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Disentangling entangled mobilities: reflections on forms of knowledge production within migration studies

Anna Wyss^{1*} and Janine Dahinden²

*Correspondence:
anna.wyss@oefre.unibe.ch

¹ Institute for Public Law,
University of Bern, Bern,
Switzerland

² Laboratory for the Study
of Social Processes and 'nccr
– on the move', University
of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel,
Switzerland

Abstract

European migration studies have been criticised for having certain epistemological and theoretical underpinnings that reproduce hegemonic structures, especially the 'national order of things' and colonial legacies. In this article, we propose the concept of 'entangled mobilities' to address some of these challenges. Entangled mobilities as a theoretical lens enables us to study specific global and transnational processes, the ways in which they are historically and locally situated, and how they materialise in individual mobilities of differently positioned actors within an unequal political global economy. This lens helps us simultaneously overcome nationality- and ethnicity-centred epistemologies, confront colonial aphasia, and be sensitive to the multiple inequalities and mobility regimes within which human mobilities evolve. Furthermore, the prism of entangled mobilities provides an ideal methodological departure point from which to systematically examine how human mobilities are intertwined and interdependent and to reveal how they are embedded in and shaped by asymmetric, historically evolved power structures. We propose three pragmatic entry points for mobilising the concept: in specific places, in terms of the intersections and interdependencies of different mobile people, and in the context of the biographical trajectories of individuals. Finally, we invite scholars from other fields, such as policy research, to innovatively adapt this approach to gain alternative knowledge and address inequalities.

Keywords: Mobility lens, Migration, Entanglements, Reflexive migration studies, Postcolonialism

Introduction

Over the past 30 years, critical voices have shed light on the ways in which knowledge production in European (and also US) migration studies is fraught with hegemonic structures and confronts certain epistemological and theoretical challenges. Primarily, migration research has been criticised for contributing to reproducing not only the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1992; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) but also postcolonial legacies (Mayblin & Turner, 2021; Palmary, 2021; Schinkel, 2018). The challenges that migration researchers face are manifold: how is it possible to avoid replicating states' efforts to fix mobilities' role in social relations in ways that make 'the migrant' a racialised, classed and problematic figure? How can scholars avoid

falling into the ethnonational trap that haunts migration studies, and how can they circumvent reproducing nation-state-based categories? How is it possible to incorporate historical entanglements arising from the colonial enterprise into their theory building?

One promising avenue for overcoming some of these pitfalls is to integrate insights from so-called mobility studies (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Tarrius, 2010; Urry, 2007) into migration research—a strategy some scholars have recently started to pursue (among others, Dahinden, 2010; Schapendonk, Bolay and Dahinden, 2021; Faist, 2013; Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, 2020). Our article contributes to this debate as we believe the potential of a ‘mobility lens’ has not yet been fully exploited in migration research. We introduce the concept of ‘entangled mobilities’ to address some of the above criticisms in our research on human mobilities. By entangled mobilities we mean a theoretical prism that, on the one hand, enables us to study human mobilities without limiting them to migration and at the same time allows us to take into account the ways in which people’s movements differ regarding their spatial and temporal dimensions and their positioning within socio-economic hierarchies. On the other hand, the concept compels us to systematically examine the ways in which mobilities are interconnected and interdependent—and thus to consider the local and global entanglements as well as the power structures in which they are embedded. Our proposal ties in with current work in the context of the reflexive turn in migration studies (Amelina, 2021; Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014) but goes beyond it in the following ways. First, we argue that the lens of entangled mobilities allows us to transcend a nationality- and ethnicity-centred epistemology as well as colonial aphasia (Stoler, 2011)—and thus to take up two strands of criticism that have only recently been simultaneously tackled (see, for example, Grosfoguel et al., 2015; Mayblin & Turner, 2021; Raghuram, 2021). Second, it allows us to bridge migration and mobility studies, which have been criticised for a lack of synchronised dialogue (Hui, 2016), resulting not least in maintaining the normative distinction between positively connoted mobility on the one hand and racialised and problematised migration on the other. Related to this, our concept of entangled mobilities, thirdly, applies a perspective that is sensitive to the multiple inequalities and mobility regimes at play (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Concentrating on intersections of mobilities helps to illustrate how mobility regimes play out differently depending on individuals’ positioning within local and global hierarchies and how they affect people’s access to mobility. Finally, we believe that the potential of the concept of entangled mobilities lies in its ability to address these different strands of the critique of migration studies simultaneously while opening up particular methodological entry points.

In what follows, we first explain why insights from mobility studies can address some of the epistemological problems of migration research. We then define entangled mobilities and elaborate on why this concept is a theoretically fruitful enrichment of migration studies. Next we propose three pragmatic entry points from which to study entangled mobilities: in specific localities, in terms of intersections and co-dependencies of different mobile people, and within biographical trajectories of individuals. In our conclusion, we reiterate the theoretical potential of our approach and suggest future avenues for research.

Epistemological challenges in migration and mobility studies

Migration scholars have critically scrutinised categories used in (particularly European and US) migration research and investigated the effects of (nation-) state-based categorisation. Some researchers have, for instance, argued that the category ‘migrant’ is not only normatively and politically influenced but also deeply anchored in—and the result of—a nation-state logic and that ‘migrants’ tend to be perceived as racialised, poor and subordinated people whose movements or presence are problematic and thus warrant state control (De Genova, 2017; Römhild, 2014). This is mirrored in the fact that in the European Union the term ‘mobility’ is reserved for Europeans, so-called expats and retired people, while ‘migration’ is associated with unqualified people (often from the so-called Global South), reproducing normative political categories of desired and undesired migrants (Faist, 2013; Kunz, 2020). It has also been emphasised that the study of migration continues to run the risk of reinforcing the deeply entrenched belief that there are such things as stable, sedentary and superior national communities whose existence is threatened by migrants (Anderson, 2019; Favell, 2014). This critique, in turn, addresses the reproduction of this nation-state logic and thus of hegemonic power structures within migration studies.

Another, related critique, which has been voiced more recently, is directed at the ahistorical theory building in migration studies, particularly scholars’ amnesia (Mayblin & Turner, 2021) and aphasia (Stoler, 2011) regarding the colonial legacies of current migration regimes. It has been argued that current migration movements, as much as mobility regimes, are (at least partially) built on historical connections generated by processes of colonialism, dispossession and appropriation – connections that are often dismissed in migration studies, as in social theory in general (Bhambra, 2014). In other words, building on important work done since the 1970s in disciplinary fields outside migration studies (namely, but not only, by scholars of the South and feminist researchers, such as Mohanty, 1984, Spivak, 1988 and Quijano, 2000), it is argued that European migration policies—as well as the formation of modern nation-states—are rooted in representations and practices of European colonialism imposed on the rest of the world and that migration studies fail to include these connections in their theorisations (Favell, 2022). Building on this work means that we turn our gaze to analysing the various technologies of racialisation, ethnicisation and migrantisation and the ways they operate in and through citizenship and migration policies—and corresponding categorisations—as a range of migration scholars have done (see, for instance, Erel et al., 2016; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Tudor, 2018).

A promising way to address at least some of these epistemological problems is offered by insights from so-called Anglo-Saxon ‘mobility studies’ (Urry, 2007) and from the French school interested in ‘circulatory territories’ (Chavel, 2014; Schmoll, 2005; Tarrus, 1993). This ‘mobility turn’ was taken up in migration research and led to an alternative epistemological stance on societies that goes beyond spatial fixity and in which human movement is exceptionalised. Urry (2007, 18), for instance, aims to ‘develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology which focuses on movements, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order’. In a similar vein, the concept of circulatory territories marks a rupture with the migration-based assumption of sedentariness before and after migration and of movement as an exception (Tarrus,

2010, 3). By focusing on different kinds of movements, mobility studies have undermined the prevailing idea of a somewhat 'natural' (national, territorial) sedentariness and rootedness that are part of the problem of the 'migration paradigm'. This opened up the view on a wide range of human movements, with migration being considered only one of the various possible forms of human mobility. The question, then, is how migration regimes and nation-state borders affect these mobilities and which of them become migranticised.

As a logical consequence, human mobilities beyond what is called migration became *empirical phenomena* to be investigated. Some migration scholars triggered a vivid debate about how to think and look at different types of mobilities and how to bring them together in theoretical frameworks. It emerged that there is a flaw in migration studies, in terms of the basis on which the migration journey—or migration as such—is distinguished from pre- and post-migration mobility (Moret, 2016). The self-evident assumption that migration involves a change of residency is not convincing, as we know from transnational studies that migrants may have multiple residences and may circulate between them (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Multilocal geographies are even more complex for highly mobile groups, be they asylum seekers (Wyss 2019; Schapendonk, 2020), so-called highly skilled European migrants (Favell, 2008) or circulating entrepreneurs (Tarrius, 2002), among others. Furthermore, distinguishing migration from mobility on the basis of changes to residency still does not answer the question regarding the end stage of the mobility journey; so-called processes of migrant 'integration' are often accompanied by new forms of mobility and circulations (Moret, 2018), and some people may indeed partially 'settle down' in order to stay mobile (Dahinden 2010; Morokvasic et al., 2008). This ongoing debate (see, for instance, nccr – on the move, 2019) reveals the normative assumption of much of migration studies that stems from their embeddedness in the nation-state logic. The question that arises, however, is which of these forms of mobility are—through laws and politics of representation—migranticised and what consequences does this have?

Going beyond a mobility lens: addressing different critiques using the concept of entangled mobilities

The mobility lens undoubtably introduced a new epistemological stance and an interest in a wide range of mobilities into migration studies. We build on these ideas, but also push them further by focusing on the 'entanglements' of mobilities at particular localities, between different people or in individual biographies. Given that different kinds of mobilities are enacted simultaneously or sequentially, we are interested in how they depend on, evolve out of or enable each other and in how they 'become entangled and mutually constitutive' (Bal et al., 2017, 24). In this context, we introduce the concept of entangled mobilities, which facilitates the analytical 'disentangling' of mobilities that differ not only regarding their spatial and temporal dimensions but also regarding their position within an unequal political global economy. We believe that such a relational approach to mobilities helps us render visible the manifold categorisation processes that govern people on the move, depending on the ways in which they are classed, gendered, racialised and migranticised at a particular time and place.

Some scholars have already applied the notion of entangled mobilities: Menet (2020, 200) introduced this term to point to the significance of social capital as well as imaginaries and mobility capital when she explored how Cuban dancers seeking access to the European salsa circuit depend on the mobilities of others. She showed that these entangled mobilities are gendered and ethnicised/racialised and that the entangled mobilities perspective allows a consideration of the (im)mobilities of differently positioned individuals without naturalising either mobility or stasis. Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2021, 1) introduced the notion of ‘entangled migrations’ as a theoretical-analytical framework to ‘address the material, epistemological and ethical premises of spatial–temporal entanglements and relationality in the understanding of migration as a modern colonial phenomenon’. Our understanding of entangled mobilities builds on these authors’ work by understanding people’s mobilities as always intertwined with other kinds of mobilities and connected to as well as shaped by other places and times. At the same time, our understanding of entangled mobilities goes beyond this work: we theorise entangled mobilities more comprehensively and systematise the application of the concept. We propose to use it as a theoretical prism and an analytical entry point that allows for the study of specific processes, the ways in which they are locally and historically situated, and how they materialise in the individual mobilities of differently positioned actors.

This approach has various theoretical potentials to go beyond current critiques within the reflexive turn in migration studies. First, it allows for cross-fertilisation of migration and mobility studies (Heil et al., 2017) insofar as it *avoids simplistic categorisations of mobile persons as migrants or mobile persons*. Rather, by de-migranticising mobilities (Dahinden, 2016), it allows an examination of which mobilities or mobile persons are migranticised, on which grounds and with what consequences. Likewise, the concept counteracts the problematic tendency within migration studies to focus exclusively on one category of people – refugees, the highly skilled, labour migrants, or a particular ethnic or national ‘group’ (Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Wimmer, 2009). Instead, our approach reveals the interplay of regimes of mobility with individuals’ mobilities and allows us to explore the role of categorisations, representations and performances.

Second, through the lens of entangled mobilities we can identify the ways in which movements are embedded within (asymmetrical) *social, political and economic relationships* rather than only in relation to geographic (national) borders—while obviously not ignoring nation-states and territories, and their governance. Some migration scholars have criticised mobility studies for romanticising mobility and for paying insufficient attention to how access to mobility is highly uneven (Wyss, 2019; Kalir, 2013; Salazar, 2016); they have made a plea for mobility studies to more closely link mobilities to questions of political economy and inequalities. While there has been scholarly engagement with the politics of mobility (Cresswell, 2010), it has been argued that mobility scholars still neglect the effects of border and migration regimes. Notably, Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013, 188) called for an acknowledgement of ‘the ways in which legal status, as well as global racialising categories, can make a world of difference in terms of the ease of travel, the repercussions of trying to move, and whether or not the traveller gains or loses status from being from elsewhere’. Their ‘regimes of mobility’ concept addresses the varying ways in which human stasis and mobility have been approached in the social sciences and also argues that these mobility regimes rely on nation-state borders and

economic and historical contexts—on regional, national and subnational levels—and contribute to how groups of people are represented and classified. We argue that our focus on different entanglements offers an avenue for unravelling and rendering visible the multiscale interdependencies and inequalities shaping individuals' mobilities. We thus propose an intersectional perspective (Anthias, 2012; Crenshaw, 1994) that pays due attention to systemic inequalities anchored in capitalism, sexism, racism and classism, among other axes of oppression.

Third, our concept of entangled mobilities allows us to *consider the historical dimension of intersecting mobilities*. Bhambra (2014) made the case for 'connected sociologies,' in terms of opening 'up a space to think about sociology differently through an acknowledgement of other histories and experiences' (3) and 'to reconstruct theoretical categories—their relations and objects—to create new understandings that incorporate and transform previous ones' (4). Building on Bhambra's work, we believe that the entangled mobilities lens pushes us to contribute to 'connected migrations' (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2021) by foregrounding how particular mobilities are interconnected with other mobilities at other times and in other places. The emphasis on entanglements, among other things, compels us to acknowledge the historical origins and colonial foundations of legal frameworks, processes of nation building, and politics of representation by which people's mobilities are always circumscribed. These connections are intricately linked to questions regarding citizenship and access to mobility—and hence to broader social and economic inequalities. The entanglement of different mobilities must also be analysed in terms of its temporality, because it can occur across different times, such as when past mobilities shape current mobilities, for example in colonial movements from France to North African countries that later spurred mobilities of people born in North Africa who moved to France. The contemporary politicisation and racialisation of this population in France as well as the immobilisation of people living in Maghreb countries as an effect of recent changes in French and European mobility regimes are excellent examples of how an entangled mobility lens helps us to better situate how earlier movements have contributed to the emergence of contemporary mobilities. In other words, to understand current inequalities we might have to address past mobilities.

In short, the lens of entangled mobilities brings processes of migrantisation, racialisation and inequalities to the forefront of our theorising, as we understand mobilities as embedded in unequal power relations and colonial legacies, occurring on different scales and temporalities, and being embedded in *longue durée*. Therefore, the concept of entangled mobilities enables the bringing together of different strands of critiques within migration studies which are often discussed separately.

Mobilising the concept: three entry points for studying entangled mobilities

In what follows, we propose three entry points for studying entangled mobilities: in particular localities, through co-dependent mobilities and in individual biographies. We will first discuss these entry points separately; later, in the conclusion, we will elaborate on how they might converge. Of course, some migration scholars have considered how different forms of mobility shape, engender or limit other forms of mobility, and thus how different mobilities are entangled with and co-dependent from each other. We will

base our argument on this existing research, but by looking through the lens of entangled mobilities, we will also propose concrete and systematic approaches to how we can study mobilities from such a relational perspective.

Studying entangled mobilities in specific localities

One way to study entangled mobilities is to focus on specific localities. Using specific places as entry points can be a useful approach to exploring how different mobilities co-constitute these localities—and, vice versa, how particular localities affect these movements. The underlying assumption is that localities are not the result of stasis or boundedness so much as being economically, politically and culturally produced by intersecting forms of multiple mobilities on local, regional and transnational scales (Tarrius, 1993; Urry, 2007). Such an approach understands places and localities ‘as in a constant state of becoming’ (Milbourne & Kitchen, 2014, 327; see also Massey, 2005). Building on mobility studies, we thus distance ourselves from a statist conceptualisation of the social world and argue ‘against the ontology of distinct “places” and “people” to emphasise the ‘complex relationality of places and persons’ (Hannam et al., 2006, 13). In this understanding, ‘places and landscapes are continually practised and performed through the movement and enfolding of a myriad of people and things’ (Cresswell & Merriman, 2010, 7).

We ask what kinds of mobilities unfold, and in which ways, at a particular locality. Are they entangled and co-dependent? If yes, how? And how do they shape this place? How does the positioning of the locality in a national, transnational and global order inform the mobilities that traverse it, and how does this shape the local reception of these mobilities? To answer these questions, we need to first identify and explore the kinds of mobilities moving into, through or out of a particular locality—not only in the present but also in the past. Second, we must look at how mobile actors are differently positioned, which mobility regimes and historical legacies are effective and how these produce particular forms of inclusion and exclusion, bordering and boundary work—and thus forms of inequalities. In short, this entry point provides an agenda for combining a mobility lens with a focus on particular localities, and we argue that this allows for a dynamic and processual conceptualisation of localities as ‘mobility nodes’ (Hannam et al., 2006).

This approach connects well with recent developments within migration studies, in which a ‘growing interest in locality as a relevant scale for understanding migration’ (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014, 45; see also Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018) has been observed. In this respect, we build on migration studies’ interest in persons’ displacement and emplacement in given localities—but with the aim of overcoming the simplistic and problematic categorisation of groups of people according to their nationality and origin.

How does this approach address the aforementioned epistemological problems of migration studies? Instead of taking nation-state containers or a national or ethnic group as a starting point of the analysis, we suggest concentrating on smaller localities and investigating how—and which—people become (or do not become) migranticised or racialised and what role class, gender and other categories of difference play. This brings to mind studies about islands (Baldacchino, 2018; Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014),

villages (Milbourne & Kitchen, 2014), middle-sized cities (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018), airports (Adey, 2003) and regions (Blanchard, 2017) but also even smaller localities, such as refugee camps, harbours, markets and local squares. We could also think of tourist sites and borderlands, or ‘-scapes’ (Brambilla, 2015), as spaces where mobilities crystallise and where they are halted or sped up by different mobility regimes that affect people in unequal ways.

A study conducted by Charmillot and Dahinden (2021) may illustrate this point. They applied a mobility lens to investigate the ways in which membership is organised in a peripheral(ised) Swiss valley. Instead of studying only a particular ethnic or national group, they included a variety of people arriving, living in or passing through the valley—and thus different types of transnational, national and local (im)mobilities and how these are locally entangled with each other and shape local processes of community formation. Their study identifies a local scheme of ordering (non-)membership that is the outcome of a dynamic and nested form of boundary work in which the most important categories and markers are socio-economic—rather than nation- and ethnicity-based. Or take Rajaram’s (2018) article on a district in Budapest where processes of post-socialist gentrification led to the internal displacement of poorer residents (such as Roma and homeless people) and where in 2015 hundreds of refugees got stuck in a train station while en route to Austria and Germany. Rajaram points to histories of ‘othering’ that target both ‘internal others’ (such as impoverished people) and an ‘externalised population’ (such as newly arrived refugees who are readily racialised in the public political debate). By focusing on a concrete place, the author is able to identify such historical continuities in terms of state actions of exclusion that target different groups of people and which are always also related to the governance of marginalised people’s mobility by means of displacement or containment.

Studying entangled mobilities in specific localities thus moves away from focusing on a particular group of mobile persons (such as refugees, particular nationalities, ethnic groups, etc.). The mobilities under scrutiny are not necessarily mutually interdependent, but they become emplaced in and constitutive of a specific locality—and are therefore locally entangled. Such a focus unveils the different regimes of mobility that are effective in specific localities and that concern people unevenly but also the multiscale connections of places across time and space and how these manifest in relation to people’s mobilities.

In a sense, therefore, what we are proposing here is an approach that does not ‘follow’ human movements, as Marcus (1995) and others (Elliot et al., 2017) suggest, but examines them in a particular place. Following Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018, 10), our perspective is ‘multisighted rather than multisited’; it considers different scales and positions of the site under study within larger political, economic and social structures, as well as in the context of its interconnections with other places and times. Almost like earlier anthropological studies, we therefore start from a concrete place; but in contrast to these studies, we conceive of that place as fluid and dynamic rather than as a static entity.

Studying intersections and co-dependencies of different mobile persons

A second entry point for exploring how the movements of different people intersect, become entangled with and affect each other is to concentrate on the co-dependency patterns of different mobile persons. The focus here is on individual persons and how their mobility is shaped by others—or how, in turn, they shape the mobility of others. The questions to be answered are (among others) as follows: how and why do individuals' mobilities become entangled with and affect each other? In which ways are these entanglements of mobilities results of, or connected to, economic and political circumstances, colonial and other historical legacies, and mobility regimes—and, hence, to what extent do these entanglements reveal inequalities?

By focusing on co-dependent mobility patterns between individuals (beyond those commonly called migrants), this approach again allows us to overcome a priori nation-state-influenced categories and to include historical contingencies in our empirical and theoretical work. We see (at least) two ways in which such entangled mobilities evolve among people: through *direct social ties* between people or through the *structural contexts of inequalities*—which are shaped by coloniality, the expansion of capitalism or other historical connections.

Focusing on direct social ties between individuals allows us to connect to migration research, this time the research interested in social-network analysis. Social-network researchers have long been concerned with how the movement of some people can spur the migration or mobility of others. Studies on so-called chain migration (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964) or 'migration systems' (Fawcett, 1989) have explored how 'pioneering' migrants engender successive human mobility by family members or friends (Boyd, 1989; Boyd & Nowak, 2013). Similarly, transnational studies scholars reveal how a person's relocation to another place can be followed by frequent visits to their country of origin, and thus how migration can lead to new kinds of mobility (Carling, 2008; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). The literature on marriage migration (Beck-Gernsheim, 2011; Scheel & Gutekunst, 2019) reveals another example of how individuals' mobilities depend on and shape each other, and how they are embedded in mobility regimes. Such entanglements also concern forms of mobilities that are not commonly subsumed under 'migration studies'; for instance, Schaer, Jacot and Dahinden (2021) show that in the case of mobile early-career academics, other family members sometimes become mobile themselves to support their children or spouses with childcare or other practical and emotional needs—a phenomenon they refer to as 'satellite mobility'. Similarly, Bal and colleagues (2017) demonstrate how highly skilled professionals from India returned to their country of origin from abroad and convinced their parents (from other regions in India) to move into gated estates to live near their children and grandchildren.

In other words, interpersonal relationships (not only family, marriage and friendship but also work- or neighbourhood-related connections) can engender different forms of mobility and trigger aspirations to move. In short, an entangled mobilities lens means systematically broadening an investigation into mobilities by looking at how the movements researchers observe are generated by—and generate themselves—other forms of movements. These co-dependency patterns are differently affected by and embedded in regimes of mobility, depending on people's nationality, legal status, class, sexuality and gender (Groes & Fernandez, 2018).

Entangled mobilities between people can also emerge when there is no direct social tie between individuals per se. In this case, historical connections between places and global inequalities cause the entanglement of people, or groups of people. These global inequalities are, for instance, a result of the internationally gendered division of labour, economic and political circumstances, colonial legacies and mobility regimes. It is here that the relationship between the privileged movements of some and the unprivileged, often racialised or migrantised, movements of others becomes most visible.

Entangled mobilities *without* immediate social ties are directly triggered by structural factors, which mostly create an interdependence between privileged and underprivileged mobilities. This becomes conspicuous when we think of, for instance, how tourism intersects with labour migration, such as when people move to tourist hotspots to find employment in the service industry (Salazar, 2020). Whereas tourists mostly originate from wealthy countries (or are elites from the so-called Global South) and are not confronted with visa restrictions, migrant labourers working in tourist resorts might be exposed to illegalisation and exploitation. For example, we can think of asylum seekers from former African colonies who are trying to access the labour market of a European country. They might end up in Italy, selling goods in the informal market on beaches to wealthy Northern European tourists. It is particularly obvious how, in this case, diverse mobilities intersect and depend on each other: whereas migrant workers, because they are exposed to a racialised migration regime that marginalises them, are pushed to provide cheap labour—and thus render tourism accessible for a broader range of people—they themselves become economically dependent on the mobility of the wealthier visitors. By scrutinising these intersections, we shed light on inequalities based on class, nationality and global disparities.

Scheel (2017), for instance, explores how aspiring male migrants from a North African country seek to marry European tourists as a strategy for moving to Europe. Thus, they make use of the facilitated mobility of European citizens to overcome visa restrictions imposed on themselves. Scheel convincingly demonstrates how these mobilities are a result of intersecting gender and postcolonial mobility regimes, and how the entanglement of these contested mobilities affects policymaking and implementation, such as when consulate staff question the legitimacy and authenticity of these relationships and develop new restrictions targeting unwanted movement from Africa to Europe. Finally, the literature on care migration provides many examples of how a gendered international division of labour produces entangled mobilities (Ehrenreich, 2003; Parreñas, 2001). In her work on Albanian migrant women, Danaj (2016, 175), for instance, speaks of 'entangled care chains': complex mobility configurations in which internal migrants (Albanian women who left rural areas and headed towards the capital, Tirana) become domestic workers for returned female Albanian migrants, who previously worked abroad as domestic workers for women in Italy or Greece but who are now themselves engaged in productive work in the Tirana labour markets. This example points to the ways in which local, national and transnational labour markets are gendered—which, in turn, produces these entangled care chains.

Studying individuals' mobility trajectories

A third option for studying entangled mobilities is to look at individuals' life stories. Such a lens reveals the very different kinds of mobility and complex trajectories people engage in over time. On the one hand, considering mobility biographies allows us to identify the different kinds of mobilities people experience and appropriate. On the other, this sheds light on how individuals are labelled with, and navigate, different 'mobility categories'. A single biography may include multiple forms of mobility (such as cross-border movements, commuting to work and travel but also enforced mobilities). Movements may cover smaller or larger distances, may be short-term moves or long-term displacement and may evolve in different directions. The aim of this third entry point is, therefore, to shed light on the developments within individual biographies and thus to apply a processual and diachronic perspective. We ask the following questions: what different forms of mobility do people exhibit during their lives and how are these entangled with each other? What mobilities are relevant in a biography for triggering other forms of mobility and how are these different movements categorised? How are they linked to the positioning of individual actors – and hence to history, political economy and mobility regimes?

This entry point also allows us to address the problems of ahistorical and nation-state-centred epistemologies. Instead of normatively categorising people—as 'migrants', for instance—we propose looking at the effects of such categorisations and how they produce privileges and disadvantages. This perspective further underlines the fruitfulness of combining migration and mobility studies, because different forms of movement are relevant to individual biographies. Taking biographies as a starting point forces us to go beyond clear-cut categorisations of individuals—who are assigned different labels over time—to pay attention to the changing nature of (im)mobility patterns within life courses and the fluidity of legal status (Wyss, forthcoming; Schuster, 2005). Adopting a long-term perspective on people's changing patterns of mobility also better captures the non-exceptionality of migration (cf. Hui, 2016) and the ways in which different forms of movement are interrelated (e.g. international and internal migration: Camenisch & Müller, 2017; Cingolani, 2017; King & Skeldon, 2010).

Studying entangled mobilities by focusing on individuals' mobile trajectories suggests an approach that 'follows' people's movement (Marcus, 1995), either through narrative-biographic interviews and life-history approaches (Blanchard, 2017; Cingolani, 2017; Rosenthal, 2011) or via multisited research (as in what Schapendonk and Steel (2014) call 'trajectory ethnography').

While there are plenty of examples in the literature of how different forms of mobility are entangled in people's biographies, there is rarely a specific focus on *how* these mobilities are interconnected, interdependent and embedded in structural societal and transnational contexts. There are exceptions, however; for example, Kalir's (2013) article on the life story of a Chinese worker in Israel, whose cross-border movement was preceded by many other moves within China and whose trajectory challenges the 'idea that crossing international borders constitutes the most significant type of human mobility' (313). Kalir thus urges us to 'study human mobility holistically, privilege the perspective of moving subjects, explore the impact of movement on the lived realities of involved actors and "bring in the state" as people experience it' (325). Moret's (2016, 2018)

research is another interesting illustration; she focuses on the pre- and post-migration mobilities of persons born in Somalia, and points to the entanglement of different forms of mobilities within people's biographical trajectories. Although the participants in her study had settled in the UK or Switzerland, they engaged in new forms of mobility when they moved back and forth between different locations. Such mobility is considered a resource, enabling people to accumulate both financial and social capital. Moret's participants obtained European citizenship, which permitted them to be mobile within Europe and to capitalise on their ethnic social networks spread across Europe (and beyond). Such an approach thus starts with mobile individuals' life stories; only then does it ask whether—and if so how—cross-border movements matter and how they are embedded in wider structural and historical connections.

Conclusion

Building on migration and mobility studies, we have proposed a conceptual framework that seeks to address certain conceptual and political challenges identified in the study of human mobility. To do so, we have suggested using an entangled mobilities lens, which we understand as a theoretical prism that aims to study specific human movements, how they are locally and historically situated, and how they materialise in the individual mobilities of differently positioned actors. Furthermore, we have introduced three pragmatic entry points for the study of human movements and their entanglements. In short, we propose studying *mobility scapes* (following Appadurai's (1999) idea of ethnoscapes), starting from a particular locality, from interdependent mobilities between people or from mobility biographies, while being sensitive to micro-, meso- and macro-level dynamics.

Paying attention to different mobilities and how they are entangled forces us to shed light on how the different dimensions of mobilities vary—but also how they depend on, shape or limit each other. Focusing on a specific place pushes us to look closely at the (sometimes random, but not always coincidental) 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) of different mobilities and helps us to analyse how these are differently affected by a range of historically grown mobility regimes, as well as how they contribute to shaping places. And zooming in on how different people's mobilities intersect and are co-dependent prompts us to compare individuals' uneven access to mobility and their motivations for becoming mobile, and thus—again—fosters a comparative and relational analysis which allows inequalities and interdependencies to be identified. Lastly, concentrating on individual mobility trajectories deconstructs clear-cut labels given to mobile persons, who engage in different forms of mobility—both simultaneously and sequentially—throughout their biographies.

The three entry points we propose converge on many points as they address different prominent critiques simultaneously. First, they all contribute to challenging simplistic—and nation-state- or policy-related—distinctions between mobility and migration and force us to pay attention to the complexities of multidirectional human movements. Second, all three entry points follow the pleas for the de-migranticisation (Dahinden, 2016), de-ethnicisation (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018) or de-nationalisation (Anderson, 2019) of people and their behaviour. Third, they urge us to explore the historical underpinnings—colonial or other kinds—of mobilities related

to places, life courses, family histories and global inequalities. This also means that when using such an approach we need to work with historians or at least consult historical sources and literature that help us to avoid neglecting the mobilities of the past, which are important for understanding how present forms of mobility are shaped, how they are perceived and consequently how they are governed. These three entry points converge because they all consider temporal and spatial dimensions of human movement, as well as the relevance of time and space within migration and mobility studies. We believe that an explicit focus on entangled mobilities inevitably has a comparative dimension and thus forces us to reveal how mobilities differ—and with what consequences. Our approach therefore crystallises an effort to ‘connect’ migration studies by proposing tools that enable us to overcome nation-state- and ethnicity-centred approaches and to bring in historical legacies (including those of colonialism). Hence, in line with other critical approaches in the social sciences, our entangled mobilities approach is an attempt to decentre migration studies. We are aiming for some alternatives in terms of knowledge production to avoid reproducing historical and contemporary power structures and processes of exclusion through our research.

We believe that our suggestion regarding studying entangled mobilities has two implications for areas other than just migration studies. To develop our argument, we drew on studies primarily from anthropology, sociology or geography that rely on qualitative-interpretative epistemologies, and we used work that focuses on the experiences, practices and tactics of mobile people. However, we think that the first implication is that an entangled mobilities lens could also be useful for scholars in other disciplines (political scientists, for instance) studying institutions, policy processes or organisations beyond the migration field. For example, social scientists could use this approach to examine how representations or the governance of different kinds of mobilities are inscribed and interwoven into policies in different domains, and how these policies are deeply rooted in the nation-state logic and the related coloniality of contemporary policies. How are mobilities represented, categorised and interwoven, for example in the field of migration, social welfare or education policy, and what are the historical legacies and the consequences of this? A good example of social scientists using such an approach is the study of Bruzelius and Shutes (2022), who apply a mobility perspective in social policy research. By doing so, they seek to go beyond the limitations of current approaches in this field, namely a tendency to define and analyse the welfare state and its subjects through a lens that reproduces the nation-state logic. Doing this often results in an uncritical distinction between ‘migrants’, for whom mobility is assumed to be a key determinant of exclusion and inclusion, and sedentary citizens for whom mobility, or the absence thereof, seemingly plays no significant role. The authors suggest applying a more holistic mobility perspective that allows multiple forms of mobility to be grasped to examine how systems of social provision generate, enforce or prevent certain mobilities but also how these welfare systems are themselves shaped by people’s mobilities. Such an approach could be further deepened in a second step by specifically examining the interconnectedness of mobilities with regard to social policy and the underlying causes of this interconnectedness.

The application of our approach to policy fields could ultimately also be relevant for policymakers. Research that seeks to avoid the reproduction of nation-state and postcolonial structures—like ours, but also like that of many other scholars—might (ideally) produce different knowledge that could lead to alternative policy decisions, which are better equipped to combat global, national and local inequalities. This is of course a visionary (and normative) outlook, yet an entangled mobilities lens can give some clues, for instance, about rethinking the notion of border (and hence connect to other critical scholars' work, like that of Sager, 2020).

The second implication of our approach is that it raises the question of whether scholars should abandon migration categories altogether. Although we consider 'migration' to be a political and normative category of practice rather than a category of analysis, our proposal is not to ignore this category but to use it as part of our empirical material and thus to examine the effects of the term on those being subsumed under it. The use of the term 'migration'—both by mobile people themselves and by state actors—is anchored in and a result of the migration control apparatus, and it must be scrutinised with regard to how it affects subjectivities, the governance of people's mobility and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, demigrantising migration research (Dahinden 2016) aims to examine how, under what conditions, for which historical reasons and with what effects some mobile people are migrantised in everyday life, in politics, in the media, in schools, etc., while others are not. As we have argued in this article, we believe that a specific focus on the ways in which mobilities are intertwined helps us to bring the effects of such categorisations more into focus in this inquiry, because this relational approach forces us to pay closer attention to whose mobility is perceived and governed in what way.

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Author contributions

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Authors' information

Anna Wyss is a social scientist interested in the governance of mobility, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and the anthropology of the state and the law. She is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Public Law at the University of Bern.

Janine Dahinden is Professor of Transnational Studies and project leader in the 'nccr – on the move' at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. She is interested in understanding processes of mobility, transnationalisation and boundary making and their concomitant production of inequalities linked to ethnicity, race, class, religion or gender. For details, see janinedahinden.net.

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Availability of data and materials

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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