Beyond citizenship: the material politics of alternative infrastructures

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ABSTRACT
This paper argues for a line of inquiry in the intersection between migration studies and STS work around the notion of material politics in alternative spaces. Drawing on multisited ethnographic inputs, I describe arrangements of cooperation coexisting with post-conflict reparation in Colombia and governmental humanitarianism in Greece. I follow material practices transforming objects into arrangements of remembrance and collective support and address the orders enacted by these practices as alternative infrastructures challenging infrastructures of migration control. The notion of alternative infrastructures offers the possibility to epistemically explore an overlooked angle by citizenship studies and STS; it engages with the objects and relations embedded in the materiality of everyday life and its politics beyond the boundaries of instituted forms of citizenship.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 6 December 2019
Accepted 24 May 2020

KEYWORDS
Infrastructures; material politics; solidarity; reparation

Introduction
Since 2011, following the passing of the Law of Victims (Law 1448/2012) the Colombian State has a legal obligation to compensate applicants registered as victims of the armed conflict. This regulation has deployed technological tools like the Registro Unico de Victimas (RUV), the official registration of successful applicants enabling compensation claims, psychosocial assistance, participation in productive projects, and access to job databases in relocation sites (Franco-Gamboa 2016; Ibáñez and Velásquez 2006). The RUV intersects with other objects like the Formato Unico de Declaración (FUD), the single declaration form used across the country to capture all the necessary information for subsequent assessment. The RUV and the FUD, among other objects (See Mora-Gámez 2016) enact an information infrastructure of restitution which is the cornerstone of current reparation policies in post-conflict Colombia.

In the case of the Southern European border where Greece is located, some of the objects enacting infrastructural capture include the Revised Dublin Protocol, the Qualification Directive of 2011, the Asylum Procedures Directive of the EU Migration and, more tangibly, the European Asylum Dactyloscopy (EURODAC) database. The access to governmental forms of humanitarian assistance for migrants in different countries of the EU is highly restricted and comes along with new fences (Boswell...
international agreements, massive surveillance technologies (Jacobsen 2015), and official numbers that promote an account of successful implementation of humanitarian policies, or of governmental solidarity.

The above sociotechnical systems in Colombia and Greece enact forms of statehood built on indicators including processed applications, percentages of relocated applicants, and financial resources invested, that, besides capturing people, regulate their access to rights within the national territories (Tazzioli 2017; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). Likewise, the material arrangements of spaces like reception offices and the central role of forms and databases to deal with applicants’ statements produces administrative orders (Pollozé and Passoth 2019; Thomson 2012).

An important portion of the literature addresses the technological mediations of migration management policies and the ways in which information infrastructures shape citizenship politics through normative values and paradigms. Some studies are concerned with the virtual production of migrants and citizenship (Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010), the performative effects of governmental databases on migration policies (Pelizza 2016, 2019), the configuration of infrastructures of recognition of migrants (M’charek and Casartelli 2019), and the relation between surveillance technologies and new forms of visualization of migration (Van Reekum and Schinkel 2017). Elsewhere, I examined how governmental infrastructures capture information about people and determine the access to rights and forms of participation and citizenship (Mora-Gámez 2016). A common aspect of this literature describes the continuous reproduction of asymmetries between members of society and migrants in arrival spaces. As other papers in this special issue assert, the boundaries of governmental infrastructures neglect different actors and voices (Puig de La Bellacasa 2011; Mora-Gámez 2016) while enacting forms of stateness (Passoth and Rowland 2010).

The conditional relation between infrastructural capture and access to citizenship has been conceptualised as the interdependence between the access to Rights and the inevitable Representation by the state, or the Double R Axiom of governmental systems (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008). Governmental infrastructures produce instituted, material and normative boundaries of rights and participation that shape the politics of citizenship enacted by states. This politics usually embeds the construction of suspicion about otherness, particularly of groups and individuals considered to be migrants. However, there are also material orders challenging and exceeding those normative governmental boundaries in non-instituted spaces (Papadopoulos 2018). Despite the restrictions embedded in infrastructural capture, migrants circulate information about a range of economic activities and services that are rarely available in situations of mobility like access to health services, jobs, and legal assistance in a sort of informal economy. Migrants also promote cooperation, and other forms of community exchange and care echoing what Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) define as mobile commons. These are ‘the ability to cultivate, generate and regenerate the contents, practices and affects that facilitate the movements of people’ (p.191).

In this paper, I take an STS oriented empirical step further in the mobile commons manifesto to describe the role of materiality in the production of contents, practices and affects and the ways in which object transformations also enact orders in communities of migrants in Colombia and Greece. I address these orders as alternative infrastructures, understood as emerging from material transformative practices exceeding the boundaries
of citizenship, rights and stateness. These orders differ from the material politics enacted by migration management infrastructures by offering alternative forms of existence to overcome contention. Hence, this paper is an attempt to gain a better empirical understanding of the role of mundane arrangements that do not necessarily involve the mediation of conventional technologies or information databases for migration management. For doing so, I present a contrast drawing on multisited ethnographic inputs from sites located in Colombia (during 2016) and Greece (during 2018).

Marcus (1995) describes different strategies for justifying the selection of field ethnographic sites, or making connections between them, including ‘following people’ and ‘following practices’. Besides ‘following people’ engaging in practices of crafting, I also ‘followed practices of crafting as sociomaterial practices coexisting with governmental policies of reparation in Colombia and solidarity for asylum seekers in Greece. Following material transformation in non-instituted spaces offers potential routes to account for the ways in which alternative infrastructures are unfolded to trespass the boundaries of citizenship. Both locations illustrate how instituted citizenship is produced by sociotechnical systems of contention of internal and transnational migration. The cases of Colombia and Greece show how, in sociotechnical terms at least, the deployment of migration management policies (internal/transnational) consists of extended bordering practices beyond geographic borders (Mora-Gámez 2016). Therefore, I bring together ethnographic inputs from Colombia and Greece as two contrastable sites where making practices challenge citizenship.

Similarly, Colombia and Greece are sites where migration is intertwined in ongoing and controversial policy projects like post-conflict reparation and governmental humanitarianism. Despite the differences in terms of historic contingencies, colonial relations of power and mobilised political projects in each location, migrants develop strategies to challenge such bordering practices. Many of these strategies promote claims against the injustice of bureaucratic contention, institutional forms of generalised violence, the lack of alternatives provided by state policies, and the precarity of assistance.

First, I describe how material practices of commemorating and sewing allow migrants to challenge the boundaries of instituted forms of participation and recognition. I then contrast the convergences and particularities of both cases around the relation between materiality, politics and migration. Finally, I draw on both ethnographic experiences to elaborate on the notion of alternative infrastructures and how it shifts our attention towards spaces where alternative materiality is produced.

Mobile memorials

While walking in the city centre of Bogotá, my reflections about the ongoing situation in Colombia are interrupted by a unique arrangement. Several pictures of protests, occupations, riots, police interventions, assassinated politicians, assassinated human rights defenders, marches, and other similar events are being exhibited in front of crowds of people. This incredible street exhibition is quite successful in recruiting walking spectators including myself, fascinated by the disposition of the images, the captions accompanying them, and the thematic sections. The disposition of the arrangement becomes especially attractive: two lampposts, a rope, multiple pictures, printed quotes...
protected in plastic hanging from the rope, and a constantly changing audience who pause in their walks to read and appreciate the hanging material.

Most of the angles of the images in the street exhibition suggest that the photographer is someone who was part of the scenes. There does not seem to be any curator or organiser of the exhibition in the street but a few minutes later Manuel, approaches me asking if I like the visual display. My affirmative tone does not hide my fascination for the content of the exhibition, so he starts telling me about how the pictures were taken. ‘I took this one in 2010 when we were protesting for the victims of Patriotic Union’, ‘that one was when we were kicked out of the Plaza with a group of victims of crimes of the State’, ‘this is when I marched with a movement of peasants in 2013’ were only some of his descriptions of a long list of events mostly absent from the news.

After being violently displaced when he was a teenager, Manuel belonged to different peasants’ movements and was a member of a guerrilla group that surrendered in the 1990s. While living in a rural area, he was again displaced by paramilitary forces in the early 2000s and has lived in Bogotá ever since. For Manuel, instead of helping people, the administrative procedures of registration have become increasingly restricting, discouraging applicants from persisting in pursuing compensations. He avoids my questions about his status in the official record of victims, but I manage to understand that he gathered enough money after a few months in Bogotá to buy a camera. ‘Nobody was willing to employ me, so I decided to take the camera and show a different lens on reality’ which is the purpose of his gallery.

The gallery has existed for several years and Manuel assures me that he exhibits new pictures every time he installs the gallery in a different place. Although most of the pictures were taken by him, he has also included pictures donated by people from the movements in which he participates. He does not sell those pictures to the public though; he only commercializes his own pictures. Manuel tells me how he has continuously moved his gallery to those many cities where he has been invited by protesters, communities, and social movements. He has also installed his gallery in other countries like Ecuador, Venezuela and Perú to ‘stimulate people’s conscience, eradicate mental poverty, and reduce the lack of memory in Colombia and Latin America. However, Manuel also describes the many times that the police have unsuccessfully tried to remove his gallery from the public space and how he has cleverly used those moments to enrich it with pictures of the dismantling.

The attempt to create a divergent account of violence, the blurred lines between the identities of victim and perpetrator, and the positive reception of Manuel’s pictures by different types of audience make of his gallery an unconventional memorial. When analysing the commemorative practices around the London bombings in 2005, Matthew Allen and Brown (2011) explain how a particular kind of arrangement, described by one of their participants as a living memorial, differs from others since it makes connections at the level of lives rather than symbols. Living memorials are not entirely finished since they manage to exist precisely by ‘changing and evolving (p.316), partly because they rely on artefacts and sites; they strongly depend on the living labour of people whose ongoing activities constitute the physical basis of the memorial. Like these living memorials, mobile arrangements like Manuel’s Memory Gallery also have the capacity to establish connections between ongoing events of protests, marches, and
occupations. However, the Memory Gallery is not a charity and nor does it exist in formal documents.

The gallery is never the same and is not finished; instead it also “commemorates through transformation” (Allen and Brown 2011, 323) by the continual material addition of new artefacts and only exists due to its constant reconfiguration. If such constant transformation ever ceased, the gallery would too. Besides the connections with ongoing events and the constant transformation, a further definitional feature of this kind of commemoration is mobility. The continuous actions of the police certainly impair the display of the gallery and Manuel often struggles to find new places to install it. However, the mobility of the gallery allows it to prevent its permanent dismantling. Some of the efforts of the police to shut it down result in its enrichment insofar as Manuel takes pictures of the dismantling to include them in his future exhibitions. Hence, arrangements like Manuel’s gallery are forms of Mobile Memorial. Besides cultivating and generating the contents and affects that facilitate movement, Mobile Memorials collect, circulate, share, and protect accounts that do not attempt to unmake the experiences of pain and suffering into numbers. This does not mean that Mobile Memorials do not transform such experiences into pictures or similar artefacts, but differently from the politics enacted by governmental infrastructures, there seems to be an acknowledgement of people’s pain (Das 1998) and people’s mobilizations instead of an attempt at containment and control.

Instead of victimhood and statehood, the events commemorated in this memorial are mobilization and the construction of alternative accounts of ongoing struggles with the State, of which the Colombian armed conflict happens to be a part. While the accounts assembled by official registration insist on the armed conflict as a past event, the images exhibited in this mobile memorial challenge post-conflict narratives and the forms of citizenship it embeds. One of the ongoing narratives built upon the official record of victims and official memory institutions addresses the Colombian State as a repairing actor, as the implementer of effective policies coherent with international standards of human rights regulations and the modern values they embed. Registered applicants and post-conflict audiences should embrace such claims about the state in their statements when applying for registration (Mora-Gámez 2016). However, Mobile Memorials challenge such forms of inclusion by positioning the Colombian State precisely as one of the actors of the armed conflict. Mobile Memorials produce audiences engaging with alternative material accounts of violence diverging from institutional memory. Yet, as Arthur (2009) claims, the question is not about the adequacy of the commemorations but the type of connections that they make possible and the ‘new modes of capturing, storing, presenting and sharing data in people’s daily lives’ that have an effect on ‘the way that lives are recalled, reconstructed and represented’ (p. 46). With his Gallery, Manuel has facilitated commemorative practices about people struggling with the institutional boundaries of citizenship and statehood. Such responsible commemorative work might be properly addressed by what Conway (2010) defines as “memory choreographers’ to describe people who either voluntarily or because of a sense of obligation create arrangements in which collective memories can exist. Mobile Memorials make visible forms of mobility and ways in which people challenge the boundaries of post-conflict citizenship; Mobile Memorials enact a form of reparation and remembrance that exceeds human rights policies.
Relatedly, in a study about informal memory galleries employed by the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) in Colombia, González-Caballero (2016) suggests that these galleries seek the transformation of the ‘political culture of those who observe, in a process that he describes as a “cognitive, emotional, and moral resocialization against the meanings, emotional rules and moral principles supporting […] relations of domination’ (p.157). Technologies are assemblages of humans and things (Latour 2005) that can also enact the social world while transforming the subjective state of affairs of humans (see Brown 2012; Derksen, Vikkelso, and Beaulieu 2012; Mora-Gámez and Brown 2019). Similarly, Mobile Memorials assemble mobile audiences, pictures, ropes, lampposts, and choreographers. These assemblages enact an order comprised of protests and other situations of mobility. This sociomaterial order challenges also the notions of victim and reparation promoted by post-conflict. It promotes alternative forms of participation beyond instituted channels for street audiences. Different from official Memory Museums sponsored by the Colombian State, Mobile Memorials destabilise the social imaginary about the State as an effective implementer of a modern project of rights restitution as a solution for the consequences of a long-sustained war.

Whereas the material politics of the channels of participation of citizens in official registration and memory are technologically shaped by one of the actors of the armed conflict, the materiality of Mobile Memorials displays a claim for the redistribution of agency by exposing the political asymmetry of governmental infrastructures. Infrastructures for migration control produce migrants as evidence-providers, whereas Mobile Memorials shift the attention of relevant audiences towards plausible reasons to distrust the Colombian State and its project of reparation.

**Recrafting Workshops**

The material politics of instituted infrastructures revolves around surveillance and contention shaping the everyday life of migrants. Bordering practices that extend beyond the fences create unbearable situations that make some migrants desist from their applications, engage in illegal actions like working, or even get imprisoned or deported. Although the Greek coasts are not full of fences and walls, the subsequent contention explicitly and strongly discourages migrants from persisting in their journeys towards their inclusion in instituted forms of citizenship. In this section I explain how engaging in a sewing workshop allows its participants to persist in their border crossing and challenge extended bureaucratic contention. Remaining bureaucratic barriers are still to be crossed and, as I will describe, spaces like the workshop permit migrants to challenge them in unexpected ways.

One of the participants in the sewing workshop was Ivan, a migrant living in a squat in Athens. He tells me about his experience of arriving in Lesvos in 2016. He describes his journey by boat from Turkey toward the Greek coasts as the longest in his life. His detailed description is honoured by the interpreter who tries to match the speed of Ivan’s narration. His recollection of the events revolves around the weight of the rubber boat that he had to carry across the Turkish coast, his fear of being caught by border officers, and the difficulty of starting the engine of the boat in the dark. He also remembers how he struggled to grab the boat during his journey to avoid falling into the water. Ivan frequently mentions that his life vest was not properly fastened. Although Ivan was
extremely scared, he managed to console a boy whose mother was panicking. At the same time, he was grabbing the ropes around the rubber boat to resist the movement of the strong waves. In those moments of the trip, Ivan remembered all his journey before Turkey, his family left behind and the situations that made him flee from his country. He expresses his desire to avoid those memories during our encounter, so we focus on his time in Athens.

One year after applying for asylum, Ivan’s application has been successful. He must now bring his documents to the relocation office in Monastiraki in Athens. He explains that he became part of the squat soon after his arrival in Athens. He chose it in preference to a refugee camp. He explains - they don’t allow you to do anything in there [in the camps], and I don’t want to become tamed for food and bed-. His role in the squat consists of cooking for 400 people approximately, regularly cleaning the facilities, fixing electrical issues in the building, and patrolling the balconies to warn about the presence of the police and neo-Nazi groups attempting to enter the building. His life in Athens drastically changed when volunteers from Germany invited him to participate in a sewing workshop. I am invited by him and one of the volunteers, Gina, to visit the workshop in our next encounter.

A few sewing machines, several tables, uncountable amounts of thread, chairs, a couple of drawers, and three people comprise my first view of the workshop. I don’t know exactly what is being made in these facilities, and I cannot identify in detail the materials or the products. I simply observe people sewing while I am waiting for Ivan and Gina. I can see a printed timetable hanging from the wall specifying the number of products sewed by every participant. Soon after that, my hosts take me to the storage room where I will have a better idea of the purpose of the workshop.

Rubber pieces from the boats, discarded floating life vests, belts, bags and boxes are some of the materials available in the storage room. An extended period of silence is my first reaction when entering the room. Those materials are the remains of migration across the southern sea borders of the EU; they are the remnants from crossing the sea seeking safety. These objects have been in contact with hundreds of migrant bodies during their journey towards Lesvos. Once on safe land, the passage of migrants from the beach leaves a trace of rubber and fabric.

Gina and Ivan explain that every week, several boats arrive on the Greek coasts of Mytilene transporting dozens of migrants from different countries whose final point of departure was Turkey. The journey previously described by Ivan becomes now more familiar and is powerfully summoned by the materials that I am observing. Gina points out that those boxes and bags in the storage room were sent a few weeks before by volunteers and migrants living in Mytilene. We just ask them to try to send large pieces of rubber and objects in the best possible condition says Gina, addressing the selection criteria. Their friends in Mytilene try to collect complete pieces and functional vests but only 3 or 4 pieces out of 10 turn out to be useful for the workshop. Using a network of friends working in transportation with enough space in their trucks and boats, these pieces of rubber, belts and vests are sent to Athens in small batches.

The usable but still dirty pieces are now cut using a variety of moulds. Only at this point are the rubber and the usable belts cleaned for the first time. Migrants participating in the workshop explain how they try to remove the dirt as much as possible. Meanwhile, volunteers prefer to remove some of the dirt but not all of it. Ivan and Gina have been
somewhat silent about the outcome of all these procedures. Ivan allows me to talk to him while he is sewing. Sewing is something he didn’t know how to do until he came to Athens. Volunteers and other migrants taught him how to use the machines, the thread and how to connect the rubber pieces. His hands firmly hold the rubber. During his periods of concentration, I imagine him trying to hold the same kind of rubber but inside the boat on his journey ‘At the beginning [of his time at the workshop], I used to remember my arrival all the time’ Ivan comments at some point ‘It is not the case anymore’. Ivan describes how he is aware of the origin of the materials and how it becomes one more reason to be careful about the results. The same hands are again touching the rubber, but this time not in order to cross a geographic border. Dozens of bags, wallets and keychains are sewed in the workshop and sent to groups of friends (volunteers and migrants) in Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands.

The arrangement rubber-Ivan crossing the sea is not the same arrangement present in the workshop. I ask Ivan about his struggles during the application period and his time in Greece. Some of his friends from his journey living in refugee camps had their applications rejected, others were caught working illegally and imprisoned, others were deported, and others possibly made their way to other EU countries as stowaways departing from Patras towards Italy. Hunger, loneliness, worry but especially boredom emerge as recurrent topics in his words - Boredom makes you do silly things, but mainly when they [the refugee camps] take away your skills and abilities to exist on your own (...) sewing, not as a job saved my life- I ask him to elaborate.

You see, I am now kind of an expert at sewing, more like a tailor, my work helps people and collects donations for friends in Germany. They help us in the same way by sending supplies. I eat here, have coffee, sometimes a nap before going back to the squat to fulfill my duties. I am making something out of all this waste, all this misery, all this rubbish charged with so many bad feelings. I make something useful, nice, clean from all those pieces. This lets me better endure the time waiting for a response.

As Ivan explains, the material transformation of objects is one way of defeating contention through cooperation and solidarity. In these interactions between bodies, sewing machines and rubber, boats and vests are reconfigured into mobile and transgressive objects that make visible a part of their journey. Recrafting Workshops do not consist exclusively in the transformation of objects like rubber and thread. Memory, affect and subjectivity are also recrafted into something different. While sewing, the journey is remade, rubber is transformed, and the contention posed by instituted infrastructures is challenged.

Information infrastructures for migration and border control in the EU materialize a narrative of humanitarian policies towards migrants. Their politics reproduces the modern material legacies of human rights by deploying technologies of capture that translate narratives into codes, bodies into data, and a colonial history of exploitation triggering violence and forced migration into successful asylum indicators. On the contrary, Recrafting Workshops like Ivan’s, encourage practices that are community attempts to share skills among the participants. The cooperation of Ivan and their communities was neither accidental nor a product of formal training. Their literacy for recrafting rubber was precisely the result of engaging with the materiality of sewing machines while exploring their routes, constraints, and alternative resources. As
Papadopoulos (2018) explains “constraints in instituted technoscience are always a matter of secrecy, while in community technoscience and experimentation the knowledge of constraints becomes common property, the fuel of material literacy’ (p.171). Whereas the limits and restrictions of instituted citizenship indeed become a matter of secrecy for civil servants and other actors involved in the management of information infrastructures, these same restrictions are inputs for material literacy, leadership, and widely acknowledged expertise in communities of migrants. Their shared literacy transforms their world while recrafting rubber to restore justice through everyday material practices.

The long waiting times, as in the Colombian case, discourage applicants to persist in extended bordering practices and relocation. Conversely, the material politics of arrangements like the Recrafting Workshops opens new channels of participation and provides means of persistence within extended bordering processes. Different from the governmental infrastructures seeking contention and public accountability, crafting practices transforming rubber and thread, allow migrants to overcome contention infrastructures. The donations received by volunteers are used in the workshop to obtain more materials and sustain such spaces of cooperation. The distribution of bags and wallets are also led by relocated migrants across the EU who send the donations back in the form of clothes, food and other material aids. These collaborations expand the alternatives of the participants of the workshop by modestly supplying some of their basic needs, permitting their persistence during the long waiting times of asylum application and relocation.

But the material politics of Recrafting Workshops is not only about the possibilities of surviving long waiting periods. It is also about the audiences reached by recrafted objects, and the alliances and accounts they mobilise. For example, the rustiness of the materials enacts a specific audience across different countries of the EU. Here, the preference of migrants for cleaner objects is understandable. My interpretation frames this preference as an attempt to materialise the persistence of something good and transparent despite the difficulties of the journey. On the contrary, the desire of volunteers to keep some of the dirt and rustiness addresses a different concern. They want donors to understand the extent of the difficulties and struggles of migrants’ journeys. The dirt in the rubber is evidence of its authenticity and intensity and it produces a particular audience of the journey, a kind of spectator interested in acquiring a symbol of that journey while supporting a network of actors and alliances across the EU Gina corroborates my interpretation arguing that they seek something very different from those commercial brands whose production methods involve slavery and suffering in developing countries. The bags, wallets and keychains crafted in this workshop seek to make explicit the suffering of the producers.

Migrant bodies recraft the objects that transported them across the geographic border. The memories relationally embedded in rubber and vests from the boats now coexist with new memories and affective relations built on cooperation, solidarity and psychosocial support. The kind of solidarity materialized in this space from rubber and thread makes visible the overcoming of experiences of migrants’ journeys. As in the case of post-conflict Colombia (Jaramillo 2012; Mora-Gámez 2016), instituted infrastructures comprised of forms, databases and official numbers assemble a form of statehood grounded in a narrative of humanitarianism across the EU. Meanwhile, Recrafting Workshops
reassemble everyday spaces across different member states by granting partial visibility to usually neglected stories; this is the politics of alternative infrastructures.

**Alternative infrastructures**

Governmental reparation and humanitarianism are enacted by infrastructures seeking the production of indicators for public accountability and the bureaucratic management of migrants within the EU territory. Despite the normative boundaries and material politics of citizenship enacted by such infrastructures, the practices of people wishing to claim citizenship have importantly become formal and informal acts articulating civil, political and social rights (Isin 2009/2017; Squire 2014). From a sociomaterial perspective, the enactment of citizenship is also carried out by migrants ‘propos[ing] their own chains of actors, data, and metadata (Pelizza 2019, 19). The possibility of peace in post-conflict Colombia currently involves the participation of movements of victims and of former militants of the guerrillas (McFee and Rettberg 2019), collective subjects of reparation, and various representatives of activist movements and NGOs. Yet, the achievements of arrangements like Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops exceed the claim of rights or citizenship although they challenge its boundaries and normativity. Instead, the sociomateriality embedded in street memorials and rubber transformation also involves actors who often do not desire to engage in such inscription processes. Their achievements are also material recreations reconfiguring memories, opening potential forms of engagement, and making visible the struggles involved in the journey of migrants. Whereas governmental infrastructures in Greece and Colombia seek contention and quantification, alternative infrastructures pursue mobility, the recovery of conditions that were lost and the challenging of instituted boundaries of citizenship through (re)crafting.

Isin (2019) emphasizes citizenship as practice and explains the multiplicity of ways of doing citizenship, its enactments and performativity. This acknowledgement is valuable in reframing citizenship outside legal scenarios. Acts of citizenship are then also ways of “doing rights with things (p.50). Some of the articles in this special issue are interested in how rights get enacted through technologies and infrastructures of migration management and control. Similarly, Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops might be understood as arrangements that also enact rights for migrants. However, acts of citizenship might or might not be part of alternative infrastructures. Most of the achievements of these infrastructures like exposing state crimes or finding donors for asylum seekers would not be recognized by state institutions as rights or legitimate democratic participation. The enactments of alternative infrastructures are not restricted to the gaining of rights in one way or another; instead, these infrastructures contest the very notions of citizenship, rights, reparation and humanitarianism in the building of post-conflict Colombia and of EU asylum policies. Alternative infrastructures escape the contention by migration management infrastructures, and exceed their channels of participation.

Papadopoulos (2018) explains that *infrastructures* can be alliances between humans and non-humans as material communities of justice (p.175). As I have empirically described, this restoration does not take place in plain sight but in almost imperceptible spaces. Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007) address this imperceptibility as an inherent feature of mobility since it “adapts differently to each particular context, changes its faces,
links unexpected social actors together, absorbs and reshapes the sovereign dynamics targeting its control (p.3). But contrary to what is said about infrastructures (Star 1999), infrastructural repair in these alternative arrangements is not about addressing a breakdown, but providing alternative forms of existence (Jensen and Morita 2015) exceeding those forms granted within the boundaries of citizenship and stateness. Thus, displaying pictures and sewing rubber are not mere passive responses to oppression, contention, or structural violence. These practices consist of shared forms of knowledge encouraging the creation of new forms of existence for people in mobility seeking the restoration of everydayness. It is the shared materiality of these arrangements that make it possible for other actors to continue expanding the network of collaborators of the memorial and the workshop in urban spaces, arrival points and relocation countries.

These alternative forms of existence are precisely what make arrangements like Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops, material spaces that allow migrants to challenge instituted forms of citizenship through everyday material practices. This infrastructural repair consists of the pursuit of everyday justice and also (but not merely) as the restoration of relations that were broken, withdrawn or neglected by states and the narratives of rights. This can be understood as the opening of new forms of engagement and the possibility of making visible their own journeys. Thereby, the material politics of alternative infrastructures permit the crossing of extended bordering practices, the dramatising of normative rules of rights enacting statehood boundaries, and the navigation around governmental forms of rights and capture. In the entanglements between governmental and alternative infrastructures, resistance against border regimes is not a preexisting entity. Resistance, in this context, is a relational achievement, it is what migrants and social movements make of the materials they transform, the connections they establish and the build alliances involving also non-humans.

Here, two notions of justice seem to coexist. On the one hand, justice can be understood as a restorative or humanitarian action of rights allegedly offered by governmental infrastructures conditional on contention. On the other hand, there is a notion of justice as something achieved in daily practices that, besides coping with the bureaucratic procedures of accessing rights, pursues alternative available resources that are not necessarily provided by governmental infrastructures or their forms of citizenship. In the second understanding, restoring justice exceeds post-conflict statehood, citizenship as a state project, and governmental humanitarianism; and this is something evident to the interlocutors I address in this paper. Their forms of infrastructural repair enact a different form of material politics based on cooperation, support and everyday transformations.

The affective processes involved in displaying pictures and transforming the rubber from the boats into other objects also embed the relational reconfiguration of memories. As explained before, living memorials are not finished since they manage to exist precisely by “changing and evolving (p.316), partly because they rely on artefacts and sites; they strongly depend on the living labour of people whose ongoing activities constitute the physical basis of the memorial. Mobile objects emerging from transformative material processes like the bags made from the rubber also establish connections between lives and bodies. The bags are never the same being rustically produced. Like the Mobile Memorials, Recrafting Workshops “commemorate[s] through transformation (Allen and Brown 2011, 323) by the continual addition of new artefacts, existing due to
their affective reconfiguration. A further definitional feature of this kind of commemoration is mobility which allows the bags to escape from becoming instituted or completely marketized. Besides cultivating and generating the contents and affects that facilitate movement, Mobile Memorials collect, circulate, share, and protect accounts that do not attempt to reduce the journey of migrants into numbers. They also protect the accounts and commemorations of those who do not engage in claims for citizenship or rights but seek alternatives to “cope with their present life (Quiceno Toro 2016, 16)

Governmental infrastructures deploy similar logics in sociotechnical terms. Despite being used only within the national territory, reparation in Colombia defines the boundaries of its post-conflict project. On the other hand, in the EU, governmental infrastructures contribute to the fortification of borders and the control of migrants’ mobility within member states. In both cases, alternative infrastructures seek to challenge different aspects of governmental infrastructures. Mobile Memorials in Colombia make visible the role of the state as an actor in the processes of violence instigating migration. This raises various questions for the potential role of alternative infrastructures in the arrival and relocation countries of the EU: how could those infrastructures make visible the historic (colonial) role of the EU in the relations of exploitation instigating migration from non-EU countries? Could we reframe the narratives of governmental humanitarianism in the EU into cases of reparation instead? What kind of arrangements would be necessary for this? This is not exclusively a matter of acts or enactments of citizenship, but also of affective engagement, remembrance and material political projects. The location of these practices in Greece and its emphasis on solving everyday needs does not leave aside the relations between the EU and the countries of origin of the migrants engaging in sewing. There is a historical debt owed by the EU that requires acknowledgement in this setting. Alternative infrastructures could potentially engage more visibly in such critical (decolonising) tasks. But it could certainly be a task of situated research to engage with such alternative sociomateriality.

The material politics of alternative infrastructures

Access to governmental forms of reparation and solidarity is highly restrictive and is accompanied by increasing screening and surveillance technologies. seeking to identify those who try to access benefits or to be relocated despite failing to fulfil the necessary requirements. These technologies tend to produce migrants as potential imposters and to reassemble the restrictive boundaries of citizenship and its asymmetric channels of participation. Meanwhile, alternative infrastructures enact new audiences and provide means for survival during prolonged waiting times. The forms of participation promoted by alternative infrastructures like Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops are beyond the boundaries of instituted citizenship. Alternative infrastructures enact an imperceptible form of politics that allow migrants to challenge the instituted forms of citizenship enacted through governmental sociomaterial contention.

I have presented two examples of alternative infrastructures. Drawing on the repertoire of STS, I have reflected on the material practices of migrants and the politics they enact. Such materiality is not limited to claims for citizenship and rights since it also deals with the excess that escapes citizenship and rights as capturing projects. In the Colombian case, I explicated how alternative infrastructures interrogate the narratives
of post-conflict and state reparation. Mobile Memorials promote a narrative that explicitly challenges the role of the state in the armed conflict. It exposes the irony and insufficiency of governmental reparation. Mobile Memorials are not necessarily an option for migrants seeking to persist in their application procedures. Meanwhile, Recrafting Workshops in the Greek case provide an alternative for migrants waiting for relocation or seeking permanence. Although bags made of rubber make visible the journey, the restrictive role of the EU bordering policies is not so explicit in the material display of the object. The display of the irony of EU humanitarian policies, and the historical debt of reparation that it entails, requires further unpacking. This is most likely to occur in the delivery of the bags by volunteers in Germany and Sweden; this aspect requires further research.

The manifesto of the mobile commons provides insights about the constitution of alternative orders. Drawing on empirical cases, I have explicated how materiality mediates these orders and how these practices enact the commons as relational achievements. Nevertheless, Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops reconfigure more than pictures and rubber. Mobile commons deployed in alternative infrastructures also involve reconfiguring objects, memories and affects that relate to citizenship, but that also fall beyond the scope of its instituted boundaries. The reconfiguration of memory by alternative infrastructures is more explicit in the Colombian case, whereas their facilitation of persistence to challenge bureaucratic procedures is more predominant in the Greek case. I have reflected on the ways in which these arrangements challenge instituted forms of citizenship whose boundaries are enacted by governmental infrastructures. I claim that the possibilities of alternative infrastructures are not reduced exclusively to ‘acts of citizenship’. Instead, the relational achievements of Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops exceed the claims for citizenship and rights. The politics enacted by alternative infrastructures consists precisely in challenging and provoking the material politics of governmental infrastructures.

Alternative infrastructures pose a variety of questions that deserve more consideration. One example is how these arrangements are shaped by the ongoing migration landscape in Colombia. At the time of writing, thousands of Venezuelan nationals are applying for asylum and work permits in the main cities of Colombia while others are massively crossing the border on their way back to Venezuela, escaping the precarity triggered by quarantine and other Covid-19 contention measures particularly affecting migrants. Likewise, given the recent changes in the political arena in Greece with increasingly restrictive policies towards migrants including sanitary contention, how alternative infrastructures are shaped by (and are shaping) these changes is also a relevant question for the argument presented in this paper.

The notion of alternative infrastructures potentially bridges promising dialogues with ongoing research about the politics of crafting practices. For instance, the implications of “rebel markets of street vendors in Spain (Zepeda 2017), the politics of textile practices of social movements of women in Colombia (Sánchez-Aldana, Pérez-Bustos, and Chocontá-Piraquite 2019, Pérez-Bustos, Sánchez-Aldana, and Chocontá-Piraquite 2019), the politics performed by spatial strategies used by migrants against governmental infrastructural projects in Spain (Chiappini, Scheerlinck, and Schoonjans 2019), and the women’s liberation movements that emerged in Britain in the late 1960s (Withers 2019), among other empirically grounded studies. As a term, alternative
infrastructures describe orders exceeding the boundaries of statehood and institutional projects. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the boundaries between instituted and alternative infrastructures are blurred and dynamic and there is a spectrum of possibilities of intersections. After all, both kinds of infrastructures build on installed bases (Star 1999, 382) and transform the inertia of those inherited bases with material practices.

The study of the material politics of alternative infrastructures can help us to gain a better understanding of the continuities and discontinuities of the material legacies of what we call nowadays rights, democratic channels of participation and citizenship. By engaging with arrangements like Mobile Memorials and Recrafting Workshops taking place in unconventional spaces, STS and migration studies can also address such discontinuities in critical, empirical and transformative ways; thinking with commemorating and crafting practices is crucial to gain a better understanding of those material orders exceeding the boundaries of instituted citizenship.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the editorial team of this special issue for their generous comments and suggestions. Thanks also to my colleagues at the FLOV and SOCAV seminars in Gothenburg University, the GESCTM seminar at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and the Technology and Borders Migration Group at National and Kapodistrian University in Athens. Their inputs and continuous support were crucial for the reflections presented in this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

The research of this article was partially funded by the UKRI Newton-Caldas fund (AH/R013640/1) and the Swedish Research Council, VR (VR990780).

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