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4 Transnational (Im)mobilities and Informality in Europe

5 Ignacio Fradejas-García¹, Abel Polese², and Fazila Bhimji³

6 *Abstract*

7 *People around the globe rely on informal practices to resist, survive, care and relate to each other beyond the control and*
 8 *coercive presence of institutions and states. In the EU, regimes of mobility at multiple scales affect various people on the*
 9 *move who are pushed into informality in order to acquire social mobility while having to combat border regimes,*
 10 *racialization, inequalities, and state bureaucracies. This text explores how mobilities and informality are entangled with*
 11 *one another when it comes to responding to the social, political, and economic inequalities that are produced by border and*
 12 *mobility regimes. Within this frame, the ethnographic articles in this special issue go beyond national borders to connect*
 13 *the production of mobility and informality at multiple interconnected scales, from refugees adapting to settlement*
 14 *bureaucracies locally to transit migrants coping with the selective external borders of the EU, or from transnational*
 15 *entrepreneurs' ability to move between formal and informal norms to the multiple ways in which transnational mobility*
 16 *informally confronts economic, social and political constraints. In sum, this volume brings together articles on informality*
 17 *and mobility that take account of the elusive practices that deal with the inequalities of mobility and immobility.*

18 **Keywords:** *informality; (im)mobility; transnationalism; Europe; mobility regimes; informal practices*

19 **Introduction**

20 Humanity's ever-increasing mobilities around the globe are commonly dichotomized between
 21 the mobilities of the undeserved and the deserving on the move. While violent conflicts,
 22 natural disasters, poverty and political repression are causing the involuntary mobility and
 23 immobility of millions, tourists, businesspeople and other cosmopolitans have access to a
 24 wider degree of mobility. The dichotomy between privileged global citizens and unwanted,
 25 stigmatized migrants, undocumented or not, excludes those who are betwixt and between. By
 26 bringing together wanted and unwanted human mobilities in Europe (Loftsdóttir, 2018), we
 27 look at the unequal relations and structures of power that limit or facilitate mobility and
 28 immobility – hereafter (im)mobilities – within transnational social fields (Glick Schiller &
 29 Salazar, 2013), as well as enquire into the daily informal activities that respond to the unequal
 30 distribution of *motility*, that is, the potential to be mobile (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004).

31 As a starting point, mobility generates social and cultural change at various scales (King &
 32 Skeldon, 2010) and boosts transnational activities, connections, linkages, positions, and
 33 belongings across national borders (Dahinden, 2017). Globally, the climate, urban, and
 34 migration crises have created new challenges for how power and inequality inform the
 35 governance and control of mobilities (Sheller, 2018). The climate crisis is affecting the urge

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36 for greener mobilities and decarbonized transportation, while with more than half of the
 37 global population living in cities, urban mobilities are impacted by excluding some populations
 38 from public spaces and privileging others. Moreover, racism and xenophobia directed against
 39 migrants and other people on the move is on the rise, nurtured by extreme right-wing parties
 40 (Rossell Hayes & Dudek, 2019) and making some *categories* of people on the move more
 41 vulnerable. The same can be said for the current COVID lockdown. It has been estimated
 42 that worldwide 1.6 billion informal workers face the dilemma of risking contagion by working
 43 outside their homes or remaining immobile at home and dying of starvation (ILO, 2020).

44 In some cases, formal structures can help people cope with the new demands arising from
 45 mobilities. The process of European integration has strongly fostered work- or family-related
 46 mobilities: according to Eurostat (2018), 19.3 million European Union (EU) citizens are
 47 residing in a country different from the one they were born in. Within this context of the
 48 increasing internal mobility of people, things, ideas and services, even a fairly well-regulated
 49 framework like the EU is likely to reveal inequality, or at least a lack of social or economic
 50 evenness. However, in certain other cases, current structures, formulas and institutions are
 51 shutting their doors and placing hurdles in the way of certain mobilities with mobility regimes
 52 at different levels (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013): “even those who have obtained citizenship
 53 are increasingly at risk for surveillance, harassment and even deportation” (Glick Schiller,
 54 2018: 206). As a result, a heterogeneous group of people on the move is being disregarded,
 55 resulting in their being increasingly pushed into informal practices and informality in order to
 56 cope with the fetters of control and the securitization of undeserved mobilities.

57 Much has been written about informality since the seminal work of Keith Hart (1973). Initially
 58 the word was used to refer to economic phenomena, but further consideration expanded the
 59 scope of research on informality to include any activities that are deliberately concealed from
 60 the state. Informal practices, defined as activities that happen outside the controlling or
 61 coercing presence of one or more states or their institutions (Routh, 2011) may be regarded
 62 as a mechanism limiting or reversing the unequal situations experienced by those who are
 63 formally excluded for a variety of reasons in respect of access to services, capital, and
 64 opportunities. This introduction argues that geographical mobilities and informality are
 65 entangled with one another when it comes to responding to the social, political, and economic
 66 inequalities that are produced by border and mobility regimes.

67 In what follows, this introduction unpacks and connects the literature on transnational
 68 (im)mobilities and informality and sets the scene for the collection of articles presented in this
 69 special issue.⁴ This collection brings together contributions that provide further empirical
 70 evidence of the existence, performance, and persistence of informal practices, and/or explore
 71 the relationships between transnationalism, (im)mobility, and informal practices in western
 72 Europe. To this end, our aim is to fill a gap in studies combining mobilities and informality,
 73 contribute to the still incipient post-structuralist research into informal practices in west
 74 Europe, and provide a nuanced understanding of the production of informality by
 75 geographical and social (im)mobilities.

⁴This special issue has its roots in a panel convened by Ignacio Fradejas-García and Abel Polese at the SIEF conference in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) in April 2019 entitled “Transnationalism, (im)mobilities and informal practices in Europe, and beyond”. Selected papers were discussed in a similarly named workshop at the MIDEX Center at the University of Central Lancashire on 7th February 2020.



76 Transnational (im)mobilities and informality

77 The transnational paradigm highlights the importance of the social, political, and cultural
 78 practices that link places of origin and settlement (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc,
 79 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Approximately 30% of migrants have
 80 regular transnational relationships (Lubbers, Verdery, & Molina, 2018) and some critics argue
 81 that not all migrants participate regularly in transnational activities (Portes, Guarnizo, &
 82 Landolt, 1999), overlooking the fact that this is a matter of the degree of involvement in
 83 transnational practices, as studies of informal social support have shown (Bilecen &
 84 Sienkiewicz, 2015). Other critics have identified a social convergence between the societies of
 85 origin and destination (Waldinger, 2015), a view that reinforces the notion of methodological
 86 nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), which assumes the existence of “social and
 87 cultural homogeneity within the unit of the nation state as well as within the migrant
 88 population” (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013: 3). In order to avoid these limitations here, we
 89 adopt a multi-scalar analysis “where local, regional, national, pan-regional and global are not
 90 separate levels of analysis, but rather are part of mutually constituting institutional and
 91 personal networks of unequal power within which people, both with and without migrant
 92 histories live their lives” (Glick Schiller, 2015: 277).

93 The *mobilities turn* has placed the movement of people, things and knowledge at the centre of
 94 social analysis and claims that theories of migration and transnationalism are valuable but
 95 limited when it comes to researching the importance of opportunities and constraints on
 96 mobility and immobility for day-to-day lives (Cresswell, 2006; Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006).
 97 Within this paradigm all forms of mobility might be addressed, thus questioning the objects
 98 of social enquiry and developing new methodologies (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Observing a basic
 99 signifier of mobility that is moving from point A to point B, migration and push-pull theories
 100 fail to explore the intermediate line connecting these two points (Cresswell, 2006). As only
 101 the beginning and end of the process are visible, there is a persistent tendency to ignore what
 102 is happening in between those two points. This is not just a physical or geographical concern:
 103 by defining informality as the “space between two formal rules” (Polese, 2016: 26), it has
 104 become clear that processes of getting to a destination are as important as the outcome, the
 105 fact that you got there, or did not. It is thus by understanding migration as one type of mobility
 106 among others that we can shed light on transnationalism as a paradigm that connects
 107 migration with mobilities, thus allowing vertical and horizontal analyses at various scales.

108 Within this framework, we contend that even migrants with illegal status and therefore limited
 109 geographical mobility depend on informal transnational networks for social support and are
 110 connected through social and economic remittances with their countries of origin (e.g.
 111 Mazzucato, 2011). Indeed, knowledge and things are an important part of the transnational
 112 flexibility of maintaining personal networks. Accordingly, rather than perceiving migration,
 113 mobilities, and transnationalism as incompatible, we merge these concepts in order to acquire
 114 a more nuanced understanding of current systems and regimes of mobility.

115 The regimes of mobility dealt with here are approached from both functionalist and discursive
 116 perspectives (Baker, 2016). On the one hand, the functionalist approach looks at the norms,
 117 policies, regulations, and infrastructure that govern movement and mobile subjects (Jensen,
 118 2013; Kesselring, 2014; Koslowski, 2011). On the other hand, the discursive approach seeks
 119 to understand how power structures shape the mobility and stasis of individuals through
 120 categories such as race or class (Glick Schiller, 2018; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013).

121 Consequently, the question here shifts from the amount and duration of mobilities to “how
122 the formation, regulation, and distribution of these mobilities are shaped and patterned by
123 existing social, political, and economic structures” (Salazar, 2014: 60). By way of example,
124 transnational mobilities are also shaped by ethnic enclaves (Molina, Valenzuela-Garúa,
125 Lubbers, García-Macías, & Pampalona, 2015), supranational organizations (Fradejas-García
126 & Mülli, 2019) or gendered transnational connections (Zani, 2019).

127 Since being coined, the word “informality” has been used to refer to several different,
128 although related, phenomena. As already noted, Keith Hart was probably the first scholar to
129 identify, and study, a number of informal economic practices (1973). However, the
130 International Labor Organization’s interest in informal labor from 1972 opened the debate to
131 various disciplines and approaches. The work of Scott on moral economies (1976) and the
132 power relationships between peasants and their landowners (1985) have been followed by
133 economic anthropologists (Hann & Hart, 2011). Policy-makers and political scientists
134 unlocked debates on the effective governance of post-colonial states (Leff, 1964; Palmier,
135 1983). Critical post-socialist studies found inspiration in informality as a way of opening up
136 the discussion on development, governance, and corruption, as well as questioning the
137 mainstreaming of imported practices, mechanisms, and institutions from the West
138 (Humphrey, 2002; Jancsics, 2013; Millington, Eberhardt, & Wilkinson, 2005; Polese, Morris,
139 Kovács, & Harboe, 2014). Informality is now seen as a socially embedded phenomenon
140 (Granovetter, 1983) found in all segments of societies worldwide (Morris & Polese, 2014) that
141 is not limited to the economic sphere, but is integrated into society and state governance
142 (Polese, Williams, Horodnic, & Bejakovic, 2017).

143 The question here concerns the subjective boundaries and legal differences between informal
144 and criminal activities. The matrix below (see Table 1), taken from Van Schendel and
145 Abrahams (Schendel & Abraham, 2005), separates legal/illegal and licit/illicit, where the licit
146 might be illegal but nonetheless socially acceptable to all or some segments of a population.
147 There is a second notion, based on notions of direct and indirect harm (Polese, 2015). Murder
148 harms a society since it deprives it of its labor force, but it also directly harms a fellow human
149 being. Trafficking, kidnapping, and theft follow the same logic. However, fiscal
150 noncompliance mainly harms the state and only then, and only indirectly, fellow citizens. A
151 lower fiscal income either puts more pressure on honest taxpayers or reduces the amount
152 available for the state’s population. Nontransparent hiring practices rarely harm a single
153 person directly (unless that person is given a job and then deprived of it in a last-minute
154 change), but it can indirectly harm society by placing incompetent individuals in key positions.
155 For example, informal enterprises and hiring practices may break official rules, dispense with
156 permits, and avoid taxes, but they are not obviously criminal because they provide income-
157 earning opportunities and goods and services that are necessary and/or desired by the public
158 (Bromley & Wilson, 2018).



163 **Table 1.** The relationship between legality and licitness adapted from (Schendel & Abraham,
 164 2005), and direct (affecting fellow citizens), indirect (affecting a society) harm and legality.

	Legal		Illegal	
Licit	State and social norms overlap	Indirect harm (might be licit)		Society allows something that is forbidden by state institutions or codes
		Laws that favor one (ethnic, religious) group over others (are licit for the favored ones)	Fiscal fraud, nepotism, ethnic or religious discrimination	
Illicit	The state does not punish actions that are stigmatized socially (by one or more communities)	Direct harm (mostly illicit)		State and social norms overlap
		Use legal action against the unaware to extort money or property; clauses written in a smaller font at the end of a contract	Murder, trafficking, heavy drug dealing, ethnic violence (might be licit in some cases)	

165 The above matrix acts to circumscribe the scope of this special issue and to suggest the range
 166 of activities that are not regulated by the state (Routh, 2011) but are either socially acceptable
 167 or do not harm fellow human beings directly. Although many operating in the informal sector
 168 might suggest that “a little bit of informality” will not harm someone “too much,” there is no
 169 evidence for this. A single failure to comply with tax obligations will not harm the state’s
 170 capacity per se, but when this happens a million times, what Scott (2012) calls “infrapolitics,”
 171 the aggregate affect may be to reduce the budget allocated to healthcare and consequently the
 172 capacity of public hospitals to treat patients. This may result in higher mortality rates and a
 173 larger number of individuals going to private hospitals. This is also why informality then
 174 happens “in spite” of the state, through parallel mechanisms that replace state structures or
 175 stretch “beyond the state” to reach spheres of governance that the state is unwilling or unable
 176 to deal with (Davis & Polese, 2015; Polese, Kovács, & Jancsics, 2018). Inasmuch as direct and
 177 indirect harm cannot be understood in absolute terms, they nonetheless provide an initial
 178 interpretative framework that allows informality to be seen not as intrinsically negative and
 179 obnoxious, but as a component of state governance.

180 **Looking for new recipes: informal practices along European (im)mobilities**

181 Of course, we need to weigh up the pros and cons of mobilities and informality as overarching
 182 concepts. Both permit interdisciplinary dialogue, bring together social processes that are
 183 apparently disconnected, and relate basic research to policy-making. However, the problem is
 184 lazy and/or ad-hoc definitions that make these conceptualizations useless. Peter Adey's article
 185 "If Mobility is Everything Then it is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)mobilities"
 186 (Adey, 2006) argues that, while everything may be on the move, it can all appear fixed and
 187 stable because there are different types of mobility, requiring a "relational politics of
 188 (im)mobilities that takes into account not only the differences between movement, but their
 189 contingent relatedness" (Adey, 2006). However, the dialectical understanding of dichotomies
 190 such as that between mobility and immobility needs to go beyond the asymmetrical tautology
 191 that axiomatically takes as passive one of the poles: that is, mobile cosmopolitans versus
 192 immobile locals (Franquesa 2011). Similarly, informality and formality need each other to
 193 operate, it being desirable to go beyond the asymmetrical view that takes informality to be the
 194 result of formal constraints. The present focus on the formal-informal continuum (Morris &
 195 Polese, 2014) is the best strategy for avoiding the "hierarchical binary mode of thought"
 196 (Derrida cited in Williams and Onoshenko 2014: 22). Indeed, looking at how these concepts
 197 intersect in social practices, we can play with words in order to tie the ends together and talk
 198 about *(im)mobilities* and *(in)formalities*.

199 The *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality* (Ledeneva, 2018) and countless books and articles from
 200 various disciplines may leave the impression that everything to do with informality has already
 201 been said and done. Undoubtedly, informality research is no longer radical. However, we
 202 argue that by changing our spectacles and working in parallel with other paradigms, there is
 203 still room to develop social theory further and to increase our understanding of complex
 204 systems. Thus, while there is a good body of literature on migration-related issues and
 205 informality in Europe (e.g. Baldwin-Edwards and Arango 1999), as well as some studies about
 206 'transnational informality' in post-socialist spaces (e.g. Cieslewska 2014; Yalcin-Heckmann
 207 2014; Turaeva 2014; Urinboyev and Polese 2016), mobilities – broadly conceived – have
 208 remained relatively understudied in connection with informality. Thus, taken as a whole, this
 209 Special Issue makes three contributions to the current debate on informality and mobility.

210 First, it provides empirical evidence about informality in west European countries and moves
 211 beyond post-socialist countries, the Global South and the development settings in which
 212 informality research has been mostly grounded. Nowadays, the vast literature on informality
 213 acknowledges its ubiquity but is mostly based on evidence from non-western contexts. For
 214 example, in the Global Informality Project there are 57 entries for the EU out of the total of
 215 250, only 29⁵ of which are in non-post-socialist EU countries. Similarly, we see the same
 216 phenomenon in some compilations on global informality with contributions from all around
 217 the world (Polese, Russo, & Strazzari, 2019; Polese et al., 2017), but there is less scholarship
 218 specifically examining European contexts.

219 It might be argued that there are fewer studies focusing on continents such as South America
 220 or Africa, but here the number of researchers and the availability of funding are not

⁵ https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Global_Informality_Project Practices in the EU: Italy (7), UK (7), Germany (6), France (2), Greece (2), Finland (2), Denmark, Norway and Sweden, Austria, Netherlands and Spain. For some countries, such as Belgium, Portugal and Cyprus, there are as yet no entries. [last accessed 1.03.2020]



221 comparable. The reasons are varied, but the fact that informality is intertwined and embedded
 222 in formality in more complex ways in western contexts (Morris & Polese, 2014) makes it more
 223 difficult to research. Finally, focusing on western informality takes us beyond the transitory
 224 and transitology aspects of the informal theories and governance systems that have been
 225 exported *from* western institutions and promoted in post-socialist and development contexts.
 226 Thus, this special issue aims to fill some of these gaps through a focus on researching
 227 informality in the EU and in western countries generally.

228 Second, using this framework we can sit at the same table with undeserved and deserving
 229 people on the move. The EU's unequal regime of mobility privileges the arrival of skilled
 230 immigrants through official migration channels (Sandoz, 2020) and/or promotes temporal or
 231 seasonal mobility programs of cheap labor from both among its own citizens (Caro, Berntsen,
 232 Lillie, & Wagner, 2015) and outside the EU (Molinero Gerbeau et al., 2016), while coercing
 233 the other mobilities of unwanted and racialized populations. In the last three decades, the
 234 growing and expanding borders of the EU have refashioned the business of illegality
 235 (Andersson, 2014), forcing migrants to risk their lives to cross borders or to live in fear within
 236 the EU because of their deportability (De Genova, 2002). The so-called "refugee crisis" of
 237 2015 made visible a regime of deservingness, opposing vulnerable refugees to opportunistic
 238 and unworthy (im)migrants who had voluntarily and freely made the choice to cross borders
 239 to seek a better life (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). The deterioration of living conditions after
 240 the long financial crisis and the related rise in populism, nationalism, and racism in Europe
 241 made people on the move the target and subjected them to being controlled by an increasing
 242 body of rules (Likic-Brboric, Slavnic, & Woolfson, 2013). The "deservingness" regime has
 243 expanded to most national aliens. Thus, the border plays the double role of contention
 244 externally and of the threat of deportability internally. The European border regime (Hess &
 245 Kasperek, 2017) is thus a double-edged sword of Damocles for non-EU citizens who have
 246 not had the full privilege of moving freely within the EU, thus forcing people to live in the
 247 grey areas where informality reigns.

248 Moreover, the celebrated "freedom of mobility" within the EU has several implications for
 249 how mobility shapes informality. Mobility control is exercised at other scales, such as
 250 emplacement in cities, labor rights, access to documents or daily racialization in being policed.
 251 Thus, although informality might be produced by mobility itself, mobility never occurs devoid
 252 of regulation. Regimes of mobility at various scales (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) are the
 253 key to understanding how different people on the move rely on informal practices. Thus, this
 254 special issue contributes to shedding light on how the EU and national regimes of mobility
 255 generate illegal apparatuses governing both the internal and external mobilities that forces
 256 people to rely on informal practices. The question here is, do the mobilities of internal EU
 257 immigrants and international (undocumented) immigrants produce different informal
 258 practices?

259 Third, we are not only looking at geographical movement but also at social mobility, especially
 260 upward mobility. Physical and socio-economic mobilities are entangled in migration and
 261 transnational mobilities in many ways. Indeed, in many cases transnational mobilities are
 262 fostered not by ideology but for work chains promoted by global capitalism (Portes, 2001).
 263 In this complex understanding of mobilities, we need to address the relationship between
 264 mobility and immobility, which has not so far been a focus of attention within migration
 265 studies. Accordingly, informal practices might be regarded as ways of improving the socio-

266 economic situations of individuals or groups, not limited to survival strategies but to opening
 267 up a space for informal practices among elites and those who are accommodated.

268 **Ethnographies of informality and (im)mobility in this volume**

269 The informal practices and transnational (im)mobilities of people, ideas, and objects are
 270 pervasive and intrinsically elusive. The former operate in grey areas of daily life: “they are
 271 often invisible, resist articulation and measurement, and hide behind paradoxes, unwritten
 272 rules and open secrets” (Ledeneva 2018: 7). The latter are socially embedded, the social
 273 structures that permit activity being inherently difficult to analyze and measure as a whole
 274 because they work simultaneously at various scales and places (Lubbers et al., 2018). Given
 275 this complex research environment, the ethnographic studies presented in this volume are
 276 based in a “long-term and open-ended commitment, generous attentiveness, relational depth,
 277 and sensitivity to context” (Ingold, 2014: 384) that allows the authors to offer a deep
 278 understanding of specific social practices.

279 As the above discussion has demonstrated, the idea of informal practices has been extensively
 280 discussed in different contexts, but there has been relatively less analysis of the way we come
 281 to understand informal endeavors when people on the move are pushed into informality in
 282 order to acquire social mobility while having to combat border regimes, racialization,
 283 inequalities, and state bureaucracies. Linking mobility and informality gives this special issue
 284 a coherence in that it advances existing knowledge on informality in western Europe and goes
 285 beyond previous accounts of informality and migration. Based on evidence from non-post-
 286 socialist and non-Global South contexts, such as Spain, Germany, the UK, and Greece, and
 287 two mobility corridors between post-socialist and western contexts, namely Finland-Estonia
 288 and Romania-Spain, the articles in this collection provide ethnographic analyses of the rich
 289 connections between transnationalism, mobilities, border regimes, and informal practices.

290 Three of the articles in this issue demonstrate the connections between the inequalities of
 291 transnational mobilities and the informal practices that people carry out in making a living.
 292 Thus, Laure Sandoz critically explores the concepts of informality and entrepreneurship in a
 293 situation of unequal access to formal resources. Grounded in the example of transnational
 294 entrepreneurs in Barcelona, she argues that an entrepreneurial ability to mobilize economic,
 295 cultural, social, and moral resources is key to managing formal or informal norms in a given
 296 context. Ignacio Fradejas-García interrogates the role of the automobile system and of
 297 informal practices in migrants’ daily work and life mobilities. Based on multi-sited
 298 ethnographic fieldwork among low-wage transnational Romanian immigrants in Spain,
 299 Fradejas-García defines *informal automobilities* as a set of livelihood strategies and infrapolitical
 300 activities that use cars to confront the constraints of geographical and social mobility regimes
 301 in order to make a living. His findings are also relevant to thinking about the impact a carless
 302 or post-car world would have on populations that rely on the current automobility system to
 303 survive or oppose unequal regimes of mobility. Also drawing on transnational and translocal
 304 strategies, Pihla Maria Siim examines the persistent inequalities of mobilities and informal
 305 practices as she explains the ways in which informal, gendered, translocal care affects the
 306 everyday lives of Estonian family members in different ways when they migrate to Finland.
 307 In her study, she demonstrates how “skilled” and “professional” migrants enjoy the privilege
 308 of providing transnational care with relative ease as they move back and forth between Finland



309 and Estonia in more flexible ways, in comparison to working-class migrants who are forced
310 to find care through their networks and extended family members in Finland and Estonia.

311 This special issue includes a second set of three articles that analyze the links between border
312 regimes, bureaucracies, and informal practices, as well as moral evaluations of these practices.
313 Romm Lewkowicz's study demonstrates how 'unauthorized' migrants on the move evaluate
314 passports and legal papers in terms of their efficacy to cross borders rather than legality or
315 formality. Lewkowicz shows how the EU border regimes obscure how illegality is embedded
316 in the legal/illegal distinction that criminalizes asylum-seeking and depict migrants as agents
317 or victims of illegality. Fazila Bhimji and Nelly Wernet show how refugees in Germany go
318 "beyond the state" to defy rules and regulations related to movement within Germany and
319 find ways to reside in Berlin, where they strive for social mobility by networking with informal
320 associations that assist them with housing. In doing so, the refugees understand that their
321 staying in Berlin is against the law, but they consider their decisions and actions necessary for
322 their economic and social well-being.

323 Hilal Alkan analyzes how refugees traverse border regimes with the help of human smugglers
324 whom they refer to as *simsars*, especially when encountering housing and employment
325 bureaucracies in Berlin and Leipzig. Alkan discusses the emic understandings and moral
326 evaluations of her interlocutors in relation to the state's assessments: refugees denigrate the
327 services of the *simsars* when they provide 'illegal' support with housing, but normalize the
328 service of human smugglers. These views contradict the state's perceptions. Finally, Caroline
329 Blunt shows the importance of informalities for refugees in a resettlement program in the
330 UK. The lack of informal social infrastructure in the location of resettlement raises intriguing
331 questions about how formal procedures can promote informality. Blunt asserts that, where an
332 informal social infrastructure was available, refugees in these localities conveyed an experience
333 of positive processes of life, resonating with Hage's (Hage, 2005) discussion of existential
334 movement, and showing that, where this infrastructure was unavailable, refugees conveyed
335 the experience of a persistent or even worsening sense of biographical interruption than that
336 to which forced migration has generally been compared.

337 The contribution of the articles presented in this volume show how informality can be used
338 to complement the state (or states), find solutions to novel problems arising from
339 (im)mobilities, and enable access to services, capital, and opportunities for those who are
340 formally excluded or constrained by EU mobility regimes. Mobility generates changes and
341 challenges that are addressed in different ways. In the current overheated world (Eriksen,
342 2016), the human population is being stressed by simultaneous systemic and overlapped crises
343 – climate, urban, migration, economic, identity, and now the COVID19 pandemic. Formal
344 structures can help cope with the new demands rising from mobilities, but in certain other
345 cases current structures, formulas and institutions are not able to respond. Future research on
346 the links between (in)formalities and (im)mobilities could help us understand how to deal with
347 the impact of the inequalities that are being generated by multiple global crises.

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