GOING NOMAD: NEW MOBILE LIFESTYLES AMONG EUROPEANS

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ABSTRACT

Going Nomad: New Mobile Lifestyles among Europeans

Global modernity with its economic and technological transformations generates new mobile lifestyles that challenge officially recognized forms of human mobility. The new European nomads presented in this article are representatives of this newly emergent form of mobility. Closer ethnographic scrutiny reveals that these people are constantly on the move, and work and use several income-making strategies while on the road. Not only mobility and economic strategies, but also conceptions concerning reasons to be mobile, relations with the background society and the public spaces they traverse share similar features. There are numerous criteria according which it is possible to talk about them as representatives of a new type of contemporary mobility, for which peripatetic nomadism, marginality and inventiveness are central characteristics. In the article I discuss the field research data that underscores the characteristics according to which my interlocutors can be conceptualised as "marginal mobile subjects": their income depends on mobile and flexible economic strategies which define their patterns of more or less irregular movement; their social reality consists of in-betweenness, a lack of networks of assistance and invisibility in public space. Although they like to state that their lifestyle is a result of a free choice, the situations in their everyday lives reveal that their freedom is actually constrained by unfortunate or unsatisfactory life situations which often lead to feelings of marginalisation and being deceived by their background society, and they tend to bypass state bureaucracies imposing "sedentary norms" on their lives.

KEYWORDS: mobility, marginality, peripatetic nomadism, inventiveness, global modernity

IZVLEČEK

Med nomade: Novi mobilni življenjski stili med Evropejci

Globalna modernost s svojimi ekonomskimi in tehnološkimi transformacijami proizvaja mobilne življenjske stile, ki postavljajo pod vprašaj uradno prepoznane oblike človeške mobilnosti. Predstavniki takšne, na novo vznikle mobilnosti, so tudi v pričujočem članku predstavljeni Evropski nomadi. Bolj podroben etnografski vpogled razkrije, da so ti ljudje v nenehnem gibanju in delajo med potjo, pri čemer se poslužujejo različnih prihodkovnih strategij. Družijo jih ne le mobilnost in ekonomske strategije, temveč tudi način, na katerega konceptualizirajo razloge za svojo mobilnost, odnos do domače družbe in odnos do prostorov, skozi katere potujejo. Glede na številne kriterije bi jih lahko obravnavali kot pred-

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stavnike nove oblike sodobne mobilnosti, katere ključne lastnosti povzemajo peripatetični nomadizem, marginalnost in inovativnost. S člankom predstavljam s terenskim raziskovanjem pridobljeni material, ki izpostavlja karakteristike glede na katere bi lahko svoje informatorje konceptualizirala kot »marginalne mobilne subjekte«: njihov zaslužek je odvisen od mobilnih in fleksibilnih ekonomskih strategij, ki oblikujejo njihovo gibanje po bolj ali manj ohlapno začrtanih poteh; njihova družbena realnost je zaznamovana z vmesnostjo, odsotnostjo podpornih socialnih mrež in nevidnostjo v javnem prostoru; čeprav radi poudarjajo, da je njihov življenjski stil rezultat svobodne izbire pa situacije iz vsakdanjega življenja razkrivajo, da so se te oblikovale ukleščene v primež nesrečnih in nezadovoljivih življenjskih situacij, zaradi česar se pogosto počutijo marginalizirane in prevarane s strani domače družbe ter poskušajo zaobiti državne birokracije, ki njihova življenja omejujejo z nalaganjem sedentarnih norm.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: mobilnost, marginalnost, peripatetični nomadizem, iznajdljivost, globalna modernost

INTRODUCTION: PROCESSES OF NOMADIZATION AMONG EUROPEANS

In the global era, nation states are more and more incapable of controlling their economies and the conditions of their labour market. The global economic crisis beginning in 2008 has threatened to push more than twelve million people under the poverty line in the European Union.[1] In many areas across Western Europe the crisis struck the youth and the elderly particularly hard regardless of their ethnic backgrounds (Erlanger 2012). The crisis has generated wide disillusionment as the constant increase in the economic influence of global corporations on national economies has furthered the dislocation of power from politics. Recent media reports from EU member states such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Greece reveal that these countries are currently facing severe problems of nationalizing and of disciplining their populations, who are openly demonstrating their frustration and devising various strategies for adapting to the uncertainty of their political future, the instability of markets, unexpected capital flows, price and tax increases and reduced welfare benefits and services.[2] Mobility has become one of the strategies to cope with this all-encompassing existential insecurity.

In the past decade, many Europeans have been pushed to migrate to places where they are able to reduce the cost of living, for example to Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Turkey) or to Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa) (Harding 2012; Kalčić 2012; Rogelja 2012). Among them, many have resorted to peripatetic survival strategies and constructed nomadic lifestyles between Europe and West Africa. For example, according to unofficial estimates for 2011, approximately 50,000 French people who are not traditionally nomads live in vehicles converted into mobile homes within the French territory (Angeras 2011). This phenomenon has up to the present remained largely unrecognized and unaddressed in popular, administrative, political and academic debates on mobility and migration. There is hardly any attention being paid to the fact that many Europeans are turning their backs on Europe.

The aim of this article is to address the phenomenon of nomadization among Europeans and to contextualise this mobile lifestyle within migration and mobility studies. Global modernity[3] propelled by neoliberal capitalism and time-space compressing communication technologies contributes to the

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1 According to EUROSTAT the highest percentages of population at risk of falling below the poverty threshold in the Euro area in 2011 were in Spain (21.8%), Greece (21.4%) and Portugal (18.0%) (EUROSTAT 2011).

2 See for example Govan 2012.

3 I understand global modernity as a descriptive term that refers to globalized (neoliberal) capitalism and time-space compression through modern communication technology and travel (Castells 2000; Giddens 1990).

formation of mobilities that are difficult to grasp within conventional conceptualisations, and which also challenge stubborn academic consensus so that clear analytical and conceptual boundaries between mobilities from the Global North and South can be drawn (Juntunen et al. forthcoming). I argue that one of these newly emergent mobilities is Europeans leading a nomadic life between Europe and Africa, whom I conceptualise as "marginal mobile subjects". The concept of "marginal mobilities", developed by Marko Juntunen, Nataša Rogelja and author of this article (forthcoming) defines "marginal mobile subjects" by the following features: "they lead a highly mobile lifestyle (1), which is neither entirely forced nor voluntary (2) and occurs along loosely defined trajectories (3). They do not participate in politicized public spheres (4) and are marked by sentiments of marginality and liminality. In addition, their life is marked by constant negotiations with respect to the sedentary norms of the nation state (5)" (ibid.). As such they can be compared to various other contemporary mobilities from the Global South or North.

The article is based on ethnographic data collected during extensive fieldwork that took place between January 2007 and May 2013 in Morocco, the Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Guinea and Burkina Faso. During my research I employed the methods of mobile ethnography (D'Andrea 2006), participant observation with a focus on practices of moving and meeting with other mobile subjects, interviewing, as well as a good measure of self-reflection, which is a logical consequence of my personal involvement in the housetrucking lifestyle. All of the descriptions of the housetrucking lifestyle employed in the present article are based on field notes that I made during my fieldwork.

THE NEW EUROPEAN NOMADS

Since December 2006 I have travelled extensively in the West African Atlantic coastal regions and in different parts of the Sahara and the Sahel. Long before engaging in actual fieldwork, I came across many Westerners[4] who resembled tourists and travellers, yet there was something peculiar about them. These people were of working age, but gradually I learned that they were not involved in any way in the labour market of their home societies. For them travelling was clearly not simply a holiday escape but a way of life; while many of those whom I met travelled and lived in various vehicles converted into mobile homes, others were carrying backpacks and used public transport or hitchhiked. I began to conceptualize them as peculiar kinds Western nomads worthy of deeper ethnographic scrutiny.

Despite the fact that they were all engaged in a mobile lifestyle between Europe and West Africa, they were far from a homogenous group. First, their degrees of connectedness to the sedentary life differed considerably. Some of them told me that they had real estate and property in their country of origin, to which they returned frequently. Many others, however, confessed not owning anything else of value but the mobile home in which they lived on both continents. I met several people who spent part of the year parked in areas where they were left in peace; in suburban areas of Berlin, the mountains and forests of Portugal, Spain and France, or in Britain and France in authorised campsites or council encampments established for nomadic people such as (New Age) Travellers/Gens du Voyage, Manouche, Roma/Gypsies etc. Others lived in close vicinity to squats in Toulouse, Marseille, London and other places, but it was not uncommon to meet those who lived part time at squats or alternatively turned to their friends, families, and the commercial rental market for housing while in Europe.

They represented not only several nationalities (the largest groups being French, Spanish and British) but also different age groups, with a variety of educational and professional backgrounds. There appeared to be varieties of mobile households, too. The most common form consisted of a couple

4 I use the term "Westerner" as a loosely defined category that commonly refers to people from the more affluent countries of Western Europe, but also from the countries with firm historical, cultural and ethnic ties to Western Europe such as The United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. In the present article however I discuss Western Europeans engaged in nomadic lifestyles between Europe and Africa.

without children (the minority with children commonly stated that a mobile life with children requires more economic resources, planning, security and time-consuming household chores). Others travelled in pairs of friends, however single men on the road was not an uncommon sight in Africa. Single women on the road were rare exceptions.

Most of my interlocutors had left their sedentary lives after the year 2000. While some lived off savings or had regular income thanks to pensions, or relied on remote wage work or mobile economic strategies enabled by the internet and development of other information and communications technologies, the large majority had to resort to various flexible economic strategies.

Regardless of the differences among these newly emergent European nomads (moving in and out of Europe), my interlocutors clearly shared a common sentiment and cultural logic of engaging in mobile life. Closer ethnographic scrutiny reveals that these people are constantly on the move, work and use several income-making strategies while on the road. Not only mobility and economic strategies, but also conceptions concerning the reasons to be mobile, relations with their background society, and the public spaces they traverse share similar features. Their highly mobile lifestyles challenge the existing conceptual tools of migration and mobility studies and call for a rethinking of the administrative taxonomies tackling mobility and migration. Indeed, in many cases they resemble international retirement- and lifestyle- migrants,[5] as well as sabbatical travellers[6] and peripatetic nomads,[7] yet there are numerous criteria according which it is possible to talk about them as representatives of a new type of contemporary mobility, for which peripatetic nomadism, marginality and inventiveness are central characteristics. Below I will discuss my field research data that underscores the characteristics according to which my interlocutors can be conceptualised as "marginal mobile subjects" (Juntunen et al. forthcoming).

PUSHED FROM BEHIND

In conversation situations my interlocutors unanimously displayed a great readiness to emphasise the fact that their lives had improved as a result of making a rational decision to engage in nomadism. Yet closer observation revealed that the decision was actually taken amidst unfortunate or unsatisfactory circumstances, in most cases involving a family crisis, personal frustrations such as unsatisfactory professional situations, economic difficulties or general personal disharmony with the dominant values of the consumption-oriented background society.

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5 Lifestyle migrants represent a heterogeneous group of people who occupy a place between tourism and migration (Bell et al. 2000; Gustafson 2002; Korpela 2009; O'Reilly 2003; Williams et al. 2000a). Lifestyle migration has been defined as a spatial mobility of "relatively affluent individuals of all ages moving either part-time or full time, permanently or temporarily to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life" (Benson, O'Reilly 2009: 612). Under the umbrella of lifestyle migration as a phenomenon of "moving for a better life" (Benson, O'Reilly 2009: 2), we find typologies such as leisure migration, counter-urbanization, rural idyll, second home ownership, amenity seeking, seasonal migration, residential tourism, bourgeois bohemians as well as mid-life, retirement or family migration (see e.g. Ackers et al. 2004; Benson 2009; Benson, O'Reilly 2009; Bousiou 2008; Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Hoey 2010; Howard 2008; Huber, O'Reilly 2004; Nudrali, O'Reilly 2009; Torkington 2011; Williams et al. 2000b).

6 As the descriptor suggests, travellers on sabbatical leave. Their movement to places outside of their usual environment represents a longer (one or two years) but temporary break from everyday routine after which they return to everyday sedentary life at home (Weber 1997).

7 Traditional groups of peripatetic nomads (Berland, Salo 1986) do not exploit natural but social resources and have been labelled by other researchers as service nomads (Hayden 1979), commercial nomads (Acton 1981), non-food producing nomads (Rao 1982) and symbiotic nomads (Misra 1982). The term "peripatetic nomads" is broader, more neutral, and most of all applies also to non-ethnic groups of nomads such as New Age English Travellers.

Figure 1: For some the only home they have (Photo: Špela Kalčić, Nouakchott, Mauritania 2010).

Most of my interlocutors come from the middle or lower economic strata of their background societies and had previously suffered from precarious positions in the labour and housing market. Thirty-four year old Stella is in many ways representative: After she finished her PhD in 2006 the research funding which she had received from her national research council ended. The research institute where she used to work could not provide resources for an extension of the work contract and she became unemployed. As she had never travelled for a longer period of time she was very happy to join her boyfriend on a trip to Niger in an old Land Rover. Like many other travellers to West Africa they covered their travel expenses by selling the car in Africa. After she returned, Stella applied without success for several postdoctoral positions and found herself in an extremely dissatisfying situation working as an underpaid part-time entertainer in a team which organises recreational events for big companies. She said that her monthly housing expenses exceeded her salary. Soon afterwards her boyfriend told her that he had found a mobile home; an affordable four-wheel-drive truck. Stella decided to give up her saving for an apartment, a plan that she could never make come true, and helped her boyfriend buy the vehicle.

As her boyfriend had obtained a one-year writing grant, he suggested that they could cover their living expenses for a longer time by going to Africa. In West Africa Stella began to write articles for magazines to supplement their budget. Together with her boyfriend she engaged in occasional tour guiding in Morocco and they gained experience in trading second-hand goods. In the second half of 2008 the magazines she had written for stopped buying articles from freelance journalists. Due to budgetary cuts in her home country Stella's options for gaining academic scholarships were reduced greatly. Stella and her boyfriend were now forced to find a new source of income. They decided to fly back to Europe in order to buy a Mercedes Benz van which they could sell for a profit in Bamako, Mali.

Similarly to Stella, numerous among European nomads that I have met along the way find themselves in vulnerable economic positions. Many pay income tax in the country in which they are citizens,

yet they often find themselves in precarious situations and struggle with bureaucratic obstacles with regard to maintaining their rights to numerous social services and benefits. Experiences of unemployment, redundancy at the age of fifty, miserable pensions, blocked careers; a precarious labour market position and homelessness together with sharp criticism towards the dominant norms of the background society marked by neoliberal capitalism were widely shared. Stella once told me: "If the academic system hadn't put me in a position in which I can't earn enough to afford a home and food, I wouldn't be here now." My interlocutors saw themselves as being "pushed from behind" (Bauman 2001) in a variety of ways and marginalized by their background society. The conventional classification of mobilities as voluntary mobilities (e.g. tourism, travel, lifestyle migration, business travel or economic migration) which stand in opposition to forced mobilities (refugees and asylum migration) therefore has hardly any relevance to the subjects of my study.

FLEXIBLE AND MOBILE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

As in Stella's case, the predominant form of income generating among the nomads I have met is engaging in various flexible and mobile economic strategies. While in Europe my interlocutors meet their expenses by engaging in the unregulated economic niches of tourism related services and construction sites, and during the harvest season in agriculture picking fruits and grapes. Furthermore they export domestic appliances and second-hand goods such as clothes, computers, cameras, bicycles, motorbikes and furniture, as well as second-hand vehicles and spare car parts to Africa. Those who sell vehicles always bring along goods that can be sold on the way to one of the West African vehicle markets.
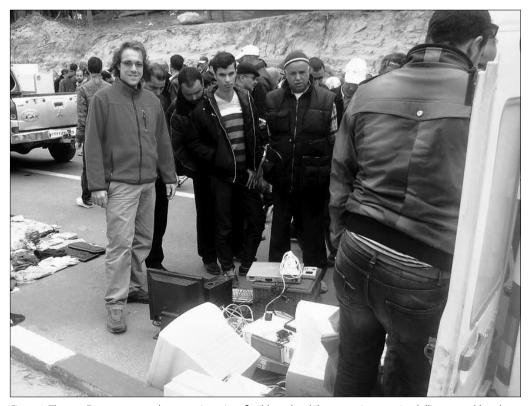

Figure 2: The new European nomads engage in various flexible and mobile economic strategies. Selling second-hand goods in West African street markets is one among several options (Photo: Nicolas Pernot, Tetouan, Morocco 2011).

Such places include the border zone between Morocco and Mauritania, Nouakchott in Mauritania, the Mauritanian – Malian border, Bamako in Mali, Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso and Niamey in Niger. Many rely economically entirely on exporting vehicles, making up to seven annual trips between Europe and Africa. Second-hand goods usually cover the expenses for fuel and generate some profit depending on the "cargo". Smaller items are usually sold on the way: in Moroccan souks, in front of motels, and in parking areas and petrol stations. These trade sites are chosen spontaneously, whenever opportunities for trade appear. By far the most profitable second-hand goods are vehicle engines and spare parts, together with computers, cameras, mobile phones and other digital devices. Maintaining a profitable business in West Africa, I was told, required having good connections with the local population. Those who sell vehicles have often established long-term connections with local brokers and with each trip they make agreements regarding future business transactions with them.

However, not all of the new European nomads I met were interested in trade. In fact the majority of my interlocutors said that they needed money just to cover their everyday expenses and to spend life in a meaningful way. A French couple in their late twenties who had led mobile life in a housetruck for several years stated: "We have a little money but lots of fun." They claimed that they spend no more than 400 Euros a month. They suffice their budgets by picking grapes and fruits in France and supplement their income with unemployment benefits.

In fact, many European nomads rely on different kinds of benefits granted by their national social security systems; these include benefits for disabled people, child allowances, unemployment benefits and income support. They often stated in interview situations that in Africa they can minimize their expenses and thus save part of the benefit money for the future. For example, I talked with several retired people who had encountered increasing economic problems since the recession of 2008 as the government of their home country had implemented pension cuts. Rather than spending money on heating and other housing expenses they told it is much more preferable to spend the winter in Morocco or the Western Sahara. As a fifty-nine-year-old French interlocutor told me in Dakhla in the Western Sahara in November 2011:

> I used to have a bakery. After my husband retired I sold it. I am not entitled to a pension yet. With the crisis France it became too expensive to live on one pension only, so we made a calculation and concluded that it is cheaper to buy a second-hand camper and spend winters in Morocco then pay each year for heating at home. In this way we do not economize only on heating but also on food. Everything is cheaper here and besides, the food is really delicious.

Some of those with better vehicles occasionally run more or less official tourism businesses. While some operate through their internet sites, others are completely informal entrepreneurs. The new information and communications as well as navigation technologies have enabled many to engage in entirely mobile work. However, those who engage in remote work and have steady Western-standard salaries were a privileged few among my interlocutors. These individuals work in fields such as computer programming, translating, writing, illustrating, design, photography, research, education, businesses and overland touring.

Most of these new nomads said that they spend the summer months in Europe and begin their journeys towards Africa and south along the Atlantic coast of Morocco and the Western Sahara in the late autumn, when the European climate gets colder. Some of them stop in one place for extended periods and circulate only between their winter and summer camps. However, those who engage in petty commerce and second-hand trade of vehicles and domestic appliances literally live on the road and circulate with a more or less intensive frequency between the continents all year long. In the case of these individuals the destinations keep changing along the travel trajectory, largely depending on the social, political, economic and climatic conditions in the localities traversed. However, the freedom of this spontaneity is restricted, as more often than not their movement is directed by pursuit of income.

It is in fact the movement itself that distinguishes these mobilities from contemporary migrations. This is not a simple linear movement from one location to another, a once and for all (Acton 2010: 7). The lifestyle of these people does not line up with the definition of migration (see Van Diijk et al. 2001). I have observed dozens of mobile subjects who circulate along loosely defined transnational trajectories, do not follow strictly fixed routes, nor does their travel occur between a limited number of sending and receiving communities where they reside extended periods of time. This movement is also not about changing a place of residence or radical break up of social ties. It is rather about circulating among coincidental and beforehand learned places of more or less temporary stops[8] that consist of unauthorised makeshift encampments on unused lands or verges of roads, parking areas, forests, occasionally in authorised camps and hotels or rental housing, as well as places held by friends, family members or acquaintances, located along their trajectories. Furthermore, for these people travelling represents a settled way of life, not an exception as in the case of classic migrants.

PERIPATETIC NOMADISM WITHOUTH KINSHIP ALLIANCES

Actually, my interlocutors share similar relation with space as traditional peripatetic nomadic people (Acton 2010; Berland, Rao 2004; Berland, Salo 1986; Berland 1992; Reyniers 1995). As defined by Thomas Acton (2010: 7), peripatetic nomadism presents a specific form of exploitation of recourses that are available at the particular territory and is based on circulation of individuals in the middle of social entities which organise access to this exploitation. As in the case of my interlocutors, peripatetics provide their services and certain skills, practise commercial nomadism, which differs from "traditional" nomadism of hunters-gatherers and pastoral nomads (ibid.). According to Joseph Berland and Matt Salo (1986: 2), peripateticism is defined as "the regular demand for specialized goods and/or services that more sedentary or pastoral groups cannot, or will not support on a permanent basis". It presents a nomadic strategy that "exploits social rather than natural resources in larger ecocultural systems" (ibid.: 3). However, demand for these services, merchandise and labour is intermittent, which is why movement to another place which provides new opportunities for work and gains is required.

Peripatetic nomadism is "the recurrent exploitation of spatially and temporally discontinuous economic opportunities" (Acton 2010: 6). It is economically, not culturally driven movement, which similarly as in the case of economic migration builds on the pursuit of a better standard of living (ibid.: 7). And this characteristic presents another moment of accordance with my interlocutors, who use their mobile lifestyles to "muddle through" the period of unemployment before they obtain their pension, or alternatively, work and use several income-making strategies while on the move. Mobility for them has become a strategy of survival due to the economic problems and feelings of futurelessness they faced in their sedentary life in Europe. As we have seen, "flexible skills and knowledge about resources in the larger social systems they exploit are key elements towards understanding [the] peripatetic adaptations" (Berland, Salo 1986: 3) of these new European nomads, for whom nomadism in fact represents a form of resilience in times of crisis.

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8 John Urry and Mimi Sheller argue that "moorings configure and enable mobilities" (Sheller, Urry 2006: 3). Urry further defines nomadism as a constant mobility that also includes temporary rests, i.e. "moorings": "Temporary rest and replenishment are conditions of mobility. Overall it is the moorings that enable movements. And it is the dialectic of mobility/moorings that produces social complexity" (Urry 2003: 126). Similarly, Joseph C. Berland and Matt T. Salo have observed that among peripatetic nomads "relative levels of mobility and/or sedentarization are not viewed as opposites" (Berland, Salo 1986: 4-5). Therefore the constant mobility of a nomadic lifestyle should not be considered without sedentary periods as a constitutive part of nomadism.

The existential dimension of this movement also represents a moment of discordance with international retirement – and other lifestyle migrants whose mobility is more about voluntary travel to and residence at localities where living costs are low, the climate pleasantly warm and life relaxed, i.e. better, and financed by pensions or periodical work in the Global North (see e.g. Ackers et al. 2004; Benson 2009; Benson, O'Reilly 2009; Casado-Diáz et al. 2004; Hoey 2010; Howard 2008; Huber, O'Reilly 2004; Nudrali, O'Reilly 2009; Torkington 2011; Williams et al. 2000b). However, these new nomads could be placed side by side with the bohemian wing of lifestyle migrants (Korpela 2009), sometimes denominated as "expressive expatriates" or "global nomads" (D'Andrea 2006, 2007), who lead accentuated mobile transnational lifestyles, embrace more spiritual and artistic aspirations (Korpela 2009: 29) and circulate through global circuits of countercultural lifestyle (D'Andrea 2006), where they establish permanent homes (that they regularly leave and stay away for several months), but also earn money utilising their skills, establish their own businesses etc. (Korpela this volume). The characteristics of bohemian lifestyle migrants and the subjects of my study do indeed coincide, but I nevertheless argue that my interlocutors seem to challenge the deeply rooted academic convention of analytically separating the "privileged" mobilities of the subjects from the Global North from those of the Global South, considered as "unprivileged", and that the concept of lifestyle migration itself represents one of such analytical frameworks which does not consider looking past this separation. That is why I prefer to conceptualise them as "marginal mobile subjects" (Juntunen et al. forthcoming). That is, the new European nomads are in many ways also comparable with less affluent and less privileged contemporary mobile subjects of various geographic and ethnic provenances such as New Age Travellers (Clark 1997; Hetherington 2000; Martin 1998, 2002), Tuareg *ishumar,* "a generation of border-crossers whose living conditions have created special mobility strategies" (Kohl 2009, this volume), or the once irregular migrants, today "marginalized Moroccan men in transnational space" (Juntunen this volume). Indeed, more and more people from both the Global South and the Global North today manage their household economies by circulating along irregular transnational trajectories (Angeras 2011; D'Andrea 2007; Kalčić 2012; Korpela 2009; MacGaffey, Rémy 2000; Rogelja 2012, this volume) and share numerous traits with traditional peripatetic nomads, yet the cultural ethos of their movement can only be grasped with respect to global late capitalism.

The nomadism of the new European nomads is not rooted in a tribal system and organised through descent groups as in the case of traditional peripatetics where kinship represents the structural and organising principle of community (Berland, Salo 1986: 4). Belonging is not based on blood relations, and sense of ethnic or national identity is extremely weak. They also do not perceive themselves as "members of a closed system" (ibid.). Their nomadism is rather marked by pronounced individualism, based on a personal decision to change their lifestyle, which is nevertheless embedded in the situation of the global modernity which promotes, enables and generates an escape to an alternative modus vivendi. The individualism of my interlocutors is, I argue, the main trait which distinguishes their peripatetic nomadism from the traditional form.

IN-BETWEENNESS

In our conversations, many of these European nomads expressed feelings of being deceived by their home societies and a quite critical and embittered attitude towards the political and social order in their states of origin. They lacked patriotic feelings of belonging towards their "homeland", and disillusionment with the national states system in general was widespread. Many claimed that contemporary states can no longer provide both material and psychological stability and that they are governed by neoliberal interests which are going against their own citizens and humanity in general. They were disappointed with the social welfare system and did not believe in economically secure old age, a just tax system and social justice in general. Stella verbalised her disappointment in the following words:

For my PhD I received a letter of congratulations from the president of the country, and me unemployed… If I want to stay in this [academic] machinery I have to attend conferences. But you have to cover travel expenses and fees up to 400 Euros on your own if you want to go to them. I don't have this money! Science has become a business: if I want to earn money through research I have to gain money for my salary through projects; if I want to win a project, I need to have strong references from conference presentations and publications, and if I want to publish, I have to have time for writing, which I don't have, because I have to earn [enough] to put something in my stomach first… And when I need dental work they book me for the next month, so I have to go to a private dentist, which I can't afford. I am thirty-four and my work history amounts to three years. I have been working since I was eighteen… Ciao social security, this is hardcore capitalism!

While the sense of national belonging among my interlocutors was predominantly weak, they stressed commonality with people of similar experience that they met on the way. Their social interactions took place in shifting and occasional small groupings of people who simply happened to stop in the same places for a few days. These sporadic and ephemeral gatherings often involved fixing the vehicles, the exchange of nomadic experiences and information on travel routes. Solidarity and readiness for recip-rocal help was clearly displayed, but these solidarities were first and foremost purely circumstantial. Nevertheless, these short-lived encounters were often enough for the development of feelings of be-longing, based on the same experiences and lifestyle on the road. Those with a place to stay in Europe clearly demonstrated a willingness to host others if they should drop by one day and seek shelter on their plot. This solidarity was particularly stressed among full-time housetruckers[9] who face numerous problems in Europe with regard to makeshift and free-of-charge camping.

The social relations among these nomads are highly situational and have a fleeting character. That is, there was a very weak sense of commonality among my interlocutors. These people practiced situational solidarity but at the same time it was really easy for them to take off and try a more or less temporary life somewhere else. They were actively communicating and networking among themselves, as well as with the local populations, but ties that they established were of an instant, weak and fluid nature. The relation to the spaces they traverse was marked by accented social weightlessness. As in the case of the postmod-ern mobile subjects described by Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport (2002) within the theory of post-cultural anthropology, they experienced cross-border/continental movement without participating in transna-tional collectivities or attributing a new social identity to the experience of mobility (ibid.: 4). They did not try to create any firmer community which would root them into the places of "temporary rests" (Urry 2003: 126). Their social connections and networks were different from the case of traditional peripatetics, as they were not connected with rootedness to a particular territory (Reyniers 1995: 49). While traditional peripatetics depend on complex networks of alliances which also organise their mobility and, in opposi-tion with the common belief about nomads, also connects with territoriality, the central constituents of mobility among my interlocutors were the notions of disjunction, escape, ambiguity and uncertainty. The absence of any kind of network of assistance marked their social world by a complete uprootedness and liminality, and similarly to Stella many confessed of being familiar with an occasional state of limbo:

I can't rely on help from my family. This kind of life can be a very lonely position. All that I have in my life is him [her partner]. If I'm sick, if I'm sad, if I'm scared and worried, he is the only one that I can rely on… It can be really tiresome sometimes to be without a fixed job and a constant circle of friends. Whatever happens, we are alone. No back-up, no nothing.

The individualistic kind of peripateticism practiced by these Europeans is marked by a "position be-tween positions" (Turner 1974: 237) and this is actually the space within which they operate: they simul-

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9 People travelling and living in cars, jeeps, vans, caravans, buses or trucks converted into mobile homes (Kalčić 2012).

taneously participate in many worlds while not belonging to any of them. Another of the "symptoms" of this in-betweenness is their invisibility in public space. They do not create politicized identities or politicized public spheres characteristic of contemporary migrant and diasporic communities. One of the reasons for this is the fact that they lead highly individualistic lives on the move, and the other is related to the fact that in cases when people participate in unregulated economic niches or rely on the management of welfare benefits, invisibility is "required" as it makes bare survival possible.

A NOMADIC LIFE IN A SEDENTARY WORLD

Many of my interlocutors perceived West Africa as a place free of the countless bureaucratic rules imposed on citizens of Western countries. While in West Africa, they reported, they do not face major constraints on nomadic life and are rarely troubled by the police and other authorities. Free of charge stay is still available in most parts of West Africa. They said that they learn about suitable stopover sites from online forums, other travellers, and most often by observing roadsides. As they tend to minimise expenses they avoid for-pay services such as tourist camping sites and resort to makeshift camping, which requires more interaction with local populations whose consent is required for the stay.

The only bureaucratic requirements that they face are a personal entry visa, country-specific car insurance, and a temporary "pass through permit" for the vehicle, required by most African states. Africa was perceived as a place where everything can be always "arranged". For example, in certain West African countries one can purchase a visa for up to five years and many states make it possible to obtain local residency which enables a long-term stay in the country. Expenses on insurance can be always cut down by negotiating with the agent, and as vehicle circulation licences are very often not authenticated, by simply altering the technical information on the vehicle. One of my interlocutors, a man who had at the time of our conversation lived for five years between Europe and West Africa, described his relation to Africa in the following words:

> Sometimes I ask myself, what I am actually doing in this dust, filth, illiteracy, and unbearable heat. Why am I not in some other, more ironed part of the world? The answer lies in the amount of practical freedom that (however paradoxically this might sound) the black continent has to offer.

In contrast, Europe was perceived as a place of endless negotiation with state bureaucracies that impose a "sedentary norm" on their lives. That is, in many EU countries, legislation together with indirect constraints on nomadic life directly delimits the possibilities for mobility by setting restrictions on camping. Parking in official sites such as camps can cost several thousands of Euros annually, while "wild" camping is forbidden in most countries and free of charge sites for nomadic people (Travellers/Gens du Voyage, Roma/Gypsies, Manouche) are provided only in France and Great Britain (Janko Spreizer this volume). My interlocutors therefore seek to stop in areas known for their relaxed bureaucracy, low fees or complete lack of attention from local authorities regarding their stay. Moreover, they revealed that while in Europe, they very often hide the fact that they are leaving in their vehicles in one place, because in the EU vehicles that are used for "camping" are also required to meet strictly defined regulations regarding sanitary and food preparation facilities. They told me they were obliged to improvise in order to bypass bureaucratic norms that require costly arrangements. Thus very often they simply registered their vehicles as ordinary vehicles, and hide the fact that they actually live in them.

As most of these European nomads lived on extremely limited budgets, they were highly motivated to circumvent the bureaucratic requirements in the most economical way. For example, being outside of their home country they usually chose not to renew the registration and insurance of their vehicles if they did not have intention of an early return. As Stella explained:

> I really don't know why we should pay for insurance which is not valid here and pay for the use of roads that we are not using and we don't intend to use for the next seven months at least.

Many were manipulating their national social security system in order to be able to claim different forms of benefits that they relied on, while spending extended periods of time outside of their country of origin. However, maximizing the benefits granted by citizenship and legal residence requires one to be at least occasionally within the reach of the authorities. Leading a nomadic life in a sedentary world does not come without payment: in most cases these people left a sedentary life behind in order to be able to survive, and now they had to pretend to be sedentary for the same reason. This paradox was very well illustrated by Stella:

> During the first six months I was out of work I was entitled to unemployment benefits. The counsellor at the employment centre told me that I am overeducated and that I shouldn't expect them to find me a job. Despite this I had to attend seminars where they were teaching us how to apply for a job! After this period the benefits were cut down, it was not enough, neither to live nor to die. I was not allowed to get supplementary work either as I would lose the rights to my benefits, and on top of this, I had to present myself at the service every month. Checkmate! When we decided to travel, I came up with the excuse of going to study in libraries abroad. At that time I did not yet know if I would be able to live on writing for journals and I needed those benefits regardless of how lousy they were.

As stated by Juntunen et al. (forthcoming), "citizenship and residence grant rights to welfare services and benefits only to those individuals who fulfil the sedentary norm. Entitlement to numerous social statuses, rights and benefits, and obtaining personal documents, certificates and licenses all require a permanent address and the same holds true with participation in official economic life through the banking system". For these reasons people like Stella constantly balance their lives between two ends and devise various strategies for convincing state authorities that they live at a permanent address and that they are therefore available to the authorities when needed. These strategies are however responses to their precarious position and uncertain economic future in which they found themselves due to the instability of global politics and markets.

In circumventing the sedentary norm, inventiveness plays a key role. As Berland and Salo (1986) have noted, peripatetics are especially attuned to changes in social and economic circumstances as well as a broad spectrum of other factors that may influence patterns of human needs and desires in the communities they exploit. It is their advanced knowledge and astute predictions about ecological, political and other factors that activate the choices of particular skills, goods and/or services that are incorporated into their peripatetic repertoires (ibid.: 4). In the situation of the global economic and political crisis directed by the neoliberal world order, the new European nomads "chose" to challenge the world of state bureaucracies imposing a sedentary norm on their lives. This world consists of the national welfare systems, housing markets, insurance systems, and in a way, even "national" petrol markets etc. Perceiving themselves as being deceived by the empty promises of the neoliberal Western state and critical of capitalist economies in general, they seek to evade "state-market-morality regimes" (D'Andrea 2007: 23): they try to pay as little as possible to the state and take as much as possible from it. They accomplish this by hiding the physical fact of leading a nomadic life in a vehicle, by manipulating the technical and registration data on the vehicle, by working unofficially in unregulated niches, by driving on vegetable oil or heating oil – all extremely affordable strategies but prohibited by law in most countries of the Global North – by taking welfare benefits while spending longer periods of time out of national territory, by pretending to live at a permanent address in order to maintain their right to social services and other benefits, etc.

FINAL NOTES

Global modernity with its economic and technological transformations generates new mobile lifestyles that question officially recognized forms of human mobility. The new European nomads presented in this article are representatives of such a newly emergent mobility. Their story is marked by marginality at several levels: first, they faced existential difficulties accompanied by the lack of social security and inadequate assistance from their background societies. Disqualification in the labour market led them to adopt a nomadic lifestyle marked again by social unacceptability and stigmatization by dominant social groups and the sedentary world order in their home societies (Coudouel et al. 2004; Gerster 2000; Gurung, Kollmair 2005). Second, they found themselves in a state of ambiguous limbo of fluid and fleeting social relations, unimportance, uncertainty and not really belonging to any particular social group (Boon 1999 in Green 2005; Turner 1974). And finally, while society has dropped them out, they have turned their marginalisation into their own benefit. Their un-identifiable position of in-betweenness provides a space for resistance and empowerment (Green 2005; Herzfeld 1997; Serematakis 1991).

Apparently insignificant, these European nomads employ subversion which serves their ends: they are creating something new out of making things unclear and uncertain (Green 2005: 4). Their lifestyle brings to the fore the subversive dimension of mobility, which is related to its capacity of changing perspectives on how things are seen and done. That is, mobility is not solely a physical movement through space but also a mental movement that can be epitomized in Deleuze's famous statement that "the nomad does not move" (cited in D'Andrea 2007). "Movement is not just the experience of shifting from place to place; it is also linked to our ability to imagine an alternative" (Papastergiadis 2000: 11). The philosophy of such subversive mobility that enables an alternative is based on a tendency towards invisibility and non-recognition. In the case of these nomads, both are derived from their marginality.

The new European nomads do not fit into any conventional category conceptualised within migration and mobility studies. As we have seen, their income depends on mobile and flexible economic strategies which define their patterns of more or less irregular movement; their social reality consists of in-betweenness, a lack of networks of assistance and invisibility in public space; although they like to state that their lifestyle is a result of a free choice, the situations in their everyday lives reveal that their freedom is actually constrained by unfortunate or unsatisfactory life situations; therefore they often feel marginalised and deceived by their background societies, and tend to bypass state bureaucracies which impose a "sedentary norm" on their lives. According to these features they can without any doubt be conceptualised as "marginal mobile subjects" (Juntunen et al. forthcoming).

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