Narrating Alternative Voices
Translating Experiences and Social Complexities of Migration and Everyday Racism

Ulrike M. Vieten, Cigdem Esin

Introduction

Racism in the context of migration and citizenship was not much spoken about in the West Germany of the 1970s/80s, where one of the authors grew up. Ethnicity carried numerous scales of legal and symbolic meaning with respect to German citizenship and the German constitution, Art. 116 I (GG)[1]. Art. 116 I GG details the German nation's ethnic (*völkisch*) criteria for belonging and citizenship. Ethnicity is identified through the hegemonic "German ethnic collective" and frames the perception of who belongs to the nation as a German citizen, and who does not. Until recently, Turkish immigrants were labelled primarily as "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*) and regarded as ethnic minorities (*ethnische Minderheiten*). This changed only in 2000: the government coalition of the Social Democrats and Green party passed legislation granting children born to Turkish immigrants in Germany the right of automatic German citizenship by birth (Vieten 2016).

Writing in 2021, another racist mass murder took place in Germany over a year ago in Hanau. Tobias Rathjen, a man politically affiliated with the German far-right, killed *Gökhan Gűltekin, Ferhat Ünvar, Hamza Kurtović, Mercedes Kierpacz, Sedat Gűrbűz, Kalojan Velkov, Vili Viorel Păun, Said Nessar El Hashemi* and *Fatíh Saraçoğlu* before shooting his mother and himself. Spelling out the name of each victim means remembering each individual as a person that is lost.

This hate crime is another traumatising, saddening, and horrific attack on minority ethnic Germans, raising anger about legally and rhetorically an-

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1   URL: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/art_116.html

chored majority ethnic perceptions and the everyday underlying exclusions of minority ethnic Germans, which has been termed "institutional racism" (Vieten 2014a). This racist murder should cause outrage and deep grief: we should engage with the majority's responsibility and consider how a hegemonic ethno-nationalistic discourse constructs a symbolic boundary between space that belongs to (ethnic) 'natives' and rights against Others. Even in the aftermath of the Hanau mass killing, in February 2020, it was reported that "the attacker in Hanau shot 9 people with foreign roots" ("Der Attentäter von Hanau hat neun Menschen mit ausländischen Wurzeln erschossen"[2]).

Our choice of language matters, in that it frames ideologically public and private narratives. Problematically, the hegemonic narrative defines who counts as German and who does not; it is a narrative that keeps the boundary against the migrant, in order to avoid the painful truth that it was a German racist from the far-right party, born and bred in Hanau, who killed innocent people, irrespective of whether they were German citizens or immigrants with different passports. The far-right ideology and language of nativism (Wodak 2019) claims to inherit places, such as Hanau. The rise of the far right in different countries and the normalisation of its racist discourse (Vieten/Poynting 2022, forthcoming) is an expression of what Essed (2018) calls "entitlement racism", which reflects on the more recent normalisation of racist discourses: "people feel they are allowed to say whatever they want, whenever they want, about whomever they want, in the name of freedom of expression." (Essed/Muhr 2018: 188) In order to challenge hegemonic language and racist discourses encompassing the everyday racism[3] of the German far-right and of those parties in other countries, we need to examine counter narratives that reiterate or challenge the hegemonic ones. In other words, we have to understand what makes discourses or narratives hegemonic. We need alternative or counter narratives in order to transgress the perception of 'us' and 'we'. Who is the self, and who is the Other? What does

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2   https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/hanau-morde-zusammenfassung-101.html (09.07.2021), or for example: 'Eine Reihe überwiegend aus dem Ausland stammender Menschen erschossen", sagte der CSU-Politiker.', https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/morde-von-hanau-schlimmster-rechter-anschlag-seit-wiedervereinigung/25565660.html (09.07.2021)

3   This concept has been coined by critical race scholar Philomena Essed (1991). It pinpoints the way everyday racism is normalised in institutions and constructed and repeated in micro-level interactions.

narrative mean in the context of social science inquiry, and in the context of migration and everyday racism?

Among other modes of inquiry, narrative is often a method to explore human practice (Freeman 2015) and it opens up a window to interaction (Riessman 2008) and meaning-making processes. Especially in the social sciences and humanities, narratives are tools to examine the everyday of the individual, the interaction between personal and grand political narratives, the contextual and historical meanings that emerge in the act of storytelling (Andrews/Squire/Tamboukou 2013), and the political function of stories in one's life and interactions (Andrews 2014). As we will show in our case studies, judgements and values are crucial in the way we respond to individual narratives in interviews: they frame our level of understanding difference.

Narrative research practise pays particular attention to the political and cultural complexities involved in storytelling. Its function becomes more important when research is done across different languages and cultures. Within that context, a component of narrative research is the examination of multiple layers in which narrative performance and meaning have been constituted in a dialogue between researcher/reader and storyteller (Riessman 2008; 2015). The constitution of narratives, including personal-political meanings co-created in storytelling, is examined as a component of narrative inquiry. In this sense, narratives are imbued with negotiated meanings. Negotiated meanings within particular historical contexts are relations in which narratives make sense for both storytellers and audiences (Bakhtin 1981 cited in Riessman 2015). Our understanding of relations is not based on an interaction between equals when narrative dialogue is considered, nor are the narratives finished products of these relational circumstances. We consider the network of relations as ongoing negotiations which should be looked into from various angles. In cross-lingual research, translation needs to be identified as part of the power relations that construct the research field. Translated narrative exchanges involve power relations shaped by the positionings of the researcher and participants. As we show, the biographies and positionings of the members of the projects are rarely included in the analysis. Exploring positioning is one of the ways through which the complexity of meaning-making processes can be examined.

This examination can be useful in analysing how and why storytellers draw upon cultural resources (Davies/Harré 2001). The personal, social and cultural worlds of both storytellers and listeners come together in the interaction of telling stories. That interaction should be scrutinized to decide whether the

stories are personal-political and/or broader, as in migrants' narratives. As Davies/Harré (2001) remind us, storytellers' positions continue to change in response to grand narratives and others' stories; storytellers make choices in their own narratives for that purpose. According to Temple (2008), how researchers discuss the effects of power and difference in their work necessitates a critical approach. Among other methods, a systematic approach to translation helps reveal the complex interplay between personal and political resources and the position of the interviewer or translator on the shaping of the narrative, as we will discuss below.

We aim to contribute to the studies that include the analysis of translation as a part of narrative methods. We aim to understand the meanings co-produced in the study on "new" citizens in Europe, for example, or in the work with refugee participants, who ran creative workshops with colleagues at the Calais refugee camp in France. We offer possible ways of analysing Amal's narrative and the narrative of a resident of a refugee camp, in order to make sense of the function of telling their story. How do we bring together the fragments of different layers of narratives? To what extent does the interaction with the interviewer/audience co-construct the narratives told?

In what follows, we first discuss the ways in which language and social complexity intersect, and how this intersection—including the positionalities of researchers and interview partners—frames the communication about and of a narrative. Secondly, we illustrate the difficulty of research across different languages while introducing material from two different studies. We argue here for an openness and fresh spirit to negotiate and agree upon ways of communicating with different levels of language knowledge, and a flexibility on both sides of the interview table to explore the individual narratives in terms of silence and 'gaps' on migration, race, ethnicity and the definition of culture. Translating social complexity and differing epistemic knowledge laden with distinctive hermeneutics is not only about the feeling of "lost in translation", but also about the acceptance of a "loss in translation;" it is loss that allows the space to negotiate alternative meanings.

Intersectional considerations: approaching narrative and translation as "space in-between"

There is a growing interest in and urgency about understanding diversity and cultural differences in and across societies. As perceptions of difference and meaning of concepts and terms are constructed, language matters crucially: it is situated in particular cultural and temporal contexts and depends on the individual positionality of speakers and listeners. English has turned into the *lingua franca* of the contemporary international Western world, widely used by immigrants as vernacular and professional second or even third languages, and even more so in an international academic context. The British cultural theorist Homi K. Bhaba (1994) writes about the meaning of translation and the creation of "in-between" spaces. Migrants and ethnic minorities are regarded as the agents of hybridisation and cultural translation processes, especially with respect the formation of nations, feelings of belonging, and normative and ideological *Weltbilder*. According to Arif Dirlik (1994: 333) Bhabha is "responsible for the prominence in discussions of postcoloniality of the vocabulary of hybridity." The prominence of his concept of hybridity has to be related to other central terms Bhabha uses, such as "cultural difference", "third-space", "in between" and "translation".

The question arises in what ways 21st century (im)migrants in Europe and beyond contribute to a transnational cultural "third-space." Their role as multilingual subjects, who speak non-Western languages, adds a more nuanced layer to the communication of cultural differences and to our understanding of what narrative means and who is able to narrate their stories. We argue here that their cross-lingual narratives mirror the social complexity of transnational life and local situated embeddedness, speaking from the margin, but encapsulating an original "space in-between". There is no single definition of cross-linguistic or cross-cultural research (e.g. Skelton 2009; Smith 1996). We speak of cross-linguistic research when a project involves the use of one or more languages, different from the one in which the research is being conducted. That said, it is not clear how many spatial, linguistic or cultural "boundaries" we need to cross to be defined as cross-linguistic or cross-cultural (e.g. Skelton 2009; Müller 2007; Smith 1996). Some might even think that the use of the terms *trans-cultural* and *trans-national* might be more appropriate here.

It is useful to go back to Bhabha as a postcolonial theorist and his definition of "cultural difference," which he distinguishes from the notion of "cul-

tural diversity." As Bhabha (1994: 134) puts it, "[c]ultural diversity is an episte-mological object—culture is an object of empirical knowledge—whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as 'knowledge-able'." The term enunciation refers to a split between the *performing* side of culture as both an emanation and as a place of negotiation. The notion of cultural difference thus contains a subversive moment that holds the potential of going beyond "translation", beyond the comprehensive way of seeing the Other. (Vieten 2007; 2012) The space "In-between" and the obstacles created in the act of translation can create an uncanny quality in a process where certainty in cultural codes is lost (Bhabha 1994). This uncanniness is an epistemic challenge and as Fathi (2013: 56) argues, "dialogical translation is part of a mutual interpretative understanding which leads to the co-construction of meanings across lingual and cultural boundaries." Whereas Fathi (see also Riessman 2008) refers to a situation of bilingual interviews and the way a bilingual researcher deals with the challenge of presenting findings (e.g., in Farsi and English) we can also think of research that involves more than two languages: interview partners might speak another 'mother' tongue, a different European or international language, or a dialect of the main language, for example Catalan as opposed to Castilian Spanish. While referring to Smith, (1996; 2009) as well as to Temple and Young (2004), Mas Giralt (2016: 186 pp.) argues that various scholars highlight the fact that interpretation and translation are often not addressed in methodological discussions of social research which has been conducted in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic settings. According to Temple and Young (2004) translation means more than finding equivalent terms, and includes grappling with the complex notions of telling a story. Translators act as "cultural brokers" as they make decisions about meaning and cultural equivalences, which are not neutral. (Mas Giralt 2016) The German word *Heimat* is an example of this difficulty in finding a meaningful equivalence. *Heimat* does not match the meaning of "home" and is closer to "belonging," loaded with emotionally coded spatial-geographical meaning. Furthermore, using, repeating, and translating a narrative told in a different language is not a neutral process; the role of the researcher as interpreter might increase their power. The positionality of the researcher and an imbalance of power can impact the narrative. There is a choice about how a text is presented and as Müller (2007: 209) suggests, one may "destabilize and denaturalize the hegemony of the translated text", while adopting the "holus-bolus" technique, which consists of keeping terms and expressions in the source language in the translated text. Clearly, this presentation style addresses that the

interview was initially conducted in a different language. In cases in which the researcher and the interpreter are the same person—which we will present later in the paper—the intersecting social divisions are important for reflecting on the way a narrative is constructed and presented. In order to grasp this social complexity, intersectionality as a feminist concept and methodological understanding is extremely important.

In contrast to a rather late adaptation of ideological contestations about *difference* among feminists in German speaking countries (Axeli-Knapp 2005; Winker/Degele 2010), British feminists from ethnic minority backgrounds challenged mainstream academia in the 1980s. Prominently, Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis analysed intersecting complexity (Anthias/Yuval-Davis 1983; also Brah 1996) and in the 1990s, the argument of translocational (Anthias 1998; 2001; 2006; 2013) positionality, looking at the distinctive social positioning of women along the lines of class, ethnicity and race, added further depth to this inquiry. The wider European adaptation of intersectionality as a methodological and conceptual approach can be traced back to the years following the 2000s (Buitelaar 2006; Davis 2008; Vieten 2009; Schiek 2011; Degnen/Tyler 2017). The success of the concept acknowledges the groundbreaking research done by US black feminists, most prominently Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1991). In the US, Black feminist scholars had challenged white middle-class feminism and male-centered anti-racism for ignoring the specific and different situation of black women. Crenshaw introduced the term "intersectionality," stressing that single-axis discrimination (i.e. *gender*) left black women outside the group "woman." The lack of responsibility in concrete situations of litigation and legal claims made it necessary to think about the combination of discriminatory grounds with respect to racism, classism and sexism, potentially overlapping in concrete situations. According to Naomi Zack, intersectionality means that we cannot impose "[l]imits on the numbers or kinds of possible intersected identities … there is no reason to stop at one dimension of oppression. To race can be added class, age, physical ability, sexual preference, for starters. The only way to limit possible intersected identities is by counting only those whose proponents have managed to give recognized voice to what they are." (2007: 199)

Zack's last remark about the "recognized voice" brings in the explicit political dimension of public dispute and collective struggle, mentioned above. It stresses that legal, social and cultural spaces in which group representations can be articulated are contingent upon and open to further contestation. The focus on intersecting categories has to be situated and connected to the

historical embedding of group struggles (e.g. Rooney 2006; Vieten 2009). In the context of narratives, questions about the following dimensions of social categories arise with respect to ourselves and our interview partners: *gender* (female/male/transgender), sexuality (heterosexual, gay or lesbian, bisexual), class (working/middle-class), nationality, age, dis/ability, and so forth. The relevant intersecting positionality should be tracked in a concrete method and scrutinized for a more dynamic understanding of what was said. As Buitelaar (2006) argues, it might even be possible to apply intersectionality to understand the different selves in one's life story, while also referring to the concept of the dialogical self to understand different identity layers. Applying this to an interview sequence analysis also means understanding how the narrative is constructed (Esin et al. 2013). As Esin et al. argue "at one level, such constructionism takes in the interactional co-constructions that operate between stories within any one text" (2013: 5).

While scholars have highlighted the relevance of the agency of translators and researchers in processes of translation and interpretation (e.g. Müller 2007; Smith 1996; Temple and Young 2004), less attention has been paid to the agency of participants as co-communicators and co-producers of texts and narrative in research.

In the remaining part of the paper, we present and discuss an interview sequence from a complex comparative study, which was conducted about ten years ago across different languages and three countries. In the second case study, we discuss field notes and the reflective analysis of a sequence of a narrative by a refugee in the Calais camp in France. First, we start with the comparative study on "new" European citizens.

Case Study 1:
"New" European Citizens' Counter Narratives

The material introduced here was part of a larger research project looking at intersecting complexity and nodes of inclusion with respect to "new" citizens in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands (Ghorashi/Vieten 2013; Vieten 2014a; 2014b; 2016; 2018). The research was done in three national languages (English, German and Dutch) and involved further language complexities since interview partners spoke Punjabi, Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Berber, and French as first languages. In this original study, 45 political key minority activists were interviewed in England (London and North England), Germany (Berlin, major

West German cities, such as Hamburg, Bremen and Frankfurt a. M., and one in Erfurt) and the Netherlands (Den Haag, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Maastricht). All semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim; they lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. Most of these interviews were conducted in English, however, in Germany, 12 out of 14 conversations were held in German. In the Netherlands, three interview partners preferred to answer the questions posed in English in Dutch. The main purpose of this bilingual interview setting was to make people comfortable; part of it was to let them use the language of their choice when talking about the issues of integration, inclusion, national and EU citizenship, their individual biography and experiences with racism.

Unlike other empirical studies which focus on guaranteeing that interview partners feel safe, and for that reason do not disclose their names, in this study the majority of interview partners were asked whether they agreed to be named in publications. The idea was to allow outspoken and prominent interview partners to be named if they wished, connecting the individual narrative to the actual person, thereby giving the interview partners ownership of their narratives. Many were well-known in their country of residence and citizenship, and some could be even considered VIPs, so they were used to being visible and speaking out in public. Naming the participants also meant giving credit to their individual success and increasing the visibility of minority citizens as role models. Later, Vieten shifted her stance on naming. In later publications (2016; 2018) with a focus on racism, after becoming aware of the rise of xenophobic/racist far-right populism, she decided to give all participants anonymous names as she felt she could not guarantee that the individuals would not be harmed by being named in publications.

Vieten acted as both researcher and as translator, though the oral and audio-recorded interviews were professionally transcribed verbatim. This added another layer of complexity as non-academic professionals transcribed the tapes in the three countries according to the dominant language (Berlin, Amsterdam and London). Occasionally the transcribers could not make sense of what was said, sometimes projecting a word they understood, which was not adequate and had to be "translated" back by the researcher. This is relevant because interview partners were academics or professionals, talking about topics like racism and discrimination, which might have made some of the transcribers uncomfortable - one of the German transcribers did in fact share this point of view with Vieten.

When reading the transcriptions and listening to the interviews, Vieten wondered what the cause of miscomprehension was, for example not understanding a Yorkshire accent, or German that was coloured by a local Hesse accent and spoken by a Turkish-German, or perhaps an uneasiness about the topic. In the process of understanding the interview material, the transcripts had to be read and compared with the original oral interviews again and again. This process of working back and forth led to a more thorough process of interpreting what was said, how it was said, and why it was said.

We reflect here on the actual research process and intend to share experiences, choices and complexities about the individual use of English and Dutch (passive) in the field, and of the "cultural" and "linguistic" proximities and distances between the researcher and the participants. As it will become clear later on, the multilingual setting and the different positionalities of interviewer and interviewee created specific communication situations where talking and listening are entangled with choices. During the development of this international and comparative project, the fluidity of the processes involved and the blurred boundaries between languages when using them in the field became apparent, as did the limits of this approach.

Here, we draw on the interviews conducted in the Netherlands. Interview partners were Moroccan-Dutch citizens, and the interview dialogues were held in English and Dutch. Sometimes interview partners switched back and forth to Dutch, or while predominantly speaking in English, used Dutch terms in the conversation. This bilingual interview setting added another *trans-cultural* layer to the task of interviewing minorities.

We will present what the interview partner said, what the researcher as an immediate listener understood, and what the researcher as a reader of the transcript understood later on. We consider in what ways the gap between what remained absent and beyond comprehension indicates different possible ways of listening and responding. Sharing the original Dutch interview sequence means devoting more space to the original voice, which slows down the reading process, and goes beyond the "holus-bolus" technique (Müller 2007) of keeping some original terms, by keeping a whole interview section in English and Dutch. Non-Dutch speakers or readers might feel distracted and jump to the next section. The dilemma is obvious: most authors will tend to use short translated sequences or prioritize the more convenient language. However, when considering the English language skills of non-native English speakers, we must be aware of the effect of social class and education, which can limit the opportunity for practicing second and third languages.

Before turning to the interview sequence, we are going to situate the interview's narrative into a national context by highlighting some aspects of the immigration regime in the Netherlands and the role of Geert Wilders. The immigration of Moroccans to the Netherlands is historically identified with an economically driven labour migration policy from the post-World War II period. In 1969 the Netherlands signed a bi-lateral contract (*wervingsakkord*) with Morocco in order for both states to officially organize and manage labour (im-)migration. Until recently, this was close to the West German immigration regime.

Jones (2014) argues that the PVV-Leader Geert Wilders and his followers are intent on treating Dutch citizens deemed "Moroccan" unequally with regards to the fundamental right of citizens to reside in the territory of nationality: they constantly refer to Dutch-born citizens as "Moroccans". Since 2010, Wilders has wanted to expel Moroccans from the Netherlands; back in 2010 he stood trial after having been accused of racism and anti-Muslim hate speech. Challenging Wilders' ethno-nationalism, and what Philomena Essed calls "entitlement racism"[4] (Essed/Muhr 2018), were more than 5,000 legal complaints, mostly from Dutch citizens of "Moroccan background". They urged the highest Dutch court to prosecute Wilders for inciting hatred against Moroccans, and against Muslims. The Dutch court, in the end, ruled in favour of free speech and argued that Wilders had critiqued Islam and had not discriminated against Muslims (Vieten 2016). The decision in favour of "free speech" is problematic in a climate where majorities define the terms of "free speech". (We will return to this point in the concluding section.)

We will now present a sequence of the interview with Amal, whose parents immigrated from Morocco in the 1960s.

The complex intersecting position of Amal as someone living in the Netherlands, speaking Arabic as a first language, and with little English practice English, and Vieten, a German native, fluent in English, but without advanced Dutch language skills, made it necessary to go forward with a bilingual interview setting. At the time of the interview, Amal, one of the Dutch participants, was 37. She was born in the Netherlands and lived in a small town near Amsterdam. She had studied tourism and worked since then in a travel agency. Her parents divorced in 1998, and while the father returned to Morocco, Amal lived in a neighbourhood close to her mother

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4   http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/entitlement-racism-and-its-intersectio ns-interview-philomena-essed-social-justice(09.07.2021)

and siblings. While working in Amsterdam at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam, Vieten heard about Amal on the radio and approached her for an interview, as Amal had prominently challenged the far right PVV politician, Geert Wilders, in court (Vieten 2016).

The interview started with some general questions related to her family background and social upbringing.

Vignette: Part 1:

Interviewer: And your siblings, your brothers and sisters, are they living in this area as well?

Respondent: Yes, all of them.

Interviewer: So, I guess you have a close relationship.

Respondent: Yes. Because my [-], mijn ouders zijn gescheiden uiteindelijk. Mijn vader kreeg suikerziekte, hartproblemen. En we waren eerst met drie meiden en toen heeft mijn moeder heel lang geen kinderen gekregen maar ze wilde toch nog graag een jongen omdat *haar eerste zoon, die je hier op die foto zag, is overleden.*[5]

Amal pointed to a picture in a frame. While conducting the interview, Vieten did not fully grasp the meaning of "overladen" (died). Amal continued describing the close-knit family, and the interviewer did not interfere. In hindsight, Vieten thought it was rude to not have responded adequately, like saying "I am sorry for your loss." She only understood the meaning later on, when reading the written transcript. What was Amal saying when she was talking about her family background? In this situation, Vieten was "the audience" of the narrative Amal was sharing. According to Esin et. al. (2013) "the listener is shaping the structure of the narrative" (2013: 5) which means that beyond the actual interview situation, even taking future readers (ibid) into account, Amal was aware of the relevance of her contribution to a research project and thus, potentially, of contributing to academic publications.

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5   "My parents were divorced. My father became sick with diabetes and heart problems. We were three girls, and for a long time my mother did not become pregnant with another baby. However, she was keen to have a baby boy as *her first son died. Here we have a photo of him.*"

In a further reflection of this interview sequence, Esin wondered what Amal brought to the conversation culturally when she described her family, the death of the baby boy, and her mother's wish to have another baby boy after three daughters. A different response to the mention of the brother's death might have moved the conversation to another topic: raising an additional question about the baby boy might have opened up a path to different cultural meanings. A different translation may have attributed a meaning to the loss of the boy, and the need to replace the baby. Because the interviewer was from a different culture, this point was missed and the specific detail about the death in the family was not understood. These interpretations are made in hindsight, but illustrate that the actual moment of speaking, the translation, and the different angles of situated comprehension open up new avenues for narrating individual experiences.

The overall context of the interview, back then, was Amal's public stance in court against Geert Wilders. In the following sequence, Amal details the context of her upbringing, and selectively narrates experiences that made her into a person who is able to stand out. The different episodes she relates from her upbringing were constructed as a cohesive narrative, explaining in hindsight how she developed into this active role.

Vignette: Part 2:

Interviewer: What I would also like to know with regard to the Wilders theme or to the court situation, is what made you decide to go public and to challenge Wilders.

Respondent: Zoals ik al zei, ik ben redelijk beschermd opgevoed en met discriminatie heb ik voornamelijk te maken gekregen bij het buitenspelen, met andere kinderen, dus je moet een beetje leren bekvechten. Als ik dan thuis kwam zeiden Nederlandse vriendinnen van m'n moeder, dan scheld je toch terug, dan zeg je toch gewoon kaaskop. En in de jaren negentig waren mijn broertjes nog vrij klein, een jaar of vijf, zes, de tijd van Janmaat. Mijn moeder woont hier iets verder, in een hofje met een plein en in dezelfde straat waren jongeren en die hebben hier toen met Oud en Nieuw een baksteen door het bovenraam van de kamer waar mijn broertjes lagen te slapen gegooid. En die zeiden gewoon, we hebben een hekel aan buitenlanders en de politie heeft dat uiteindelijk ook wel tegen m'n vader gezegd. En mijn moeder hoorde een knal, die ging kijken en mijn broertjes bed stond onder het raam, dus dat zat

helemaal onder het glas. Gelukkig sliep hij door, en mijn moeder heeft dat glas er toen allemaal af zitten halen. En dat was de *eerste racistische [-], het was ook echt een racistisch motief*, het was niet even lol trappen of gewoon vandalisme. En dat had de politie ook wel door. En de reden dat ik me heb aangesloten bij het Wilders proces, wat voor mij de druppel was, is dat iets voor de verkiezingen, ik kwam bij mijn moeder vandaan en liep naar de bushalte toe, er een jongen op z'n fiets met z'n vriendinnetje achterop schreeuwde van, *Wilders heeft gelijk, jullie moeten allemaal oprotten van hier*. En die fietste zo op mij in. Ik stond gewoon perplex. Ik heb niks teruggezegd. Dat was me nog nooit eerder overkomen. Wel toen ik klein was van, rot op, en dat soort dingetjes, maar heel vaak zien mensen niet eens dat je Marokkaans bent, dan denken ze dat je Spaans bent of zo en dan hebben ze minder problemen met je. En ik draag ook geen hoofddoek. Maar ik dacht, wat is dit, dit kan gewoon niet waar zijn.[6]

Amal describes her feelings while referring to three central experiences of everyday racism in her life. In this sequence, she narrates several stages and incidents as part of her biographical narrative that made her conscious

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6   "Well, what should I say. I lived in a very secure and safe neighbourhood as far as my home is concerned. I only encountered discrimination when I was playing outside, with children. And I had to learn how to fight back. When I came home—complaining to my mum—once, Dutch friends of my mum said 'then call them names, call them cheese head (kaaskop).' In the 90s my brother was a little child, probably five or six. My mother lived close by in the neighbourhood, with a backyard, and there were boys living there, too, who threw stones at the window to the room where my little brother was sleeping. They were saying that they did it because they are against foreigners; that's what the police told my father, later. And my mum heard the noise and went to my brother's bedroom. There was glass all around his bed. Luckily, he kept sleeping and my mum picked up the glass. This was *the first racist... yes, there was a racist motive behind it*. This was not an act of simple vandalism. The police also backed this view. And well, the reason why I joined the group challenging Wilders in Court was triggered by this experience: one day, after I visited my mum, I was on my way to the bus stop. And there was a boy on a bicycle (with his girlfriend on the bike behind him) and he shouted at me '*Wilders is right; you all should get out of the country.*' Then he cycled past me. I was in shock; I didn't say anything back. I hadn't experienced this before! Well, when I was a little girl, I heard 'clear off' and things like that, but often people did not recognize that you are a Moroccan. Instead, they regarded you as Spanish, and seemed to have no problems with that. Besides, I don't wear a headscarf. Well, when I heard this boy shouting, I thought 'what is this? This cannot be happening!'"

of Dutch racism and encouraged her to and come forward against Wilders' hate speech. Her first encounter was that of a child harassed by other children ("boys"), in the second encounter her family home is targeted, and in the third episode, she is explicitly harassed on the streets as a Moroccan migrant, again by a boy (witnessed by his silent girlfriend). According to Amal, it is the semi-public sphere of the neighbourhood where she was confronted by everyday racism. Amal shares these three stages as a narrative that shaped her future self as a confident and brave young Dutch citizen challenging one of the most notorious Dutch politicians, renowned for his xenophobic views. Amal presents the second and third experiences as crucial in triggering her consciousness of racism. However, her childhood encounter sets the tone: Amal narrates her story, conveying the experience of loss, vulnerability and strength. Because Vieten did not grasp the death of the first brother, she was not able to relate the death of this first son, Amal's brother, to the even more devastating meaning of the attack on the family home, with her five-year-old brother nearly escaping physical harm. Nor were aspects of this discussed with respect to the further development of the family, for example the parents' subsequent divorce. Due to this, Vieten did not fully understand the more complex emotional nuances of Amal's narrative.

While referring to Josselson (1995), Buitelaar (2006: 262) argues that "[N]arratives about key events such as high, low and turning points in particular are pre-eminent dialogical moments in the construction of identity." The reconstruction of central biographical experiences of everyday racism in Amal's life helped her (and the audience) to answer the question "Who am I?" (ibid). From the different anecdotes we get a sense of what the experience of everyday racism looked like for visible ethnic minorities, for example Moroccan-Dutch migrant families, in the past. Although the emotional baggage conveyed in the narrative wasn't understood during the interview, these three linked episodes still clearly come through in the narrative. As argued elsewhere (Vieten 2016), racism is embedded in societal structures and cannot be seen as a recent phenomenon. We might note that Amal slightly struggles to use the word "racist"; her hesitation might come from a national Dutch culture where people think of themselves as tolerant and multi-cultural and have historically rejected debates on racism. (Essed/Hoving 2014) Unlike Buitelaar (2006), who felt that her interview partner had prepared the interview speech almost like a "press release" (2006: 263), Vieten understood that Amal's narrative was co-constructed, but not defined as a

"public" speech. The social positioning of the interviewer and the interviewee is particularly relevant in forming this impression.

Lounasmaa illustrates in her "monologue" that power relations ("post-colonial"; Eurocentric) influence the interview setting with Moroccan female activists. She reflects on her use of different languages and when and how she positions herself as a non-native English speaker for the purpose of bonding. Our own experience as researcher and interviewer matches this view: hierarchies and power structures became opaque and complex in interview settings where we similarly "performed" for interview partners, aware of also being migrants, and belonging to a minority. For example, when conducting her interviews in Germany and in the Netherlands, Vieten lived primarily in Leeds, and temporarily in Amsterdam, and Berlin. With her interview partners, she positioned herself as a migrant, showing familiarity not only with the experience of migration as such but with the struggle to adapt to a new environment and language. Although an EU citizen, and relatively privileged with respect to legal status in Britain, she also experienced discrimination as a foreigner at that time (pre-Brexit 2020). She noticed "loss" of language and weakness in grammar, due to a rupture of her own native language German because of speaking and writing in English with respect to the Dutch interview setting, she accepted that her active Dutch was not good enough to have the whole interview conversation in Dutch.

We will continue with an example from a different context to discuss the multiple meanings that a biographical narrative may convey.

Case Study 2:
Exploring Meaning in Narratives – "Jungle" Stories

This second example was co-constructed as part of overlapping projects that Esin facilitated in the Calais "Jungle" camp together with Aura Lounasmaa, Corinne Squire and a group of colleagues who volunteered from September 2015 to October 2016. The projects were run with the participation of camp residents and included an accredited Life Histories course, interactive photography workshops, visual storytelling, and film-making workshops. The projects were not framed as research, but as public engagement that aimed to go beyond one-off support in solidarity with the residents of the camp. The facilitators worked with a constructionist approach (Riessman 2008) to biographical narratives, and encouraged participant-storytellers to tell about any

part of their lives across all languages and narrative modes (written, visual, relational). O'Neill and Harindranath (2006) argue that biographical methods can provide a safe space for displaced populations to tell their stories; these methods are also useful in understanding the experiences of belonging beyond legal frameworks. As Berg and Milibank (2009) argue, when personal narratives are linked to legal claims for asylum, the structure and contents of those narratives are subjected to scrutiny. They have to show consistency and include established facts. Participants in "Jungle" projects were encouraged to tell stories differently from legally framed stories, stories about experiences of refugees/forced migrants, which may challenge the narratives that often marginalize or problematize migrant communities. As discussed elsewhere (Esin/Lounasmaa 2020), the decisions within the space of the projects raised ethical questions.

One of the questions was what could and could not be translated in narratives where multiple languages were spoken and used. Esin reads the process as constructive; the dominance of the English language as the medium of communication was challenged in these interactions. There was wider space to explore multiple meanings in narratives. Mani's story below was one of the narratives (a combination of visual and spoken communication) which made her consider not only the function of language in interaction but also the meaning of sitting around the fire.

> "This is an alley in the Jungle. I saw some Afghans around the fire. One of them is my neighbour. The Sudanian man, I forget his name. He is my neighbour, with the phone. I just asked if I could take a picture. He is maybe watching television. It is very cold. And at this time, we haven't got anything to do. A lot of people in the Jungle make a fire; sitting around the fire, it is great to tell something together. We all speak different languages. It is amazing how people make connections together, with English." (Mani, from Iran)

Mani's narrative was co-constituted during his participation in the "Displaces" photography workshops which were tutored by photographers Gideon Mendel and Crispin Hughes. Both photographers had worked with communities on similar projects. In the camp, participants were asked to use digital cameras to tell visual stories about their lives in the camp, with a follow-up session to edit their images, working with the photographers. The participants were then encouraged to tell or write their narrative of the image if they wished to do so. Mani participated in many art-related workshops

Abbildung 1

in the camp. For the Life Histories projects, he communicated with the facilitators, encouraging them to explore various meanings embedded in life in an unrecognized refugee camp. The image together with the written narrative delivers a story about what it meant to connect around a fire in the camp at nighttime. He refers to the various languages, which might have made the communication complex at the time. The fire was a connecting point for those who sat there (if they had not gone to try and reach the British border). Esin did not think about the link between the fire and connection across languages before Mani wrote about it. The field was shaped by power differences including the class-based and cultural differences in the projects. Esin's sensitivity to the conditions of the camp was formed by her own middle-class, non-European background, even before she interacted more with the residents. The material conditions of the camp (including the projects at the time) were based upon *gender* and ethnic hierarchies. These hierarchies shaped the everyday life in the camp. The *gender* of individuals or groups who could use the public spaces freely, which ethnic groups played a leading role in community-related decisions: these hierarchies were regulated by the camp

population. The facilitators of the projects used hesitancy (Kofoed/Staunæs 2015) as an ethical position while working in the camp. They avoided one-off intervention, encouraging dialogue as much as possible. Hesitancy and their position in an institution enabled Esin and other facilitators to work with camp residents despite their differences. Yet the power imbalances made them raise questions across differences. When Esin saw and heard narratives about fire, she first considered the material needs of residents to warm up, to cook or to clean up. After re-reading Mani's narrative, she connected the fire with linguistic or cultural differences in the camp. The story about the fire made her rethink the scope of residents' claim to citizenship. Previously, for her, the claims were limited to legal frameworks, in connection with the discourses about displaced populations. Mani's narrative about the fire reminded Esin to include claims such as the right to emotions and the right to respond to power relations, despite linguistic differences.

Conclusion

We have illustrated how our own intersectional positionality as non-native English speakers and our views on narratives shaped our understanding of migration and everyday racism. We problematised the notion of translation in conveying narratives of visible minorities as "new" European citizens and those of refugees, discussing how the insistence to give voice to other narratives and experiences might be an informed choice, but still with limits in what we can grasp as/in narrative. Considering the intersectional positioning of researchers and interview partners allows us to reflect further on location, language and the loss involved in bringing alternative voices to the metaphoric "table" of the majority and on the hegemonic truth of belonging, citizenship and social status. Lost in translation here means to reflect on loss in immediate communication, which, however, does not jeopardize fundamentally multilingual research. It is a challenge to manoeuvre different spoken languages in an interview, but the practice of transcribing and reworking a text again and again leaves space to deal with initial limitation. Foremost, it is about stepping back and giving space to others (Ghorashi 2014). The two case studies, though drawn from very distinctive empirical studies, illustrate how spoken, and subsequently written, texts can create a space to reflect on the positionality and intersecting positions of those involved with research, and how selective interpretation impacts the narratives presented to us. One

way of examining the personal narratives is to inspect the interconnection between personal and grand socio-political narratives to understand how these narratives are constituted and shared within contexts. Understanding the relation between dominant narratives and counter narratives as the relation between the majority and minorities is helpful in placing personal narratives in context. Counter narratives are produced in relation to dominant ones, but they are not necessarily oppositional (Andrews 2004). Some broad narratives, such as the ones about everyday racism, the ethnicity of migrants and their identity, attain a normative status as they are cited in a 'natural' way. That does not mean that they are to remain 'unchallenged', not only in personal narratives but also in public ones. This 'normative' status does not mean that the interconnection between individual and public narratives are straightforward: storytellers usually make connections between counter and dominant narratives while strategically positioning themselves. The dominant or counter narratives may be reworked or resisted in personal narratives. In Amal's narratives, her aim was to reveal multiple layers of everyday racism by developing a form of counter narrative. Yet, she builds up her stories with reference to dominant ways of migrants' portrayals. In this way, she reveals her challenges as an insider in respect to community relations.

We have argued that cross-lingual narratives mirror the social complexity of transnational life and local situated embeddedness, speaking from the margin, but encapsulating an original "space in-between". The biographical narrative functions as a device to create a hybrid space for storytellers in both cases. They even work as individual political project through which Amal and Majid, for example, share meanings in relation to dominant narratives, about citizenship, about the right to challenge, about communication in a marginalized community, and about tough living conditions. In both instances, listening to the narratives attentively necessitates examining what could (not) be translated during the actual interaction. The storytellers convey the meanings that are formed in response to the public narratives and the audiences (in these cases, including the researcher and the facilitator) to claim multiple memberships. In both cases, Amal and Majid aim to create a cultural-political space in communities they live in.

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