focus on studies. This punctuation of time reflects a contemporary society increasingly structured around the logic of projects with permit renewal appearing as a yearly project that engenders experiences of leading a precarious ‘project-based life’ (Jokinen, 2016: 93). Moreover, it demonstrates the way in which the temporary permit functions as a technology for exerting migration control over and through time (Tazzioli, 2018).

Entrapment through temporal borders

The temporal aspects of the student permit are not only rooted in the legal framework constituted around time limitations, such as the one-year duration of the permit and the limited numbers of allowed work hours. The permit, and the border regime it is inscribed in, also produces temporal limitations when applied in practice. The most urgent temporal limitations derive from the slow process of renewing the residence permit, which was brought up in every research interview. A majority of the research participants had to wait for periods of up to nine months to get the one-year permit renewed. This would imply that after renewal, only three months was left of the legal time of residence before permit renewal again was required, thus provoking feelings of uncertainty over the right to reside in Finland. Moreover, Taya and Abiral described the close interconnection between work and immobility, arising as a consequence of the slow residence permit process:

They [the student-migrants] could still work, but your freedom of movement is kind of restricted; you couldn’t go home if something happens and you couldn’t go for a study trip or exchange. (Taya, Eastern Europe)

You can’t travel, you can’t go anywhere; if some work place wants your visa, you don’t have your visa, so what do we do? It’s very sad. (Abiral, South Asia)

As Taya and Abiral pointed out, the student-migrants are on a reoccurring basis stripped of their right to cross-border mobility, and thus experience their mobility as governed by speed, and provoking a deceleration of mobility (Axelsson, 2017; Cwerner, 2004; Papadopoulos et al., 2008). The unpredictable process of permit renewal was furthermore described by Nina as a ‘lottery’ that, on an unspecified basis, defines the length of the process of permit renewal:

When you have the residence permit for a student, it’s just one year, and usually the [work] contract matches the date that you have to renew your residence permit; and if you haven’t done this on time, and there’s a situation that your contract is terminated and you don’t have the new residence permit, you can’t go to find another job, so you’re kind of trapped and you should
wait until the new [one] comes. It’s a lottery because you never know when it’s gonna arrive. Some get it in a week some in three, four or six months. And you still remain in the country, but you need the new residence permit to get a new job, but if you still have the old contract, even if the residence permit is expired and you have applied for a new one, you can remain in this job and you can’t lose it, otherwise you’re in a bad situation. (Nina, Eastern Europe)

The lottery of permit renewal indicates the obscure nature of the process of renewing the residence permit. The research participants explained that friends who had filed their applications on the same day with similar supporting documents would receive various outcomes: some would get the permit in a couple of weeks and others would need to wait for months.

Moreover, the research participants emphasised that despite being temporarily restrained from travelling, student-migrants still had the right to work in Finland. According to Nina, foreign students often obtained a work contract of similar length as the permit itself. If the permit was not renewed in good time before the expiry date of the permit, one could not apply for a new job. In Nina’s words, this would create a ‘trap’ in which the student-migrant could be stranded for anywhere from one week up to nine months, displaying similarities to the experience of a ‘blockage’ in reaching one’s desired goals (Nilsson Folke, 2018) and remaining ‘stuck’ in the migration process (Brux et al., 2019; Griffiths et al., 2013). This experience of entrapment places barriers both on cross-border movement and mobility within the labour markets. Therefore, Nina, like other research participants, underlined the importance of holding on to one’s job, as it would be difficult to find a new one within the intervals of renewal without a valid permit, thus amplifying the migrant’s dependence on the employer (Anderson, 2010).

Such forms of entrapment and restricted access to mobility among the student-migrants inscribe their lives in the temporal regime of global labour (Karakayali and Rigo, 2010), which produces a flexible labour force ready to accept most types of insecure and low-paid jobs. Thus, temporal borders assist in opening up a gap for global capital to invest in a labour force that, at least temporarily, remains in place. Here, the temporal and spatial forms of control of migrant labour become prominent and indicate that spaces for the accumulation of capital appear only to disappear again along with the people’s movement and migration trajectories (Karakayali and Rigo, 2010; Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 199). Consequently, this emphasises the importance of the temporal migration policies in ensuring access to a flexible labour force. Entrapment also engenders punctuated temporalities, demonstrating the way in which temporal borders produce insecure labour market positions as they construct hierarchies between temporary student-migrants, long-term migrants and citizens, and furthermore create modalities of the migrant ‘Other’ alongside such constructed differences as race and gender (Robertson, 2014).

**Differentially activated temporal borders**

Temporal borders not only produce differences between migrant statuses, but they also manifest differently within the group of non-EU/EEA migrants waiting for their student permit to be renewed. Asya explained the difference:
they [Brazilians] had this three-month thing, they were fine. Same with Australians. . . . they didn’t have the same stress of leaving the country, they could come back, you know. So, I saw that difference certainly. And Asian countries, like Japan or [South] Korea, I never really got the feeling that there was so much stress about this [student] permit, from what I’ve spoken with them about, it was never really this ‘Oh My God, what’s gonna happen?’ But definitely Turkey, Morocco, all these countries, there was more stress, but then I guess we are wired to think that way, to fear the system. (Asya, Western Asia)

The ‘three-month thing’ Asya described is the lived experience of the division of the world enacted by the European Commission: the EU’s list of third countries whose nationals are required to be in possession of a visa when crossing the external borders of the Member States (Council Regulation EC No. 539/2001), an instrument of government seldom discussed in research on the deceleration of migrants’ movement. Van Houtum (2010) writes that the EU used to label the regulation the ‘black’ and ‘white’ list (see also Bigo and Guild, 2003; M’charek et al., 2014), but that it had recently been relabelled the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ list (EUR-Lex, 2019). The list designates those who are required to have a Schengen visa before entering the Schengen area (black/negative) and those able to travel visa free within the Schengen area for up to three months (white/positive).

In terms of the temporal implications, several student-migrants experienced the negative list as a hindrance for travelling to their home country during the waiting time, as they would not be able to return to Finland before the residence permit was successfully renewed. Several research participants had experienced hardship because of this regulation since they had not been able to travel to see their families even for particular reasons such as a funeral or to do an internship in their country of origin. Neither could they do internships or exchange periods within the Schengen area while waiting for the renewal.

Van Houtum (2010: 958) terms the government of mobility based on a positive/negative divide the EU’s ‘constitutive “management” of exclusion of the “Other” inhabitants of the world’. The management of the ‘Other’ has been part of European politics for centuries since its founding days, having relied on colonial and racial meanings to secure the future existence of a European social, economic, geopolitical, historical and racial order (Hansen and Jonsson, 2014: 41). Today, the negative list as an aspect of the Schengen project functions as tentative tool for Western identity protection and as a shield against the global poor (van Houtum, 2010: 964).

The temporal impact of the positive/negative list on student-migrants’ lives in terms of restricted mobility and the production of the incorporated fear of the system that Asya described point to the subjective dimensions of border crossings emphasising the ways in which borders function as instruments of discrimination (Balibar, 2002). Moreover, the unequal recourse to mobility demonstrates how the positive/negative list operates within a logic of coloniality of migration (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018) that produces hierarchical differences beyond the immediate presence of colonial power (Krivonos and Näre, 2019), which can then be capitalised on (De Genova, 2016). In a similar vein, Robertson (2019a) creates a link between contemporary forms of temporally containing student-migrants and the colonial logic by conceptualising the delay in student-migrants’ trajectories in Australia as the experience of ‘indentured time’, hence making explicit reference to the colonial history of indentured migrant labour.
Drawing on the argument that borders never just exist in space but are activated when crossed (Bigo and Guild, 2003), the temporal border can be said to become \textit{differentially activated} depending on nationality and positioning on the positive/negative list. Thus, it emphasises the need to avoid assuming a homogeneous temporality with respect to the functioning of borders. Additionally, the activation of the temporal border depends on the migrant’s legal status, as temporary migrants, such as the students leading precarious project-based lives, experience the temporal effects of the slow residence permit system more intimately than someone having a long-term or a permanent residence permit. Lastly, the differential activation of the temporal borders also depends on the unpredictable pace and outcome of the residence permit renewal process, which often relies on gendered, racialised, class-based and moral assumptions about an applicant (Guild, 2001; Leinonen and Pellander, 2014).

\textbf{Conclusion}

This article has analysed the occurrence of temporal borders in wage-working student-migrants’ everyday lives in Finland by highlighting the temporal effects of the student permit. First, the article discussed the production of punctuated temporalities as a consequence of the one-year temporary student permit and the associated time limits on work. A large number of student-migrants find work in the low-paid sector to cover their daily life expenses and to collect the resources to renew the student permit, which demonstrates the way in which their student status shapes the student-migrants’ occupation and moulds their lives into sequences of precarious one-year projects.

Second, the slow process of permit renewal engenders experiences of entrapment, which makes it difficult to advance in the labour market while reducing the possibilities for finding work or internships abroad. When taken together with the need to work to renew the permit faced by most student-migrants, the temporal borders produce a labour force that remains in place, even if only for short periods of time. In this way, the temporal borders posit the non-EU/EEA student-migrants as a labour force employable in the low-paid sector in part-time work reflecting short-term labour market needs. Thus, temporal borders add yet another layer to the hierarchising function of the border regime, which produces differences in the space–time arrangements of the student-migrants’ everyday lives, which appear profitable for capital. These results are in line with earlier research demonstrating the link between, on the one hand, immigration law, control and policy in producing hierarchies, and on the other, labour under capitalism (e.g. De Genova, 2016; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Könönen, 2019; Robertson 2014).

Third, by nuancing the analysis of processes of deceleration, the article has demonstrated that the slow and unpredictable permit renewal process has particular implications for nationals appearing on the EU’s negative list. Citizens of countries on this list are hindered from travelling out of and returning to Finland without a valid visa or residence permit, which demonstrates how hierarchical differences between certain nationalities are produced according to a logic of the coloniality of migration (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018). The article has suggested that the temporal borders become differentially activated depending on nationality and positioning on the EU’s positive/negative
list together with the migrant’s legal status. Thus, the differential activation of temporal borders intensifies the hierarchisation between legal subjectivities in a situation where the gap between different visa and residence permit categories grows following the proliferation of investor visas and investor citizenships, while naturalisation and visa requirements for the majority of the world’s citizens become more restricted (Boatcă and Roth, 2016).

In conclusion, the article has, through an examination of temporal borders, advanced the understanding of the time-related impacts of the border and visa regime and the punctuated temporality engendered among a group of temporary migrants. Through a specific focus on student-migrants, the article has contributed to the scarce literature on the effects of borders from a temporal standpoint on the lives of migrants perceived as being or on their way to becoming highly skilled. Furthermore, the article has brought a new angle to the literature on working student-migrants by demonstrating the impact of temporal borders on the production of low-paid student-migrant labour. Hence, the analysis suggests that highlighting the temporal aspects of migration control can help us come to terms with the temporary inclusion of productive subjects in the value-producing circuits of capital in the 21st century, where the quest for flexible migrant labour is becoming increasingly central (Robertson, 2019b). Moreover, it makes it possible to grasp in a more comprehensive manner the way in which global capital invests in what appears to be hybrid and heterogeneous constitutions of global economic and social spaces (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) by means of controlling and filtering migration through temporal borders.

Although this article has focused on the punctuation of lived time through temporal borders and the inclusion of student-migrants in the temporal regime of labour, student-migrants should not be conceived as only being subjected to borders and exploitation. Whether or not a non-EU/EEA student-migrant ends up working in low-paid jobs is an outcome of their legal and socio-economic status together with intersecting forms of oppression, personal networks, the correlation between their field of study and the need for labour as well as the constantly transforming political circumstances surrounding the internationalisation of education. Furthermore, despite the few social rights accorded to temporary student-migrants, they are active in their attempts to challenge structures and shape desired futures by participating in university politics and negotiating the rigid boundaries of the bureaucratic migration system.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank the editors, the anonymous reviewers as well as Lena Näre, Sarah Green and Daria Krivonos the for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this article.

Funding
This research project has been funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Academy of Finland and the Kone Foundation.

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Note
1. The student residence permit refers to the legal document for a stay exceeding three months, often referred to in Anglophone contexts as a ‘student visa’.

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**Author biography**

Olivia Maury is a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of Helsinki. Her research focuses on student-migrant workers in Finland and the entanglement of borders and precarisation in producing flexible labour force.

**Résumé**

Le jalonnement temporel créé par les visas et les permis de séjour affecte profondément la vie quotidienne des migrants temporaires. Les formes temporelles de contrôle engendrées par le régime mondial des frontières et des visas et leur impact sur la fragmentation du temps vécu ont été peu étudiés par rapport aux aspects spatiaux des migrations, qui ont fait l’objet d’études approfondies, en particulier dans le domaine de la recherche sur la mobilité conceptualisée comme une migration qualifiée. En s’appuyant sur des entretiens approfondis avec des migrants dotés d’un statut temporaire d’étudiant en Finlande, j’examine dans cet article la manière dont les frontières temporelles entraînent des temporalités jalonnées chez les étudiants migrants non originaires de l’Union européenne ou de l’Espace économique européen. Par ailleurs, je montre comment les limites temporelles des permis d’étudiant créent un terrain propice à la production d’une main-d’œuvre faiblement rémunérée et comment les frontières temporelles contribuent à hiérarchiser cette main-d’œuvre en matière de mobilité et de droits. L’article contribue à la littérature sociologique sur les migrations et les marchés du travail précaire en faisant ressortir l’importance d’analyser les frontières temporelles comme source de hiérarchisation du régime frontalier et comment les frontières temporelles favorisent la production d’une main-d’œuvre migrante précaire.

**Mots-clés**

Frontières, frontières temporelles, main-d’œuvre étrangère, migration des étudiants, permis de séjour, temporalité
Resumen
El jalonamiento en el tiempo de visados y permisos de residencia afecta íntimamente la vida cotidiana de los migrantes temporales. Las formas temporales de control engendradas a través del régimen global de fronteras y visados y su impacto en la fragmentación del tiempo de vida han recibido poca atención en comparación con los aspectos espaciales de la migración ampliamente estudiados, particularmente en el contexto de la investigación sobre la movilidad conceptualizada como migración calificada. Usando entrevistas en profundidad con inmigrantes que tienen un estatus temporal de estudiante en Finlandia, el artículo examina las formas en que las fronteras temporales provocan temporalidades jalonadas entre los estudiantes-inmigrantes no pertenecientes a la Unión Europea o al Espacio Económico Europeo. Además, demuestra cómo los límites de tiempo del permiso de estudiante crean un terreno fructífero para la producción de una fuerza laboral mal remunerada y cómo las fronteras temporales ayudan a jerarquizar esta fuerza de trabajo en términos de movilidad y derechos. El artículo contribuye a la literatura sociológica sobre migración y mercados de trabajo precarios al enfatizar la relevancia analítica de analizar las fronteras temporales como forma de generar jerarquías del régimen fronterizo y cómo las fronteras temporales facilitan la producción de mano de obra migrante precaria.

Palabras clave
Fronteras, fronteras temporales, mano de obra extranjera, migración estudiantil, permisos de residencia, temporalidad