Chapter 2

“Have You Just Taken a Picture of Me?”: Theoretical and Ethical Implications of the Use of Researcher-Produced Photography in Studying Migrant Minorities

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2.1 Introduction

In recent years, the field of migration studies has witnessed a growing interest in the employment of photography. This is however not a new phenomenon in this area of study. Amateur photographer Augustus Sherman, who was photographing people arriving at Ellis Island (US) in the late 1800s and early 1900s, started documenting the lives of migrants using photography already over a century ago. This trend was developed in a more similar form to what we understand as visual research practice today in Berger and Mohr's classical book *A Seventh Man: Migrant Workers in Europe* (Becker, 2002; Berger & Mohr, 1975). Ethical issues around photographing migrants has also caused public debates, such as the one around Dorothea Lange's depiction of “A migrant Mother” (Phelan, 2014). Nevertheless, while research employing visual methods in a context of migration have become gradually more popular, a meta-reflection on the use of visual methodology in this sensitive field has been very limited (Ball & Gilligan, 2010, § 44). This book aims to fill this gap, with this particular chapter focusing primarily on photography.

Building on Luc Pauwels's (2009, p. 550–552) categorization of the origins of visual data, in relation to the process of its production and the issues of control arising around it, we may differentiate between “found”, “secondary and respondent-generated”, and “researcher-produced” visual imagery. “Found” are pre-existing materials, the production of which is beyond the control of the researcher. “Secondary and respondent-generated data” are those produced by other researchers in similar research contexts or by the respondents. Here the control of data production increases but is not fully owned by the researcher. Finally,

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“researcher-produced data” are those images generated by the researcher, over which, at least in theory, she exercises the greater amount of control. This chapter, as a primary reference point will focus on the use of researcher-produced photography. Pauwels (2009, p. 551–552), however, is reluctant to draw clear-cut lines between the sections of his categorization, proposing instead to see different visual imagery as elements of a continuum. Following from this, the discussion presented in this chapter, while focusing primarily on researcher-produced photography, and presenting theoretical and empirical challenges related to this particular method, may be, to a various extent, applied to other elements of the visual imagery continuum, going therefore beyond clear-cut categories between types of visual sources and techniques.

This chapter explores the use of researcher-produced photography in studying migrant communities. The discussion presented here is inspired by my research practice of employing photography, within a methodological framework of ethnographic observation, to investigate the way migrants and their descendants exercise transnational belonging in new and ancestral homelands. The main aim of the chapter is to critically assess the theoretical implications and ethical challenges arising with the application of this method in studying immigrant communities.

Researcher-produced photography is understood here as relating to the pictures collected by a researcher in the field in a process of a systematic data gathering within a solid methodological framework. It can be both a stand-alone method and an element of a more complex toolbox, which incorporates visual and so-called traditional methods (Gold, 2004; Martiniello & Boucher, 2017).

The organization of the chapter is as follows: I start with the introduction of methodology and context of my research on Norwegian Turks in Drammen that constitute the empirical reference for theoretical and ethical analyses introduced further. Then I move to the discussion around the ontological status of a photograph in a light of realist-conventionalist dilemma, showing how I solved that problem when interpreting and presenting visual data. Further, inspired by Gibson’s (1979) ecological approach to visual perception as well as Pink’s multisensorial approach to visual methodologies, I discuss the theoretical implications of a “place-based” character of photographs (Klett, 2012), the local context of visual data gathering, and the positionality of the researcher. In a final section, I focus closely on chosen ethical challenges I had to consider when employing photography during research on migrant minorities in a multi-sited setting.

2.2 Methodology and Research Context

The primary research behind the theoretical and ethical discussions presented in this chapter was conducted between 2013 and 2016 in Drammen, Norway, and in a number of villages in Konya province in Turkey. The aim of the research was to understand issues related to identity creation, belonging and the use of cultural heritage by people of Turkish origin settled in Drammen. As such, the research focused

on Norwegian-Turkish communities in this city, but the fieldwork was also conducted in the ancestral villages of Drammenian Turks origin in Turkey. This allowed me to make comparisons regarding the employment of researcher-generated photography in different geo-cultural settings. The research combined researcher-generated photography with more traditional methods such as ethnographic observation, in-depth and semi-structured interviews. In total, I collected 36 interviews with inhabitants of Drammen and experts, including those of Turkish descent, around 3000 photos of the space of Drammen and villages in Konya, and around 50 field notes and numerous informal conversations with people in Drammen and in the villages in Konya. Visual data were analyzed using the MaxQda software. Research findings were described elsewhere (Nikielska-Sekula, 2016a, b, 2018, 2019), while in the following two sections I focus primarily on theoretical and ethical issues around visual data collection, interpreting and publishing, which I faced during the research process.

2.3 Theoretical Implications of the Use of Photography in the Research Process

2.3.1 *Realist-Conventionalist Dilemma*

The recurrent question from the very beginning of visual representation's history has concerned the ontological issue of a presence of truth as an immerse element of a photographic image (see: Baudrillard, 1999; Bazin, 1963). “Throughout its history photography has been subjected to two opposing polarised theories of representation: those of realism and convention” (Wright, 2016). Realists have assumed a close relation of the photography with what it represents, while conventionalism has called this relationship in question, acknowledging the arbitrary way the photographs are constructed. While the realist – conventionalist opposition still constitutes a relevant issue within a framework of a modern visual literacy, some authors have proposed an approach to photographs that partly incorporates the assumption of these two different theoretical angles. Arnheim (1986, p. 112) claimed that “in order to make sense of photographs, one must look at them as encounters between physical reality and the creative mind of man”. The relationship between the photograph and its representation is therefore mediated by a human factor, either on a level of creation (the photographer), or on a level of interpretation (audience). I find Arnheim's (1986) statement useful as a starting point for building a theoretical discussion in this chapter for two reasons. Firstly, if visual methods are utilized as a way of data collection, there must be an underlying premise about the relationship between an image and what it represents. This is a condition sine qua non for recognizing visual data as of any value in representing social life (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 22), and this is what the first part of Arnheim's statement conveys. Secondly, when any research in social sciences is conducted, regardless of the methods

employed, the human aspect is a factor influencing data and shaping the research situation, be it from the side of a researcher or a participant, and must therefore be taken into account. Photographs are not free from such influence and here Arnheim's "creative mind of man" comes into play.

The realist-conventionalist opposition in relation to the ontological value of a photographic image has driven numerous discussions, and activated various thinking traditions for approaching and analyzing photographs. One of the most popularized in social sciences is semiotics (Wright, 2016). Within this broad and heterogeneous discipline, there is a sound tradition to approach images as "visual signs" that refer to other things, and the relationship between image and its referent is assumed as "manmade", rather than natural (Baetens & Surdiacourt, 2012). In this regard, the oft-cited is a threefold sign typology by Pierce (1839–1914).¹ He classified photography as an icon, but later critics pointed out that because of a rather causal relationship between the photograph and the photographed, it should be seen as indexical (Wright, 2016; see also Nöth, 2012). When I started employing photography to better understand the life-worlds of the members of Turkish minority in Drammen, I had to recognize the relationship between the photograph and its referent to allow any meaningful analyses. This, however, did not implicate that this relationship was straightforward and unproblematic: that the picture represented the objective reality, or that what it presented could have been linked to only one referent (Nöth, 2012). Quite the contrary, all data I had obtained, regardless of the method used, were constructed and negotiated in the interaction between me – the researcher – research participants and structural and cultural features around the inquiry. What was captured by my photographs depended on my preconceptualizations, topic of the research and its immediate interpretations in the field (see also Desille, Chap. 4, this volume), focus driven by the respondents to particular phenomena, and broad structural and cultural features that make me and the respondents discuss particular issues and omit others. Relating therefore to the conventionalist – realist discussion around photography, the argument I would like to make here is that the relationship between the images taken in a photo survey and a fragment of social world that images depict is both conventional and real. Real – as a depicted world exists for some people in some circumstances and are seen by them as "objective" and constituting the exclusionary referent of the picture. Conventional, as the pictures may refer to several referents of various meanings for different audiences. The latter is exactly what I experienced at the stage of findings' presentation, when depictions of particular areas of the city of Drammen were seen as familiar and home-like by some, and unfamiliar and exotic by others. This argument sustains the statement of Arnheim (1986), that photographs are encounters between physical reality and a creative mind of man. What is more, an overall conclusion from the discussion on the objectivity of pictures as tools of inquiry is that photography as a method of data collection within social sciences is a subject to a very similar

¹Pierce typology of sign: sign as an icon (closely resembles the referent), index (connection between the sign and the referent is causal), and symbol (relationship between the sign and referent is established conventionally) (Nöth, 2012; Wright, 2016)

influence of a “humanistic coefficient” as more traditional methods such as interviews and ethnographic observation are (see also Becker, 1998).

While a semiotic statement on the constructed relationship between the photograph and the photographed is useful in visual inquiry as demonstrated above, some researchers pointed out the limits semiotics pose in approaching images that should be taken into account when “researching visually”. The status of photographs as signs has been of a particular interest of visual semiotics, which focused on similarities between the structure of images and the structure of language (Nöth, 2012). Because of this correspondence, the approach to decode images by “reading” them in an analogous way verbal signs can be decoded was popularized. Baetens and Surdiacourt (2012) argue that such dominance of textual analogies in approaching the images is problematic in the light of the visual turn (Mitchell, 1992), which brought a recognition of the ability of images to communicate messages independently of language. Baetens and Surdiacourt (2012) encourage researchers to “go beyond what is often called linguistic imperialism” by seeking more image-center ways of analyzing and approaching photographs in a “postlinguistic” or

Fig. 2.1 Graffiti relating to a Turkish right wing party (MHP), and the city of Konya in Turkey. Konya is where many of Turks settled in Drammen originate and MHP party is quite popular in this area. The connection is easy to establish for the insider, but not so obvious for the outsiders

“postsemiotic” manner. They also underline that we are yet in a phase of defining what terms such as “postlinguistic” and “postsemiotic” actually mean, and the answer to this question is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, this discussion shows that the paradigm of semiotics may pose certain limitations in relation to visual inquiry to which I return later in the chapter.

2.3.2 *Place-Based Photographs*

Gibson (1979) developed the ecological approach to visual perception, which sought a more holistic way to address the act of seeing. He broke with a mind-body dichotomy in perception, stating that it is not only the eyes that observe but the eyes located in a particular body located in particular settings:

One sees the environment not with the eyes but with the eyes-in-the-head-on-the-body-resting-on-the-ground. Vision does not have a seat in the body in the way the mind has been thought to be seated in the brain. (Gibson, 1979, p. 205)

Drawing on Gibson’s theory, I would like to shed light on two factors important and complementary to seeing in this and following sections: the physical location of the body of a photographer (body-resting-on-the-ground) (Sects. 2.3.2 and 2.3.3) and her positionality (the-head-on-the body) (Sect. 2.3.4).

The idea of the body-resting-on-the-ground as complementary to the act of seeing lies at the very core of visual ethnography. While new technologies, and here I particularly refer to drones, enable employing researcher-generated photography to the methodological tool box without setting a foot on the ground, the majority of ethnographic research still utilizes a traditional idea of the researcher’s presence in the field. Following from this is the assumption that pictures taken in the field as part of data collection are “place-based”, to use Klett’s (2012) terminology: “One reason photographs are so useful is they originate from a real position in space” (Klett, 2012).

This observation made by Klett (2012) is crucial in the context of migration research. In a public discourse, and to some extent in scholarly work on migration, migrants and refugees are often presented as stuck in-between cultures and localities. What is underlined is their uprootedness and living in a transnational social space. The impression stemming from this is that migrants live their lives in an abstract space of in-betweenness, while spatial aspects of their every-day routines go unattended. Instead, people’s bodies are material and so are their surroundings. Everyday life forces them to respond to the local circumstances of their new places of settlement. In my research, I found that the respondents had developed their unique belonging in Norwegian society under the umbrella-identity of (Norwegian) Turkishness. While they identify as Turks and participate actively in various Norwegian-Turkish communities, they underline that their living space is in Norway and their belonging and home-like experiences are rooted in the local places of Drammen. Employing photography to my research allowed “materializing” respondents’ transnationalism, revealing that various aspects of their transnational

Fig. 2.2 Turkish mosque in Drammen located in a former Adventist church. Inside (b) and outside (a)

Fig. 2.3 Turkish free time club located in a wooden house typical of Norway (a). Inside (b): antique wall with traditional rose painting acknowledged as Norwegian heritage, a picture of Atatürk, the founder of Turkish republic, and King Olav of Norway

livelihoods were adjusted to the local circumstances of Norway and had an imprint of this locale. One example here are the artefacts typical of Turkey such as tea machines and pottery with inscriptions either in Norwegian or supporting Norwegian sport clubs. Presenting them along with written findings enhanced the message of placing Norwegian Turks' belonging in Norway. Another example showing that photography helped to reveal the localized aspects of Norwegian-Turkish everyday life concern Norwegian design and aesthetics of buildings hosting Norwegian Turkish associations in Drammen – things that went unattended at a first glance as I was overwhelmed by the issues that distinguished these places from the mainstream. This showed as well how photography could be more fruitful than field notes that are based either on researcher's memory or on an immediate observation in which some details may be omitted (see Gnes, Chap. 14, this volume).

A tendency to acknowledge migrants' belonging to the local places they are settled in is present within migration studies (Buhr, 2018; Çağlar, 1997, 2001; Ehrkamp, 2005; Fangen, 2007a, 2007b; Savaş, 2014), but there is still much more to be done here. Photography, as a place-based (Klett, 2012) medium enhances the ability to highlight the local aspects of migrants' day-to-day business and their rootedness in a new homeland, therefore serving the purposes of "locating transnationalism", showing directly that so-called "foreign" or "exotic" practices, associations, and alike are located in a new homeland and constitute a part of it. Following from this is an observation that migrants constitute a part of new homeland societies and belong to them through their everyday practices. These could also have been discovered with traditional methods, but the very nature of photography as a place-based (Klett, 2012) medium evokes the conclusion that migrants are located rather than dislocated in a more straightforward manner.

Theoretical implications of the employment of photography discussed here refers therefore to two aspects: First, by involving a spatial realm into investigations of the social relationships of migrants, photography sheds light on their rootedness in a receiving society by either denying their "in-betweenness", or showing that even so-called "in-betweenness", or more broadly, transnationalism, is spatially located, materialized locally in new homelands, and is influenced by the local circumstances. From the above, a second theoretical implication follows, namely seeing migrants as members of new homeland societies. Even if denied or marginalized, migrants, documented or not, rarely live in a complete separation from the societies they are settled in, and therefore their livelihoods constitute a part of the new homelands. The place-based (Klett, 2012) nature of photography is capable of revealing this.

2.3.3 Research Context as a Finding

Gibson's (1979) photographer's body-resting-on-the-ground has yet another implication for the research findings, apart from the very outcome of this stance described in a previous paragraph: a place-based photograph (Klett, 2012). Namely, the physical presence of a photographer in the field prompts various social relations, while local context influences what a photograph depicts, and provides interpretation frameworks. The latter was discussed and acknowledged by theorists of photography, who claimed that while there are pictures that deliver a story, the context they were taken in is equally important. Becker claimed that "Photographs get meaning ... from their context" (Becker, 1998, p. 88) and the lack of it forces the audience to use "their own resources" (p. 89) and interpret the picture within the framework of viewers' own cultural habitus. This possessive interpretation presents dangers especially in the context of migration research, where some cultural practices and habits of the actors may be unfamiliar to local or international audiences and therefore misunderstood. There is an agreement that displaying photographs obtained in research requires contextualizing them. It is the responsibility of the

Fig. 2.4 Landscape of a village in Konya province that has experienced a significant emigration to Europe. Local, stone-make dwellings contrast with big houses built from remittances

researcher-photographer to acquire such meaning from the field, and to do so visual methods often have to be supported by other forms of inquiry (Gold, 2004; Martiniello & Boucher, 2017). Nevertheless, providing a verbal context to the photographs does not have to undermine their power to communicate messages independently from the language. On the contrary, while the written context sets a framework for reception, these are the images that interact with viewers' sense of aesthetics, and her socio-cultural background that influences her perception of the world. While presenting pictures obtained in the villages of my respondents' origin in Konya province in Turkey, I had to verbally provide a thorough context of causes and consequences of labor migration for this area, but these were images that “spoke” e.g. about contrasting economic and aesthetic features between the dwellings of local villagers and holiday houses of Norwegian Turks built after years spent in Norway. The verbal context did not reduce images to a role of mere illustrations, but rather served as a counteraction against possible misconceptions the pictures with no context could have brought.

Another issue that is discussed here regards a mere context of photo taking that can deliver important information at early stages of the research influencing its focus and the findings. Below I describe how the context of picture taking can be a source of data and can influence what the photo depicts.

We like to think that while hidden behind the camera, we become invisible to the people around. This is, however, rarely the case. Researchers are not transparent, and in many circumstances camera makes them even more visible at least at the

initial stages of the interaction, and its presence may alert people. While taking pictures the photographer does not only see the surrounding. She is also seen by people around. This can further cause reactions or lack of them and can initiate social relations or not. Both possibilities deliver important information about the field that should be included in analyses. While taking pictures in public places of the neighborhoods of Drammen, Norway, I was approached by people making sure that they, their houses, and shops were not photographed. People consenting to be photographed would check the outcome and sometimes would ask me to delete the picture if it did not appeal to them. As a consequence, when displaying pictures from my research in Norway at international conferences, I was often accused of talking about social relationships while presenting pictures empty of people (Fig. 2.5). This was indeed the case – after a series of unpleasant conversations and comments concerning the act of picture-taking, I avoided photographing people in Norway. These basic reactions to the photo-taking, however, told me a lot about the character of the investigated area with high anonymity concerns shared also among the members of minorities. In Turkey, in turn, similar reactions in public places were rare. The situation in private places was different, as I would always ask for permission for photo-taking upon arrival. Still, in Norway my hosts were careful to leave the scene so as not to appear on a picture, while in Turkey they generally would not do that. Interestingly, the hosts in Norway I am referring to were of Turkish origin. This experience directed my attention to significant differences between people of Turkish background settled in Norway, as affected by high anonymity concerns quite common in Norwegian society, and Turks living in Turkey.

Fig. 2.5 Empty streets of Drammen

This shifted my attention from the Turkishness of the members of Norwegian Turkish communities, to the possible differences between them and Turks in Turkey, as well as their links to and influences from Norwegian society. In this regard, social relationships initiated during photo-taking became an important element of the research process and influenced the further direction of the investigation and eventually the findings. In other words, a very context of an act of picture-taking became data. Theoretical implication of this is to consider treating the process of data collection as part of collected data. In my research, this approach proved to be fruitful as it brought new angles of analyses and shed new light on the investigated community.

Social reactions prompted by the presence of a camera may yet influence another issue, namely what is photographed and what is not. Researchers are expected to follow ethical standards and should be sensitive to the issues of informed consent (Ball, 2014). There are settings where obtaining a formal consent for photographing is difficult or impossible. Examples here may be crowded streets and public places, where asking all pedestrians for consent is simply not doable. It is the responsibility of the researcher to understand which strategies are acceptable in any given local circumstances and adjust photo-taking so as not to violate people's privacy and local rules and this is what I did when collecting data in Turkey and in Norway. In more private settings, such as associations, places of worship and private houses, in turn, I encountered a host who would accompany me directing the attention of the camera towards particular things while omitting others. While adjusting to the local rules of what is accepted and what is not, an act necessary to secure ethical standards of the research, the researcher allows the context to determine what pictures actually depict, the way I did it to comply with high anonymity standards in Norway. All this resulted in the context of picture-taking, a very presence of the body on the ground holding the camera, influencing what was present and what was absent on the pictures taken during my fieldwork. Paying attention to these nuances was a part of analyses too, and it delivered information about the field that otherwise would not come up if it was not for the presence of a camera.

2.3.4 Positionality

Finally, Gibson's (1979) head-on-the-body can be related to the individual positionality of the researcher that regards both, her socio-cultural and economic background (that will be metaphorically described here as “the head”), and physical appearance, age, way of clothing, and more (“the body”). This positionality influences the social relationships occurring in the field shaping broadly understood context. Before I started my research on Turkish communities in Norway, I was already familiar with practices, smells, aesthetics that were associated with Turkey as I lived, studied and worked in the country for relatively short periods (up to 6 months) several times. I therefore had expectations of what Turkishness in Norway might be. When starting the research, I could have recognized smells, tastes, aesthetics and

clothing as familiar and resembling of Turkey. This experience was important in making connections between Turkish communities in Norway and Turkey. But it also helped me grasp things that were different from those common in Turkey. My positionality, therefore influenced the way I interpreted the events observed in the field (see Clarke, 2005), determining further what was photographed and what was not.

Familiarity and “naturalization” of some fragments of the research situation may push it outside the scope of analyses. An example of such omission in the context of migration research regards undermining similarities (and overestimating differences) between the mainstream and minority population. Influences of local, mainstream society, from architecture to practices and habits of people, may look “transparent” and may therefore be omitted in a search for “exotic” themes. As a result, research may remain biased giving a false impression of unfamiliarity of immigrant districts. All supported by a photographic documentation of difference that leaves out the similarities and enhances a false image of immigrant communities as disconnected from mainstream society. As a non-native Norwegian, who had newly arrived in the country to conduct research on Norwegian Turks, I did not have the sense of familiarity with this country developed, learning about it while conducting research on Norwegian Turks. This alerted me to unfamiliar yet common practices and aesthetics in Norway that I had encountered in Turkish communities. In this regard, my experiences based on my individual positionality were involved in the research along with photo-taking influencing my seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting the field and projecting further on the interpretation of obtained visual data.

Following from this is another issue rarely discussed in a context of more traditional research methods – sensory experiences of the field that shape the way findings are interpreted. Pink (2007, 2012) advocated that the Western idea of approaching senses as separated from each other is problematic: “the five senses do not travel along separate channels, but interact to a degree few scientists would have believed only a decade ago” (Cytowic, 2010, p. 46). She further suggested that taking photographs involves not only vision, but is related to other senses that the Westerners would call “smell, touch, hearing, and taste”:

vision is not just about looking at images; rather it is part of the multisensory processes through which we interpret the total environment in which we exist, as well as the specific material objects that we encounter. (Pink, 2012)

Pink (2012) advocates a need for

A reflexive approach [that] would involve developing an awareness of the culturally and personally specific sensory categories that one uses as a person and as a researcher, as well as the moral values and judgments attached to these. (Pink, 2012)

When the-body-on-the-ground conducts the fieldwork, the senses driven by individual positionality of the researcher are activated. The researcher cannot stop the impression of familiarity or unfamiliarity driven by a joint experiences of smells, textures or observed aesthetics, and these are tightly linked to her own positionality and past experiences. This is how I approached and recognized Turkishness while in

the field – associating it with smells and aesthetics familiar from Turkey. The inconsistencies between experiencing Turkishness in Turkey and in Norway directed my attention to a very important finding about significant influences from a Norwegian mainstream society on Norwegian Turks. This shows that often not fully conscious or controlled impressions are cast on the interpretations of the field and have a real impact on the findings.

The approach of considering senses as reliable measures for an academic inquiry is getting popularized in the field of studies such as sensory anthropologies, geographies, and sociologies (Pink, 2012). Sensory experiences are part of researcher’s individual positionality and they indeed influence the research process in the same way the other dimensions of positionality do (Clarke, 2005). Acknowledging them in a research process therefore seems justified, while using them in an inquiry in a systematic way, as proposed by Pink (2012), can extend the understanding of the research situation, e.g. by providing a reflexive angle of researcher’s experiences of familiarity and difference in the field.

2.4 Ethical Challenges

All researchers have to follow ethical standards while conducting research. Usually, the universities and local ethical committees deliver ethical guidelines. These are, however, rarely able to address the context-sensitive ethical challenges while conducting and publishing the research. Some research situations are more sensitive than others, and this is especially true for research in a context of migration, which often involves subjects who are in various ways vulnerable (Ball, 2014, p. 153). While ethical challenges connected to using visual methods were extensively discussed by Rose (2012) and Pink (2007), in this section I would like to draw the reader’s attention to three aspects especially relevant for ethics around researcher-generated photography in a context of migration research. These aspects center on the following topics: 1. Deciding what to display and what to hide, 2. Ethical standards in different geo-cultural locale, 3. Anonymity concerns vs. agency.

2.4.1 *What to Display and What to Hide*

Deciding what to display and what to hide is one of the most important tasks of the researcher with regard to research ethics. This claim is especially relevant in relation to visual methods, since here the displayed faces and artefacts take a concrete shape and are not anonymous, contrary to the written description of them, which can skip identifying information such as name, geo-location etc. Nöth (2012) described five limitations images pose compared the written text in relation to what they cannot express in a way the text can: Negation, Causality, Modalisation, Deixis, and Metareference and Self-reference. With regard to the latter he stated:

“Pictures can only show their own qualities: they cannot explicitly “speak” about them, nor can they generalize” (ibid.). While this characteristic may be seen as an advantage in a qualitative research process, where the focus is on deep meanings and an accurate depiction of social life in a particular context – purposes to which pictures can be “worth a thousand words”, this also has a negative side in relation to research ethics. Photographs display whatever they have depicted and cannot skip certain information without losing its quality in the way the words can. It is therefore more difficult to anonymize people and places that constituted a focus of our research, and therefore a researcher should make wise choices with regard to publication.

During the fieldwork, I encountered problematic issues and had to make ethical decisions on how to protect the best interest of the participants to the study. As a consequence, I did not publish pictures depicting potentially problematic issues. In this regard, I made a choice of what to display and what to hide, even though displaying the pictures that presented the phenomenon would be much more convincing than a written description of it, which, in turn, provides anonymity.

2.4.2 Changing Ethical Standards in Different Localities

The second issue that is especially relevant in relation to migration studies regards changing ethical standards in different social and geographical locale. At its core, migration research has a focus on people and groups of various origins, whose practices and values may differ or even stand in contrast to those in receiving societies and/or to those of a researcher. What is more, there is an established practice in social sciences to approach migration as a back and forth phenomena (Andrews, 2014), and some researchers choose to conduct research also in the local areas of migrants origin, as I did, where, again, practices and system of values may significantly differ from those represented by the researcher and her institution. A question that I had to face when photographing in Turkey was “which ethical standards should I use, local or Norwegian?” Pink (2012) argues that ethics are always situated, and in this regard, ethical standards should be adjusted to the local expectations. Nevertheless, in my case, the local expectations were less strict than those from my home institution. I decided to follow the rule of informed consent. This, however, did not solve the problem of photographing children. In Norway, children’s privacy was especially protected. I would be approached by the strangers raising doubts whenever I was photographing around the schools. I have also experienced a protest of a 10-year-old boy who thought I took a picture of him, and who asked me with suspicion: “Have you just taken a picture of me?”. In Turkey, neither children, nor their parents had a problem with being photographed and the ethical question that I faced was whether I have a right to approach children’s privacy unequally in different geolocations, and how to reconcile it with children’s own agency.

Fig. 2.6 School in an immigrant-populated district in Drammen

Changing geolocations, therefore, induces a series of questions concerning different ethical standards and expectations in various geo-cultural settings. The researcher should carefully reflect on whether she can benefit from a greater freedom in picture taking in places with less strict approach to anonymity protection, or should she rather stick to her strictest ethical standards at all times. Addressing these issues requires a great amount of sensitivity and a close focus on both an informed consent (Ball, 2014) and a dignity (Langmann & Pick, 2014). In a context of photo-taking, however, the researcher should be aware of global as well as class differences regarding the consciousness of the consequences of a photo being taken and displayed. I believe that it is unethical to benefit from this bias to obtain more extended material.

2.4.3 Anonymity Protection vs. Agency

Finally, the tension between anonymity protection and agency should be discussed here. Studying migration often involves vulnerable subjects. This becomes problematic especially with regard to presenting e.g. pictures of undocumented migrants, even if we have obtained their consent. The question of agency prompts: can people decide for themselves if their photos are being displayed or is it the researcher who holds the responsibility for their protection and has a final say? I believe that the

seriousness of the consequences the migrants can face in the future, including deportation, urges the researcher to make choices with regard to the longitudinal well-being of the research participants. Another issue that is relevant here is a right to disappear, a concept coined by Patricia Prieto in preparatory discussions to this volume. How long is the consent researcher has obtained from the research participants valid, and how to provide the participants with a right to disappear after the findings are published? These questions should be considered when making decisions about publishing images of research participants. I decided not to display pictures of people that have directly participated in my study as I was not able to predict the longitudinal consequences of their identity being compromised. What is more, I wanted to grant them the right to disappear and I felt that displaying their faces would significantly limit this right. After all, visual methods are not primarily about displaying images but about collecting data via images. Displaying visual data should be done carefully, in the same way as quoting interviews is done, when the researcher omits the information that may compromise anonymity or decides what to hide to spare the researched community the harm. The main principle here is a consideration of the best interest of a subject.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates how visual methods, and especially researcher-produced photography, can open new angles of analyses of migrants' life-words. It discussed theoretical implications of a place-based character of photography (Klett, 2012), namely the rooted and local to the new homeland character of migrants' transnationality. Further it presented the role of context in the research process, indicating that the social relationships prompted by a very act of picture-taking both influences what the collected photographs depict, and delivers important information about the field, becoming the source of data and influencing the findings. Moreover, a multi-sensory positionality of the researcher was discussed with a focus on a holistic engagement of the senses, vision included, while photographing. Finally, ethical considerations with regard to the use of photography of migrants and in changing geo-cultural settings were presented. The chapter advocated a number of advantages in the employment of photography to research, indicating the ways this can enhance inclusion and recognition of migrants as members of the new homeland societies.

Theoretically, the chapter built on the premises of semiotics, acknowledging the relationship between the photo and its referent. I have signalled, however, the problem voiced by Baetens and Surdiacourt (2012) about the overly linguistic nature of semiotics when it comes to the photo analyses. Looking for "postsemiotic" forms of approaching images and going beyond the textual character of the image involves recognising the value of images in delivering research findings that traditional methods would not deliver. The question relevant here, though, is to what extent

pictures can be left on their own with no support of language at all, and at which stages of research this is appropriate and ethical. As stated earlier, in a context of migration research, the challenge in letting images stand on their own at the stage of findings’ presentation regards the risk of a reproduction of misconceptions about the presented reality that can cause serious harm against exposed people and communities. Recognising pictures as equal means of communication to language is a one thing, another is leaving pictures with no or too superficial contextual information, the latter assumed by Becker (1998) as a mere ignorance.

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