ROOTS & ROUTES

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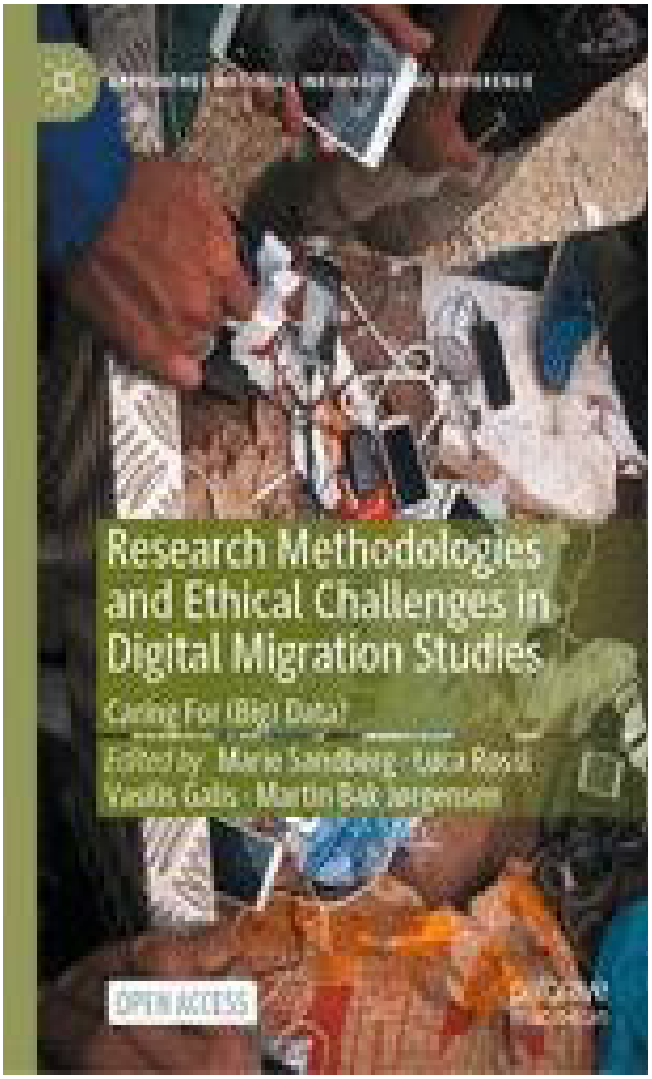

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In this issue:

Articles

The Day the War Began

News

The Global Indian Diasporas: Literary, Cultural and Socio-Economic Perspectives in the 21st Century

Book Review

Research Methodologies and Ethical Challenges in Digital Migration Studies: Caring for (Big) Data?

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The MIGRATION NEWS
People on the Move

GRFDT
Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism

Editor's Note

Contents

Articles
News
Book Review

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Dear Readers,

Greetings!

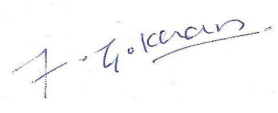
As we approach the final pages of 2023, we want to take a moment to extend our warmest wishes to each of you for a prosperous and joyful 2024 from the entire team at Roots & Routes and GRFDT.

2023 has been a year of profound challenges for migrants. There have been many incidents, such as internal conflicts and disputes, that adversely impacted the human spirit. Among the hardest realities we have witnessed is the pain of war, which forced millions of people to migrate. These forced migrants were not only leaving their homes but also carrying the memories of their places and the hardships of their journeys. These stories become lifelong memories for the uprooted people, bringing hope, happiness, and pain together. In this issue, we are going to highlight such incidents.

As we look forward to 2024, we will continue working in the areas of migration and diaspora and fulfilling our commitments.

The current issue of Roots and Routes presents a commentary titled "The Day the War Began" by Camelia Tigau. Svitlana's harrowing journey from Ukraine to the United States via multiple countries amidst the 2022 conflict is depicted with deep detail. Facing immense challenges, including depression and the struggle for employment, Svitlana's narrative captures the plight of skilled refugees displaced by war. Her story, alongside her friend Dima's experience, underscores the broader impact of conflict on young, skilled individuals forced to navigate new lives abroad. The article highlights the compassionate responses of host communities and the complex emotions tied to displacement and the longing for home. This edition also features event coverage of "The Global Indian Diasporas: Literary, Cultural, and Socio-Economic Perspectives in the 21st Century" by Andrew Mendy. Additionally, the current issue carries a book review titled "Research Methodology and Ethical Challenges in Digital Migration Studies: Caring for (Big) Data?," written by Ahmed Murtala Hassan.

We invite readers to participate and share their experiences with us for meaningful engagement. You can communicate with us through email at editorinchief@grfdt.com. We wish you happy reading and look forward to your suggestions and comments.

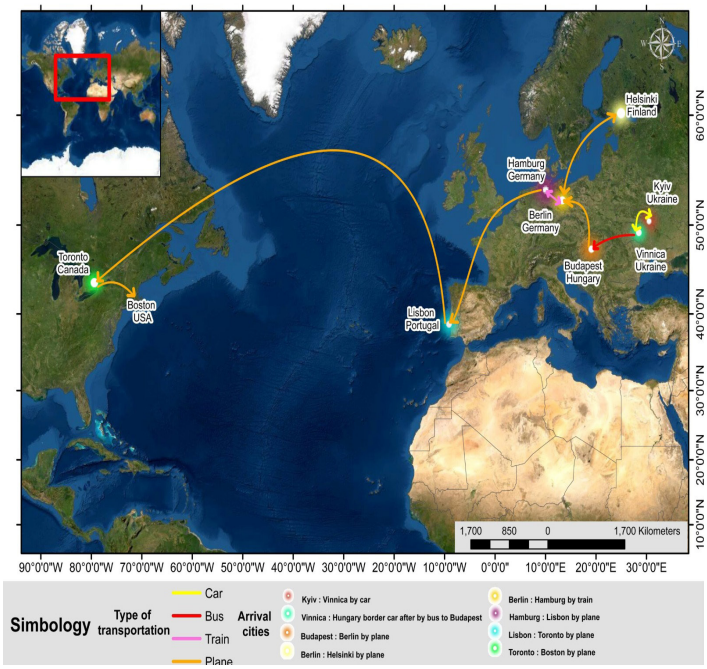


Feroz Khan

THE DAY THE WAR BEGAN

Svitlana—interviewed virtually on Tuesday, October 11, 2022—is very young, as is her friend, Dima, interviewed five days earlier. They are both Ukrainians in their twenties and live in Boston, USA. Svitlana does her best to hold back her tears during our talk. Nevertheless, on the other side of the screen that separates us, I can sense her need to scream out in pain. She is severely depressed. She left Ukraine with a friend in the spring of 2022 and crossed several borders to meet up with her brother in Boston. They first went to Hungary and stayed at an Airbnb owned by a landlord who was sympathetic to her situation and charged weekly rent. From there, they headed to Germany, where they found free shelter, but were unable to find work. Svitlana decided to apply for Temporary Protected Status in Canada, but the wait time in Germany was far too long; so she went to Finland to present her application and was accepted within three weeks. In Toronto, she was received by a welcoming family, part of the Ukraine Take Shelter platform. Linda and Patrick took her into their three-room house for several months along with two other Ukrainian women—one with two kids—and hosted them until they found jobs or could be reunited with family. The couple who participated in the Ukraine Take Shelter program spent their savings to accommodate the women and children, organized dinners, and even took them to see the sights of Toronto, hoping to raise their spirits.

Despite this warm welcome, Svitlana decided leave Canada. She felt lonely, so she moved in with her brother in Boston and applied for a work permit there. She has been waiting for four months now, and she expects it will be at least another four before she will be able to work. She has taken IT classes and is seeing a psychologist. She has a master's in finance and was gainfully employed in her field before the war. Svitlana's route to safety and family reunification traversed 13984 km, passing through nine cities (see map).



Svitlana recalls February 23, 2022: her boyfriend's mother told them they should be ready in case anything happened. She had said the same thing in the past and they paid no heed. But this time was different. So they both packed their things and prepared to return with their parents. The next morning, Svitlana received a call from her boss telling her she had a ticket to go to Cyprus that same night. The company was moving its headquarters and Svitlana was invited to join the team abroad. She spoke with her parents and they all agreed it was the best option. But the next morning, Svitlana woke up to the sound of war. There was no way she could make it to Cyprus. So she took her cat, her documents, and clothes, and traveled to her parents' home. A few weeks later, she began her trek to Hungary with her friend. Her parents stayed back, since her father is under 60 and may be called up to serve in the army.

Despite the packing, Svitlana says she took nothing with her. When I ask her if she prefers living in the US or Canada, she answers that she prefers Ukraine. In the survey I am conducting with skilled refugees and displaced professionals, she stopped answering at the section about prejudice. She doesn't feel discriminated against—on the contrary—she feels people have been welcoming in the six countries she has visited this year. Her problem is not discrimination, but rather the war. It's a war she never imagined, and she has no idea when it will end. She doesn´t seem to be interested in politics, and would prefer to simply get her life back. Every time she talks to her parents on the phone, she knows it might be the last time she hears their voices. Missiles fly over their village each day, but her parents keep on with their daily lives as an accountant and a driver. When she speaks to her family in Crimea, she is cautious to never bring up the subject of the war. The phones are likely tapped, and any negative comment about Russia could result in jail or even death; so the conversations are limited to simple small talk.

In contrast to Svitlana, her friend Dima is clearer about his immigration decision. He feels his stay abroad—in the US for now—makes more sense than going back home. Instead of fighting in the war, he sends money back home to his younger brother—who is 15—and his mother, an active post office worker who doesn't want to quit her job because she finds it useful, particularly in times of war. Both Svitlana and Dima are permanently distrustful of Russians.

These are not characters from an action movie, but real diasporas in a world torn by conflict. Over the past two years, my research has addressed the responsibility to protect these young, skilled refugees: intellectual capital displaced by active or latent conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan, Honduras, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine, and Venezuela. There is an alternative way to approach skilled migration and brain drain, focusing on governance instead of the back and forth of blame and guilt.

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Camelia Tigau is a Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto, Global Migration Lab and a researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Center for Research on North America. She is also a regional vice-president of the Global Research Forum on Diasporas and Transnationalism. She would like to thank the General Department for Academic Support (DGAPA) at the UNAM for the scholarship that made possible the fieldwork for this article. Special thanks to research assistants Rodrigo Said Bahena and Israel Martínez.

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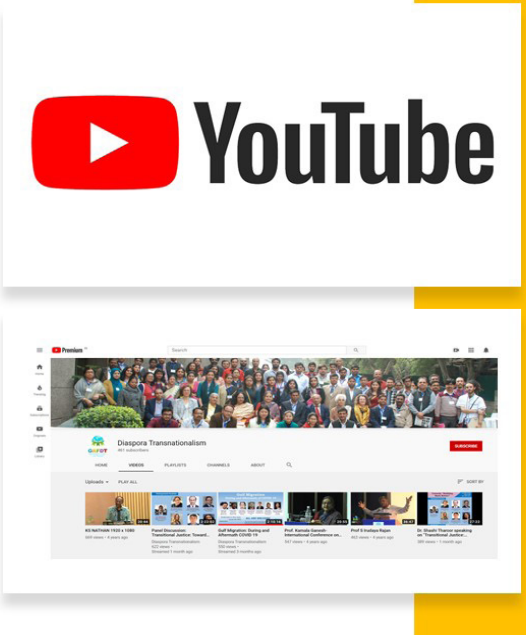

4 Thursday Forum Seminar Series

THURSDAY FORUM

Mexican Diaspora

Prof. Camelia Nicoleta Tigau
Center for Research on North America (CISAN)
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Mexico

25th January 2024

7:30 pm IST/ 9:00 am New York/ 8:00 am Mexico/ 10:00 am Port of Spain/ 6:00 pm Dubai

Zoom Meeting ID: 856 2555 1117

Passcode: 427664

THE GLOBAL INDIAN DIASPORAS: LITERARY, CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

International Interdisciplinary Series of Conferences on

The Global Indian Diasporas: Literary, Cultural and Socio-Economic Perspectives in the 21st Century

Session II: Student Migration from India: Opportunities and Challenges

The Conference on The Global Indian Diasporas: Literary, Cultural and Socio-Economic Perspectives in the 21st Century was held from the 23rd to the 25th of February, 2023.The conference was jointly organized by Centre for Diaspora Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, India. The theme of the second session, held on the 24th of February, was **"Student Migration from India: Opportunities and Challenges."** The session was chaired by **Ms. Paddy Siyanga Knudsen**, Vice President of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism.

The first speakers of this session were **Ms. Lekshmi. S**, Research Scholar, Department of Economics Sanatana Dharma College, University of Kerala & **Dr. Suby Elizabeth Oommen**, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Christian College, University of Kerala. Their paper was titled "An Analysis of International Student Mobility Diaspora for Higher Education in India ." The paper examines the historical pattern and trend of student mobility from India for higher education abroad. The paper also highlights the social and political consequences of student migration. The study concludes by suggesting how the pattern of international student mobility has impacted recent policy focus on expanding higher education in India. India's greatest strength is its large number of young people, but, unfortunately, the country is still far from figuring out how to satisfy these individuals with quality education and employment opportunities. The implications of this research, therefore, are relevant for governments, educational institutions, and organizations that wish to know the reasons for international student mobility.

Dr. Mohamed Musthafa KT, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Farook College (Autonomous), Kerala, presented his paper on "Trends and Patterns of 21st Century of Malayalee Students Migration to United Kingdom". His paper seeks to examine and understand the trends and migration patterns of Malayalee students who sought to migrate to the United Kingdom to fulfill their educational desires.

Ms. Uma, Research Scholar, BPSMV, Khanpur Kalan, Haryana, presented her paper on "Human Migration and its Impact on Education and Society in India ."In her paper, she sought to examine migration and its impacts on Indian society and the Indian Educational System. The paper throws light into the historical evolution of human migration, which has recently become an issue of global concern and political debate. The speaker in her paper articulated that migration has shown an unbroken upward trend, be it of people who have left their homelands voluntarily for economic or other reasons or of those who have been forced to leave their homes (refugees, displaced persons, etc.). Managing human mobility is one of the greatest challenges for destination countries worldwide, in developed and developing countries.

Mr. Shamsher Singh, Senior Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, presented his paper titled "Overseas Flow of Human Capital: A Study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Educated Unemployed Youth ."The paper provides an outline of the issue of unemployment and the flow of migration among educated, unemployed youth. According to the author, human capital is the aggregate of skills, knowledge, and intellectual properties that generate economic value. Human capital is the driving force behind economic growth, in addition to a means of lessening rising youth unemployment, poverty, and gender inequality—all of which are challenges that the world is dealing with in the twenty-first century. Employment is an integral element in the life of a

person; it describes and determines the socio-economic status of a person. It offers them a level of economic protection, which would normally be a prerequisite for entry into family life. Unemployment is a severe issue and actually a problem for educated young people.

Mr. S. Balu Anand, Thiagaraj College, Madurai, presented his paper on "Push Factors for Migration of Manapad Fishermen," which attempts to identify the push factors that caused the mobility of Manapad fishermen. His paper articulated that migration potential arises from regional discrepancies, differences in life chances, and an obvious welfare gap. Life chances are operationalized by demographic, economic, political, and ecological factors.

The final speaker, **Ms. Arundhathi K**, CMS College, Kottayam, Mahatma Gandhi University, presented her paper on "Social Exclusion and the Desire to return home in the Malayalam Movie Pathemari." Her paper focuses on the exclusion faced by people like the protagonist Narayanan who is a representative of the early generation of the Keralite Diaspora in the Gulf. According to her paper, these migrants face exclusion in their native places and move to foreign countries only to earn money. They continue to remain as a migrant because of family pressure, and in states like Kerala, being a relative of Gulf Migrant is a prestige. The paper also tries to focus on how the Gulf Migrants became strangers in both their homeland and foreign land, as well as the trauma and identity crisis faced by the protagonist, which is the product of social exclusion and the lack of emotional support.

The session ended with constructive reflections from some of the Executive members of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism- **Prof Binod Khadria** and Dr**. Raj Bardouille**, who was the Discussant of this session, and remarks from **Ms. Paddy Siyanga Knudsen**, the chair of the session on Student Migration from India; Opportunities and Challenges, with **Andrew Mendy** as the rapporteur of the session.

Andrew Mendy holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations from the University of the Gambia and a certificate in Migration, Governance, and Diaspora Engagement from Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism, a think-tank research consortium in India that focuses on issues of Migration, Research and Policy Development. His Book review publications include The Socio-Economic Impacts of Remittances on Household Gender Roles, The Politics of Women and Migration in the Global South, and Forced Migration and Global Politics. He is a research fellow at Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism. Andrew has written several E-conference reports, including Forced Migration and Human Rights. His research interests include Politics and Globalization, Postcolonial Africa Literature, and Migration Studies.

MIGRATION AND DIASPORAS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

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EDITED BY MARIE SANDBERG, LUCA ROSSI, VASILIS GALIS & MARTIN BAK JORGENSEN. RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL MIGRATION STUDIES: CARING FOR (BIG) DATA? PALGRAVE MACMILLAN. SWITZERLAND, 2022.

Introduction

Sandberg, Rossi, Galis and Jorgensen, in their book '*Research Methodology and Ethical Challenges in Digital Migration Studies: Caring for (Big) Data?* address the implications of methodology and ethical issues associated with digital migration studies. The premise of migration studies is based on a scenario that brings migration governance and migrants into closer interaction with communication technology. In these new ways of interaction, nation-states apply smart technology to control migration and on the other hand, migrants, especially those operating in the irregularized migration spaces together with their network of solidarity use communication technology and the internet to facilitate passage into their intended countries of destination. As a result of this, migration scholars face new sets of research challenges- from data access to privacy protection (research ethics). For instance, if irregularized migrants are the subject of studies, they face the risk of being exposed to the state authorities as a result of their participation. Already, migration studies are characterised by the issues of security, trust and informed consent; yet the digital paradigm added to it further issues of security (online), privacy and confidentiality. Traditionally, migration studies depend on qualitative research methods to obtain ethnographic evidences, which include participating observations, in-depth semi-structured interviews and online "netnography" (page,18). The introduction of digital methodology to migration studies has led to the emergence of new data formats, the so-called 'big data'. Furthermore, the book draws the attention of migration researchers to concerns about ethics in digital migration studies. Traditionally, ethnographic research put emphasis on the dignity and safety of migrant research participants, especially migrants who lack recognised papers and are in danger of being rejected and deported. It is also important when conducting ethnographic fieldwork accompanied by digital migration studies to ensure that the use and scrutinization of migrants' online activities doesn't put them in danger.

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The book is grouped into three parts: part 1 (Digital and Qualitative Data Dynamics, covering 4 interesting and innovative chapters), Part II (Ethical Challenges in Digital Migration Research and Beyond, covering 3 chapters about caring for Big-data), and part III (special comments on caring for data and the future prospects of Big-data-based knowledge development in migration studies)

Part I: Digital and Qualitative Data Dynamics

Chapter two by Vasiliki Makrygianni, Ahmad Kamal, Luca Rossi, and Vasilis Galis, discusses the Migrants Digital Space (MDS), a digital environment that brings migrants and solidarity workers together, which enables the integration of digital data and ethnographic observation possible. The authors discussed various ways of defining MDS and argue that the variation depends on the actors involved, the size of the space and the challenges it poses; an concluded that MDS is formed by "(a) digital subjects (accounts, pages, hashtags, channels) touching on (b) migrant-related topics (such as discussions on migration routes; language lessons; football conversations; university enrolment; job seeking) through conversations across (c) various digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)" (pp. 31). In **Chapter three,** Marie Sandberg, Nina Grønlykke Mollerup, and Luca Rossi demystify the relationship between Social Media Data and Ethnography in Digital Migration Studies. The authors present the relationship in a contrapuntal

manner showing ethnography and digital data-centric approaches as the two faces of a coin. Information in the chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the Danish–Swedish borderlands in 2018–2019 as well as social media data collected through API access from public Facebook pages. Ethnography followed a well-established qualitative procedure and, in total undertook 16 interviews with 12 refugees, and 16 interviews with 16 solidarians situated on both sides of the Danish–Swedish border. After transcribing all interviews, the transcripts were manually coded with field notes (526 pages in total) for different themes that had emerged through the fieldwork and through reading and re-reading material and ended up with 97 codes. At the same time, Facebook API enabled the collection of a final dataset comprising 200 pages, 84,359 posts and 2,254,923 comments, produced between 20/12/2010 and 24/09/2018. And for ethical reasons only social media data from publicly available groups were collected, because non-public information (including private messages on Messenger, WhatsApp, and similar platforms as well as posts and comments in non-public groups) is not included in the research material. A seamless analysis of the data obtained from both sources is offered based on the interaction of migrants with the border: politico-legal border, solidary border, and border navigated. Interestingly, both ethnography and social media data spoke to the three different borders differently but about the same subject. **Chapter four** by Giacomo Toffano and Kevin Smets discusses the experiences of irregular migrants crossing EU borders based on the *Migration Trail*, a web GIS pseudo-reality of irregular migration available on migrationtrail.com; which is an online interactive platform that allows users to have 10 days of exploration of the relationship between data visualization, cartography and migration fiction. *Migration Trail* is a big data model that represents very well the impact of social media on the lives of migrants. Although the authors identified the GIS model with some shortcomings, *Migration Trail* undoubtedly represents an original attempt to re-humanise migrants' narratives in interactive spatial data visualisations. And **Chapter five** by Laura Steilike addresses the challenges and prospects of big-data-based migration data and knowledge production. Stelike believes that the global need of the international community to fulfill migration concerns enacted in the SDGs 2030 (goal 10) requires timely, reliable data & disaggregated data, and social media big-data has the potential to achieve that. The author presents the imperatives of big-data production through the three major migration narratives in migration governance: demography, integration and humanitarianism; a statement that emphasises the importance of big-data as an opportunity to gain access to new migration data and have a better understanding of migration in the light of these narratives. Big-data sources are diverse and the procedure of data analytics to gain insight into big-data is also diverse. Therefore, to make sense of migration knowledge through this kind of data, the author borrows Annemarie Mol's proxiographic perspective; presenting migration as a multifaceted phenomenon occasioned by the diverse nature of big-data. Steilike analysed 17 big-data-based research papers related to migration and concluded that it is possible to establish knowledge on migration data governance based on the experiences of migrants as they interact with different social media platforms and the peculiarities of the different technologies that make up those platforms.

Part II: Ethical Challenges in Digital Migration Research and Beyond

This part of the book addresses ethical issues in digital migration studies. **Chapter 6,** by Leandros Fischer and Martin Bak Jørgensen set the scene with a focus on the Impossibility of Digital Migration Research considering ethical challenges in the (Digital) Study of Deportable Populations Within the European Border Regime. The chapter addresses two major issues: migration research ethics with its associated challenges, and a critical debate on two major approaches (militant research approach and the Autonomy of migration) on the principle of "doing no harm". On the issue of ethics, the chapter emphasises that merely observing the "procedural no-harm procedures" doesn't guarantee safety for vulnerable migrants because the approach failed to contribute to enabling their participation. Whereas in the debate between the Militant approach and Autonomy of migration, the militant approach offers a methodology that produces knowledge that emphasises the struggles of migrants. On the other hand, the Autonomy of migration (AoM) approach offers a methodology that emphasises the agency of migrants and presents migration as a social movement. **Chapter 7** by Vasilis Galis, titled "The Redundant Researcher: Fieldwork, Solidarity and Migration", addresses the question of the legitimacy of research that is based on vested political interest, ideological loyalty and propaganda, and a hazard for the subject of research (migrants in

danger). The author reported his experiences while ethnographically researching vulnerable migrants. He raises the question of legitimacy and objectivity around research that is embedded with the political and emotional personality of the researcher. In the end, he proposed a new paradigm shift to migration studies based on the "Disability emancipatory approach" which empowers disabled people to control decision that shapes their lives. He believes that critical research on migration should address the following questions: Does the research promote migrants' control or scrutiny over the processes that shape their lives? Does the research address the concerns of migrants themselves? Does the research support migrants in their struggle against oppression and for free mobility? Does the research guarantee the safety and integrity of migrants? And **Chapter 8** by Ninna Nyberg Sorensen follows up with additional evidences on the implications of emotions in qualitative migration research. Doing research about the lived experiences of vulnerable migrants results in serious emotional effects, which sometimes leave the researchers to return with traumatic symptoms. Therefore, the author suggested that potentially emotionally challenging situations should be considered in project design and methodology and form part of the evaluation made by ethics boards.

Part III: Comments

This section presents three comprehensive analyses of the book in form of commentary. Koen Leurs in **Chapter 9,** titled "On Data and Care in Migration Context", discusses how migration researchers, practitioners and policymakers can care for Data. While in **Chapter 10,** Anders Munk, discusses the field of digital methods as an interface between media studies, science and technology studies (STS), computer science, and information design (pg. 235) He further argues that relying on tools that others have built to do digital methods research quickly lands researchers in situations where whole research projects become untenable from month to month as the infrastructure on which the tool is based changes or is entirely removed. He concludes that researchers must therefore be proactive enough to not only think about this challenge, but also to develop in practice, makeshift alternatives. And in **Chapter 11,** Anna Lundberg raised a very big ethical question on the Ethico-political nature of digital migration studies: "What should we do as Intellectuals Activists". He advocates for creating of spaces where researchers will develop as intellectual activists based on two concepts: "epistemic injustice" and "hope". By these two concepts, the author discusses the possibilities of dislodging the methodological silencing of vulnerable and weak voices in academic research, ensuring that the minority views of refugees and other vulnerable migrants are given enough legitimacy to prevail with equal evidences. And a way forward on this is to be offered by the emerging methodological approach referred to as "A Scholarship of hope".

However, despite offering comprehensive collections on digital migration study, methodology and ethical care in migration research, the book is silent on the implications of a digital divide between the south and north on theoretical and policy positions on digital migration studies, that can offer legitimate evidences universally.

Ahmed Murtala Hassan, Nigeria Immigration Service,

Abuja, Nigeria.

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