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A Mobile Heterotopia in a Migrant Camp

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Abstract

In this paper, mobile communication is examined in the context of forced migration from an affective perspective using the case study of an informal migrant camp that was established in 2015 at Budapest's Keleti train station. Drawing on concepts of migration, affect and media, I examine various news reports and social media commentary about the camp as well as the makeshift Wi-Fi network that was established there in relation to Hungarian populist politics. I posit the station as a site of contestation between migrants, the Hungarian government and non-governmental actors that speaks to the politicisation of communication technology. The conclusion points to how mobile communication provides a way for forced migrants to create a heterotopic space in extreme conditions as the migrant community is affectively moored by media practices that enable feelings of familiarity and security. These practices not only constitute a kind of refuge for migrants but also offer a form of refusal, however small, towards the shaming and inertia they experience.

Forced Migration and Mobiles

Following the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in mid-2011, forced migration, especially from the Middle East to Europe, has occurred on an unprecedented scale compared to previous periods of history (Spindler 2015). The figure of the migrant in this so-called[1] European migration "crisis" has been shaped, perhaps even defined, by mobile phones. In this context, English-language mainstream media and news sites have tended to place the mobile phone at the centre of migrant journeys, as an enabling technology and a "migrant essential" (Gillespie et al. 2016: 9). In particular, the phrase "mobile phone wielding refugee" – first coined by *The Irish Times* – has often been used in the media to articulate how the smartphone has become a complicated symbol of threat, even a weapon that migrants employ to navigate their journey and mobilise groups. The subtext of this popular

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[1]   "So-called" because this hackneyed phrase "migration crisis" is often used as a tactic to create fear and paranoia among citizens by populist governments and media.

discourse – concerning the entanglement of mobiles and migrants – is that the technology becomes an "active agent in the refugee crisis" (ibid: 23).

Migration is nothing new to society; indeed, the history of homo sapiens rests on migratory movement (Bauman 2016: 3). However, the influence of mobile technology on forced migration provides a nascent area of research – recently referred to as "digital migration studies" (Leurs & Smets 2018) – especially as it pertains to the hierarchies and systems of power implicit in mobility and communication systems. This paper, positioned within this still-emergent field, aligns with those scholars (Badran 2018; Borkert, Fisher, & Yafi 2018; Smets et al. 2019) who articulate how some forms of agency, however limited, are exercised through media within migrant communities. Moreover, I heed the recent calls within the field to avoid approaches to migration studies that fetishise either migrants or technology (Leurs & Smets 2018). In this vein, my focus as a media and cultural studies scholar attempts to extend beyond a focus on technical capacities of mobiles alone, to include an emphasis on forms of contingency and agency above concepts of inevitability and so-called progress (Slack & Macgregor Wise 2002: 490).

As Susanna Paasonen, Ken Hillis and Michael Petit (2015) claim, "the fluctuating and altering dynamics of affect give shape to online connections and disconnections, to the proximities and distances of love, desire, and wanting between and among bodies" (1). The authors argue that networked communication is far from a neutral process but, as a form of cultural practice, is "underpinned by affective investments, sensory impulses, and forms of intensity that generate and circulate within networks comprising both human and non-human actors" (Hillis et al. 2015: 1). Drawing on this contingent and relational model of affective networks between people and technology, affect is conceptualised in this paper as a lived, felt and embodied response to new media technology that binds bodies in a sense of shared purpose. In this regard, I have relied on the valuable and extensive migration field work done by media scholar Saskia Witteborn (2011a, 2011b, 2014, 2015) to delineate one of the most dominant manifestations of affect among migrant communities: shame.

Indeed, the affective dimension of migration – as an embodied practice with various scenes, noises, information, smells and pressures that move through the body and give rise to emotive responses – is a transformative force, not confined to the personal experiences of migrants but rather extending to collective bodies, including those of researchers, the public and the political, among others. The relationship between bodies, as they relate to a very specific place and time, mediated through mobile technology is a major focus of this paper. More specifically, my aim is to show how mobile technology has a paradoxical role in the context of migration as a technology that unsettles the temporal, cultural and physical security of some citizens but also serves to secure and confirm feelings of ontological safety among migrants.

Following this premise, I analyse the formation of an informal migrant camp at Keleti station in Budapest at the height of migrant arrivals in Europe in

September 2015. I pay specific attention to how migrant bodies become a source of shame, as something objectified and disregarded, inferring that the body and embodiment are central components of this affective force in the migration process, and as a technique of control (Witteborn 2011b: 16). My assertion is that mobile media practices at Keleti such as calling and texting offered an "affective mooring point" (Dixon 2018), a point of fixity for migrants, enabling feelings of familiarity and security. Through this process of mooring, which entails a feeling of stability among the flows of people and information, forced migrants are able to create a heterotopic space in extreme conditions – where heterotopia, as defined by Michel Foucault (1997), refers to a space as a counter-site that is located in opposition to the "normal" or accepted norms of society. These media practices not only constitute a point of stability for migrants but also constitute a form of refusal, however tiny, towards the stigmatisation and shaming that occurred at the camp. I borrow this concept of refusal from Tina M. Campt (2017) to describe a subtle form of resistance by some towards dominant forces and as a way to reclaim personhood and "subjectivity in the face of dispossession" (65). Campt insinuates this refusal with the miniscule gestures and possibilities for self-expression and futurity that exist for those people within restrictive circumstances – in her case study the strictures of colonial rule on African men and women in South Africa.

My analysis proceeds by examining an archive of media reports about the camp from the BBC, *The Guardian*, Aljazeera and Gawker.com, alongside social media commentary from the Facebook page of Telekom HU – a German-owned telecommunications company with a local subsidiary in Hungary. My cultural analysis of these media texts have been informed by my interview with a key volunteer and academic at the camp – Kate Coyer – who was responsible for the Wi-Fi set up there. These narratives about the migrant camp are further contextualised in relation to Hungarian politics. In this analysis, I place an emphasis on structures of feelings, attending to the lived, felt experiences of the migrant community in the Hungarian context, as they are represented in narratives about the camp, and what meanings can be read from this. Following Raymond Williams, my cultural analysis is both a process of selection and interpretation (1998: 56). This process involves a gathering and noticing certain narratives about the camp that relate to mobile usage and to specific notions of place and space as leads for producing a critical analysis about how some bodies have come to matter less than others.

With the knowledge that labelling is a contentious issue within digital migration studies, I adopt the rather broad term "forced migration" from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) glossary throughout this paper as a way to define "A migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes" (2011: 39). The term "forced migrant" or simply "migrant" is used in this article to refer to asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, development displacees, environmental and disaster displaces, smuggled people and trafficked people (IOM 2011: 39). As I will discuss, the regulatory category of "forced migrant"

is often questioned and resisted. These sceptical narratives tend to implicate mobile phones as markers that somehow nullify the "genuine" needs of refugees.

In the first section of this paper I will draw from existing digital migration literature to elaborate on the sources of shame in the migration journey. I will examine these emotions as a way to set up my argument that the Hungarian government halted the journey of approximately 2500 migrants at Keleti station as a way to make the so-called imminent threat of the migrant Other more perceptible to Hungarian citizens. In addition, I will show how migrants, in turn, used the makeshift Wi-Fi zones at the station as a form of mobile heterotopia to refuse the shame and inertia they experienced. In the latter part of this paper, I will examine how mobile technology is further implicated in processes of digital Othering as Hungarians protest this provision of free Wi-Fi to migrants.

Shame and Migration

In 2014, in Venice, I was struck by a particular incident. A young African man walked past me in the middle of a small piazza. While I only had a minute or so to observe him I noticed how he avoided lifting his gaze from the ground. While I looked directly at him and our bodies passed each other quite closely, his gaze seemed to stick quite steadfastly downwards. His mannerisms seemed to indicate a level of purposeful inattentiveness; a measured disconnect. The word *extracomunitari* is often used by Italians to describe those "outside" the European community and the term has been further accentuated by increased encounters between locals and migrants (Harney 2013: 3). This "outsider" status was further delineated in 2008 when irregular migrants[2] were declared criminals by Italian law and liable to pay a fine of €10,000 (Harney 2013: 6). As Nicholas Harney (2013) claims in his study of African migrants in the city of Naples, the work of migrants is especially risky and their everyday existence is punctuated by precarity and uncertainty. One of Harney's interviewees remarked that "Neopolitans don't really see us, and those who do I think, well, many are scared of Africans" (2013: 8). Indeed, a central theme in migration to Europe is the stigmatisation that migrants endure, marking them as shameful or discredited from society (Bauman 2016: 40). Zygmunt Bauman (2016) extends this notion further, claiming that shame leads to acts of self-contempt and self-derogation among migrants (42). Indeed, shame often features in studies of migration not only as part of a process of stigmatisation but also as a technique of control.

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2   While no universal definition for an irregular migrant exists, the IOM defines an irregular migrant as: "A person who, owing to unauthorized entry, breach of a condition of entry, or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country" (2011: 54).

As Witteborn confirms, "Shame is a dominant shaping and formative force in migration" (2014: 73) – as illustrated in her examination of institutional spaces of asylum or refugee centres in Germany and Hong Kong. For example, asylum seekers in Hong Kong are often made to share ablution and toilet facilities, even razor blades, often with little regard for issues of privacy, discretion or health. Specifically, as a technique of control and degradation, the "asylum seeker body becomes a deindividualized object which is not entitled to privacy, dignity or health" (Witteborn 2011b: 13).

In addition, migrant centres are often noisy, overcrowded, busy places with shared facilities, making living conditions stressful, with little or no privacy. In Germany, migrants live in centres for prolonged periods of time, even years. These centres become home for many migrants, even though the residents are not afforded any autonomy associated with a "normal" home. In one of Witteborn's studies, a woman admits, "I feel ashamed not to offer you any tea or food like we do back home for guests" (2011a: 1148). Another woman comments that her children are ashamed to live in the migrant shelter and never invite friends home to play (Witteborn 2011b: 8). When migrants call their families back home, they report feelings of shame, especially when their family's expectations about Europe and its elevated standards of living do not match their everyday reality (Witteborn 2015: 11). In some instances, migrants send selfie images with city skylines and brands in the backdrop as signifiers of excess in order to maintain the expectations of family back home that "everything is okay," thereby avoiding the shame associated with conditions of living (Witteborn 2017). Shame as described in these examples can be seen to collectively bind migrants in acts of discipline and codes of conduct. Shame as a powerful political and affective force also serves as an ordering mechanism, a way to create a hierarchy between those who can claim legitimacy and belonging and those you supposedly cannot. As a potent affective force, shame conditions the bodies of migrants into the institutional norms and accepted forms of behaviour.

Heterotopias and Refusal

While mobile phones have been called technologies of precarity in the context of migration, they are also seen as tools of refusal or counteraction, as they form part of a process of re-balancing power relations between migrants and institutional and bureaucratic powers. More specifically, these acts of refusal are techniques for migrants to unsettle news narratives and so-called authority voices concerning migrant experiences (Wall, Campbell, & Janbek. 2015: 10; Witteborn 2015: 9). These authority voices, often generated through camp administrators, the media and institutional authorities, tend to overshadow migrant narratives (Malkki 1996: 386). "Refugees suffer from a peculiar kind of speechlessness in the face of the national and international organizations whose object of care and control

they are. Their accounts are disqualified almost a priori, while the languages of refugee relief, policy science, and 'development' claim the production of authoritative narratives about the refugees" (ibid: 386).

Migrant centres can be located outside of cities and, as such, migrants are often relegated to areas in the country separated from local communities by fences or agricultural land and isolated from the wider dynamics of the society they are hoping to join (Tyler 2006: 194). To subvert or overcome this isolation, for example in Germany, migrants often use digital technology to learn German, to seek information on the asylum process and to socialise with friends on Facebook (Witteborn 2015: 1–2). Similarly, mobile phones are intrinsically part of information-sharing processes that can enable migrants to share experiences and, when needed, to also mobilise collectively. In their field research of migrant centres in Berlin, Maren Borkert, Karen Fisher and Eiad Yafi (2018) found that social media was key to maintaining familial and friendship contacts among migrant communities as well as informing networks of new migrants about their experiences. In sharing information about similar experiences, migrants are afforded a way to recast themselves, outside of being seen as victims, as actors with agency (Borkert, Fisher, & Yafi 2018: 9). In this vein, mobile chat groups such as those formed in WhatsApp can also provide a form of stabilisation, a feeling of being emotionally held during times of uncertainty and, as such, the virtual becomes a digital dwelling defined by a sense of safety, solidarity and "being in this together" (Dixon 2018: 494). Witteborn (2014) argues that cyber cafés and internet rooms in migrant centres can provide a particular digital heterotopia for migrants where "forced migrants can cope with physical isolation and social isolation and mobilize for political action" (73). However, she also cautions that these digital heterotopias – that offer connection and information sharing – are not immune to the dynamics of control that still persist through the institutions within which they operate (2014: 80).

Foucault (1997) defines a heterotopia as a counter-site, "in which all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned" (332). For example, crisis heterotopias are places reserved for people who, in relation to their environment and society, are in a state of crisis and here Foucault cites examples of adolescents and the elderly. Other examples of heterotopias include prisons or psychiatric hospitals characterised by a presumed deviance where those spaces are set in opposition to the "normal" or accepted norms of society (ibid: 333). Characteristically, heterotopias are bounded by systems of opening and closing that demand either a form of enforced entry in the case of a prison or membership, ritual or permission to join (ibid: 335).

In the context of migration, migrants can be understood as spatially constructed through bureaucratic labelling as well as assignment to physical and digital heterotopias. Migrant centres are positioned as places of deviance, outside of the normal functioning of the society they are part of, but not integrated with. Asylum seekers are often figured as outsiders who pose a threat to the national

integrity of a country and their illegal status makes them somehow deserving of exclusion (Tyler 2006: 191). I argue that it is within this atmosphere of exclusion and so-called deviant heterotopia that mobile communication offers a counter space and even a "place" of refusal. Migrants who find themselves in a heterotopic space can transcend certain definitions of lack of being affectively moored by social interaction within their online community and contacts. Following Bauman (2016), the virtual suspends the anxieties of life as the online world offers the "promise and expectation of liberation from the discomforts, inconveniences and hardships" of life (104).

I argue that as part of communication with friends and family to share the stories of journeys, mobiles enable a certain kind of heterotopia. I argue that this heterotopic space is mobilised through – rather than dampened by – shame. As I will argue in the following section, the Wi-Fi network formed at Keleti station served to temporally suspend people from the difficult past and their uncertain future, providing a sense of agency to migrants. I draw on these concepts – of heterotopias and mobile-mediated agency – to develop my argument that a mobile heterotopia can be seen to emerge at Budapest's Keleti station as a way to refuse the affective force of public shaming and inertia.

Keleti Train Station

Keleti train station is notable for its grand, if not imposing, architecture dating back to the late 19th century. Viewed from the square directly in front of the station, the 43-m high entrance contains multiple towering columns, ornate glass facades and sculptures of deities and historical figures. The station survived two world wars, although still partially damaged, and therefore might be understood as a symbol of Hungarian resilience during periods of outside hostility. Declared a heritage building in 1984, Keleti station is located to the east of the centre of Budapest, hence its name: translated from Hungarian to English, it means "Eastern Station". Keleti is the busiest transport hub of Hungary, with 410 trains arriving and departing from it daily (Csáki 2016). In September 2015, amidst an unprecedented forced migration of people from the Middle East to Europe due to the conflict in Syria, the Hungarian government issued a moratorium on train travel. More specifically, more than 2000 asylum seekers and refugees travelling by train from Turkey or Greece through the Balkans, transiting through Budapest to reach their final destinations in Austria and Germany, were suddenly stuck at Keleti. An informal migrant camp formed at the station, resembling similar transit camps in other parts of Europe – albeit on differing scales and conditions – such as Maximiliaan Park (Belgium) and The Jungle (Calais). Here I draw on Dirk Lafaut and Gily Coene's (2018) reference to a camp as a localised area "where unwelcome non-European citizens, crossing or attempting to cross a border, are managed and externalized as a group" (1).

Figs. 1 and 2: Exterior views of Keleti station showing the upper and lower walkways and the main entrance to the station (photos: Natalie Dixon)

I am aligned with David Morley (2017) that the intersection of mobile media studies and studies of mobility is vital to understanding the migration process. I am particularly interested in Morley's (2017) claim that "Transport choices are made in the broader context of our social and cultural identities and we have to consider questions of affect, emotion, and symbolism in this realm as much as any other" (86). Indeed, differing scales of mobility exist where some segments of society are afforded more ease of movement over others. More so, mobility, especially in cases of forced migration, is co-constituted through mobile communication where "Mobile phones provide 'network capital' to refugees" that can be seen to enable increased capacity for movement (Gillespie et al. 2016: 10). Here, network capital is defined as the capacity to produce and maintain those social relations which enable emotional, financial and practical benefit (Urry 2012: 27).

John Urry (2012) goes further to claim that the "entanglements of physical movement and communications ... have become highly bound up with each other, as contemporary twins" (27). In the context of migration, "when refugees do not have access to local sim cards or reliable power supplies this technology maintenance impacts negatively on their network capital" (Gillespie et al. 2016: 32). The BBC (2015) reported that the moratorium on travel at Keleti station, according to the Hungarian government, was a way to enforce European Union law – whereby anyone who travels into the Union must do so with a valid passport and appropriate visa. The stoppage meant that migrants were effectively stranded at Keleti (Connolly & Nolan 2015). In the days that followed, the station remained closed to international travel and migrants were made inert, unable to travel further and forced to camp on the lower level of the station. The station became a highly charged, albeit static, affective node in a broader migration transport network. Many migrants with valid train tickets were frustrated by the travel ban and police patrolled the area as tensions rose. A line of police barred migrants from entering the main entrance. The BBC (2015) published footage of thousands of migrants gathered in front of the station chanting "freedom" and "Germany."

Passengers can access Keleti on two levels, the first is at street level where pedestrians access the front entrance of the station. On this level, pedestrians can glance down to the lower-level walkway where metro and train pedestrians also make their way to the station. It was here on this lower level that migrants created an informal camp, where the infrastructure consisted of a tiled floor and only partial cover from the outside elements. Aljazeera (2015) reported that between 2000 and 3000 migrants, their baggage and belongings occupied almost the entire lower level of the station. This area of Keleti station had two toilet facilities, ordinarily both require payment for use. One facility contained two basins and five toilets. News images showed the provision of additional portable toilets (Cameron 2015). There was only one electricity charging point available for public use. *The New York Times* described Keleti station as a "defacto refugee camp" characterised by chaos and squalor (Hartocollis 2015). A journalist from Gawker.com summed up the scene as "the centre of the shitshow that has a country in crisis" (Cameron 2015).

Migrants tend to be defined through spatial terms such as transit, entry, return, stuck and isolated (Witteborn 2011a: 1143). In the process of migration – one intrinsically defined by its motion and the goal of reaching a particular destination – to be blocked and made inert is an emotionally painful and physically stressful event. More so, to be stuck in Hungary under the Dublin Regulation[3] meant that any claim for asylum might be examined in Hungary instead of Germany, which migrants wanted to avoid as this almost certainly meant they would be deported "home" (Cameron 2015). Keleti effectively became a place of "entrapment" for migrants (Coyer 2018).

More so, many of the migrants stranded at Keleti station had little access to running water or clean clothes. Some people needed medical treatment, most were exhausted and others had depleted their monetary funds. Makeshift water outlets were made available by a city utility company and migrants were able to cool off and clean their belongings (Coyer 2018). Highlighting the shame that attached to the bodies of migrants in this instance, reporter Anemona Hartocollis (2015) wrote in *The New York Times*:

When Ahmad Majid (30) saw the cool running water, he walked over and dunked his head under the stream, then drank deeply. It was the first day since leaving Macedonia about five days before that he had not put on a clean shirt. In Belgrade, he managed to find a pristine

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3 The Dublin Regulation is a European Union law that determines which member state is responsible for examining asylum seeker claims; this is ordinarily defined as the first European Union member state that an asylum seeker enters (IOM 2011: 30). However, in 2015 amidst an unprecedented arrival of migrants in Europe, the German chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany will process asylum claims regardless of the country of entry for migrants, effectively suspending the Dublin protocol.

white shirt with the logo of the Serbian humanitarian organization that was handing out clothes. For this proud and fastidious man from Syria, not having a clean shirt to wear seemed a small sign of how arduous his trip here had been.

While the migrants were confined by police to the lower level informal camp of Keleti, the BBC (2015) reported that Hungarian commuters were able to pass through a side entrance of the station to board trains. Indeed, the station was filled with Hungarians travelling to local destinations seemingly with some sort of purpose and somewhere to go. There are very few waiting zones at Keleti station; in fact, it is a place defined by transit with numerous escalators, train tracks and metro passengers. Even the station's cafés are devoid of seating, opting instead for a take-away service or in rare instances standing space is offered to customers to eat. At Keleti, migrants were made to wait in full view of local Hungarian pedestrians who passed the camp as part of their daily commute. Shame circulated as migrants became part of a public spectacle. Mothers changed nappies on the street. *The Guardian* newspaper (2015) featured a small child in the camp holding a piece of paper that read: "We are human, what about me?".

As Morley (2017) argues, there is a kind of politics attached to the act of waiting (86). "Articulated through a 'productivist' discourse in which speed, hyperactivity, and multitasking are assumed to be the ideal state of being, 'waiting' is, by contrast, understood as a temporal void (or regrettable aberration) of 'dead' or 'suspended' time" (ibid: 86). As an embodied corporeal experience waiting tends to be associated with "a passive and acquiescent body" and seen to be a "withdrawal from the world" (Bissell 2007: 278). "It is somehow 'better', culturally, economically, or politically, to be mobile than immobile" (ibid: 280). However, mobility is also contingent on the economic and social status of travellers, where concepts such as speedy boarding, priority boarding or fast lane access come at a premium and those who can afford these premiums rarely have to wait. This accelerated mobility is often at the expense of other travellers who have to contend with their immobility while waiting in queues or transit spaces.

In context of migration the mobile phone has been conceptually framed as a technology of precarity. Precarity as defined by Judith Butler (2009) "designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (ii). This sense of uncertainty is set against the kinds of support offered previously by the welfare state, indeed if such a welfare state existed in the first place. Precarity in the context of refugee journeys is multidimensional. Precarity relates to the status of the migrant as someone who is seeking asylum in a new country and whose capacity for movement and access to work and financial means is therefore severely restricted (Witteborn 2015: 2). It can also refer to information, or what Melissa Wall, Madeline Otis Campbell and Dana Janbek (2015) articulate as "information precarity" – a concept that describes the unstable and insecure access to particular sources of news and personal infor-

mation. For Syrian migrants in Jordan to have access to certain strategic information could help avoid violence and surveillance by the state or police (Wall et al. 2015: 2).

Some migrants at Keleti became the victims of scams at the station, and in the process family members were separated and lost each other (Cameron 2015). Families as large as 14 people travelled together, so staying connected on this journey required constant mobile contact. Without local Hungarian sim cards, knowledge of the Hungarian language or disposable funds to buy airtime, migrants were largely reliant on Wi-Fi to maintain their network capital. Yet, at that time no Wi-Fi was available at the station. In response to this need, volunteers from the Central European University Refugee Aid[4] headed by media scholar Kate Coyer purchased hardware – partially funded by a crowdsourcing effort by a member of the Electronic Frontier Foundation – and set up a Wi-Fi network named "No YouTube Please." The volunteers further provided a series of battery packs for charging phones. The Wi-Fi initiative was documented on a blog (Keleti-connected.tumblr.com) showing multiple volunteers walking around with mobile routers in back bags allowing migrants to connect to the internet and access to data. Coyer observed that the network was predominantly used for one-to-one or one-to-few communication mostly on WhatsApp, Skype and Facebook Messenger as migrants used these messaging applications to inform family members of their whereabouts. "People just wanted to talk to their friends and their family who were awaiting their arrival or were back home and to talk to people who were travelling and give them information about routes" (Coyer 2018). With access to data and power, migrants were able to read trusted news sources in their own language; use translation and currency exchange applications; share information and plan routes using Google Maps – some at Keleti opted to walk to the Austrian border (ibid).

Generally, most migrants arrive in Europe only with a mobile phone as a way to access valuable social media networks such as Facebook, which they use to "crowd source information – refugees share maps, contacts and advice in both public and private groups" (Gillespie et al. 2016: 19). Many migrants use WhatsApp and Viber, which are considered secure due to encryption technology to "recruit fellow travellers, contact smugglers, report on their journeys and highlight opportunities and dangers" (Gillespie et al. 2016: 19). Migrants often store important documents such as digital copies of their passport or identification on their mobile phones (Wall 2017). At Keleti, access to Wi-Fi became not only part of a communicative act, but also a political and emotive one that offered some form of agency, even refusal, towards the inertia experienced. While the informal camp might

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4   A side note about the Central European University: In April 2017, the Hungarian government threatened to close the Central European University. Many critics of the government believe this threat was part of a larger government strategy to silence liberal voices within the Hungarian academic community (Kean 2017).

be understood as a heterotopia of deviance to which the so-called unwashed and unwanted migrant body was relegated, I argue that the free Wi-Fi zone provided a counter-site, a heterotopia offering a sense of possibility and community through mobile communication. In this sense, mobiles also functioned as spatial technologies, where they served to create new spatial practices or ways of refusing existing restrictions on mobility. For migrants, this spatial practice often hinged on their network, as others gave tips and advice on border crossings, thereby making the Wi-Fi zones at Keleti part of a communicative act of defence in the face of existential, physical and emotional insecurity. In the following section, I will expand on how the process of Othering and the subsequent affective atmosphere of shame took place at Keleti station, in part, by offering some political context to this Hungarian case study.

Figs. 3 and 4: Photos of Keleti station at night showing the lower level of the station where migrants were camped (Photos: copyright Mauricio Lima)

Protesting Wi-Fi

The Guardian newspaper (2016) reported the Hungarian government's announcement of plans for the construction of a fence along the 177-km southern border with Serbia and Croatia, to slow down the process of migration. Conflating the figure of the migrant with the terrorist, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was quoted: "Immigration and migrants damage Europe's security, are a threat to people and bring terrorism upon us." In that same year, Orbán's populist-nationalist Fidesz government rejected a European Court of Justice ruling that Hungary and Slovakia should accept their countries' compulsory quota of migrants as issued by the European Union (Byrne 2017). The Hungarian government held a national referendum to gauge public opinion on refugee relocation in 2016. The central message of the government's information campaign leading up to the referendum succinctly summed up their position on migration: that migrants pose an imminent threat to the Hungarian people. The Facebook page of the Hungarian government, various billboards, radio and websites advertised the official campaign messages. These messages included: "Did you know that since

the beginning of the migrant crisis, more than 300 people have died in Europe in terror attacks?" and "Did you know that since the beginning of the migrant crisis, harassment towards women has steeply risen in Europe?" as well as "Did you know that the Paris attack was carried out by immigrants?" (Budapest Business Journal 2016). A Pew Research Centre survey (2016) found Hungarians associated migration with terrorism, more than any other European country surveyed. Seventy-six percent of Hungarians believed hosting refugees increased the likelihood of terrorism – the highest rate among 10 countries sampled (Poushter 2016). Indeed, 87 percent of Hungarians supported Orbán's decision to build the fence (Bauman 2016: 32).

In the case of the fence and the stoppage at Keleti station, the aim of the authorities appeared to be the restriction of mobility of migrants. The role of government shifted from being the provision of infrastructure and networks of transport to the "function of ... a valve, modulating the mobility regime" (Morley 2017: 81). This act can also be seen as more than simply restricting movement, but rather also a process of making the so-called threat of migrants perceptible to the Hungarian public. In this atmosphere of chaos and squalor, the figure of the asylum seeker accrued various undesirable affective qualities, such as disgust, anger, fear and mistrust (Tyler 2006: 191).

The exaggerated media rhetoric of mass migration as an uncontrollable "influx" or "flood" of people was writ large as migrants encountered a bottleneck in their journey and were forced to camp en masse at the station. The Hungarian government made migrants perceptible, parading the deviant, unwashed Other for people to witness. The migrant, now visible (and numerous), became "the imaginary figure of an alien or external collective 'other'" (Balibar 2005: 25). At the same time, this other was "'reified' as an object of domination and knowledge, and became 'fantastic' as a threatening double, or an essential enemy, when the self receives its identity from the relationship established with the other" (ibid: 25).

The figure of the migrant was constituted and shaped by the so-called imminent threat migrants posed, "brought into the awareness of the common citizen" through "the media spectacle, bureaucratic labels and heterotopias" (Witteborn 2011a: 1155). This threat fuelled right-wing political rhetoric whereby politicians could promise the restoration of order. Through what can be perceived as a manipulation of affect – where migrants generated anxiety and fear – politicians could introduce a particular siege mindset and logic for protection and defence of the country. This kind of emotive atmosphere tempted voter empathy for the restoration of order (Bauman 2016: 17). Indeed, governments were "not invested in allay-ing their citizens' anxieties", they were interested instead in amplifying the "anxiety arising from the future's uncertainty and the constant and ubiquitous sense of insecurity" (ibid: 30). In this spirit of emotional appeal, Prime Minister Orbán is the "strongman" figure that rallies the anxious class and promises to protect them. He seals the border, builds fences and sounds the alarm against migrants (ibid: 88).

In this affective atmosphere of fear and anxiety the telecommunications company, Telekom HU, a subsidiary of the German telecommunications company Deutsche Telekom, announced the planned provision of free Wi-Fi at Keleti station. On 7 September 2015, the company wrote on their Facebook page (2015): "Our company is trying to help with its own tools ... we'll start building free Wi-Fi. We hope that refugees can start to use the service as quickly as possible, which will help them to communicate, to obtain information. We also provide power distributors to make sure charging phones don't cause difficulties" (Facebook 2015).[5]

More than 1000 comments appeared after the announcement was made on Facebook, some congratulating the company on the offer, while many others offered negative feedback. One user welcomed the initiative, "It's a very good idea, finally a company that is acting according to European values! #Respect" (Facebook 2015). Echoing the government's narrative of threat, another user wrote, "Well, if it goes on like this, Hungarians have to get out of here. Thank you Telekom for letting them stay in touch with the terrorist centers. When they shoot at us from every direction, we'll remember who helped them to get their orders" (Facebook 2015). Casting doubt on the need for the service, another user commented, "Refugees and poor, but they have a full phone! They could buy a mobile internet with euro [sic]" (Facebook 2015). Many users asked, "I also use the internet for contacts. Why don't I get it for free?" (Facebook 2015). One Facebook user provoked the company by asking, "Why don't you give them a phone for free??" (Facebook 2015). Telekom HU responded: "According to our information, they [migrants] usually have a phone – as a single tool of communication –, but they can't use it without the basic power and wifi. We wouldn't be credible if we didn't help them... we posted a few weeks ago to 'connect Europe'" (Facebook 2015). Angry responses followed: "Telekom HU you will never 'connect' Europe. Never! Europe doesn't have to be connected, it's not broken..." (Facebook 2015). The Telekom responded, "To help homeless people, we don't think it's unethical, especially after a marketing message, when we said, 'we're connecting Europe'. We don't talk politics, we install wi-fi stations" (Facebook 2015).

These extracts of dialogue from the Telekom's Facebook page show how the figure of the migrant was not only conflated with terrorism but also with mobile networks. The issue of communication became politicised as a determinant of the level of threat posed. Acts of connection took on much broader scope beyond that of Keleti station and can be perceived as a metaphor for the larger issues of the European Union and the tensions and fissures that exist in this sphere of community. The anger and frustrations that attached to migrants and mobile communication can be understood as symptomatic of the real issue at stake, that of national identity and self-protection.

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5   It is unclear whether the company ultimately provided free Wi-Fi to migrants at the station.

The Migrant Other

In this paper I have analysed a case study that intersects concepts of mobility, migration, affect and mobile phones, examined within a very specific cultural, political and historic context. Keleti station, as a critical node in the migrant journey, can be perceived as an emotionally charged point for political action and a site of contestation between volunteers, migrants – who are made perceptible as the inert and chaotic Other – and the Hungarian government. In this instance, the very nature of the camp – including its unique temporal and spatial setting – "gave rise to new connectivities, new intersubjectivities, and hyperpoliticization of the migration crisis" (Lafaut & Coene 2018: 16). Part of this politicisation was how migrant bodies were made visible, paraded and shamed by the Hungarian government, becoming "embodiments of the collapse of order" (Bauman 2016: 15). As Judith Butler (2004) argues, "politics and power work through regulating what can appear, what can be heard" (147). At Keleti station, normative power could be seen to work through the dominant narrative of the precarious migrant, as a way to make tangible to Hungarians the alterity they feared. Authorities enabled a visual spectacle of migrant bodies in the process of Othering, where the spectacle relied on affective registers of chaos, disruption, even litter and dirt, to produce its desired effects. This issue of visibility is complex in migration journeys, as migrants vacillate between wanting to be visible (to aid agencies and coast guards in times of danger) and invisible (at border crossings) during their journey. Indeed, many migrants at Keleti preferred *not* to be seen in Hungary to avoid the Dublin Regulation and risk their claim to asylum; in this way, Budapest was merely a transit point in their onward journey to Germany or Austria.

I want to sustain this idea of visibility of migrant bodies and expand on the deeper ethical reason for doing so. For Butler (2004), drawing on the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas, "what binds us morally has to with how we are addressed by others in ways that we cannot avoid or avert" (130). I argue that the precariousness of migrants at Keleti constituted an ethical demand; it assumed a responsibility. This demand was about being "awake to what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself" (Butler 2004: 134). The call to responsibility for the bodies and lives of others – in particular, precarious others who lack means of making their own voice heard – is significant here. For the Hungarian government, the migrant spectacle at Keleti represented "that sought-after bottom located even further down; a bottom that may render one's own lot less than absolutely demeaning" (Bauman 2016: 14). However, the precariousness of migrants was not universally read as a sign for retreat or as a threat to security; it also constituted a demand for empathy and dialogue. In this vein, Leurs and Smets (2018) refer to "social justice orientated researchers" as a particular category of digital migration scholar (8) – insinuating the increasing blurriness between media scholarship and activism. In this case study, communication constitutes a form of refusal, however small, towards existing narratives of threat as well as the forces of

shame and inertia routinely experienced in migrant journeys. Migrants were able to strategise and reorganise their routes, inform other travellers and communicate with their families. In this way, mobiles and the Wi-Fi network at Keleti might be considered a fundamental human right in the creation of a space of security and the feeling of safety.

Postscript: In July 2018, the Hungarian government criminalised the act of aiding any illegal migrant in that country (Kingsley 2018).

Acknowledgements

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