Chapter 9
Conclusions: Migrants Through Images

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The three chapters in this part of the book have quite different starting points, objectives and questions. This makes them rich and allows a dialogue between the authors on a meta-level: not in the methods of description or analysis of the daily life of migrants, or the representations in their new lives, but in the one that questions the choices made by the producers of images to account for this reality, immaterial, intimate and profound.

This also meant that, given the diversity of approaches contained in the three chapters, it was hardly possible to deal with them through term-to-term comparisons or even to confront them without resorting to an artifice that was doomed to failure. This is why, while maintaining an overall view of the three chapters, we have preferred to enter into the subtleties of each of the chapters in order to look at and understand the processes initiated to attain knowledge that paper writing was likely to miss, at least partially.

9.1 Produce Knowledge Through Filmmaking

Introducing her chapter with the question "How can filmmaking produce theory?", Sanderien Verstappen asks a multiplicity of questions to theories of knowledge: how to pass from observation to theory or how to theorize data resulting from observation? Conversely, is theory sufficient on its own, including being satisfied with administering proof through observations, sometimes interpreted to serve the theory? One cannot escape the eternal debate between the inductive approach (illustrated here by ethnographic cinema) and the hypothetico-deductive approach which,

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starting from theories, can take filmmaking to go beyond observation and description, including the ability to show the invisible.

With the author we can overcome this unfruitful dichotomy: the two approaches to reality must be mutually enriching because they cannot be dissociated if we wish to remain in good faith. On the one hand, every researcher, analyst, filmmaker, and author who goes to the field arrives loaded with theses and theories that they have more or less consciously constructed during their existence. There is no creation from a blank page: the trajectory of the creator leads and influences her observations, her choices throughout the ethnographic observation, it permeates her theoretical choices. There is no inductive approach without an *a priori*, pre-established and non-conscious theory that "induces" the gaze (and therefore the image/sound recording) in ethnographic work, whether filmed or simply observed. In the same way, in the hypothetico-deductive approach, hypotheses derived from theories can be thwarted by observations, and it is from this point that *equipped observation* (with a camcorder), i.e. film observation, acquires an efficiency distinct from immediate observation (with field notes) likely to feed a new cycle of questions-hypothesis-verifications.

The Chap. 6 "Ethnocinematographic theory. How to develop migration theory through ethnographic filmmaking" (in this volume) presents the benefits of this approach, which organizes the to-and-fro between theories-hypotheses and inductive observations. The thesis of upward/downward mobility is proof of the merits of this process: observation of a strong differentiation in the status of individuals in both situations, while the contribution is in the conceptualisation of a double mobility, made possible by the incorporation of antecedent theories (specific to each situation). For example, it is on the basis of the theories of downgrading of young people from the middle class in India and New Zealand occupying middling positions both at home and in the United Kingdom that the observations make sense since, while being qualified, they do not find it possible to take up jobs corresponding to their university level in the host country and live there with rather mediocre incomes.

Articulating emigration country and immigration city, Sanderien Verstappen contextualises mobility both from the point of view of class membership and from the point of view of the migratory project, which is known to concern a large population of young people who, through migration, seek either to develop their skills or, by means of this movement, to individually solve the problem inherent in all societies where the possibilities of ascension remain low and concern only individuals belonging to the dominant classes. The film *Live as a common man*, which was directed towards academic audiences as well as Indian youth, accompanied the research and involved three directors, Sanderien Verstappen, Mario Rutten and Isabelle Makay. This collective film exposes the fantasies of Indian youth locked in the communal gaze and who dream of finding themselves independent of the social norms of the group while imagining London as "a city paved with gold". The relatively long time frame allows us to grasp the multiple situations and relationships lived in and outside the country of origin. One walks through the streets of India, where the idleness of young people is immediately apparent, while the omnipresent

posters call for them to emigrate. However, Sanderien Verstappen's proposal, which tells about a research with a "translocal" character, is part of the analysis of a migration that is not linked to misery but to a temporary departure project associated with the idea of a return that should be characterized by a social ascent. Although the phenomenon is well known, it is rarely favoured by researchers, who are in their majority more concerned with relating migration for economic or political reasons, often with dramatic consequences for the migrant.

The screenshots included in Sanderien Verstappen's chapter show the cultural changes among middle-class migrants from Gujarat to London. The photos are accompanied by subtitles that take us away from the researcher's interpretation of what appears in the photo to support the individual's awareness of the changes they have experienced in taking on domestic tasks usually carried out by women or domestic workers in the mind of these middle-class migrants. It is an opportunity for the researcher to recall that the probably ephemeral relaxation of original male dominance is one of the frequent components in the absence of family migration. It is also the discovery, within the community to which they belong, of poorly paid work, indefinite working hours and exploitation. Alongside this is also the pride of having resisted the trials during this journey of initiation and Ulysses' way of returning to his native land, of reconnecting with the culture of origin without neglecting a hybridisation with Western culture, which enables them to find the original middle classes again while resituating them in the Western modernity that they encountered during their stay in London. These few screenshots expose public and private transformations of spatial mobility.

9.2   From Text to Image and Back: Where Are We in the Work on Image?

If the use of film has played a central role in shaping the author's analysis of upward and downward mobility, it is also because of the very nature of ethnographic-cinematographic observation, which "fixes" social objects in the film and makes possible multiple viewings/listenings, opening up new hypotheses to work with already existing theories to enrich, improve or even pervert them. In other words, the use of the camcorder can open up new theoretical perspectives at the same time as it shows the social and "produces evidences" that are themselves known to be the subject of acute epistemological debates. To say that ethno-sociological film *shows the social*, here means two things: on the one hand, it is to affirm that the choice of shots (tight, wide, medium) and their length, the choice of lighting (when possible) and the editing mean that the film proposes a point of view or, in other words, a theoretical analysis of a social situation; but it is not a univocal point of view, because, at the same time, the film provides the viewer with the elements to construct his own analysis of the social. Finally, it is necessary to underline that texts (written to convey theories or spoken texts to highlight the lived experience and

feelings of individuals) are inseparable from images and cannot be opposed to them. This is also supported by Sanderien Verstappen, who has associated an article, "Middling Migration", with her film, and who writes that "taken together, the film and article demonstrate how we employed filmmaking in this collaborative research project as a tool of exploration, analysis, and theorising. Film and text both show how an ambiguous experience of upward/downward class mobility is produced by migration". The author underlines how the two forms of expression are complementary, especially when it comes to pushing the conceptual argument: it is from film and film data (i.e. also from data collection through image and sound) that the article has been able to deepen the concept of "middling migration",[1] taken up in international analyses on migration.

In their chapter, Jerome Krase and Timothy Shortell also raise the question of the status of the image – this time it is with photography – in the process of knowing the real: starting from the photo to show the urban or starting from the theories of the urban to think about the photos to be taken in the city. It is very likely that it is a dialectical vision of the relationship between photo and urban theories that offers us a solution to better know the city. But then we come across another question which, after thinking about it, is dual: that of the making of the image and its analysis by the photographer and beyond by the reader or the public. The latter, as we know, is not prepared and above all trained to read images as they are to read texts: moreover, most readers only look at each photo for a few seconds or fractions of a second, the photo having in their minds only the status of an illustration of the text, that is to say, it is immediately struck with insignificance or uselessness. Secondly, it must also be recognized that for us, authors of texts and images wishing to enhance the production of knowledge through photography or video, we do not have at our disposal a precise tool developed for this function as there is for the text: the semiology of the image and all the sciences of interpretation of images remain little diffused beyond the circles of artistic (or sometimes advertising) teaching. Nevertheless the tools exist to analyse the city, as Krase and Shortell's chapter shows: urban semiotics has acquired a certain maturity and has spread widely in the disciplines analysing the city. In a way, this divorce between the reading of the city and the reading of the image runs through this article: the textual analysis of the population shift in Brooklyn on 8th Avenue brings us to experience the slow departure of the Scandinavians, replaced by Asian populations.

We thus live in a real paradox: in a chapter whose introduction and main thesis give priority to the visual to analyse and interpret the city with its population transfers, it appears that the text remains first in relation to the visual. Because of

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[1] Indeed, as is often the case in English, the concepts that work well in the academic world are those that make sense in several strata of social life and theoretical analysis. Here we are dealing with migrants from the *middle classes* of the country of departure, who live a contradictory experience in the host country (a certain downgrading), in a somewhat mediocre daily existence in the sense that it does not provide migrants with many advantages in terms of sociability (uprooting), moral comfort (isolation) or pecuniary benefits (low income compared to the population of the host country and above all job insecurity, therefore social insecurity).

their small number and perhaps also because of the lack of their integration into the text – text-image writing modalities are yet to be invented in paper versions as well as for transmedia on the Internet – photos and the visual cannot play the role that the authors would like them to play. This is perhaps even more true of the visuals of London: the authors propose a very fine development on the importance of walking to observe the city and the social; the concept of the *global nomad* shows a renewal of this form which privileges the slowness of walking over all other forms of movement, particularly motorized. However, here sociologists and anthropologists have to question the importance of *déjà vu* and its photographic or filmic reproduction, which often acquires more significance, or even relevance – because *déjà vu* is already seen and known – than the singularity, specificity and discoveries that the "social scientist" can film in these fields. If visual sociology is a sensory sociology, as Krase and Shortell rightly write, cinema, and even more photography, which does not have sound or real movement, still have an enormous amount of thinking and creation to do to account for smell or touch. The latter can only be grasped by signs that we must learn to perceive, list and keep in memory in order to include them within the framework of our images. This is a heavy apprenticeship, essentially because there is no training or school to transmit these mechanisms of representation of the sensible that are not a matter of sight and hearing.

It appears that visual sociologists (or anthropologists, geographers…) still have a long apprenticeship to complete, in most cases, to master the practice of photography. First of all, in the case of ethnographic photographs, it is always desirable to draw inspiration from anthropologists such as Georges Bateson and Margaret Mead who, before photographing Balinese dances, studied them at length (Bateson & Mead, 1962): they chose the angle, the position of the camera (in height) to capture the details of arm movement as taught by the teacher. In other words, the photographer has to mentally represent the result of his or her shooting before shooting in order to frame it just the right way: in a way, the photographer has to "script" intellectually, even conceptually, the photo he or she is going to take (which is what great documentary photographers of the twentieth century such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank, Dorothea Lange, etc., did). This vision prior to the taking of a photograph is essential to the successful transmission of the sociologist-photographer's sensibility to his public and his readers.[2] This means that he must choose the right frame (the right focal length), the best point of view to include the essential signifiers that are useful for his subject and his demonstration while excluding what may interfere with them. Although this exclusion is not necessarily definitive: other photos may include this context, even if it is to function as an off-screen photo enriching the first one. Alternatively, what does not constitute the main discourse of a photo may be kept (i.e. shot) for further remarks and demonstrations.

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[2] Without, of course, making him a model for social scientists, we have to learn from the great photographic reporters who compose their images before they are triggered. We should read all the articles and books they write about their profession. In addition, they have the "pressure" of the snapshot related to the news they deal with that social scientists do not have.

This reflection on the included/excluded signifiers of the image leads us to return to the importance of the signs in the photo so that it speaks to the reader-spectator. The photographer must therefore be extremely attentive to the preparation and conception of these signifiers (establishing a quasi-listing) that he knows are present in the scenes to be photographed and that he must include in his image. The best example of this can be found in August Sander's photos of trades taken at the beginning of the twentieth century: the locksmith has his keys, files and ruler; the gas workers have their lamps to go underground and their files under their arms to report on their work; the young people of Bohemia are dandies, smokers, their hair in a mess and dressed in unusual costumes. The whole "documentary style" described by Olivier Lugon (2001) emphasizes the presence of attributes or the modalities used by photographers to bring them out: frontal shots of wooden houses (Walker Evans) to bring out the monotony, doors and windows of geometric barns to emphasize their functionality (Scheeler), etc. (Sebag & Durand, 2020). On the other hand, not everything needs to be expressed directly – what Barthes (1967) calls *denotation* – and one can give more force to a statement by suggesting its content rather than providing a direct vision. For example, Barthes shows that the Panzani advertisement gains strength by suggesting the Italianness of the products through their colours (red tomatoes, white onion and green pepper), which are those of the Italian flag; moreover, the housewife's fillet placed on the table evokes the horn of plenty.

On the other hand, the photos of social scientists must try to be narrative, that is, they can, in a single shot, not just be a snapshot, but tell a story. This exercise may seem difficult, but it is also the condition for making a "good photo". For example, to return to the chapter by Krase and Shortell, their photos of London can be narrative: on the one hand, the clothing (very loaded with attributes or signifiers) tells where some of the characters come from, what their ethno-cultural affiliations are, and on the other hand, they are in motion, going from point A to point B with an eager purpose, they enter or leave a shop. By frequenting a shop with a sign written in Arabic or another alphabet, they confirm to us their active membership of a community different from the numerically dominant population in the United Kingdom. At the same time, although we are sure that their membership corresponds to the nature of the store, there are still some uncertainties: what will they buy, how many times a week do they enter the store? These are other qualities of ethnographic photography or documentary photography: it must maintain uncertainty, surprise and, if possible, suspense. These qualities increase the attractiveness of the photo for the readers and lead them to look at it and to deepen its meaning.

This question of the *interest* of the image carried by the reader as soon as he or she sees it must also be worked on so that the reader does not pass from image to image without looking at them. There are many ways in which the spectator can catch the viewer's attention and in general they can be made explicit (except in the case of advertisers, but for different reasons…): one can spot the unexpected in a scene, the paradox it contains, the exceptionality of the situation, etc. Although the sociologist must be wary here: the catchphrase should not exaggerate or distort the

Fig. 9.1 Photograph by Jean-Pierre Durand, Argenteuil (North of Paris), 1971. This image offers several levels of reading: structurally, the stacking of mailboxes suggests a high population density, which is reinforced by the multiplicity of names on each mailbox. Essentially male names: this is therefore an immigration of North Africans (read the names) who came to France alone to work, before the policy of family reunification (1974). Finally, the wall covering shows the dilapidated state of the building and housing

subject matter he wishes to propose to the reader-spectator. For example, horizons or verticals that are systematically placed diagonally do not work! A remark which leads us to the question of the aesthetics of photography: the traditional canons of image composition can be respected or voluntarily circumvented if there is a significant reason; the play on values and on colours even more opens up ways to photographic quality; digital photography allows us to take risks that we could not afford with film: play on blurred images, on movements, etc. But as elsewhere, the trap lies in the search for a formalism in the image that would take precedence over the background and the subject matter that the photographer wishes to convey.

Fig. 9.2 Photograph by Jean-Pierre Durand, Construction site in Paris, 1971. This photograph does not reveal the geographical origin of the workers, but it is symptomatic of the recruitment of immigrant workers in this type of work

9.3 Cooperation at the Heart of the Documentary Creative Process

Sanderien Verstappen's chapter raises another, more pragmatic question, but one that all "social scientists" who use film to think socially and debate theories in and through film ask themselves: how to organize cooperation between social scientists with different trajectories and ages. Here it can be said that the common feature of the three directors is their training as anthropologists, but one of them knew the Gujarat since he had conducted extensive fieldwork there, while the two other

Fig. 9.3 Photograph Joyce Sebag: Hispanic family in a park, California, 2014. This image tells us about the happiness of being parents and having a successful life (despite certainly other vicissitudes): the brightness of the colours of the baby's clothes and that of the blanket contribute to the narrative

researchers were both new to the Gujarati world in London. Some of them practised more writing and others were already familiar with visual anthropology. The first originality of the team was the absence of non-anthropologists, which may have fostered the emergence of a "non-hierarchical collaborative arrangement" that transformed individual desires into a collective force, including with the two brothers, the main characters in the film, one of whom wanted to show what life was like for migrants in London.

But given the material collected in several places with a multiplicity of points of view, the film could take several directions: it is here that the non-hierarchical nature of the team and the decision to take the necessary time to analyse the rushes and edit the film were the team's two assets. For, contrary to what researchers who have never worked with video think, making a film is a very time-consuming undertaking (much more than a collective work in which each person proposes a chapter) because it cannot be carried out other than *collectively*, in an unfailing temporal commitment. The interest of the chapter also lies in this: the presentation of a collective methodology that is invented as the film is being constructed, not only in the editing, but also in the organisation of the shooting by deciding from meeting to meeting what was to be filmed in the following weeks. We recognize here the

importance of the discourse on the inductive approach. This is what remains astonishing and goes somewhat against the commitments one makes when starting to make a film: even if the final script is not the one that was originally decided upon because of the variations in the material collected compared to what was expected, a common thread runs through all the stages of the making of the film and in particular the shooting.

The same pragmatism accompanied the editing, which is more common if we look at the concrete practice in social science filmmaking. An example is the fact that one of the characters, Sohang, fully inhabits the film, for example by emptying his suitcases the day before his return to India to display all the durable goods brought back to his relatives, proof of his upward mobility. Here the narration is based on the long time in which Sohang comments on each object in his suitcase, sometimes indicating the recipient. The editors achieve their goal because it gives the viewer time by making this scene lasts: this allows them to transmit to the viewer the emotional charge of the return to Gujarat, which is perhaps a second exile.

The montage took place in two places, Brussels and Amsterdam, which made things even more complicated, but which, it seems, led the actors of this venture to (re)invent the term translocal to illustrate the film's triple movement. The film deals with two countries of emigration/immigration, with authors of different nationalities, who filmed and then edited in several cities. It is difficult to predict the future or the trajectory of such a concept, but it does characterize the complexity of migratory movements and the work done to the body and mind of migrants through their nomadisation throughout a world that is certainly increasingly disorienting.

9.4   From Photo-Voice to Cine-Voice?

The three articles, in one way or another, involve migrants as participants in their representation through images, in ethnographic approaches with an anthropological or sociological background. But it is certainly Klára Trencsényi and Vlad Naumescu who go the furthest in transforming migrants, the objects of their work, into *subjects* in their films. First of all, their chapter clearly shows the diversity of representations of migrants in Hungarian and European media and films according to historical contexts, social movements (of rejection or defence of migrants), institutional determinants (role of the state and associations) and above all according to the modes of financing of films on migrants.

If at the beginning of the 2000s it was a "niche subject" in Hungary, borrowed from the representations of other minorities (Roma, precarious, homeless, people with disabilities…), it is no longer the same since the turn of 2014, when Prime Minister Viktor Orban raised the intolerance and concern of Hungarians about the "external enemy" that migrants have become, alongside the support of the public media. In response, and since 2015, filmmakers have been showing a different face of migrants through intimate portraits that, according to the authors of the chapter, contribute to the depoliticization of migrant subjectivities. But it is only through an

initiative hosted by the Central European University – the *Open Learning Initiative* (OLIVE) programme – that a reversal is taking place, based on the participation of migrants in their own representation in photographs or documentary films. In addition to training in English, theatre and film practices, the aim is to place migrants in the position of authors of their own productions.

After *photo-voice*, the OLIVE program engages migrants (and their supervisors) in a *cine-voice* in which they become the author-subjects of their films since they have the equipment to make their films themselves. Here there is no theory or *a priori* lectures that could bias the self-representation of the migrants-authors, but only an accompaniment that could be described as technical (from the narrative to the use of the camcorder and editing software). Hence, according to the authors of the article, a return to Dziga Vertov's *cinéma-vérité*. This recourse to *the man with the camera* is very tempting, but is it really justified? Certainly, the migrants crisscrossing the city with their cameras let us discover, in the manner of Vertov, what holds their gaze, a world of apparent ease, quietness and the misery of the homeless. But Vertov himself was filming with his team: this allowed him to multiply the points of view and to try to explain politically the causes and reasons of the difficulties of his fellow citizens to live in the USSR in the 1920s. Can we explain the causes and sources of international migration from the expression of the migrants' subjectivity? How can we speak here of the original causes of migration from sub-Saharan Africa or the fundamental reasons for the wars in the Middle East, the vain attraction of the "lights" or European comfort, etc. that lead millions of people to Europe (or North America in other circumstances)?

The film directed by Klára Trencsényi is in this vein of questioning about migration today by giving migrants a voice and a camera.[3] In the film shot by the young migrants at CEU university, we witness the presentation of the theatre workshop where the dramatic nature of emigration and the dynamism of young people, which rarely appears in this type of document, are mixed together. There is a cheerfulness in the discovery of a city – here we are closer to Dziga Vertov showing the city – in particular in the choice of the filmed subjects: through their shootings, the migrants question and discover themselves through their visit of the city. They are out of the normal spaces that constrained them and they acquire a great freedom of expression.

At other times, they share their painful experiences. This is expressed theatrically through words and emotionally through the tears of women who identify with the experience of the Other. European aid is highlighted: either through the containers which serve as their accommodation and in which they seem to have found some comfort; or through the internationalisation of their care with the Helsinki lawyers who have come to meet one of them to integrate him into Finnish society. The mobility that continues in their new situation is welcomed with a certain serenity because the openness towards their future host countries is perceived positively compared to what they experienced in their countries of origin or during their

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[3] Unfortunately this film is not yet broadcast because it was made by migrants about migrants in an environment that is "hostile" to them, thus presenting risks of repression and sanctions.

dangerous journeys. Their desire to integrate and to succeed socially is on everyone's lips; the film does not deal with the other negative aspects of the reception conditions of other migrants – let's not forget that we are here in a university, with skilled people – but it is this impetus and optimism in the start of another life that animates most of the characters that we retain. In this film based on the cine-voice, the diversity of the devices invented by the director and used by the migrants give it a dimension of sensitive "truth" that makes the spectators share the intimacy of the migrants.

Thus, this film once again questions the possibilities allowed by the new video equipment. Filming equipment is lighter (in weight as well as in cost) thus it radically transforms the making of films and documentaries in particular. This strong trend had already led Alexandre Astruc, as early as 1948, to speak of the *camera pen*: beyond the misinterpretations to which this formulation gave rise during the era of direct cinema and the Nouvelle Vague, what Astruc meant was "the quality of the transmission of thought through images" (Astruc, 1948). This text is not an ovation to the "immediate camera" but rather a call to abstraction to think through the image and a call to reflect on what it means to replace the text (the pen) by the image (the camera).

The question then becomes: what to do with the *cine-voice*? For what is indispensable to documentary film in the social sciences lies in the presentation of the diversity of points of view – not only subjective points of view by the subjects themselves – to hold both the subjectivity and emotion of the lived experience AND its relationship to the world in order to show the causes of social distress (or happiness). There is a function of revelation of the masked and the hidden by the cinema that it must assume, certainly by other means than the written word. In other words, the "social scientists-filmmakers" have to invent the integration or osmosis of cinéma-voice in productions that rise to the heights to situate the social facts that they analyse. Hence it offers the necessary diversity of points of view, which include making the spectator think through the image.

For example, at the heart of the migration issue (excluding war emergencies), we cannot escape the following question, which cannot be satisfied with the agreed discourses (of migrants or politics), but must seek to reach the deep-rooted causalities: how can we express through image and sound that the decision to leave (to emigrate) is not immediately economic? It is not always the poorest and most destitute who leave, for example, sub-Saharan Africa or North Africa, but often those who have sufficient intellectual and social resources to cope with the unknown and new and dangerous situations. These decisions to go into exile are largely based on the imaginary: elsewhere is presented as opening up a far superior material life; this may result, after the betrayal of reality, in a new discourse on social success in Europe and in the distribution of gifts on return, such as those contained in Sohang's suitcases in Sanderien Verstappen's article. The question of departure never includes the question of the emotional deficit in the host country with the difficulties to live them or the troubles that follow. In other words, how, in films and documentaries on migration, can we show through images these imaginary processes that work on the subjects at the *departure point*, i.e. without being satisfied with the compassion

imaged by frustration or physical and moral discomfort, but by demonstrating the political responsibilities of the political and economic leaders of the countries of the South and those of the North?

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