Chapter 16

The Researcher's Nightworkshop: A Methodology of Bodily and Cyber- Ethnographic Representations in Migration Studies

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16.1 Introduction

Migrants working the night shift (MWNS) have been invisible to the public eye for far too long. The failure to acknowledge the crucial role played by migrants working in the evening and night-time economy of developed societies is difficult to tackle with classical research tools alone. This chapter offers to novice and seasoned migration scholars a threefold methodological strategy to immerse, inhabit and to bring out of the dark a nocturnal landscape that has been invisible to diurnal people. The researcher's nightworkshop's innovative approach provides migration scholars with visual-analytical tools to capture the hidden experiences of MWNS. Theoretically, this chapter considers the broad aspects of representation (*reel*) and reality (*real*) of migrants in the public space and in migration scholarship. Night workers, the invisible people of the nocturnal city remain so to scholars, due to the impracticalities of doing nocturnal research (MacQuarie, 2019a). Empirically, therefore, the researcher's nightworkshop's strategy offers a solution to the puzzle of "invisibility" of night shift workers. But it also reckons with the fact that to make visible the working lives in the realm of the night is a daunting task for scholars. Readers should interpret the notion of *visibilisation* with caution, using it as a visual metaphor to expose the factors that alter the night-shift workers' precarious working conditions. This challenge is addressed here, through efforts that bridge the contingent of night workers, their minds and bodies that share the precarious landscape of nightwork with the researcher – alert and awake via the senses and suffering turned into skills.

This night-vision ethnography has significant applicability in larger studies, and in unchartered contexts, which I explain throughout the chapter. More broadly, this

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empirical approach tells of migration stories bottom-up. Therefore, it helps researchers to understand the power of visual storytelling by migrants travelling to work in the night, and how they see day people in developed societies, responding (or not) to their yearnings for sociability, lack of time due to long unsociable shift hours, limited access to education, and denied rights to decent working conditions. More narrowly, it tells us why it matters to make visible the societal challenges in great part faced (not caused) by migrant workers. It matters because a methodology that includes visual methods will enable “invisible” groups of marginalised migrants to gain space in the media, public and political debates on migrant affairs, which are scarce and skewed.

This chapter stems from my doctoral fieldwork on the invisible migrants working all night in London’s largest fruit and vegetable market, the New Spitalfields. The nocturnal landscape that I discovered soaked into my body’s fibres and sensorial experiences, six nights per week, during night shifts lasting from 10 to 16 h, over the course of 8 months. Besides the advantages of using audio-visual tools in my research, I immersed in the invisible lives of manual labourers and relied on corporeal methods to experience night work – *veni, vidi, vici*. In the main body, I describe and evaluate the nightworkshop methodology in the “flesh and blood” sociological fashion that has allowed me to enter an unknown, invisible world. The last section consists of a *trilogy*, and tackles the triangular aspects concerning night work: invisibility in *Invisible Lives* (IL); nocturnal work and day sleep in *Nocturnal Lives* (NL), and sleeplessness and homelessness in the *Nightshift Spitalfields* (NS). The three short films were shot in London, co-produced with two filmmakers and one co-participant, and subsequently used as research methods and communication tools to raise awareness of migrants’ precarious lives, their specific needs and to make them visible to the critical public. Each film addresses a different milestone in my understanding of visual methodologies: the first film, IL, allowed me to explore the role of co-operation between researchers and filmmakers; the second, NL, my approach to filmmaking while researching the world of night work; and the third, NS, the transition from the researcher’s body and voice to the migrant protagonist who films and makes visible his own experience through the medium of the camera. In the discussion section, however, I discuss the gains (e.g. new representations), limitations and difficulties that I encountered while doing nocturnal ethnography and opportunities that this approach has created for me (e.g. establishing contacts, dissemination and further research). I conclude with reflections on the quest that I took to bridge the gap in the representations. I do so by putting migrants first, i.e. migrants must tell their own experience to mixed audiences.

The visual ethnographic outcome is three-fold. First, it aims to restore lacunas in social science by bridging bodily knowledge with mind constructs, broadly, and to include visual methods in migration research, specifically (Wacquant, 2015). Second, its visual focus is on the ways migrant night workers are systematically invisibilised. Third, it proposes a nocturnal, visual ethnography aimed at capturing the conditions that deny MWNS’ presence and participation in the 24/7 societies. In other words, it brings out of the dark night workers and their specific needs as

manual labourers playing crucial roles in the “strategic maintenance domain” in global cities (Aneesh, 2017), which I introduce succinctly next.

16.2 Invisible Migrants Travelling for Work

Many wo/men, travelling in the dark for work are low skilled MWNS in precarious work sectors, like food-processing, street cleaning or fruit and vegetable markets. Research shows that high-income countries rely on the migrant workforce to fill low-skilled positions that locals do not accept (Ruhs & Bridget, 2010). Against the backdrop of emerging economic and political restructuring in Europe, in a time of global expansionism, masses of citizens live in poverty and travel for work in response to the increasing inequality within the European Union (Kaneff & Pine, 2011). The trend is now acknowledged among migration scholars as being caused by “gendered gaps in transnational social rights” (Ezzeddine, 2014; Lutz, 2011; Uhde, 2016). Besides, 7.1 M foreign-born were unemployed in 2010/11 and resided in the OECD regions.¹ More than half of today's migrants live in only ten countries (OECD, 2013, p. 2), and the numbers of migrants continue to reach historic highs (nearing 250 M, OECD, 2018). Evidence shows that the migrant segment working on the UK labour market has increased considerably from 2.9 M (in 1993) to nearly 7 M in 2015 (Rienzo, 2016b). *Migrant Observatory* produces regular updates on the characteristics of foreign-born workers in the UK labour market. In 2015, it reported that the migrant workers were divided between 36% working as employees and 48% as self-employed and all lived in London, *the* global city in Europe (Rienzo, 2016b, p. 2).

London is open for low-skilled migrants to work on 24/7 rhythms. The night-time economies of 24/7 cities depend on and demand manual workers (Rienzo, 2016a, 2016b; Ruhs & Bridget, 2010). Thus, a global city absorbs a significant proportion of migrants who live, work, and become part of the production processes (Sassen interviewed by Aneesh, 2017). Their strategic positioning ensures that “temporal requirements of the 1 percent” are met (Sharma, 2014, p. 11); i.e. the chief executives and wealth managers who cannot afford the slightest delay in their business schedules are transported by precarious minicab drivers and their lunches prepared by precarious migrant catering staff working all night. Yet, these people are invisible to the mainstream (day) society due to the nature of night work activities.

Furthermore, loaders, forklift drivers, café servers and salesmen are migrants working in London's night markets (e.g. New Spitalfields, New Covent Garden) to

¹ The OECD (2013) World Migration in Figures reports the average unemployment rate of 11.6% in the OECD. In 2013, the United States (US) was at the top of the OECD list of immigration countries. In Europe, only the Russian Federation (11 M) overtakes other receiving countries like Germany (9.8 M), the UK (7.8 M), France (7.5 M), and Spain (6.5 M); despite the economic downturn, millions of migrants flow across national territories to settle in OECD countries.

maintain Londoners' incessant appetite for ready-made and take away food. Migrants travel for work to meet the "need for cheap labour in mature economies" (King, 2012, p. 4). Yet, they are depicted as a threat for driving down locals' wages or are accused of welfare benefit tourism. Mannik (2012, p. 262) points at the "dehumanizing and dehistoricising" characteristics of today's representation of immigrants in the media, which has been noted previously by other scholars (Malkki, 1997; Nyers, 2006). Scholars and artists have been countering media representations of immigrants for some decades already. Among other key works, Berger and Mohr's (1975/2010) collection of photographs, poems, figures, and facts (many out of date now) depicts a stultifying portrait of a migrant's journey to work abroad.

Nevertheless, perhaps there is more to it than political interest alone – we are living in an era of non-inclusiveness of migrants in Europe. Furthermore, the gap between misrepresentations of migrants (*reel*) and that of reality (*real*) is likely to widen, especially in the context Brexit² openly supported by the unelected Prime Minister, Boris Johnsons, in October 2019. An example of the rhetoric that misrepresents migrants and refugees is that where they are portrayed as not being in crisis (and fleeing their own countries for it), but that they are contributing to a crisis in the countries where they arrive or pass through (Nyers, 2006). Some of the common stereotypes in the Londoners' imaginaries could portray someone standing on the street corner or the underground exit as the generic Eastern European man; or the older mother wearing a scarf as the Roma woman; or images with Romanian gypsy beggars have become common place. But, why don't we see past the façades? Who are the people behind the stereotypes and what are their lives like in the UK? How can one narrow this gap? I will attempt to narrow the reel—to—real gap by using the "eyes of the skin" as envisioned by Juhani Pallasmaa (2005) to show how I embodied knowledge about people-on-the-move by entering the world that night workers inhabit. Other contributors (Gnes and Magazzini, Chaps. 14 and 15, in this volume) offer ways and methods to challenge representations of migrants and minorities. This chapter continues in this spirit, with lens turned towards my migratory experience, which has shaped my approach to night work studies in migration. I also draw from reflections on the lessons I learnt while I was a migrant worker in Turkey.

²As of 1 January 2021, the new point-based immigration system (EU Withdrawal Bill, 2020) prevents migrants from accessing the UK labour market unless reaching the £25,600.00 general salary threshold. Brexit (a portmanteau of "British" and "exit") is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU). Following a referendum held on 23 June 2016 in which 51.9 percent of those voting supported leaving the EU, the Government invoked Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, starting a two-year process which was due to conclude with the UK's exit on 29 March 2019. That deadline has since been extended to 31 October 2019. More detailed information on the withdrawal agreement and political declaration on the future relationship between the UK and the EU is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-points-based-immigration-system-policy-statement/the-uks-points-based-immigration-system-policy-statement> Published 19 February 2020. Accessed 31 May 2020.

16.3 Methodology

16.3.1 *Reflections on my Migratory Experience*

My migrant worker experience began in Turkey in the late 1990s. Back then, I had the social determination, but no theoretical weaponry required for an anthropologically driven experience. In Wacquant's (2015, p. 1) words, I was neither empirically nor theoretically armed to "reap the rewards". Before, I only learnt to "perform precarity" as the native co-workers (Glick Schiller, 2016). Move the point of focus to London and fast forward 14 years. I began researching about Romanian migrants working in London's night-time economy under Ger Duijzings, when we were both associated with UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. I have since continued to immerse in the lives of workers whose languages I could speak, and atypical minds I understood (mostly Romanian, Turkish and Bulgarians). That confirms my *bona fides* – I have become an anthropologist by doing. In short, it shows how my own migratory experience has shaped my interests in migration-related topics, how I do my research (hanging out and doing stuff), while schmoozing with everyone to create contacts through fieldwork by participant observation, but it does not explain the visual dimension of my methodology. Here I am now, writing about how my auto-ethnography approach was born to offer a better understanding of the role that researchers, ethnographic filmmakers and documentarists have in portraying *reel* lives beyond dehumanising the "villain" and welcoming the "hero", and as close as possible to the *real* problems that migrant labourers face. Meanwhile, I introduce the guide to a researcher's *nightworkshop* and within the same section I explain how film became a part of my methods portfolio.

16.3.2 *Nightworkshop Methodology: Researching All Night*

The following methodological guide to visual storytelling in migration consists of bodily ethnography to research about MWNS; cyber tools to measure the sensorial experiences in order to present it visually via infographics, photo montage, and films on night workers. Here, *visual* means: representations of night work/—ers in the public eye; cyber-ethnography is used for visualising the findings with infographics, photo montage and film to portray migrant lives as human experiences in the conditions where they exist. The *nightworkshop* methodology communicates findings to mixed audiences, including academic reporting, the specific characteristics that are currently missing from scholarship on night-time economy (Roberts, 2004). From collection to dissemination, the *nightworkshop* research design includes empirical strategies and tools needed to study night work within the field of migration. Inherent in this design, is a set of core components needed to make visible night-to-night issues experienced by "invisible" MWNS. The core components include: *night walking* (Beaumont, 2015); *observing and schmoozing*

(Driessen & Jansen, 2013); *recording audio-visual interviews*; *bodily notetaking* (MacQuarie, 2019b; Strathern Stratham, 1996; Wacquant, 2004, 2015); *projecting short-films* and *podcasting*. Following my doctoral studies, I developed the last three components, which I discuss here in depth to connect space and time to corporeality of researching at night. These components are grouped in four distinct stages: (1) Review and explore; (2) Research by night; (3) Cultural interpretation; and (4) Provide a framework. Most relevant here are: stage 1 – a classical approach in research, which arms the researcher with mind constructs prior to entering fieldwork. Stage 1 may involve, for example, reviewing migration literature informed by gender studies to understand cultural sensitivities, i.e. differences and similarities in the experiences between fe/male migrant workers in terms of the depth of the precariousness impacting on bodily, emotional and intellectual functions of MWNS.

At stage 2, researchers bridge the visual with the sensorial in order to carefully acknowledge the differential experience of the night shift and the *real(-ism)* of a migrant's visual story. At this stage, a researcher-by-night will be using three components: the researcher's body via immersive ethnography, a form of participant observation that registers sensorial experiences of the researchers body at night, audio-visual recordings, cyber-ethnography that quantifies physical effort, and physiological changes due to physical effort that the investigator encounters while researching all night (e.g. heart rate, distance by number of steps). This kind of immersive ethnography is inspired by "carnal sociology" (Bispo & Gherardi, 2019; Wacquant, 2015).

Migrants become part of the process, and the very protagonists who give us insights into their own lives – as migrants, research co-participants and co-filmmakers where applicable. They raise awareness of their own predicament or give us, migration researchers, the best possible answer to how things work and to "human experience" (Engelke, 2019, p. 35). Namely, the *third stage* is the cultural interpretation mode in anthropology. This mode contributes, for example, to the understanding of the depths of precariousness due to denial of decent work right to night workers. When we connect visual instrumentation of text analysis with representational acuity in a self-critical manner, we (researchers) begin to see that our "terms of analysis, understanding and judgement are not universal and cannot be taken for granted" (Engelke, 2019, p. 16). Moreover, researchers become more attuned to differentiating between the misrepresentation of migrants' lives portrayed by the media (*reel*), and the reality that constrain them to remain hidden (*real*).

Combined, this set of tools specific to collecting data at night about migrant workers aids researchers to learn about advantages of co-participation in migration filmmaking; and with the respondents' input to produce *visual projections* of the everyday lives and every night issues faced by MWNS, as Piemontese and Augustová (Chaps. 10 and 11, in this volume) found with their respondent generated visuals, and who advocate for the participatory research methods. It has been applied and tested by visual sociologists (Martiniello, 2017) encouraging us to use visual methods in migration when discussing, for example, the racialised and ethicised migrant groups, as shown in the case of Albanians on a boat on its way to Italy in

the beginning of the 1990s. I apply these studies when I objectify my bodily, sensorial experiences through visuals. I join scholars proposing that migration researchers immerse themselves in the object of study through embodiment, lived sensorial experience, and to visually objectify their bodily experiences. Co-participation is as essential in heightening the sensibility of migrant workers' human condition, currently portrayed as heroes and villains. Moreover, it marginalises the current dichotomist view and reduces the gap between what is portrayed on screen (*reel*) and the *real* experiences of migrants.

16.3.3 *Bodily Notetaking: Gathering Sensorial Knowledge*

The *nightworkshop* methodology emphasises the researcher's sensorial experience captured through her/his body and coined by Bourdieu (1977/2000) as *embodied* knowledge. Ethnographers' bodies are like boxers' bodily capital. From a methodological standpoint, the bodily capital is translated into the *stamina* to withstand the tiredness during nights of walking, observing, small talk with strangers, or interviewing and recording observations. Ethnographers applying themselves (body and soul, matter and spirit) to research need constant surveillance of their bodily capital and manage the responses as described earlier. The ethnographer's body becomes her/his "stock-in-trade" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 129). Nocturnal activity "presupposes a rigorous management of the body" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 128) as well as of the senses, because prize fighters, martial artists or ethnographers have a limited bodily capital for labour. That leads to "practical sense, a sense of corporeal thrift acquired gradually through long-term contact" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 127). On the one hand, s/he needs to last in the fight as long as possible so that the night shift work (or another field for that matter) is embedded in the set of dispositions called *habitus*. On the other, the ethnographers' *habitus* embedded into one's bodily, mental and emotional structures becomes an epistemological tool to construct and produce bodily knowledge, a kind of "practical sense ... that orients choice" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 128). The ethnographer's "concrete science" gives her/him a *feel* for the *field*, between "incorporated history and objectified history" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66).

Ethnographers are crafts persons who make things (write ethnographies) that apply to social life; they embody a portion of the social, nocturnal landscape and through various presentations such as, editing material, the act of writing, they compile the stories of the world they study. I incorporated the subjectivities of my night co-workers, the sufferings, the gains and losses of sleepless hours and endless night shifts. I, too, internalised a set of skills (capital) to carry out nocturnal fieldwork. My research experience therefore is unique in that it enables me to represent differently the issues experienced by my migrant co-workers. Besides, the intuitive knowledge accumulated in the ethnographer's body is as concrete as physical matter is described by Pink (2006) in her multi-sensorial ethnographic manner. Strikingly, Nikielska-Sekula (Chap. 2, in this volume) articulates in her

chapter how photography grounds the photographer's positionality through her senses that connects the researcher to her immediate, immersive experience. As she smells (Turkish scents of food or male fragrances in her Norwegian neighbourhoods), touches, and feels, she cannot evade a pre-built-in positionality. But the ethnographer needs long hours of constant practice (e.g. long-term fieldwork), at regular intervals if one wishes her/his body to be the epistemological tool that one takes out as one sees fit. However, in the current climate of academic research where *blitz* fieldwork is preferred due to lack of funding, very few will have the privilege to spend a considerable amount of time to accumulate such embodied knowledge. This limitation needs consideration; an ethnographer, especially if an apprentice in the early stage of building her/his bodily capital through bodily labour while working in the field of inquiry, needs to adapt to the nocturnal rhythms, by giving up both day sleep and socialising with diurnals in the evenings. The ethnographer should neither ignore her/his bodily limitations, nor attempt to exceed them. Once unembedded from fieldwork, researchers benefit from the wealth of reflection on their immersive experience and by co-reflecting with peers when presenting findings s/he re-assesses her/his positionality as well as the privilege of being above the "survival" level that co-workers continue nightly.

16.4 Research-Based Short-Film in Migration Studies

The visual within the portfolio of the *nightworkshop* methodology contributes to the stream of participatory visual research in line with the movement MoVE (method:visual:explore) project that explores ways of engaging in research outside the classical approach to public dissemination beyond the conference or class room (Oliveira, 2016). MoVE raises awareness of the public, its negative perception and treatment of migrant sex workers, for example, as an agency-less and apolitical group (Fox, 2013). In this vein, I engaged my respondents in the *photoshoot*³ event and made space for their voices to explain how they live outside of mainstream societies. The broader theoretical advantage in using visual aids is to enrich the portfolio of methods to capture most pressing issues for European societies (Fig. 16.1).

Moreover, the short video-vignettes describe how night shifts into day in synco-pated tempos; and it captured both order and disorder in motion, the friction and consumption, as well as stillness and the expectancy that products were sold by the

³Figure 16.1 shows that during the photography shoot I involved my co-workers in the project. I explained what my aims were with the material and the purpose behind taking photos and video. Having obtained permission prior to the photo shoot from the Corporation of London, I collected material for the digital repository and put it to use for visual objectification of the bodies at work, and post fieldwork for presentations mixed audiences (dissemination at conferences and methods classes at university and as podcast material). Author's outputs are available in various formats as green access: <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>; as complementary tools to this chapter, the author has released a new podcast series (2019–20) in which video-logs are used to objectify the corporeality of researching the graveyard shift. The podcast series are available at: http://bit.ly/nwp_srs Accessed 31.05.2020.

Fig. 16.1 I am showing the camera/photos to my co-workers

end of the night shift. Video logs (recorded on a mobile device) serve as self-portraits that capture impressions overlooked by a researcher due to tiredness. The video logs are 1–3 min long and show my first impressions in the field, from emotional states to physical challenges to work all night, which became part of the script in the NS. Another method I used for recording field data involved digital or cyber-ethnography.

16.5 Cyber-Ethnography: Tracking Space and Time to Learn about Bodily Knowledge

Learning and knowing the world through bodily activities has gained terrain among sociologists (Bourdieu, 2000; Wacquant, 2015), successfully applied in anthropology and branches of pedagogy by Pink (2015) and Fors, Pink, Berg, O'Dell, 2020; Vaïke et al. (2020). Here, I employ the theme “sensoriality self-tracking” (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2013, p. 29), as a term that encompasses data gathering techniques and tools that aid ethnographers from data collection to visualisation. Self-tracking my

own movements helped me learn about the embodied, unspoken and sensorial experiences of night workers while working aside co-workers. I used self-tracking tools, such as pedometers, to measure walking distances, thus make visible my corporeal intensity during physical labour and make it meaningful for workers so they “shape everyday situations” (Fors et al., 2013, p. 29).

The resulting data, in the case of my doctoral research, from a pedometer (e.g. *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™*) was used in measuring space-time intensification of labour that I was subject of together with my co-workers. Combined, data collected by the pedometer complemented and supported the text interpretations and visual analysis. In short, it objectifies the embodiment of researcher’s effort by giving accurate spatial-temporal dimensions used for data visualisation (pedagogical purposes), as well as visualise and verbalise learning based on this novel approach to self-tracking physical activity for the purpose of improving health concerns and preventing precariousness to invade the workers’ bodies beyond recovery. *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™* is a *Walking, Weight Loss & Health* application (app)⁴ available for smart phones and watches. This application tracks every step 24/7. It recommends 10,000 steps for the average daily walker. It collates data based on step length, height, weight, blood pressure and pulse entered by the user, and produces charts, i.e. it quantifies the researcher’s bodily labour, which can be interpreted as either valorising or depreciating bodily capital (e.g. building stamina) through reduced sleep and weight loss caused by long walking distances⁵ (see Figs. 16.2 on the left and 3a, upper left left). The descriptive statistics show a cumulus of physiological stages and changes that I associated with exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and mood swings. Most of which, I experienced as I exited the field (see Figs. 16.3 a–d).⁶ The descriptive categories have been converted and show: – level of *activity* of the user during a set time and/or during the day; – *distance* chart

⁴*Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™ Application* available for Apple iOS devices. *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker 4+ Walking, Weight Loss & Health* Accessed: 27.02.2020.

⁵Figure 16.3. It shows the number of steps converted to kilometres and accumulated by foot during the 11 months of fieldwork. The 2310 km are an equivalent of the distance between New York and Lafayette in the United States or nearly the same as between London, UK and Sibiu, Romania.

⁶Figures 16.3a: The lowest weight was registered in June 2015 with a slight increase during mid-June when I took 1 week off to fulfil INTEGRIM project duties. Figure 16.3b (above right): I regained weight when the activity rhythms and intensity decreased, indicating that bodily labour affects weight gain/loss. Caution is needed to read the indicators’ values (BMI/SBMI) as they offer different range values. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>

Figure 16.3c (above right): Descriptive data shows that as the activity levels (loading equates with stepping); thus distances, increase, day sleep hours decrease. This is indicative of the negative correlation between high activity levels that impact on reducing day sleep time over a protracted period. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2> Figure 16.3d: (Left) BMI* According to the World Health Organization, BMI is based on “normal weight” class (good); (Right) SMBI** Smart Body Mass Index’s represents a health-risk system weight-class definition. However, for an ethnographer to manage his bodily capital based solely on S/BMI indicators is not sufficient. Combined they may aid awareness of wellbeing in the field. Sources: Kromeyer-Hauschild K, Wabitsch M, Kunze D et al. *MonatsschrKinderheilkd* 2001, 149:807; The Global BMI Mortality Collaboration, *Lancet* 2016; 388:776–86 (adults 40–80 years).

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 2 left: average distance per night over 11 months non-participant observation; right: total distance of 2,310 Km covered during the fieldwork period. Source: Google

Fig. 16.2 Number of steps have been converted in kilometres by the Pacer Pedometer app. The distance that I covered by-foot during night shifts over the 11 months of fieldwork, as participant/ observer sums up to 2,310km - the equivalent of the distance between New York and Lafayette in the United States or nearly the same as between London, UK and Sibiu, Romania

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3a. Weight fluctuations. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>; Figure 3b. Please see footnote for interpretation of data correlation. Figure 3c and 3d: Left (c): BMI*; Right (d): SMBI** values and risk levels.

Fig. 16.3 (a) Weight fluctuations. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>; (b) Please see footnote for interpretation of data correlation. (c and d) Left (c): BMI*; Right (d): SMBI** values and risk levels

compiled data based on the number of *steps* and converted into kilometres/miles; – *calories*: burnt during exercise; – *weight* fluctuation and blood pressure (Systolic/Diastolic) are optional features in the app – I updated mine weekly at the local chemist. However, further research could tackle one limitation of the present method, using more performant applications than *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™*, and record the weight that night workers carry on their bodies as they walk throughout the shift, while engaged in picking-up, moving, placing and replacing crates or sacks of packed produce. Thus, the bodily labour intensity could not be captured by the *cyber notes* alone with this application. However, I tested the data for validity and reliability through triangulation of the combined methods: field notes, respondents' accounts, photography and film, and it confirmed that fluctuations in weight and sleep patterns disruptions were not so dissimilar across the board. However, some workers continued to have disrupted night sleep while their day sleeping pattern was somewhat regulated. I lost weight from 83.2 kg to 70.4 kg during the 8 months of travail. My weight only increased from the month of September as I stopped working the night shift. The next section discusses three film projects. The three projects represent different approaches to make visible night workers' confrontations with bodily labour and its challenges due to lack of sleep and busy nightshifts.

16.6 A Trilogy: Invisible, Nocturnal and Sleepless Lives of Migrant Night Workers

Since *Nanook of the North*, directed by Robert Flaherty in 1922, the first documentary on the “migration of a group of people (Inuit Eskimos) far removed from our industrial civilisation” ethnographic films have changed (Glynne, 2012, Location 4147). Both anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking have changed; they shifted from the “exotic” to the studies of the urban myths (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 5). They engage with the urban myths, traditions and conventions with an anthropological gaze and film lens turned onto their own societies to show that their own customs are as curious or peculiar as anyone else's away from home. An example of documentary realism in urban settings comes from filmmaker Agnes Varda's, in her 1954 debut with *La Point Courte*, before the French New Wave was established (Ince, 2013; Vincendeau, 2010, 2009). Agnes Varda (1929–2019) was a “sensitive realist” (Beylie, 1962, p. 26; cited by Ince, 2013, p. 609) who had “a much more novelistic conception of creation” (Mandy, 2000, p. 71) with an experimentalist sensibility and saw life in its raw state (Raynaud, 1963). In a Vardarian fashion, in this trilogy, all but one are non-professional migrant actors. All three short-films are research-based documentaries.⁷

⁷ At the time of writing this chapter, the Sleepless Bat entered the post-production phase.

The trilogy consists of three short films, *Invisible Lives*, *Nocturnal Lives* and the *Nightshift Spitalfields*. This visual ethnography is about “other workers”, MWNS in London. Each film marks a different time (politically – before and after EU transitional controls (2014), before and after the Brexit referendum (2016)); different research stages and skills levels of the researcher/filmmaker (before, during and after my doctoral studies), and a different focus (four Romanian migrant night workers in London (IL); the researcher and three migrant co-workers (NL); and one Bulgarian-Turkish co-worker and his family (NS)).

The aspects highlighted in these short films, invisibility, nocturnal vs. diurnal work, and sleepless are as important as the period in which they have been shot – times charged with immigration debates in British politics and media portrayals of self-employed Romanian and Bulgarian (A2) migrant workers as health tourists and benefit frauds, in the UK specifically, and across Europe. *Invisible Lives* was shot in 2013, the year before the right to *freedom of movement of workers* from A2 countries came into force in all the 28 EU member states. *Nocturnal Lives* was completed in 2015 – after transitional controls and before the Brexit referendum in 2016. The *Nightshift Spitalfields* was shot mostly during 2015, the year I worked together with Ali, the protagonist; and during two brief visits to the UK in 2017 and 2019. In each film, nonetheless, workers experience a shortage of rights to decent work. Each film will be discussed in turn.

16.6.1 *Invisible Lives: Romanian Night Workers in London (2013, UK)*⁸

This is the brainchild of an anthropologist and a cinematographer, Tim Marrinnan. Tim was keen to capture nocturnal rhythms of London on camera. I was interested in the city's political economy as well as the evening and night-time economy. Our departure points and training were distinctive (a novice anthropologist and a junior filmmaker), but we both wanted to capture something of a similar kind. After receiving a small grant from RCC, our project zoomed onto the invisible lives of four Romanian night workers in London's night-time economy. The protagonists are four Romanian migrants working in London's construction, hospitality, sex industry and food chain supply and distribution areas – four important industries that sustain the evening and night-time economy expansion. All four spent 1–2 years in London since their arrival. Three participants did not wish to appear in front of the camera to protect their identity (though Romania entered the EU in 2007, work restrictions for Romanian migrants were in place). Through narration-image combined, IL captures important issues debated in various disciplines and study areas – migration, sleep, precarity and criminal justice issues. The scenes tap into

⁸ *Invisible Lives* won the 2013 RoundTable Project awarded by Ratiu Family Foundation/Romanian Cultural Centre (RCC) in London.

some of the protagonists' difficulties of living at the margin of a rapidly changing society demanding their manual labour while denying their rights to decent working conditions, safety, and rights to healthcare, social support and until 2014 the full rights to work.⁹ The film does so without commentary and analysis. However, IL neither achieved making their faces visible, nor did it fail to bring to light the issues of marginalisation that migrants in global cities face. Inseparable from this kind of life is the long commuting – a reality that cannot be ignored by locals and migrants alike. But, the armies of workers travelling at night to work the night shift are mostly manual labourers lacking skills that would afford them access to social mobility. On the one hand, casual travellers by night occasionally lack safety in London. On the other, sex workers, at-street, vulnerable and homeless in the chilly winter nights experience abuse and violence on nightly basis. IL depicts both scenarios to the viewer.

16.6.2 *Nocturnal Lives: Day Sleepers (2015, UK)*

Once I immersed into my nocturnal fieldwork, I began recording the *Nocturnal Lives: Day Sleepers* (NL). The film is sectioned in four short chapters: the workers, language skills, sleep and the market. I filmed the market, my co-workers during the break, before and after the night shift or while driving a forklift to capture the flow and rhythm of the market at different hours. In the first 3 min of the film I comment briefly on how I accessed the field site. My commentary fades as the stories shared by the 3 day-sleepers take stage. These are three migrant men working six nights per week at the New Spitalfields market. NL conveys crucial aspects shared by protagonists – how they cope with the night rhythms and day family lives. All three men expose their hardened lives by the nocturnal landscape in the UK's largest fruit and vegetable market owned and managed by the Corporation of London. All three protagonists, a manager, porter and grocery customer worked at the night market. Each one recollects that the main challenges they faced were: lack of sleep, social isolation and inability to spend time with family due to the demanding nature of night work. One would need to call up on all cinematic kits and skills in order to convey messages of the sensorial kind, if it was not conveyed by the migrant night workers, and the extent to which they invested to make their painstaking journeys to work in London's night market. In NL, I continued the quest of making the lives of day sleepers more visible and palpable. The film is available via green access. I presented it in various academic settings or used it as a tool for teaching, as well as communication medium covering mixed audiences.

⁹Romania joined the EU in 2007. Romanian citizens in the UK were not entitled to work during the seven-year transition, which ended in January 2014.

16.6.3 *Nightshift Spitalfields: A Participatory Approach to Visual Storytelling*

A trailer of the third short film was released in 2016, under the name *Sleepless Bat*. In 2020, however, the short-film *Nightshift Spitalfields* was released at a launch event organised in collaboration with Migrant Voice, in London. It covers themes of immigration, exploitation, homelessness, sleep deprivation, invisibility and lack of decent working rights. What places apart this film from the other two is the depth of the story that focuses solely on Ali, the main protagonist. He is a migrant co-worker from Bulgaria of Roma-Turkish descent. Ali's migration journey is full of twists and turns that he overcame in the 21 years since he left Bulgaria as a teenager. He also appears in NL, as well as the photo montages or other visual representations (see Fig. 16.4 below). I installed a GoPro camera on the roof of the forklift so Ali could film as he worked all night. The more participatory approach is revealed in the shots which offer the viewer, Ali's perspective. In NS, this is visible from the start of the film when he chooses the shooting angle (front or rear) depending on how he drives his forklift (back or front wheels). During NS shooting, Ali also decided what and whom to capture as he drives through the market. Among the long hours of travail in the night market, there is a breathing moment captured by Ali when he surprises one of his co-workers with his live camera. The co-worker is framed sitting and half sleeping on the forklift seat while waiting for a customer.

In NS, Ali shows his life as a night porter trapped between the impossibility to find a day job due to a lack of English language skills and poor competencies in other areas of work, and the never-ending lack of sleep that he experiences throughout the 5 years that he spent working at the night market. The

Fig. 16.4 Night porter

protagonist-turned-filmmaker experiments with the visual tools in a non-traditional documentarist style. For these reasons, the audience needs to focus in order to understand Ali's mental world vis-à-vis his outer world. The turning point in his story reveals problems with homelessness, which pushes his surviving skills beyond the limit he usually copes with. He spends the three nights of homelessness in emergency accommodation offered by the Metropolitan Police, between sleeplessness and the harsh reality of a migrant family in the UK needing to camp outside the Hackney council, north London, while his homelessness application is being processed. As a researcher, I am now totally hidden behind the scenes. I accompany him and his family throughout this period. I interpret for them at the Hackney council during the assessment; we spend time over coffee and have lunches together. At the end of four exhausting days in temporary accommodation, the family is given emergency accommodation in North London. New challenges appear, such as Ali commuting north to east London to work, and his wife and children commuting to attend school. All this time, his wife is pregnant with their third child. In this heart-wrenching poem, Ali, the *Sleepless Bat*, shows an immense will to survive the callous world in which they swim in need to survive the crisis they face.

16.7 Discussion

This section discusses the outcomes of employing methods to build ethnographic theory in night work studies within migration. In this spirit, I am indebted to Wright Mills (1959/2000, p. 215), who explains that “intellectual craftsmanship” is about exchanging conversations on the “actual ways of working” that emerging researchers best hone their craft with. In this vein, the *sensorial experiences* (senses, suffering and skills), *visual* and *cyber-ethnographic* tools crafted here, bridge mind and body to restore lacunas in social science, broadly, and to include visual methods in migration research, specifically (Wacquant, 2015). As I reflected on my migratory experience and the lessons learnt during the doctoral fieldwork, I found two key hallmarks: a *bodily method* that works in many contexts: away and at home, with migrants and locals, in the day and at night; and a *mode* of approaching the field. In flesh and blood, I enter the field I study armed with sociological constructs to objectify workers' bodily labour using cyber-ethnographic tools that capture, measure and monitor sensorial experiences, and to create different visual storytelling of migrants.

Ethnographers-turned-insiders immersed into the field could hardly pass as flies-on-the-wall. In a fruit and vegetable night market, I was one of the bodies-turned-machines, another post-Fordist worker whose labour power was extracted through “maximization of bodily and mental potential” methods for the purpose of maximising capital (Chelcea, 2014, p. 40). At the night market, I became a bio-automaton just like my co-workers. I too accumulated a bodily capital that was useful in performing precariousness, at the market. Would I have not been immersed for the time and depth of the thick ethnography that I carried out in 2015, and laced into words

here, my bodily knowledge would have remained as instrumental as floor washing (an unpaid-overtime task) following a 16/17-hour long night shift. Instead, this epistemological tool, my body, that I used to capture and sediment knowledge or my “means of production” combined with this ethnographic craft of writing to represent differently (and as a contribution to ethnographic theory) issues experienced by MWNS (Wacquant, 1995, p. 67). By that I mean, that it has been a personal, subjective affair where, as a researcher, I immersed *in situ*, corporeally, mentally, visually and viscerally. For the calibre of such depths, its visual outcomes cannot be dejected for its subjective source of data, as seen by the Chicago sociological school (Russell, 2007).

Furthermore, the visual ethnography is multi-layered. First, I was able to “see” what I could have not without the camera – how far *real* is from the *reel* lives; this led me to create more real, more different “representations” of migrants in the nocturnal landscape; finally, I learnt from the different kinds of cooperation that involved working with filmmakers and my co-worker to create and produce the *trilogy*. Both the two co-filmmakers and Ali, the co-participant in the *Sleepless Bat*, have taught me invaluable, practical and theoretical insights: to stand back and let participants give the field perspective as they see fit; to rely on “tools of visual sociology” to construct social messages (Wacquant, 2005, p. 70); that “images are everywhere” (Pink, Tutt, Dainty, & Gibb, 2010), and the power of the image offers the space for interpretation with multiple meanings and fascinating endings, unlike other methods. Here are the results.

16.8 Bring the *real* Lives into *reel* Stories

The “*real* lives into *reel* stories” quest is a work in progress. I documented on *reel* the *real* lives to illustrate through visual methods that although a global city in high demand of migrant workers, “other” wo/men workers have no guarantee other than to remain faceless, voiceless and vulnerable. Although the exploration of *invisible*, *nocturnal* and *sleepless* migrants in this trilogy does not hold itself as an exhaustive account of how migration is depicted at the cinema, it can be argued that the three short films illustrate how visual methods accompanying enacted ethnography provide insights into the *real* aspects in a nebulous contemporary society living 24/7. The invisibility of migrant workers is symptomatic of a capitalist system causing the crisis within itself and a state of non-inclusiveness of the “others” – the immigrant anti-hero.

Some real lives fail to become *reel* stories. Consequently, researchers need to create space and focus on methods that allow co-participants to speak through images to mixed audiences. The result of using mixed methods could wed the experiences lived behind the scenes in a traditional, narrative sense with the more modern visual ethnographies in order to guide the viewer towards a certain standpoint of analysis in a gentle, non-prescriptive manner, but at the same time allowing for multiple interpretations by the wider, critical public, thus, greater

impact. Moreover, the mix of classical research tools and visual approaches to document people-on-the-move, aids teaching and dissemination of findings to wider audiences, on a range of issues facing developed societies: migration and refugee crisis, poverty, lack of education and rights to decent work for fe/male migrants around the world. Some uncharted contexts explored through larger studies could also be included in such a portfolio.

Without my body, I could not feel the depths of precariousness invading bodily, emotional and intellectual functions of MWNS. When co-workers could not articulate as clearly as I needed to understand their experiences, my own “body notes” would reveal those depths and nuances. In short, I accumulated the bodily knowledge or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977/2000) by using the six ‘s’ factors approach: *symbol wielders* are *sentient* beings who *suffer*, hone their *skills*, *sediment* knowledge in their bodies that are *situated* in a specific context (Wacquant, 2004, 2015), which I developed elsewhere (MacQuarie, 2019b). Without my camera, however, I could have not framed and portrayed my co-workers, and even engage them as I did when I have shown them the photos. Strikingly co-workers refused me an interview, but they accepted to appear on the camera. As for co-workers appearing in front of the (photo/video) camera lens it is a clear advantage for researchers, instead of the classic audio recorder. Nikielska-Sekula (Chap. 2, in this volume) also found that behind the value of photography there are two key aspects to learn from: the process that triggers social relations and the sensory experience of fieldwork with equally powerful messages to words. Nonetheless, once in front of the video/photo camera, the participants are recorded and their identity could be compromised. Thus, it is important to consider the ethical implications of visual methods on the privacy of those participating in our research and those remaining visible long after. In order to prevent damage to participants’ integrity, researchers must follow to the letter the instructions of their participants regarding what parts of their experience can or cannot appear on screen. That applies to voice recognition. I cannot say with certainty that these methods will damage the image of the participants, but I can make sure that I give the participants “the right to disappear” with every possible opportunity.

On this ethnographic journey, I have faced major challenges to examine invisible aspects of lives lived in the dark from within. Despite the bodily pains and aches, emotional unrest and social isolation and low mood that I experienced while a doctoral researcher, the journey has given me the insight that I lacked when I performed precarity as a labour migrant in Turkey. I exposed the steps that I took to understand the reality of people (in the actual conditions where they exist and operate daily and nightly), and are seen as “others” – migrants perceived by the mainstream society as foreign, alien and strange. Once I re-emerged from my object of study – precarious livelihoods of migrant night workers in global London – I brought to surface *reel* stories that include, but are not limited to vulnerability, marginalisation, and exploitation of immigrant night workers, which remain unchallenged in today’s non-inclusive societies. The power of the image in the hands of researchers-turned-filmmakers can change that by documenting the lives of migrants *at home, away from home*.

16.9 Conclusion

24/7 cities' night-time economy depend on and demand low-skilled, manual workers. Yet, these people are invisible to the mainstream (day) society due to the nature of night work activities. The researcher's *nightworkshop* methodology contributes to the current volume with an innovative portfolio of tools that capture hidden experiences and unhide visual representations on night work. It symbolises the close relationship between the visual and touch senses. In other words, I wanted to convey the significance of the body in experiencing and understanding the world. I used cyber-ethnography to objectify the sensorial experiences, which I put in a visual form to present my research findings and to create digital storytelling about migrants working the night shift. The bodily methods to experience this nocturnal landscape through my body's eyes and sedimented in bodily notes – *veni, vidi, vici* – made possible to bring this guide alive for novice and experienced researchers alike. The core message is that we experience the world that surrounds us, with our bodies and through the senses, while at the same time we use our eyes to receive (and transmit) messages. The “message” is a window into a reality documented through research, before the camera captures it, that lives outside of film that re-presents it to an audience and lives long after the researcher has left the field site/film set.

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