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# New directions in migration studies: towards methodological de-nationalism



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## Abstract

In this paper I consider how the construction of migration as a problem poses both ethical and epistemological challenges to migration scholars and how this is related to political and methodological nationalism. I briefly outline two paradigm shifts that have been highly generative in our field and beyond – methodological transnationalism and the mobilities turn, both of which have as their starting point a critique of the nation state as a container of social processes. Building on these critiques and alternatives to methodological nationalism I go on to propose an approach I'm calling 'methodological denationalism' which takes as its starting point the migrant/citizen distinction. Key to this approach is to 'migrantize' the citizen, and I go on to give some examples of how this is done, not only to citizens of colour, but also to those who support non-citizens or who are the partners of non-citizens. Finally, I suggest that migrantizing the citizen enables us not only to look at the ways in which immigration controls affect citizens, but also how we might begin to make connections between the formal exclusions of noncitizenship and the multiple, and sometimes informal exclusions within citizenship.

**Keywords:** Citizenship, Methodological nationalism, Methodological transnationalism, Migration, Migration studies, Mobilities, Race and racialisation

Social scientists working on racism, class and global inequality are generally keen to engage with the public about their field of expertise. These issues do not air as often as they should, but there is one exception: when they are framed in terms of migration. Indeed, scholars of citizenship and migration in Europe to are more likely to feel – why does the public insist on talking about 'migration'? After all, the history of the world is unavoidably a history of mobility. Beginning with the movement of early humans from Africa the movement of people has shaped, reinforced and undermined social relations and institutions for thousands of years. As Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) have observed, 'If we think historically about the human condition it might seem that we should really have a stasis studies rather than a migration or mobilities studies' (p. 185). The story we are told about migration today is a tale of unparalleled movement and huge demographic change that presents a direct threat to sovereignty, security and national identity. In Europe migration is seen to pose a 'tragedy of commons' to welfare states and a threat to national culture. Scholarship has often sought to rebut or at least interrogate political claims that migration is of its nature a negative process and to nuance policy makers' and the general public's understandings of migration. Nevertheless, hostility to migrants seems to have increased despite our best

efforts, and the significant growth in migration research, research centres, journals, networks and post graduate courses. Indeed, perhaps we are experiencing not an 'age of migration' but an age of migration *research*.

Migration scholars often put a lot of effort into relating with integrity to the many different political actors and stakeholders who are active in relation to migration and asylum. In this paper I want to invite reflection about why migration research matters and how we can study human mobility without turning it into a problem. I'm going to begin by outlining the ethical and epistemological challenge posed by methodological nationalism, and briefly some of the highly generative developments in the last two decades. Taking this as my starting point I go on to propose an approach I'm calling 'methodological denationalism'. Key to this is to 'migrantize' the citizen, and I go on to give some examples of how this is already being experienced by citizens of colour, by those who support non-citizens and by the partners of non-citizens. Finally, I suggest that purposefully migrantizing the citizen can help us make connections between the formal exclusions of non-citizenship and the multiple, and sometimes informal exclusions within citizenship.

### **The challenge**

If everybody moves, when does movement become migration, whose movement counts as migration and why? Crudely we can distinguish between the 'migrant' in law and policy, the 'migrant' in data, and the 'migrant' in public debate. These three types of migrants do not easily map on to one another. For example, while the migrant in data is typically defined as foreign born, many of those 'migrants' may be citizens in law, through naturalisation for example, or deriving citizenship from a parent despite being born abroad. On the other hand, a person might be foreign born, and a non-citizen in law, but still not imagined as a 'migrant' in public debate. British people living abroad rarely think of themselves as 'migrants' and certainly not 'illegal immigrants' whatever their status in practice. They are expats. The middle class, wealthy and white may experience immigration controls as collateral damage, but they do not imagine themselves as the primary target of controls, and very often they are right. Putting it crudely, in political debate, a 'migrant' is a person whose movement, or whose presence, is considered a problem. In academic research different disciplines tend to select different definitions: demographers and economists tend to prefer the definition 'foreign born' because it does not change; lawyers, 'foreign national'; while sociologists and anthropologists are often more concerned with the migrant as someone who is perceived/perceives themselves as out of place or racially othered. This is part of the richness of our field, the reason we can learn so much from one another, and why an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary approach is so important.

There have been real efforts to broaden the scope of migration studies to include the full range of mobile non-citizens. Ground-breaking work on 'lifestyle migration', return migration, highly skilled migrants, children and young people, and retirement has examined the mobilities and identity making including of often relatively privileged and affluent groups (see for example, Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, 2009; King, 2002; Kofman, 2012; Sigona & Hughes, 2010; Tryandafyllidou & Isaakyan, 2016). However, migration studies in general continues to focus on the mobility of the poor and the subordinated. Again, we should note that this is not unique to our field. The social sciences have always

been particularly interested in the marginalised and the disadvantaged. Five decades ago Laura Nader asked with reference to her own discipline of anthropology 'whether the entirety of fieldwork does not depend upon a certain power relationship in favour of the anthropologist, and whether indeed such dominant-subordinate relationships may not be affecting the kinds of theories we are weaving' (Nader, 1969, p. 289).

For academic research the 'ideologically charged' migration lexicon is not only a terminological and epistemological challenge, but a conceptual, ethical and theoretical one, as it assumes a tension between embedded 'natives' and out of place 'aliens' and this tension lies at the heart of contemporary concerns about human mobility. Cross-border mobility is not the natural marker of difference that is often imagined, any more than nation state borders themselves are natural, and human movement is only contingently constituted as a problem for 'migration' policy and as an object of investigation. The study of migration has tended to reinforce the strongly imagined norm of national and stable communities disrupted by migrants – even as it has endeavoured to show for example how those migrants have enriched those communities economically and culturally. The identification of a population and its associated problems draws even those researchers who strive for analytical objectivity into participation in politics and governance (Bacchi, 2012). Indeed, the making of the difference between 'migrant' and 'citizen' is key to the creation and governing of nation states and their territorial borders, and attending to the (colonial) histories of borders reveals their generative rather than purely regulatory nature (Malkki, 1995; Mongia, 1999; Ngai, 2004; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, & Tsianos, 2008; Torpey, 2000; Van Walsum, 2008). This state governed differentiation attempts to fix mobilities' role in social relations in very particular ways which depend on history and context, but the critical point is that 'migrants' are subordinate to 'citizens'. This subordination can be very direct such as when migrant workers are dependent on employers for their visas, but it also suffuses the contemporary politics of immigration: immigration controls must be for the security and benefit of the citizenry, and they mark states' claims to prioritise their citizens' needs over those of foreign residents.

### **Shifting paradigms and new approaches**

As is evident from the work cited above, those of us studying immigration have not been unaware of this problem, often acknowledging that difference is not only made by law, policy and politics, but also by research. Rooted in 'migration studies' and building on the work of Beck, but also of mobilities scholars, Wimmer and Glick Schiller made a substantial contribution to social science in their elaboration of 'methodological nationalism', a model that naturalises the nation state as a container of social processes and thereby pre-determines and defines certain objects of sociological enquiry (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). One of their arguments captures a preoccupation of this paper, that migration studies' uncritical embracing of the nation/state/society as a natural social and political form, implicated scholars in nation state building processes. The problem of methodological nationalism is particularly acute in migration studies but it runs across the social sciences. It is compounded by the nature of academic funding regimes, both national and philanthropic, which have fuelled the understanding of certain kinds of human movement as a 'problem' to be solved.

Emerging from Wimmer and Glick Schiller's critique for example was the research paradigm of transnationalism that recognised human communities and communications as not restricted to a single nation state and 'migrants' as building social fields that connect across borders (Glick Schiller, 1999; Vertovec, 2007). 'Transnational studies' sought to de-centre the nation state and look across spaces and scales, enabling us to see how the 'global' and the 'local' change when we 'don't assume they are automatically linked to particular types of territory or space' (Levitt & Khagram, 2007). Faist for example proposes a methodological toolbox for the effective study of transnational phenomena including specificity in unit of analysis and the usefulness of the concept of transnational spaces which can 'provide alternative definitions of units of analysis that are general enough to think of social entities as de-territorialized and territorialized at the same time' (Faist, 2012, p. 57).

Famously the work of John Urry (2000) sought to challenge the position of national society as sociology's 'central concept', arguing that its centrality deprived sociology of the tools to understand globalisation. Urry was a prominent voice in what became described as the 'mobilities turn'. This aimed 'to develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order' (Urry, 2007, p. 18). It linked different scales and forms of movement and promoted methodological moves away from boundedness and the sedentary, and highlighted the importance to the global economy of the intersection of everyday lives with mobility systems. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) welcomed the normalizing of mobility but argued that it does not pay enough attention to different barriers to movement, proposing 'regimes of mobility' to explore the relationship between privileged and stigmatised im/mobility, and defining movement within social and economic relationships rather than simply across borders.

These kinds of efforts to escape methodological nationalism have gone significantly beyond critique to offer alternative frameworks for understanding and analysis. However, while social science have gone some way to recognising the distorting effects of methodological nationalism, political theory has tended to be rather disengaged from these debates (Sager, 2016). There have, to be sure, been incredibly productive debates about post-national, de-national and transnational citizenship, including explorations of the many varieties of citizenship that encompass how contemporary states have accommodated human mobility such as dual citizenship, long term residence, European citizenship, and turning a blind eye (Bauböck, 2017; Sassen, 2002; Soysal, 1994, 2011). These and other scholars are concerned with varieties of political community and how the nation state can be expanded or recognised as only one of multiple layers of political membership, though notably this membership can continue to have primacy even in the 'postnational': 'rights and membership of individuals remain organized within nation-states. The nation-state continues to be the repository of cultures of nationhood and institutions through which rights and membership policies are implemented' (Soysal, 2011).

Engin Isin and Greg Nielson (2008) pioneered a conceptualisation of 'acts of citizenship', arguing that events performed by 'migrants' themselves can constitute citizenship, asking what makes the citizen, (rights claims) rather than who is the citizen. But why does politics have to be constituted within citizenship? As Bhambra remarks:

This assumes that people outside of citizenship are not political and that being outside of citizenship is not itself politically constituted in terms of stabilising particular relations of domination. Further, there is no recognition within the analysis as posed that the very idea of citizenship being mobilized is itself constitutive of the division that is then to be overcome through struggles for citizenship.

Bhambra, 2015.

The study of migration has increasingly engaged with the study of borders and bordering, demonstrating, as Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy argue (2019), the entanglement of the projects of governance and belonging that lie, not at the margins, but at the centre of political life. This connects migration with the politics of race, class and 'indigeneity' (with its very different implications in Europe and in settler colonies) (Back, Sinha, & Bryan, 2012; De Genova, 2018; Goldberg, 2006; Lentin, 2014; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). People have started to bring the work of post-colonial scholars into conversation with migration literature, and explore the relationship between colonialism, citizenship and mobility controls and the ways in which the coloniality of power saturates contemporary immigration policy and practice (Carver, 2019; De Sousa Santos, 2007; El-Enany, *in press*; Sharma, *in press*; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Mamdani, 2018; Mayblin, 2017; Mongia, 2018). These efforts challenge the assumed distinction between 'migrant' and 'citizen' that undergirds some of the toxic politics in many European countries and beyond. However, as Nandita Sharma, among others, has pointed out, decolonialism can seem compatible with certain kinds of nationalism, territorialism and sovereignty, that is, it does not necessarily mean denationalism (Sharma, *in press*). Yet it is a crucial starting point to answer my original question: how do we research migration without reinforcing the migrant as a problematic subject? How do we recognise the key role of the nation state without falling prey to methodological nationalism? How to move outside the mutual reinforcing circle of migration – critical migration studies towards **methodological de-nationalism**?

### **Methodological de-nationalism**

By methodological de-nationalism I mean an approach that builds on the insights of transnational studies, mobilities' paradigms, and bordering and decolonial approaches, that is, that recognises that borders and citizenship are politically constituted and historically and economically embedded. However, while sympathetic to Levitt and Khagam's proposal to adopt a gaze that 'begins without borders', such gazes have their own ontologies (Marston, Jones, & Woodward, 2005) and their own normative and historically embedded assumptions. Even in a 'borderless world of networks' we cannot 'objectively' simply trace actually existing networks.

In the case of migration studies, recognising the constructed nature of the categories of migrant and citizen does not mean that we therefore simply shed them. Whether one is a 'migrant' or a 'citizen' matters both normatively and empirically. It matters in at least three ways. Firstly, immigration status matters, being subject to immigration

control and/or being ultimately deportable has all kinds of impacts on a person's life. It impacts on a range of rights, and it impacts on life plans, on how and indeed whether one can imagine a future. It impacts too on social relations. In systems where citizens can sponsor migrants as employees and partners for example, it makes for more compliant workers and spouses. Conversely, being a citizen gives access to a range of rights depending on the state of citizenship, – and it also usually means that a person can be deported to their state of citizenship.

Secondly, nationalised subjectivities matter to how we imagine ourselves and who belongs. Ideas about our place in the 'national order of things' give rise to many different forms of socialities and politics, but they are constructed in an everyday way (Billig, 1995; Dzenovska, 2013; Malkki, 1995). Nationalised subjectivities are not confined to citizens. Those legally classified and/or socially imagined as 'migrants' may also feel the importance of language and habits more strongly than they do when they are living 'at home' and much migrant organising for instance, is around country of origin. That is, for the people we engage with, migration and citizenship matters both normatively and empirically,

practices of mobility are shaped by the material reality of the national order of things and that the national order of things also lends meaning to mobility in collective and individual narratives. At the same time, the experiences of mobility\* and the associated emplacement and displacement\* exceed their co-optation by national(ist) common sense

Dzenovska, p. 205.

Thirdly, the state, while contingent and multi-faceted, constructs economic and social relations. It creates law and policy and encourages behaviour and relations that shape social and political lives and experiences in very material ways including but not restricted to the institution and relations of citizenship. Law and policy do not only shape relations of political representation and participation but also the national landscapes of labour market, welfare state, housing, education, cultural practices and so on. For example, national labour markets are created in large part by the national institutions, laws and policies of states. It is not only who is allowed to work, but under what conditions, with what rights and protections, for what wages. These are set by states and differ between them. This is in a context where, for all the academic critique of the traditional conceptual tools of liberal politics and sociology like 'the state' and 'the nation', and despite significant changes to ways of thinking about power, nevertheless the state/government continues to be the frame through which public discourse understands the distribution and accountability of political power (Rose, 1999).

By methodological de-nationalism I mean an approach that does not assume difference between state differentiated categories and seeks to investigate what this does for theory, politics and practice. It makes visible and investigates the workings of state-imposed categories of migrant and citizen in all their differentiations, their impacts on the experiences of individuals and groups, and the management, governance and accountability of national(ised) territories and international/global relations more generally. It recognises the continuing power of the state and the national order of things, how they work together to inform our understandings of 'society', political power and

accountability, and also can order engagement with politics, with communities, and with the histories and cultures that we claim. Yet also that 'local understandings of emplacement' may be enfolded in Dzenovska's 'national(ist) common sense, and are by no means necessarily reducible to it (Dzenovska, 2013, p. 205). While acknowledging the consequences of sovereignty and constituted national institutions, including national welfare states, methodological de-nationalism must be attentive to the impact on the migrant/citizen of the interaction of global, regional and local institutions and processes. Finally, like transnational studies it is informed by a sensibility that historicises the theories, concepts and practices of the field (in this case, migration) to better understand contingency, assumptions, and possibilities that inform research and practice. In this way it has the potential to recover relationalities and interdependence to shed light on the impacts of methodological nationalism beyond the academy and into politics.

### **Migrantizing the citizen**

What then are migration scholars and activists to do with the category of 'migrant'? Firstly, we must be attentive to the distinction between social, legal and data understandings of who counts as a 'migrant' and a 'citizen', how these interact, contradict and reinforce one another. I am here going to focus on the 'social' use of the term, which is also quite pervasive in migration research, and here one can turn to critical race theory to look at ways of responding to the epistemological, ethical and conceptual challenge of managing and developing an 'inherited' concept. Mills (2017) helpfully compares 'race' to 'phlogiston' and 'witch'. 'Phlogiston' was a gas that was believed to be omitted by materials on combustion, but when phlogiston was proven not to exist it was dropped as a scientific construct. Conversely, witches in the sense of evil women with magical powers do not exist either, but the witch is still used in stories and as a term describing believers in Wiccan religion.

...'race' is arguably more like 'witch' than 'phlogiston' in that many social and political theorists have contended it can still do useful work for us... Instead of seeing race... as part of a natural hierarchy, one reconceptualizes it so it refers to one's structural location in a racialised social system, thereby generating a successor concept. People are 'raced' according to particular rules – we shift from a noun to a verb, from a pre-existing 'natural' state to an active social process.

Mills, 2017, p. 5

Migration studies has got half-way to a successor concept in the debates about the terminology of illegality/undocumented/unauthorised/ clandestine etc. No one is illegal, any more than they are witches, but they are 'illegalised' through an active social – and state endorsed – process. Perhaps then we can think of 'migrantized people' – though I would be grateful if someone could think of a less ugly word. In this spirit there have been calls to 'demigrantize' migration studies, that is to 'move away from treating the migrant population as the unit of analysis and investigation and instead direct the focus on parts of the whole population, which obviously includes migrants' (Dahinden, 2016) in this way de-exceptionalizing migration.

In tandem with the ‘demigrantizing’ of ‘migrants’ then I suggest that it is helpful to at the same time ‘migrantize’ the citizen. The instability of the category of ‘migrant’ after all destabilises the category of ‘citizen’. Migrantizing the citizen is precisely what the everyday terminology of ‘second generation’ migrant or ‘person of migration heritage’ encourages us to do. Who sheds and who retains their migrancy is often bound up with nationally specific ways of encoding and remaking of race and it is too easy to dismiss this as simply because of public ignorance. The development of the modern state ‘depended on the ideological work of manufacturing sameness’ and in differentiating between, on the one hand subjects/citizens/natives (and their differentially excluded dependents of wives, children, slaves etc), and on the other hand strangers/foreigners/migrants (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997; Goldberg, 2002). As David Goldberg has so brilliantly argued, this sameness became bound up with the ideological work of the construction of race. Importantly, states are not only about statehood, but about *national* statehood. It is the national that can be called on to legitimise state practice – the response to a call to respect the *national* interest is likely to be very different to the response to a call to respect *state* interest. The nationalising logic of sameness derives on a conceptualization and categorization of ‘race’ within Europe and in Europe’s colonies. Scarcely surprising then that racialised differentiations can be highly relevant in popular identifications of ‘migrant’, overriding legal status or other forms of belonging (Anderson, 2013). As Lentin puts it:

Managing migration by regulating mobility, policing the border, mandatorily detaining asylum seekers and deporting those labelled “undocumented” are as much about the regulation of the spaces within the territorial border as they are an attempt to draw an ever tighter distinction between inside and outside.

Lentin, 2017

The hostility to migration in many states today cannot be understood independently of the migrant as a racialised category, but migration scholarship has demonstrated a certain aversion to discussing ‘race’ and racism, preferring ideas of ethnicity or culture and, relatedly, integration. But once migration is no longer at the border it becomes ‘race’, and minority ethnic citizens are often already ‘migrantized’ (Erel, Murji, & Naha-boo, 2016; Jones et al., 2017; Virdee, 2014). Perhaps the paramount example of this in Europe are Roma people who may be EU citizens, yet nevertheless are often removed/deported as criminals (France), nomads (Italy), or homeless (UK). In the US work by the legal scholar Stevens (2011) for example has found that thousands of US citizens have been (illegally) deported – migrantized in practice. Typically these deported citizens share characteristics with people who are recognised as vulnerable to signing false confessions: Black, with poor literacy and mental health challenges.

The imbrication of immigration and race is vividly illustrated in the UK where the responsibility for immigration enforcement has been rolled out to a whole range of different non-immigration actors: not only employers but drivers, landlords, registrars, public service providers, even academic lecturers, are required to check that people are complying with immigration requirements. These consequences are felt much more strongly by Black than by white people. This was vividly illustrated in late April 2018



when the UK was hit by the so-called Windrush Scandal. The lives of large numbers of Black British residents who had lived legally in the UK since the 1950s had been destroyed – evicted, denied medical treatment, refused entry to the UK, summarily sacked, detained – because they were unable to demonstrate their rights of residence and in some cases their citizenship. Immigration policy is far from being of no import to citizens. Citizens are affected by immigration law and can find themselves caught up in the immigration net and this is not confined to the UK.

Citizens are also affected by immigration law as a consequence of the requirement to enforce. In many states the criminalisation of citizens via immigration laws has been increasing. There has been a significant rise in what the Institute of Race Relations has called, ‘crimes of solidarity’. Across Europe criminal laws designed to target organised crime and profiteers are applied to fit an anti-refugee agenda (Institute of Race Relations, 2017). Those who assist people who cross borders are being accused of smuggling, trafficking, and even being ‘slave-traders’. Sea rescue, giving lifts to people within as well as across borders, provision of food and water and medical care, are all becoming offences. These kinds of measures hit citizens who are engaged in migration politics, but non-activist citizens too can find themselves in breach of the law should they employ people who do not have the right to work for example.

Strong enforcement not only reminds those migrants who are not deported that they are deportable, it also reminds those citizens who enforce, or who are subject to enforcement, that they are not deportable. The effect of this normalisation of immigration enforcement is to present a fantasy citizenship of full social inclusion even as in practice citizenship is highly differentiated in terms of diversity of race, gender, sexuality or disability (e.g. Williams, 1998; Young, 1989). As Cohen puts it: ‘In the final analysis citizenship does not make a citizenry equal. In fact, it appears to institutionalize both difference and inequalities, albeit in sometimes unexpected ways’ (Cohen 2009, p. 12).

The current obsession with immigration as a problem turns attention well away from the gendered, classed and racialized borders within formal citizenship, depicting all citizens as fully and equally included. Yet immigration enforcement itself is one of the mechanisms that helps to create differentiated citizenship. It bears down disproportionately not only on minority ethnic citizens, but also on those who don’t have money. Consider the now standard requirement across most EU member states that citizens have minimum earnings before being able to be joined by third country national partners and by their children. In the UK nearly two thirds of British women in employment do not earn enough to be joined by a third country national partner, let alone children. A right to family life that has been denied low waged or unemployed citizens whatever their ethnic background.

Migrantizing the citizen excavates the connections between exclusions within citizenship and exclusions from citizenship realising the potential to complicate arguments that set up a homogenised ‘migrant’ in conflict with a homogenised ‘white working class’ in a ‘natural’ competition for resources and status. Whiteness is not stable or homogenous and it becomes visible under certain conditions and for certain groups. In the hierarchy of whiteness Roma, gypsies and EU nationals from poorer countries are considered ‘white’ yet still may be classed as undesirable

'migrants' and subjected to discriminatory labour conditions and racialized violence. Methodological de-nationalism demands careful thinking about the relation between immigration, race, nationality and class, how they reinforce each other and are contested in the current conjuncture and how, in practice, this complicates the migrant/citizen binary.

### **Methodological de-nationalism beyond immigration controls**

Methodological de-nationalism does not mean discounting mobility but rather considering migration as one of the multiple ways in which people's movement has been guided and constrained over the centuries. Even before the introduction of welfare states, in many European states poor relief was limited to parish residents and the poor were liable to be 'moved on' if there was any suggestion that they might become unemployed, stay long enough to make a claim on the parish, or have a baby that would be born in the parish and therefore be the parish's responsibility. And what are immigration controls but attempts to control the mobility of the poor, to tie certain people to places, albeit allegiance is now owed to nation states rather than lords. Analysing immigration controls as part of a gamut of measures that are used to control the mobility of the poor, whatever their citizenship helps us make connections between immigration controls and different scales of movement. Thus while a citizen may have a right to be present on the territory that does not give them the right to be in any public space. Citizens who are homeless or who beg can be prohibited access to certain spaces or moved on. This is often done at local authority level: in Barcelona for example, begging by citizens can be prosecuted as obstructing the "peaceful free movement" of citizens. To allow some citizens their rights of free movement, others are immobilised, fenced in or fenced out.

One way of connecting the exclusions from formal citizenship with those of 'differentiated citizenship' is to make visible the worker citizen. Europe has a long history of attributing a strong moral value to labour from all sides of the political spectrum. Unemployed formal citizens are often considered not mobile enough. Stuck in housing estates or rural areas, not prepared to get on their bike they must be prodded off their sofas and into employment. These prods can be delivered by welfare benefit requirements, which demand a person be prepared to travel a certain distance to work, but at the same time, moving around too much can raise issues when one wants to make a claim on the state. Indeed, access to the welfare state has replaced the levers of immigration controls as a means of controlling the international mobility of certain EU citizens. To deter non-earning people who do not have the resources to support themselves, complex restrictions on access to certain non-contributory benefits are imposed. Importantly returning nationals are not exempt from these restrictions – they may be legal citizens but they are no longer local residents.

Critical to the governing of these restrictions is not only movement but time. Migration researchers have explored the different ways in which immigration controls shape migrants' relation to the labour market, and how temporary visas often push them into highly precarious work. Yet workers who have not been employed for longer than a certain period cannot make certain kinds of claims on an employer and qualifying periods structure the standard employment relationship for migrants and citizens alike (Grabham, 2016). Despite their apparently marginal status, qualifying periods are a key

part of the legal apparatus enabling and encouraging ‘the structural expansion of contingent employment’ (Peck & Theodore, 2012, p. 742). Qualifying periods and temporal controls also feature strongly in welfare state regimes. Foregrounding time as a boundary around access to rights (Cohen, 2018) rather than citizenship per se has the potential to recalibrate assumptions about the relation between the citizen and the migrant, and the functioning of immigration controls and welfare benefits. Perhaps we can think of migrants as at the sharpest end of the temporal restrictions that surround access to many rights for citizens as well as foreigners.

Indeed, if ideas of race and ethnicity speak to the inclusions and exclusions of nation and histories, attention to time and temporality speak to ways of connecting migrants and citizens through state governance. States govern through time and the intense focus on migration as movement across international borders has tended to mean that until recently the ways in which states exercise control over temporalities has been overlooked. Many political theorists are agreed that migrants accrue rights over time, and that deportation becomes more egregious as one develops connections (Carens, 2013). The ways that states exercise control over time is intrinsic to immigration controls and to the moving of the border inside of territory. States impose temporal limitations on residence through time limited visas, intervening in migratory processes and life stages to cut them into temporal chunks and migrants typically have to reside legally in a state for a set number of years before they can claim certain rights. Bureaucracies may also subject applicants (for asylum, visa renewal, citizenship) to long periods of uncertainty and suspense. Without a time frame or anticipated future to work towards, people can struggle to cope and find it difficult to make progress or invest in themselves.

While there is a developing literature on time and immigration detention and rights to settlement and citizenship, it is not only the lives of the mobile that are temporally governed, but also the lives of citizens, and citizens too are experiencing temporal shifts. The idea of an overly powerful present and prolonged youth for people with uncertain futures has been noted by Jeffrey (2010) who has written powerfully about ‘timepass’ in India describing the increasing numbers of people subject to chronic waiting where promised access to social goods, economic resources, settling in some way, is always coming soon but never quite there. Even in the rich world, as jobs are more precarious, homes more expensive, pensions more fragile, the sense of permanent temporariness and unsettlement is more pervasive.

## Conclusion

The study of mobilities, and human mobilities draws attention to the problem of methodological nationalism and migration is a field which demands new approaches. In Europe today the challenge is to draw out the connections between the crises of increasing European poverty and associated popular anger and resentment on the one hand, and immigration controls on the other. Fantasy citizenship benefits from the affective pull of the *nation*, from which the state derives legitimacy. In an age of precarity it seems that the nation has an even stronger affective pull, and worker solidarities can be difficult to generate in a gig economy and accelerating inequalities at all scales. The coupling of economic squeeze and immigration is always in danger of being reduced to a simple message: ‘We must look after our own first. We must first attend to the housing,

benefit and health needs of our population. Sorry, but there is just not enough to go around'. The 'we' here is the citizen talking across the border, but in addresses within the border, the 'we' may be the taxpayer, or residents in a municipality, or homeowners. Methodological de-nationalism seeks to excavate the connections in exclusionary logics.

Promises of strong control over immigration appeal to the hope of a national labour market and economy, a stable cohesive national society and representative democratic politics. These hopes are eminently understandable, but they will not be attained by exerting ever tighter control over immigration. Indeed, the risk is that the obsession engendered by immigration only increases exploitation in labour markets, destabilises neighbourly relations and caricatures democratic politics. Mobility and international migration are indications of our interdependence, the challenge is how to make these interdependencies visible. Perhaps we can start from the insight that what is bad for migrants is not good for citizens, indeed, it is often bad for citizens as well.

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