Emotion, Space and Society 37 (2020) 100702

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Emotion, Space and Society

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/emospa

Affective border violence: Mapping everyday asylum precarities across different spaces and temporalities

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Borders
Affective governmentality
Asylum
Slow violence
Precarity
Emotional labour

ABSTRACT

This paper stems from my long-term involvement in asylum activist communities in London and Berlin and is an analysis of the emotional work of borders. It describes asylum seekers' daily journeys through endless spaces of discomfort and depletion, which I conceptualise as *affective border violence*. Stories about different public and private spaces such as the post office, gay clubbing and Berlin's asylum camp spaces will illustrate how affective technologies are mobilised to manage asylum seekers' bodies, time and space. The aims of this paper are threefold: 1) to illustrate how *affective border violence* works through occupying emotional and mental space by creating an overwhelming amount of *emotional borderwork*, 2) to illustrate how states mobilise power and violence in and through specific temporal modalities such as fearful anticipation, continuity and the everyday, and 3) how people seeking asylum negotiate affective border violence through re-claiming bodily and temporal space. The empirical elements of this paper include personal reflections, participatory work within and outside of asylum activist groups in London and Berlin, in-depth conversations and friendships with people registered as asylum seekers.

1. Introduction

In this paper I try to shift attention to the emotional work of borders. Discomfort, unease, worry, shame and fear are emotional aspects of asylum seekers' daily lives in quite specific ways: the endless waiting for their claim to be processed, collecting money at the local post office, reporting to the Home Office, but also in their homes, relationships and friendships. As I will illustrate in this paper, the politics of emotions around discomfort, and the multi-layered affective precarities that asylum seekers have to navigate to live on, are part of a constant process in which people seeking asylum are *b/ordered* (van Houtum et al., 2005). I argue that states mobilise affective technologies of power and violence to control and punish racialised and colonialised others. These affective technologies work by setting up a system of endless discomfort and depletion. This paper explores the condition under which affect and emotion are turned into power and violence in the context of asylum seekers' everyday lives in Germany and the UK.

Other scholars have emphasised the important need to investigate the effects of the increasing incorporation of technologies of everyday bordering into immigration legislation, not only for people seeking asylum and irregular migrants, but also for all residents (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). What these measures do, and what everyday realities they create, is often assessed in the form of their discriminatory nature, access to rights and belonging, as well as how an increasing number of "regular" residents are forced to perform unpaid borderwork (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). What remains largely hidden is what these policies mean in terms of the feelings and emotional realities they create and how these realities are negotiated by people in asylum systems. Attending to how these policies unfold on the bodies of those seeking asylum, on the most intimate of all scales, needs to be considered if we want to think together about how to negotiate these violent practices. While these measures offer a recent framework for discussion of affective border violence, it is important to emphasise that technologies of racial differentiation are by no means a new invention; both states, Germany and the UK, have long histories of bordering racialised and colonised bodies. The history of asylum, and who comes to be called an asylum seeker, refugee or migrant, is itself a way to govern racialised and colonialised bodies (Rodríguez, 2018).

However, I want to put the argument forward that within the range of precarities produced through processes of bordering, racialisation and coloniality, there is a very particular and irresolvable precarity of people engaged within the asylum regime. Research has attended to the precarity of those seeking asylum; lives constrained and controlled by many practices uniquely tied to the asylum process (Waite et al., 2013; Griffiths, 2014; Aumüller et al., 2015). It is their often inhumane housing situation, detention and deportation threats, financial

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2020.100702
Received 13 April 2019; Received in revised form 29 April 2020; Accepted 1 May 2020

problems and the stress and uncertainty due to their lives being on hold, on top of institutional and everyday racism, that people seeking asylum have to negotiate on a daily basis.

In Germany, the 2015 Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act (Asylverfahrungsbeschleunigungsgesetz) brought about the most severe restrictions to the right to asylum since the 1990s (Kirchhoff and Lorenz, 2018). Now deportation dates no longer need to be announced in advance, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro were classified as safe countries and the time asylum seekers have to make complaints and appeal decisions was significantly reduced. Most people seeking asylum in Germany are housed in initial reception and collective accommodation centres and receive an asylum allowance of €135 per person per month to cover travel expenses and clothing.

In the UK, Theresa May's call to create a "really hostile environment" implemented in the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts brought about measures and policies preventing people from accessing housing, healthcare, education, work, bank accounts and benefits. While in the UK officially everyone has free access to healthcare, increasing ID checks within the British National Health Service (the NHS) reduced the number of people with insecure status making use of the services through fear of detainment and deportation. People seeking asylum in the UK are accommodated in designated areas, mostly in regions with a lower demand for housing than London and the South-East of England, where they live in flats, houses, hostels or sometimes bed and breakfast. They receive an asylum allowance of £37.75 per person, which needs to cover food, clothing, toiletries and travel expenses (Home Office, 2019). In both countries bordering practices have become more and more diffused and privatised (Doty and Wheatley, 2013).

This paper explores how affective border violence unfolds and is constantly negotiated by drawing on fieldwork between 2015 and 2018 in Berlin and London. I have studied affect and emotion and bordered positionalities and what they do in the context of asylum activist protest events, demonstrations and activist group meetings, but more significantly through friendships with people seeking asylum and in the everyday. Drawing on memory, observation, field notes and recorded bits of conversation with over 40 people registered as asylum seekers, this paper is interested in the ways in which affective border violence is encountered, lived and negotiated in hidden and less hidden ways in everyday life. The paper proceeds with an outline of its theoretical and methodological framework and continues with illustrative examples of different spaces of bordering that hope to tell the story of the hidden emotional politics of bordering and asylum seekers' constant negotiations of discomfort. I conclude with the necessity to conceptualise bordering as an affective and emotional practice that governs migrants' lives while also being subject to ongoing contestation.

2. Affective border violence

In this paper, I want to look at borders as emotional and affective spaces. Borders are constantly in the process of becoming, reconfiguration, dislocation and reconstitution (Wemyss, Yuval-Davis & Cassidy, 2018) as well as sites of ongoing political negotiation (Rajaram and Grundy Warr, 2007). Much of the literature has pointed out that the geographies of borders have become more expansive, invading all aspects of people's lives (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018; Gravelle et al., 2012). I want to add to this body of literature by exploring borders as affective technology of racial differentiation. Both Germany and the UK developed asylum apparatuses of interconnected structures and processes of border-*making* in institutional spaces, political spaces and everyday life. These machineries are designed to mobilise affective technologies such as *precarity* and *unlivabilty* (Butler, 2012, 2006) that force people seeking asylum to "live within conditions of death" (Kurpar, 2013), or in Berlant's words to die a *slow death* (2007).

People seeking asylum expressed different emotions and bodily sensations such as anger, shame, worry, pain, fear and stress. However, most often they described their bodily experience of these emotions as "feeling uncomfortable". Therefore, this paper uses the concept *discomfort* to group together depleting bodily sensations. Comfort and "feeling comfortable" are important aspects of corporeal experience. According to Bissell (2008), similar to "hope" (Anderson, 2006) and "joy" (Bennett, 2001), comfort can be described as a positive and desirable sensation, while discomfort - feelings of unease and pain - are far less desirable sensations. Other scholars have described comfort as a basic and fundamental human need (Malinowski and Stamler, 2002; Tutton and Seers, 2003), an important sensation through which a subject derives a sense of security. As asylum seeking is a social position of multiple precarities and constant insecurity, it further stresses the importance of addressing the role of discomfort in research on asylum. However, looking at discomfort as only destructive and comfort as only productive does not account for the complexities of affects and emotions and their relationship to power and transformation. In my fieldwork I also observed discomfort as being productive as it, for example, started and allowed for the continuation of our conversations.

I observed deep and significant emotions of discomfort, produced through everyday bordering experiences, depleting the lives of those seeking asylum. Hence, here I look at depletion as the result of ongoing exposure to discomfort that people seeking asylum have to negotiate on a daily basis. This shows that if we talk about precarity (Butler, 2006, 2012), we thus also need to talk about a political condition of an unequal distribution of exposure to *emotional harm*. This points to the importance of considering the emotional dimension of precarity and how different multi-layered precarities work on differently situated bodies. What Butler called an *unlivable life* is thus not only a life that is not worth protecting, sheltering or feeding, it is a life that is actively depleted and made uncomfortable across different spaces and temporalities.

I will look at emotions in form of their *doings*. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2013), Sara Ahmed, similar to other scholars (White, 1993; Rosaldo, 1984; Hochschild, 1983), engaged with the question of what it might mean to think of emotions as practices, rather than as states that exist inside a subject. Through the intensity of their attachment, emotions have the power to align individuals with collectivities and to connect "bodily space with social space". Emotions and affects are productive and, accordingly, can be mobilised in a biopolitical (Faucault, 2003), necropolitical (Mbembe and Meinties, 2003) and disciplinary *governing* function – the power to organise life and death in particular ways. A large body of literature has illustrated how emotions are bound up with the securing of a specific social hierarchy (Ahmed, 2013; Lorde, 1984; Collins, 1986; Cohen, 2004; Hooks, 2000; Illouz, 2007).

I use the term *affective governmentality* to speak to a diffuse set of strategies and tactics including state regulations through affect and emotion that manage the bodies of those seeking asylum, time and space. This paper explores under what conditions affect and emotion become transformed into a mode of power by states and asylum seekers themselves. The aims of this paper are threefold: 1) to illustrate how affective border violence works through occupying emotional and mental space by creating an overwhelming amount of *emotional borderwork*, 2) to illustrate how states mobilise power and violence in and through specific temporal modalities such as anticipation, continuity and the everyday, and 3) how people seeking asylum negotiate affective border violence through re-claiming bodily and temporal space.

My interest lies thus in exploring how political negotiations of who belongs in the context of asylum always involve *emotional borderwork* by invading the realm of the body of those seeking asylum. I want to argue that in order to understand border violence and how it manifest itself in affect, emotion and the inscription of discomfort onto the bodies of asylum seekers, we must look beyond the examinations of everyday borders in term of access, rights and discourse. State machineries are always also circulated and multiplied through affect, emotion and the body.

3. Researching affective border violence

This paper draws upon empirical fieldwork conducted in Berlin and London between 2015 and 2018 that I call "intimate ethnography" (drawing on Lerum, 2001; Banerji and Distante, 2009). Fieldwork was conducted using methods such as participation, observation and informal interviews in the form of ongoing conversation with 40 people registered as asylum seekers and activists from Uganda (7), Nigeria (6), Iran (4), Cameroon (3), Afghanistan (3), Somalia (2), Syria (1), Iraq (2), Pakistan (1), Bangladesh (1), Ivory Coast (1), Mali (1) Serbia (1), Gambia (1), Egypt (1), Eritrea (1) and Albania (1). Most of these interviews were informed by conversations with larger groups made up of people seeking asylum. Extensive fieldnotes were taken and some interviews were recorded and transcribed while most conversation was reconstructed from fieldnotes. Twenty-one of the asylum seekers that were interviewed identified as women and 19 as men. Most of the people involved in this research were in their 30s, however, I also interviewed people registered as asylum seekers in their 20s, 40s and 50s. All of them came to the UK and Germany for very different reasons; 16 asylum seekers came because of LGBT reasons.

All participants knew from the beginning about my positionality as a researcher. Much feminist scholarship on methodology has explored the complexity of fieldwork relationships (Rose, 1997; Chattopadhyay, 2013; Fisher, 2015) and the politics of friendship (Spencer and Pahl, 2006; Hall, 2009; Desai and Killick, 2010). As a white, middle-class female researcher from the Global North, I thought thoroughly about the ethical and political concerns of studying asylum communities. My ethnographic practice was rooted in mutual ethics and a practice of care that put participants' needs first, to bring about ease and relief and making sure no extra discomfort was created. This practice of care meant being in a constant conversation with participants about what from our intimate encounters would come out in my work; what was safe and unsafe to report. Throughout the 18 months of my fieldwork there was an ongoing back and forth between our conversations, my writing and participants' feedback on my writings. I follow recent scholarship in the argument that friendships that are established and situated outside of research relationships can offer productive spaces in and through which methods can be decolonised (Leeuw et al., 2012). In particular, I want to explore the extent to which attending to bodily techniques of power and their role in *making* racial and colonial presents offers us a technique to further decolonise solidarity.

4. Occupying bodily space through emotion and affect

In this section I want to discuss how states circulate and multiply affective technologies of differentiating racialised and colonised bodies through the occupation of emotional and mental space. I use emotional and mental space to refer to how much space, time and energy goes into negotiating everyday bordering experiences. While emotional space speaks to the intensity and circulation of feelings and emotions, mental space speaks to how much thinking, worrying and thought processes of fear go into these experiences of everyday racism and bordering.

During my fieldwork in Berlin, at the beginning of June 2017, I visited an asylum camp for women. It was an old four-storey school building that had stood empty for a long time before it became a women's camp space in 2016. I sat down on a bench right before the camp as that was the best location to wait for the women to leave the camp. While sitting on the bench and waiting, Mara, a woman from Egypt in her early 30s sat down next to me and smiled. She introduced herself and told me that she used to live in "this camp", pointing with her hand at the old yellow school building behind us. When Mara came to Germany in September 2015, she first lived at the largest camp in Berlin, which she described as "the worst place to be" for women and children":

> So much violence, harassment, attacks from men: from security stuff, social workers, volunteers and even asylum seekers. I was so scared all the time … I followed the social worker around for days saying that I need to be moved. I can't be there, it's too much!

A few months later, Mara was finally able to move to another camp; the old school building in front of which we were sitting. The school became a camp in February 2016 to provide separate accommodation, a safe space, for women and children who came to Germany on their own and needed "special protection", as the camp administration proudly announced in a local newspaper. At that point, there were around 320 women and 80 children lived in the old municipal building, many of whom were forced to stay longer than the statutory 6 months. Mara lived in the camp for 10 months and was still in contact with many women living there, visiting them regularly, she shared. She feels sorry for them as they are being stuck in what she calls "everyday torture". The security staff were "everywhere", she said:

> They are located in different places, but they go around the building every hour so you can find them everywhere. All the women in this place are afraid, they are lost … sometimes something happened with a guy from the security and some women got hysterical, screamed, cried. Some tried to kill themselves. It's impossible. You can't live in this place. Women are most afraid at night. Even in the middle of the night, the security staff walk around the building. You can hear them laughing and walking by. You can hear their voices and you get really scared. Your room door is always open. It cannot be closed with a key so it's even scarier in the middle of the night.

This story shows the pervasive and multi-layered affective border violence exercised within camp spaces on a very particular object of bordering: the bodies of women. It also narrates how fear and worry energise every inch of these camp spaces; located in nearly every encounter women make within them: from the shower, to their bed, to walking past security, to eating and to talking to a social worker. While Berlin's camp spaces, next to detention centres, are the most emotionally, psychologically and physically violent spaces of everyday bordering I encountered in my research, they illustrate how states circulate and multiply affective technologies of power *within* and *through* these extreme spaces of control. Mara's story reveals the draining emotional work of constantly having to make your life liveable and being forced to negotiate the now and make it inhabitable wherever you go. While in the current discussion of everyday bordering (e.g. Yuval-Davis et al., 2018) borderwork is mainly attended to as the administrative and physical work of the "citizen" subject as unprofessional and unpaid border guard, here I want to first draw attention to the emotional dimension of borderwork and secondly, how affective border violence creates different amounts and experiences of emotional borderwork for differently situated bodies. This highlights how states organise the reproduction of life in ways that make it very difficult for specific bodies to maintain mental and bodily health.

Women's acts of screaming, crying or taking their lives shows the extent to which these emotions have become accumulated and shows the collapsing of emotion management; the inability of their bodies to negotiate and manage these feelings any longer. The intensity of the camp experience weighs women down, immobilises them and thus also keeps them from leaving the camp for outside activities. In conversations, asylum seekers often used the words "it's so hard" and "exhausting" to describe the deep tiredness and depletion they experienced as a result of performing the necessary emotional work that is required to live their lives. Hochschild (1983) and James (1992) originally developed the concept of emotional labour to theorise the unpaid and unrecognised emotional work that is typically performed by women in the home. While drawing upon Hochschild and James concept of emotional labour and recognising the import contribution made by Gunaratnam and Lewis (2001) to extend the concept by looking at racialised divisions of labour, I want to argue here for the necessity to examine its entanglement with bordering practices, reaching beyond

the rather fixed categories of gender and race. It also calls for the need to further situate how different locations create and require different amounts of emotional work.

Next to these spaces of extreme intensity and control, there are countless other spaces in which people seeking asylum were forced to perform these unseen emotional labours. One of these spaces was the post office. In the UK, until spring 2017 most people seeking asylum collected their asylum allowance of £37.75 a person a week in cash from a local post office, where they had to present their Application Registration Card that confirms their identity and eligibility for support. In 2017, this practice has been replaced by a visa chip and pin system called the Aspen card that other scholars have identified as another form of violence that uses financial tactics to punish and control populations with precarious citizenship status (Coddington, 2018).

In spring 2016, Cynthia, a woman from Nigeria in her early thirties, told me about her weekly journey to a local post-office in the North of London and how much discomfort she experienced:

> If you go to the post office to pick up your money everyone is looking at you, and you feel so uneasy. I always feel so uneasy …
>
> Sometimes the person giving you the money doesn't even look at your face!

Her experience engages with how the *politics of attention and disregard* are mobilised as an affective technology of racial interpellation, resonating Ann Laura Stoler's (2010) engagement with politics of disregard and inattention as a collective practice in the service of colonial governance. Cynthia describes the *politics of attention and disregards* as two different forms of racialisation creating discomfort: negative interpellation and non-interpellation (Hage, 2010). The first one works through being noticed and made visible in public space and the negative characteristics such as "underserving" and being "a social problem" that are attributed to the figure of the asylum seekers, while the second one is linked to her experience of feeling ignored and invisible. Discomfort thus becomes incarnated on the asylum body through affective processes of racialisation. Attention as well as disregard become powerful tools for creating affective precarity, amplifying difference and feelings of discomfort. Cynthia is worried about the gaze of people at the post office who might be thinking "why is she getting the money anyway?" She lives in constant worry of being recognised as asylum seeker "it just comes to your head all the time", illustrating the space, time and energy that goes into negotiating the emotion and affects these experiences of racialisation create. Her story goes on circling around an event in which the employee of the post office only gave her £34.95:

> One time my money was short by two pounds, but I didn't go back to ask for it, when I realised £2 were missing because you don't call for attention because they look at you.

Cynthia told me that she felt she "just had to walk away". Feelings of worry, shame and fear of "calling for attention" keep her from asking for the missing two pounds. Having been friends with Cynthia for 2 years, I know how valuable these £2 are for her. Many scholars have pointed at the increasing financial precarity people seeking asylum find themselves in (Waite et al., 2013). Cynthia is not allowed to work, as with the majority of people stuck in an asylum process, and so has to live on £37.75 a week, which is not enough to cover her travel expenses to her solicitor, to occasionally see friends and buy food. She relies on other people contributing to her expenses. Yet, Cynthia's discomfort of raising attention is larger than her need for the two pounds.

The story illustrates how appearing in public spaces requires particular forms of emotional labour and the management of emotions from asylum seekers, resulting from their bordered and racialised experiences in these spaces, and the dominant discourse around the "undeserving refugee" that delegitimises their experiences. Cynthia's response also echoes Hochshild's work describing how people of colour manage their feelings to "create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (p. 7). Cynthia had to choose between "walking away" or to risk negative interpellation as "ungrateful" (NAYERI, 2019; Moulin, 2012) asylum seeker.

Cynthia expressed shame about not being able to stand up for herself, not conforming to the internalised model of a subject that "takes care of themselves", of a resistant subjectivity that speaks up and acts:

> I walked away shamefully, but I felt so uncomfortable. I felt like it is my right and I don't exercise is because I don't feel I can do it; I don't feel comfortable around myself. Because when people feel comfortable they can defend their position, but if you're not, of course, you walk away. Even if it is just £2.

This illustrated how emotions such as shame (Munt, 2017; Ahmed, 2013; Zembylas, 2008) and discomfort are mobilised in the service of everyday bordering. Cynthia's feeling also reminds of Ngai's engagement with "ugly feelings", which describe situations in which "the morally degraded and seemingly unjustifiable status of these feelings tends to produce an unpleasurable feeling *about* the feeling" (2005, p. 10), showing how states circulate and multiply affective technologies of power through occupation of emotional and mental space. Shame and discomfort create everyday "unfreedoms" (Cassidy, 2019) and self-incarceration as it limits the possibility of action. It also shows how everyone, from the post office employees to visitors (consciously or not) become involved in performing *emotional borderwork*.

5. Mobilising affective border violence *in* and *through* temporal spaces: the politics of fearful anticipation, continuity and everydayness

In this section I want to illustrate how affective border violence works through several temporal modalities such as anticipation, continuity and the everyday. Next to circulating and multiplying affective technologies through the occupation of emotional and mental space, states mobilise power and violence in and through specific temporal modalities. Here I want to turn to a story about gay clubbing. Christine, a woman from Eritrea in her early 30s, and Dalia, a woman from Somalia in her late 30s, shared their latest experience of going gay clubbing with me in autumn 2016. Dalia and Christine were really excited to go out. As they shared, gay clubbing was supposed to bring some momentary relief, "just fun!" and was supposed to help them to forget "the asylum", "waiting" and "not knowing what will happen" just for one night. However, when they were queuing in front of a gay club, and discovered that the club was checking people's ID, they were confronted again with the affective violence of borders. They recounted:

> Christine: We were so reluctant to bring out the card because they take such a weird look at you
>
> Dalia: And of course it's a moment you don't want to think about it … I felt so uncomfortable, so uncomfortable
>
> Christine: You never know what will happen with those ID checks. I know people get detained in all kinds of different locations. It tends to happen when you don't expect it
>
> Dalia: Yes, that is what tends to happen. This is what makes you crazy. Knowing everything could always happen anywhere. You're never really safe

Both describe the discomforts and deep exhaustion they experience of being confronted yet again with the affective violence of borders that are everywhere. This story shows how even when people seeking asylum try to escape the border for one night, by having fun, they still encounter it and its discomforts. Even though clubbing can be described as a rather informal contact with the state, it is still about documentation, identity and the ways in which asylum seekers negotiate the border through taxing *emotional borderwork*. Similar to Cynthia,

Christine and Dalia's story narrates how the *politics of attention and disregard* are mobilised as an affective technology of racial interpellation. Dalia and Christine, as they told me, were hoping to enter an alternative space in which they are "not forced to identify as anything". The story shows in particular how much emotion management takes place within the temporal space of *fearful anticipation*; of what might happen. Being recognised as an asylum seeker feels unsafe because it could lead to anything; from a racist comment, to violence, to the police being called, to them being detained and potentially even deported. Christine and Dalia have both been detained before. In fact, thirty of the forty people seeking asylum I have spoken to, were detained at least once. Some of them were picked up on the streets, others were detained when reporting to the Home Office; as they are required to do at different intervals. The affective violence of detention, as Dalia and Christine mention here, does not start at the point when people get detained and ends when they are released. It is the constant threat of a possible detention that is violent too; an affective violence that works through keeping people in a constant state of fear and worry. Next to the temporal space of *fearful anticipation*, *in* and *through* which affective border violence is mobilised, Christine and Dalia's story also speaks to the *politics of continuity*.

Clubbing illustrates an important social space as it is an available communal activity of physical pleasure that allows people to bridge different lives. For Dalia and Christine it feels like a "short holiday" from the hard emotional borderwork they are constantly having to perform. Their expressions "knowing everything could always happen anywhere" and "you're never really safe" reveal how intensities of discomfort accumulate and deplete asylum seekers' lives through the continuation and lengths of the experience. The story moreover helps to understand the role the temporal dimension of uncertainty plays in implementing a politics of discomfort. People seeking asylum, in other words, lack temporal predictability that enables them to anticipate their future, leaving them in a constant state of fear and worry. Many subjects engaged within the asylum regime struggle with mental health problems connected to the asylum process being experienced as indefinite and at the same time temporary (Mansouri and Cauchi, 2007).

A growing body of literature has explored how continuity is mobilised politically in the context of asylum, where people seeking asylum are often trapped in spaces of waiting at state borders, refugee camps, reception centres or are subjected to unlimited periods spent in detention centres (Mountz, 2011; Conlon, 2011; Turnbull, 2016; Tazzioli, 2018). Berlant (2007) introduced the term *slow death* to speak to the continued physical wearing out of specific populations through regimes of governmentality. Similarly, Nixon's (2011) work on "slow violence" describes an ongoing destruction playing out across a range of temporal scales (p. 2). As the Berlin camp, post office and gay clubbing stories demonstrate, similar to Berlant's and Nixon's engagement with hidden forms of suffering, affective border violence works in an invisible, gradual and non-linear way. There are no clear beginnings or endings to the slow affective violence of bordering. It does not have a direct action-response relationship: the effects of the violence accumulate gradually and often do not show up in direct response to experiences, but instead they are dispersed across time and space. The increasing number of acts of self-harm within detention centres that recently received much media attention (Mulman, 2018), for example, are often not a direct response to one single event, but rather they are the result of a massive amount of everyday forms of suffering.

As such, I also want to point at the *politics of delay*: affective border violence is also inserted through and in the temporal space of delay. As Nixon (2011) writes: "violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility" (p. 2), highlighting how the *non-eventful* temporal space of *the everyday* is used to invisibilise and depoliticise these "geographies of everyday endurance" (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). These affective, everyday, unspectacular forms of violence often fade from our view as they work in subtle and quiet ways through borders that are invisible to most of us. It is through the invisibility that this violence never achieves a state of having occurred (Povinelli, 2011); no one is held responsible and, in turn, this suits a politics of asylum in which responsibility is pushed back and forth between state authorities and private companies. All three stories illustrates how affective border violence "prospers not in traumatic events (…), but in temporal environments whose qualities and whose contours in time and space are often identified with the presentness of ordinariness itself, that domain of living on" (Berlant, 2007, p. 759). Scholars in the area of feminist geography (Cassidy, 2019; Pain and Staeheli, 2014), sociology (Back, 2015) and coloniality (Mbembe, 1992) have emphasised the importance of paying attention to the everyday as a space *in* which complex processes of power and state regulation take place but also a space *through* which political struggles of racialised and colonialised others are individualised and depoliticised as a technology of power.

6. Negotiating affective border violence through re-claiming bodily and temporal space

In this last section I want to attend to some of the ways in which I observed people seeking asylum negotiating affective border violence through re-claiming bodily and temporal space. While states actively and intentionally mobilise precarity and unlivablity, it is important to also attend to the ways in which subjects engaged within the asylum regime manage to negotiate these multi-layered affective precarities through hard emotional work that allows them to live on. As such, they reclaim their lives as liveable. Krupar (2013), in her work on queer ecology, reminds of the importance of attending to the residual "to that which materially remains and persists in the present, unsupported by present modes of life (p. 14)". According to her, life and death are not organised and experienced in pure opposition, and it is up to us to make visible their ambiguity and uncertainty. As such, the discomfort and depletion as affective states are always a "scene of both liveness and exhaustion" (Stewart, 2007, p. 2). This illustrates that while states organise the reproduction of life in ways that make it very difficult for specific bodies to maintain mental and bodily health, that order is constantly disrupted, subverted and negotiated by people seeking asylum through reclaiming the space of slow affective violence also as a difficult but possible way of life.

In the context of Berlin's camp spaces, women's screaming and crying can be seen as the actively political negotiation of affective border violence as they symbolise ways to release some of these intensities. They mark both the collapsing of emotion-management and, yet, also an active letting-go of that management, so illustrating the ambiguity of these affectivities. In *The Politics of Scream in a Threnody*, Gustavo Chirolla Ospina (2010) argues that screaming "is about making visible, not just a particular sound, but those invisible forces that make it come out" (p.15). Screaming becomes both a speech act and an act of resistance contesting affective border violence as it confronts the power of the invisible affective border violence. It is a "cry against death" (Deleuze, 2002, p. 61) that shows asylum seekers' bodies resisting the condition of *unlivability* (Butler, 2012, 2006) and *slow death* (Berlant, 2007). Deleuze termed these affirmative forces the "power of the future".

In the context of the post office, Cynthia negotiated the intense feelings of discomfort and emotional borderwork created through encountering the politics of attention and disregard, by picking up her allowance on more quiet days:

I never go there on a Monday because they queue is very long. I go when the queue is very short.

Through picking up her allowance on more quiet days she manages to create as much comfort and predictability for herself as possible. This highlights that in the context of affective border violence, resistance and political negotiation must be located beyond normative notions of agency in acts such as decreasing discomfort and depletion through

small day-to-day acts of management. Through these acts, people seeking asylum decrease the amount of emotion management they have to do. As Berlant wrote: “in the scene of slow death, a condition of being worn out by the activity of reproducing life, agency can be an activity of maintenance, not making; fantasy, without grandiosity; sentience, without full intentionality …” (2007, p. 759).

Other ways of creating little gaps of comfort and predictability and by that disrupting affective border violence, were asylum seekers making and sharing their “do-not-do” lists with each other:

Justine: “I don't go out much”

Dara and Charles: “We try to not walk on the streets in the night. That's not safe”

Emmanuel: “I don't allow myself to relax for a just a minute, because that minute might be the moment when I get detained or deported”

Mina: “You can't forget. You *always* need to remember”

Joseph: “I don't go away for more than one night, I might receive an important letter”

Aazar: “I don't travel at peak times because that costs more”

Solomon: “I don't take the overground or tube, that's much more expensive than the bus”

While these “do-not-do” lists reveal the massive amounts of everyday unfreedom asylum seekers experienced, they were also actions to managing emotions and uncertainty. Through drastically reducing their encounters *of* and *in* spaces (and actions) that would most certainly lead to discomfort, precarity and unsafely, people seeking asylum reduce feelings and thoughts of fearful anticipation and, instead, engage in their own future-making.

Lastly, in the context of gay clubbing, I observed people seeking asylum disrupting affective border violence through a politics of fun. As Christine and Dalia shared, going gay clubbing creates a little gap of comfort and happiness as it offers them the possibility to forget about “the asylum”, constant “waiting” and “not knowing”. It moreover allows them to strip away their identity as an asylum seeker for one night and to practice another identity, which can ease burden and bring about relief. Playfulness, laughter and displays of fun are ways to reclaim life within a condition of ongoing exposure to multiple affective precarities and unlivability, highlighting the everyday as a site of political action and negotiation. However, it is important to mention that next to the asylum, the LGBT identity is also forcefully instrumentalised in the asylum process, in which asylum seekers feel the demand to appear in public and perform a visible LGBT identity to be considered worthy candidates for asylum (Lewis, 2014). Despite the forced visibility that people seeking asylum encounter in the space of gay clubbing, Christine and Dalia shared that “just being there” nevertheless represents for them an important articulation of LGBT rights.

7. Conclusion

This paper offered a discussion on the emotional everyday work of borders. The journey showed how states mobilise the political power of intensities in the asylum day-to-day to uphold and amplify processes of bordering and racialisation. It also revealed how much negotiation and emotion management goes into embodying the border. Living on, in the day-to-day existence of affective border violence, leads to feelings of extreme exhaustion; a gradual depletion of asylum seekers' lives. I conceptualised affective border violence as a form of *slow violence* as it is experienced as an ongoing, invisible and gradual violence that often stays hidden from public eyes. Yet, these stories also revealed political possibilities within the condition of *slow death*. This paper also offered examples of asylum seekers’ political agency located beyond normative understandings of what it means to be a political subject. These examples include little acts of day-to-day management, fun and screaming. Asylum seekers' acts of emotion management always seemed to be linked to creating little gaps of comfort in the otherwise violence asylum everyday and therefore must be seen as a form of political negotiation that is in conversation with states mobilising politics of discomfort.

This paper thus highlighted the importance of attending to borders as affectionate and emotional and added to the literature by further illustrating the interconnectedness of different spaces and temporalities of violence. It moreover engaged with everyday state occupations beyond the physical and material and demonstrated the massive amounts of everyday incarceration (Cassidy, 2019) people seeking asylum experience through affective technologies of governance. Finally, this paper offered a development of the concept of emotional labour by examining its entanglement with bordering practices. It calls for the need to further situate how different locations create and require different amounts of emotion work and management.

Funding

This research was funded by the PhD Excellence Scholarship from University of East London and the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in Relational and Territorial Politics of Bordering, Identities and Transnationalization (RELATE).

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