Intersecting Mobilities

Declassing and Migration from the Viewpoint of Organising within and against Precarity

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Abstract: Many recent political debates have revolved around the supposed opposition between the interests of ›local workers‹ and ›migrants‹. Any social theory that wants to question this opposition must break with the long tradition of methodological nationalism. Such methodological nationalism naturalises the nation state as a framework for social science, and turns the nation state's legal and governmental divisions of local workers and migrants into reified and reductive categories. This article shows that there is an alternative to this approach in migrant and precarity organising within the context of declassing and crisis migration in Europe today. Engaging with the case of the Vienna Precarity Office, it shows how class and migration-status cannot be understood separately, but must be understood as outcomes of strategies of social reproduction. Regarding the ways the outwardly and downwardly mobile compose in precarity organising, the article suggests that such experiences open ways to overcome the separations and reifications of (methodological) nationalism.

Keywords: precarity, migration, class, social reproduction, organising

In recent years, Europe has been in the throes of two crises: The so-called ›crisis of migration‹ and the economic crisis. Within a context of economic decline and welfare retrenchment, many have turned against migrants and refugees in the name of protecting scarce jobs, opportunities and welfare services for locals.[1] There already exists a varied literature in welfare studies describing these attitudes as welfare chauvinism and nativism (Van Der Waal/De Koster/Van Oorschot 2013; Loch/Norocel 2015). However, this literature has one key presupposition in common with welfare chauvinism itself, namely the idea that class is bounded by nationhood: Where the latter privileges a supposedly threatened national middle or working class, the former analyses class as a bounded unit in terms of national statistics. Whether due

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1 | This shift is recognisable, not only in the discourses of right-wing populists such as Farrage, Le Pen and Hofer, but also in a rightward turn of social democracy, with leaders in both Austria and Denmark breaching the topic of possible government coalitions with the far right.

to a strong belief in the imagined (Anderson 2006) or statistical community of the nation (Mitchell 1998), migrants and refugees are presented as strangers within a national class structure and welfare system. Despite the ostensibly critical and egalitarian *Erkenntnisinteresse* (Habermas 1968) of welfare studies and the class theories it draws on, its methodological nationalism, which it shares with much of social theory (Chernilo 2006), leads it to pose the question of migration and class in a way that hinges on the nation-state, and the degree of its willingness and capacity to show solidarity with outsiders. This is a framing that is limited by the same pragmatic, imaginary and institutional horizon as welfare chauvinism itself: In other words, it shares the *problematic* – how do migrants fit within a national class and solidarity structure? – with welfare chauvinism. This limits its political and institutional instruments to the framework of the nation state (Beck 2002: 32–33; Curran 2013). Nathan Sznaider and Ulrich Beck raised this as an important challenge, when they wrote that

> »*class* [...] must be released from the fetters of methodological nationalism, re-conceptualized, and empirically established within the framework of a new cosmopolitan social and political science.« (Beck/Sznaider 2006: 6)

Meanwhile, migration studies is undergoing a thorough self-critique of methodological nationalism. This critique concerns the tendency to ignore differences between people such as class, gender and ethnicity (Sager 2016: 54), as well as to reify »›migrants‹ as a distinct category of human mobility (or, mobile humanity)« (De Genova 2013: 253). What class theory and classical migration studies have in common is an obsession with identification and identity. Identification reduces complex interconnected lives to the categories of social science and national statistics (›migrant‹, ›working class‹ etc.). It provides categories that are useful for governance or for fortifying identities. The politics based on such reductive identities or identifications miss the intersectionality of problems, the hybridity of subjectification and the transversality of political organising and composition. It misses what Homi Bhabha called *vernacular cosmopolitanism*[2] and the connections between migrants and non-migrants within social fields of differential power (Wimmer/Glick Schiller 2002: 324).

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2 | »The vernacular cosmopolitan takes the view that the commitment to a ›right to difference in equality‹ as a process of constituting emergent groups and affiliations has less to do with the affirmation or authentication of origins and ›identities‹, and more to do with political practices and ethical choices. Minoritarian affiliations or solidarities arise in response to the failures and limits of democratic representation, creating new modes of agency, new strategies of recognition, new forms of political and symbolic representation.« (Bhabha 1994: xvii–xviii). We

In recent years, many initiatives by precarious EU-migrant workers in the cities of the north of Europe have been key in re-problematising the economic crisis as a process of declassing, uprooting and of new forms of solidarity and everyday economy. They also serve to combat the proto-racist stereotyping of ›PIGS‹ populations, which portrays them as threatening migrants in a climate of growing hostility towards people who may rely on local social systems (Curcio 2014), extending long-running prejudices against Eastern European migrants. Thus, these groups engage in a timely and situated (Haraway 1988) articulation of a critical discourse around Europe, crisis and migration. While there are many examples of local groups initiated by intra-EU migrants within Northern European cities, the first part of this text will focus on the experience of the Precarity Office in Vienna, which from 2013 onwards has been organised by different EU and non-EU-migrants together with local activists around common issues. Militant research practices make it possible to engage with such vernacular cosmopolitanisms as situated and strategic action and thought (Malo de Molina 2004; Colectivo Situaciones 2003; De Genova 2013; Garelli/Tazzioli 2013).

The second part of the text (sections 4–6) reflects on how these perspectives allow a theoretical reconceptualisation of class and migration starting from social reproduction theory, understood as a theory of strategies of life responding to the contingencies and precariousness of livelihoods, especially within crises.

This explorative text aims to demonstrate that without an understanding of the tactical, strategic, affective and relational aspects of classing and migration, class theory and migration studies can only operate within a regime of identity and identification. To achieve such an understanding, the »cosmopolitan social science« advocated by Beck and Sznaider is absolutely inadequate. What is needed is *militant research* able to engage with the actualities and possibilities of composition between migrants and non-migrants, between different groups of precarious people.

THE PRECARITY OFFICE VIENNA

The Precarity Office in Vienna is only one of many examples of local groups started by intra-EU migrants, often together with locals and migrants from beyond the EU, to organise solidarity, mutual aid, debates and campaigns around the European crisis. The forerunners of these groups were young politicised people from Greece

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have elsewhere written about cities as spaces of cosmopolitanism from below (Hansen/Zechner 2016).

and Spain, who moved north to find work or to study during the early parts of the European crisis. The Juventud Sin Futuro and Marea Granate networks of Spanish migrants function as support networks in places of arrival as well as running translocal campaigns.[3] Greeks have self-organised abroad via solidarity groups, such as the Solidarity4All[4] network or the local Spira Graz[5], linking Greek initiatives with cities and Greek people across the globe.

The concrete inspiration of the Precarity Office came from the long-standing local experience of the Oficina Precaria, a self-organised advice centre for unemployed/precarious people in Madrid in the context of the 15 Movement. It travelled north with many of the activists that left Spain to find jobs, most conspicuously giving name to the Precarity Office in Vienna and the Oficina Precaria Berlin. As Juventud Sin Futuro write,

> »[...] young people are obliged to choose between unemployment, precarity or forced exile. However, this last option is no solution either: beyond our borders there's no paradise of work to be found. Precarity is an epidemic evil in all of Europe, and one suffers it as much in English, French and German as in Spanish.« (Juventud Sin Futuro 2011)

We became involved in the Precarity Office from its very beginning. Manuela was active in setting it up while Bue became a fellow traveller.[6] The Precarity Office Vienna was born in 2013 amidst a perceived need to develop new platforms for transnational organisation and solidarity in a way that connects to the everyday lives of people in the economic crisis. Its starting point was thus an alliance between a local precarity-organising group (the Prekär Café, with much experience and knowledge around labour rights, local regulations and institutions), the Spanish Emmigrants' platform Marea Granate Vienna/Juventud Sin Futuro Vienna and the Greek Solidarity4All Vienna. All three groups functioned as support and information networks as well as platforms for campaigns and protest. All three groups were built on a desire to organise together on the basis of lived problems (precarity and migration), rather

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3 | »No nos vamos, nos echan« was an impressive campaign documenting the trajectories and reasons of young people that left Spain after the unfolding of the crisis in 2008, see www.nonosvamosnosechan.net. But these groups also ran several campaigns documenting injustices suffered by people in their places of arrival, as well as their exclusion from elections in Spain by way of postal vote deadlines and bureaucracy etc.

4 | See, for instance, the Vienna local node. URL: solidarity4allvienna.wordpress.com.

5 | See, for instance, the Spira Graz Blog. URL: spiragraz.wordpress.com.

6 | For an early reflection on the Precarity Office see Zechner 2013a.

than on the basis of political ideology. This approach came with a shared prioritization of conviviality, and a concern for practically useful politics, which was stressed in the group names' references to cafés and offices. The Precarity Office idea was conceived as a necessary experiment in organisation in the face of increasing South-to-North EU-migration: More than 427.000 young people left Greece in the early years of the crisis[7], while 700.000 Spanish citizens left Spain during 2008 and 2012 (González Ferrer 2013).

The basic formula of the Precarity Office remains close to its early form: It is based on a monthly event that brings people from diverse places and backgrounds together to exchange information and debate and where people can get advice on their labour or residency problems as well as meet over food and drinks. In the course of its existence, many individuals from different countries and groups have joined the office, turning it into a diverse space where many languages are spoken. The events are extremely diverse in terms of countries of origin, with known regular participation of people from Austria, Greece, Spain, Romania, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, France, Denmark, Turkey, Israel, and Nigeria. This reflects the cosmopolitan character of a city such as Vienna, within which 38.3% of inhabitants were born outside Austria, and 27.4% remain non-citizens and thus barred from participation in national elections. Many participants (including Austrians) are newcomers in Vienna, some have a wealth of local knowledge and experience to share; most people who join are aged 20–35 and many either study or work in the fields of science or culture. In terms of class, the majority are precarious with middle class family backgrounds.

The founders of the Precarity Office were concerned that a failure to produce solidarity across local and mobile precarious workers could fuel a local anti-migrant backlash by allowing employers to use migrants as an instrument of wage dumping. With this in mind, the three groups formed the Precarity Office to articulate their respective local situations with the broader crisis in the EU, and to develop a model of organising that might inspire initiatives elsewhere. However, the Precarity Office was always an open space for the discussion of other issues, from the Greek debt crisis over extractivisms in southern Europe and Romania, to movements across the border in Hungary, to new electoral experiments in Spain, to refugee solidarity in Greece, repression in Erdoğan's Turkey etc. The Precarity Office may best be understood as a mobile and open network-like constellation that produces a sense of belonging not through an organising principle of identity but of creating transversal connections.

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7 | »Greek economic migrant increasing, while joblessness soars«. The Guardian of 03.07.2016. URL: www.theguardian.com.

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

This geographically diverse yet class-wise similar crowd proved a remarkable space for reflections on how the crisis was transforming mobile European subjects into migrants, and on how this related to the way they lived class. Because in times of broad shifts in dominant social class compositions – and of the invention of corresponding strategies of collective and transversal action and living – the limits between mobility and migration are not always that clear cut (Isin 2002).

The Precarity Office was founded on the understanding that migrant workers are the subjects of precarity par excellence, and of how migration is related to an erosion of working conditions that effects local workers, too. This insight was already a part of the practice of the Prekär Café, which started a campaign for trade unions to support undocumented workers, leading to the setup of an office for undocumented workers via a trade union. The Precarity Office embodied another form of this insight, being established as a constitutively transnational and translational space. From the beginning, the idea was not only to work around the shared condition of precarity, but to better understand how different legal statuses – Austrian, EU-citizen, non-EU-citizen – effected precarity, and how to undo these stratifications.

In 2014/15, the Precarity Office organised a series of three events entitled »if the door shuts behind you, you are a migrant«, where the aim was to discuss different aspects of migration and mobility in and around the EU. First was an event on »migration and mobility in the EU«, then one on EU-external borders entitled »precarity has no borders«, and finally a play/improvisation-based event on imagining »faces of utopia« and concerning the freedom of movement. The second event, on 2 December 2014, opened onto questions concerning non-EU migrants and asylum seekers, long before the ›refugee crisis‹ had been declared. It aimed at articulating this situation with issues of migrants within the EU:

> »The implementation of an allegedly universal ›Freedom of Movement‹ for European citizens within the EU has always been closely tied to restrictive measures of constraining the mobility of people without European citizenship. In accordance to the needs of European labour markets, the European migration regime attempts to regulate migration in order to ›sort out‹ people that are ›needed‹ – unprotected labour force for seasonal work, f.e. – and people that are not ›needed‹ and therefore unwanted. In last years, the restrictive measures to hinder ›unwanted‹ people from moving to the EU have taken on more and more violent forms.« (Precarity Office Vienna 2014b)

Here, via militant research, the Precarity Office explores the central distinction between EU-migrants and non-EU-migrants within governance, and asks how it affects economies of status. Whilst ›mobility‹ is discursively associated with ascent, improvement, progress and development, as operating on a high level of social, cultural and material capital today, ›migration‹ is associated with downward social mobility, coercion and victimhood.[8] The neoliberal arch-subject is a mobile one whose movements need not correspond to migrations, but rather to chosen steps along a career path, an entrepreneurial self (Smith/Favell 2006; Hannam/Sheller/Urry 2006). But instead of stabilising the narrative into a binary between ›expats‹ and ›migrants‹, with a focus on the binary between white/European privilege and racialized migrant subject, the experiences of the participants of the Precarity Office opened for a complication, and an exploration of the grey zones between these poles.

Since the economic crisis, Southern Europeans were downgraded from their previously mobile status of EU-workers and students and came to be labelled as ›migrants‹ in northern Europe. Many reported experiencing an increase in scepticism, even racism, facing the Austrian media and random strangers. Many Southern Europeans in the Precarity Office who had moved to Austria before the crisis, felt that the deep crisis of their home countries and the lack of jobs and welfare there transformed them from equals within the European system of mobility to impoverished migrants. For many participants with Eastern European backgrounds the experience was different: Because of the relative lack of opportunities in the east they arrived in Austria as migrants, despite the optimistic narratives of mobility connected to the EU-accession of their countries. The common logic was established through the Precarity Office's affirmation: »If the doors shut behind you, you are a migrant«, as one event was titled, referring to the impossibility for many migrants of the EU-crisis to return to the countries they departed from (Precarity Office Vienna 2014a). The theme of this event was further examined through interviews by some members of the Precarity Office (Knittler/Müller-Uri/Schröcker 2014). The general assumption of the collective analysis identified a shift from mobility in the European Union (people who in the past moved as Erasmus students or skilled workers) to migration, defined as not having the choice to return, as being forced to stay on the move to sell one's skills. The interviews from this project reveal the complexity and contradictions inherent in such a distinction, however. We see this in the response from a Greek group member, commenting on the difference between migration and mobility:

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8 | The ways migrants are racialised and stereotyped based on skin complexion religion and ethnicity (whether real or imputed) also plays a huge role here.

> »On the surface it [migration] appears to be a matter of lack of choice, but that's only on the surface, because digging deeper, mobility also implies deep flexibility and insecurity and this can only be temporary, this can never be permanent for anyone. But of course this term [mobility] is sold as something very positive, something deeply desirable in the current labour market, in the current lifestyle [...].« (Knittler/Müller-Uri/Schröcker 2014)

The intersections and differences of migration and mobility clearly have to do with the governance of bodies and subjectivities, with shifting systems of differential inclusion (Mezzadra/Neilson 2010) and with the attempt to align desires with the needs of the labour market. This logic is here narrated through experiences of exploitation and declassing, with all the ambivalences of neoliberal coercion and control. »Mobility doesn't exist« says one interviewee:

> »I think that the ruling classes in the EU want to call migration mobility, because they want to somehow give a positive meaning to migration and convince the people that it's something nice and the flexibility of the working people. They have started with the Bolkenstein agreement in 2006 to make everybody mobile, flexible, all working people should have limited contracts, so they don't get any stable position and have to move around all the time.« (Knittler/Müller-Uri/Schröcker 2014)

This interviewee highlights an important pre-crisis movement in the promotion of intra-EU labour migration, particularly geared towards promoting east-to-west migration. In this way, a genealogy is established that connects the crisis-induced north-south migration within the crisis to the directly governmental attempt to channel cheap labour from Eastern to Western Europe. These two moments have common conditions and effects on the level of governance. They are both conditioned on a preceding lowering of wages in the countries of outward-migration, achieved by economic crisis and structural adjustment programmes. They both have the aim of facilitating labour arbitrage: increasing access to cheap labour within non-outsourceable labour markets in Western Europe, particularly the service sector. Within the Precarity Office there is an awareness that this tends to produce labour competition along national lines, between migrants and non-migrant labour. The Precarity Office regards itself as insufficient to tackle this issue, even on the smaller scale of the Viennese labour market. What it can do, though, is raise awareness about these processes, and experiment with strategies and a production of subjectivity that could overcome this production of divisions.

COMPOSING AROUND PRECARITY

The key element of the Precarity Office's strategy is to bring people who are separated by methodological nationalism into ›workers‹ and ›migrants‹ together. Writing about migrant organising in the hospitality sector in London, Gabriella Alberti et al. draw the distinction between organising migrants as workers or as migrant workers. They convincingly show the limitations of trade union strategies that reduce all workers to a universal ›workers' identity‹, and show the advantages of an intersectional approach that takes migrant workers' specific concerns as migrants seriously, e.g. concerning work permits and language skills (Alberti/Holgate/Tapia 2013). ›Worker‹ here refers to the set that all belong to, with ›migrant worker‹ being a subset of workers who face specific difficulties. For the Precarity Office this common condition is not so much defined as *work,* but as *precarity*. So what difference does that make on group identity formation? Put briefly, the concept of ›worker‹ draws on a commonality based on the relation to employers/capital, prioritising the wage and the activity of labour over other relations of dependency and reproduction, such as the family and welfare. The concept of ›precarity‹, on the other hand, focuses on the experience and reality of the insecurity of livelihoods, and does not prioritise wage as the main or only point of access to a livelihood. The precarity/migrant organising within many European cities marks a new phase in ›precarity organising‹, as a genealogy of political organising that stems from the (Euro)Mayday movement and passed through autonomous-feminist (Precarias a la Deriva et al.) and later popularising (e.g. Standing 2011) before arriving at the phase of translocal initiatives (Zechner 2012).

The key forms of precarity touched by the Precarity Office are: 1) the precarisation of labour, which was a central concern both for the Prekär Café and for the many Precarity Office participants who had come from Southern and Eastern Europe came to Austria both before and during the economic crisis. 2) The precarisation and deterioration of access to protections in case of un- or underemployment. In the case of Eastern Europe, this decline happened already with the move away from state socialism, and in Southern Europe, the decline of families' capacities to provide a security net during the crisis was a factor aggravating the retrenchment of an already weak (or underdeveloped) welfare state. Precarity and precarisation are thus experienced both by migrants and non-migrants in Austria (albeit to different degrees), and the Precarity Office discussions revealed that when precarity was not the reason for migration in the first place, the increasing precarisation within the crisis had transformed the experiences of mobility into experiences of migration.

Many have argued that precarity is the norm of labour under capitalism, with the full employment and social protections of the welfare statist/Keynesian/Fordist period

being a temporal and geographical exception (Neilson/Rossiter 2008; Denning 2010; Mahmud 2014; Schram 2015). As Neilson and Rossiter (ibid.) note, precarity mainly becomes a powerful organising concept for those that have an urgent experience of *precarisation,* i.e. for those that *felt* secure or expected to do so. Precarity organising, in short, is a response to a profound shift in the mode of social reproduction, which affects both expectations of and access to employment and welfare.

Precarity politics is thus centrally, if far from exclusively, the remit of those hitherto protected. We can briefly historicise this with the following narrative: Mid-to-late 20th century Western Europe was characterised by relative security, based on the welfare state, Keynesian full-employment policies and Fordist industrial development. In post-fascist Southern Europe, there was also a growing middle class, based on high rates of home-ownership, increasing access to cheap credit (especially after the introduction of the Euro). In Greece and Spain, one could expect some protections from the state apparatuses build up by PSOE and PASOK in the 1980s, even if clientilism remained a strong part of these growing welfare states, especially in Greece. In both the North and South of Western Europe, the job market, state and credit sector strongly encouraged the growth of a middle class with a high and growing power of consumption, and the expectation that this would continue. In the economic crisis, both the reality and the expectations of this middle class have been solidly shaken. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that a large part of those active in precarity organising are part of a downwardly mobile middle class.

Declassing and Crisis

Declassing does not only refer to downward social-economic mobility of individuals and populations as triggered by unemployment and precarity, or to the devaluation of job titles and generational descent from stable middle class lives into precarity. It also means a social and subjective phenomenon that affects the subjectivities of people and collectives, a breakdown of a classed mode of subjectivation, of expectations, life styles and life strategies. Camille Peugny distinguishes between three interrelated kinds of declassing, all of which can be seen in the European South today: familial or intergenerational (loss of status, unemployment); personal or biographical (uprooting or divorce); and educational or meritocratic (devaluation of human capital) (Peugny 2009; Martínez-Celorrio/Marín 2012). One powerful factor in the production of movements and subjectivities of declassed Europeans is the realisation that upward social mobility is blocked. »You'll never own a house in your fucking

life« as the slogan of the Spanish movement V de Vivienda went in response to the pre-crisis housing bubble.

Significantly, precarisation and declassing suggest a situation which demands constant flexibility (Kessler/Di Virgilio 2008); instead of fixing or securing people in stable jobs, welfare rights and professional identities, it encourages a constant displacement of bodies and subjectivities. Where identities are constantly destabilised, old imagined communities become weakened, even if some of them are made the object of reconstruction projects based on reactive and indignant nostalgia, especially in right-wing populism. But this contingency and weakening of identities and collective subjects also creates space for resubjectivation and recomposition.[9] Indeed, it is crucial to keep tracing the production of subjects in order to avoid an impoverished vision seeing only a struggle between depressive individualism and reactive identitarianism. Moreover, like precarity, declassing is a phenomenon that is experienced by many migrants and non-migrants alike, albeit differently. The question then is how these problems (can) come to be considered common problems.

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: BRINGING TOGETHER DOWNWARD AND OUTWARD MOBILITIES

Drawing on social reproduction theory, it is possible to consider both migrant status and class membership – and the identities that might come with it – as the result of individual and group strategies of reproduction within wider systems of social reproduction. We here understand social reproduction not only as 1) the market-mediated capitalist reproduction analysed by Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg (Marx 1978; Luxemburg 2003), but also as 2) the ideological and educational reproduction theorised by Louis Althusser (Althusser 2014), and 3) the everyday corporeal and subjective reproduction analysed by feminist Marxists such as Silvia Federici and Mariarosa Dalla Costa (Dalla Costa 2004; Federici 2012; Caffentzis 1999).[10] Historically, the welfare state has intervened on all three levels, through (to illustrate via

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9 | »...the central task of class composition is to respond to the problem of the contingency of proletarian reproduction, which all proletarians have in common, but deal with in many different ways. This means that class composition must start from the recognition that the modes of proletarians' struggle are extremely diverse« (Hansen 2015). See also Mohandesi 2012; Cleaver 1992; Moulier-Boutang 1986.

10 | For two recent collections of texts on social reproduction see issue 5 of Viewpoint Magazine (Mohandesi/Haider 2015) and Historical Materialism 24 (2) (Ferguson et al. 2016).

simplification): labour-market and economic policy, educational and media policy, and family policy. Class belonging and migration are outcomes of the, often conflictual, strategies of reproduction of capital, the state as well as allied and affiliated individuals.

By starting with the concept of a crisis of social reproduction instead of class or migration status, we start with a *problem* rather than with an identity (worker/migrant) or with a relation to capital or the state (employed/illegalised). To start with a problem means to start with a space of differentiation and pragmatics: People who are faced with the same problem of making a living, meeting their needs, or pursuing their desires, develop different strategies and habits of dealing with it: becoming a trainee, going on benefits, studying, engaging in criminalised activities, marrying a stable wage earner, migrating, etc. – strategies that are often shaped by regimes of gender, racialisation, and citizenship (Hansen 2015).

This means that class – or classing as a process – is neither a mere cultural or ideological construct nor mere material condition. It corresponds to a set of conditions and strategies that allow people to function in material, social and economic worlds, and to their strategies and practices of social reproduction:

> »Strategies – and that which they mobilize at the level of dispositions, that's to say habitus – are products of class conditions. Thus the strategies of agents are the fruit of what these apprehend in relation to given material conditions of existence – and of the conditionings these impose – and make agents differentiate the potentially possible [...] from what they percieve as ›impossible‹.« (Jiménez Zunino 2011: 52)

The question of classing is thus intimately tied to the horizon of the possible, as perceived and enacted by individuals and collectivities, within the system of social reproduction and economic ownership structures they find themselves in. Here, we see the limits of identification and identity, which prioritise the actual over experimentation with possibility. Identifying people by their class belonging or migration status categorises people according to certain objective markers (income or level of education, citizenship etc.). The risk of this approach is a reification of these markers, and a lack of engagement with the tension between problems transversal to several of those markers, like, for instance, precarity, poverty, limited opportunities, or war. It misses the strategic, poetic and relational aspects of life, whose importance increases in the face of the contingency of reproduction.

In economic crises, the contingency of social reproduction becomes epidemic, leading to declassing, an increase in precarity, and, for some, a desire or pressure to migrate. The key question here is concerned with the possible openings that processes

of declassing can activate, and what collective strategies ›losing‹ middle classes may activate as their middle class identities and life-strategies falter. Through what tactics, narratives, and encounters may they connect transversally with others facing the same problems? This question concerns the possibility of the emergence of new collective subjects and platforms that develop other ways of relating to resources, exchange, belonging and profession in post-welfare and post-growth scenarios (Hansen/Zechner 2015).

To sum up, behind the reified category of class, there are processes of classing and declassing, which all have strong subjective components: pragmatic (strategies of life, such as education and careerism), affective-experiential (based on the spaces one inhabits, the encounters and relations one engages with), temporal-expectational (relating to the trajectory and expectation one has of life). All these open to notions of composition and collective organising that are neither dependent on ›general‹ similarities, such as notions of collective identity or similarity of legal status, nor ›particular‹ similarities, such individual interests and tastes. But of course, composition might produce general similarities through collective struggle and debate, and particular similarities through mutual inspiration, conviviality etc.; in short, through forms of friendship and micropolitics (Zechner 2013b).

MIGRATION AS AN ANSWER TO A CRISIS OF REPRODUCTION

The theoretical points raised above allows us to understand migration as an answer to a crisis of social reproduction. It is a question of life and livelihood, of needs and desires. As such, migration is a set of strategies of self-displacement that respond to conditions of non-reproduction in the countries of origin and destination (unemployment, war, climate change), as well as international differentials of social reproduction (relative employment, security, welfare levels, etc.). The mobility of migrants is conditioned by wider socio-economic and ecological processes, and biographical and subjective factors. But it is a movement that works upon and transforms this condition, which we can understand in terms of displaced class status and in terms of experiences of (de)classing at the point of departure, *en route,* and of the years of arrival.

Migration, like classing, becomes an object of states and supra-state governance. As Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson have forcefully asserted, we have to stop speaking of borders as lines and start to analyse them as methods of differential inclusion, according to the perceived needs of the labour markets of the receiving countries (Mezzadra/Neilson 2013). To understand the border as method, also means prioritis-

ing the analysis of *mechanisms of power* (and a tactical knowledge of how to disrupt, bypass or hack them), over debates regarding identity and identification of migrants and refugees. As Prem Kujar Rajaram writes:

> »There is neither migrant nor refugee; there are instead modes of biopolitical processing that seek to manage and hierarchize different populations and subject positions – on all sides of the border – in the light of cultural, political and ideological interests.« (Rajaram 2015)

The reason states need to govern migration (and class) is that it is autonomous (Bojadžijev/Karakayali 2007; Mezzadra 2011). Autonomy, as described here, is not some abstract freedom, but rather the constrained openness of strategies of reproduction within the broader contingency of social reproduction, i.e. within conditions of need. Discourses of migration as victimhood ignore this autonomy by disregarding the fact that human mobility precedes its illegalisation as migration and its filtering by border regimes. On the other hand, the EU's neoliberal celebrations of mobility ignore how people are often pushed to migrate by dire need and frustrated desires. Furthermore, autonomy resides in the fact that the people find ways – temporary or lasting – of composing their strategies, developing forms of solidarity and *mobile commons* (Papadopoulos/Tsianos 2013).

To study class or migration by observing how people are ordered according to legal or sociological categories (lower, middle, working, upper class..., EU-migrant, non-EU-migrant, refugee...) is an ex post facto exercise. It misses how such categorisations and the categories themselves are products of struggles between the strategies by which people and groups ensure the reproduction of their lives, the strategies by which states try to govern this reproduction, and through which capital tries to profit from it. To understand class and migration is to take seriously the decisions, subjective investments, and strategies that mark people's existential trajectories as well as collective and social processes. Only if these are taken seriously, can tokenistic or charitable politics ›for‹ the other be replaced by composition or building alliance.

The Precarity Office did not produce a theory of social reproduction, but, as militant research points out, it does open towards pragmatics of dealing with problems of social reproduction. Taking its starting point in the common problem of precarity, the Precarity Office composed a transversal group around 1) a set of tools and tactics for dealing with one's situation, such as legal advice and mutual aid, 2) conviviality, creating a community in otherwise dispersed lives, and 3) a common conversation around broader problems such as the EU's crisis management, neoliberalism and the global crisis. All this would have been very difficult to do starting from identities such as ›migrants‹, ›workers‹ or ›Austrians‹. Nor did the Precarity Office experiment start

from abstract slogans, such as Marx and Engels' »The workers have no fatherland« (Marx/Engels 2016: 64), or from ideas about privilege and victimhood. Instead, it proceeded by creating a context in which the expectations and hopes, the anxieties, struggles and urgencies of people's lives – about the crisis of their home countries, the difficulty of returning, unpaid internships and much more – could meet and compose in friendship, articulate themselves in anger and hope, and lead to common analyses.

CONCLUSION

The case of the Precarity Office illustrates the political effects of seeing migration as a class issue and class as practice and habitus: We see how the Precarity Office's focus on *practical experiences of precarity* and *declassing* enabled different migrant groups to organise jointly and together with locals. This organisational experiment is not without implications for class theory and migration studies. Understanding migration as linked to processes of (de)classing means going beyond the methodological nationalism of much class theory. Class cannot be confined to the borders of the nation state, nor can class within a given state be understood without understanding that it is a product of current and past migrations (including migrations within that country). To understand the class-dimension of migration means to go beyond the reification of migrants. Migration is an aspect of wider strategies of reproduction and becoming through which intersecting lives seek to meet their needs and realise their desires. Militant research provides ways to map and conceptualise such solidarities in ways that furthers a vernacular, cosmopolitan class composition.

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