

On multiple spacetimes in the everyday lives of irregular migrants in Finland

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Abstract: This article explores how multiple layers of spacetimes overlap and merge in individuals' lives and relationships, transforming, enhancing, and/or hampering their abilities to interact with the environment. Drawing upon content-analysed ethnographic notes, the article investigates the case of irregular migrants in Finland. It shows how their past activities, practices, and relationships, as well as their

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hopes and fears for the future, materially shape their now-times. The latter change and evolve through a relentless combination of different past and future elements, in multiple, disparate, and often contradictory ways. This article considers how these migrants survive by inventing new activities and practices and building social relationships (with local residents and their own communities) on a daily basis, negotiating disparate elements, such as laws, digital and physical spaces, and work- and health-related issues. In so doing, migrants acquire, in roundabout (non-linear) ways, the knowledge and capacity to deal with their current, stressful conditions. The article shows how a spatio-temporal approach can transform the emotional geographies of irregular migrants by shedding light on how they navigate the disparate and often conflicting elements of their lives, activities, and relationships.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This article explores how multiple layers of past and future spacetimes overlap and merge in migrants' everyday lives and relationships, transforming, enhancing, and/or hampering, in non-linear ways, their ability to interact with the environment in their now-times. This relational approach can enhance understanding of how the multiple, often conflicting, interconnections coming from disparate spacetimes transform the emotional geographies of irregular migrants in Finland.

Irregular migration is becoming an increasingly important issue, and scholars have investigated its multiple facets, including the effects of immigration policy on irregular migrants (Czaika & Hobolt, 2016; Triandafyllidou & Dimintriadi, 2014; Van der Leun, 2006), the controversial questions of their citizenship (Nordling et al., 2017) and agency (Hellgren 2014; Mainwaring 2016; Schweitzer, 2017), and their capacity to resist the hardships they encounter. Empirical research has scrutinized the living conditions of irregular migrants, exposing elements such as their vulnerability (Schweitzer, 2017), exploitation (Bloch et al., 2009), use of social media (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014) to maintain contact with family and friends and find means of survival in the host country, traumatic experiences (Bustamante et al., 2018; Priebe et al., 2016), sometimes limited social relationships (Sigona, 2012), precarious mental and physical conditions (Muntaner et al., 2010), and practices of agency (Sigona, 2012; Triandafyllidou, 2017). The livelihoods of irregular migrants have

also been thoroughly investigated by numerous ethnographic studies (Fontanari, 2017; Jauhiainen & Tedeschi, 2021; Khosravi, 2010a, 2010b; Picozza, 2017—to cite but a few).

These scholarly works have shown how the everyday livelihoods of migrant individuals are heavily affected by structural frameworks, welfare and migration regimes (Ambrosini, 2013), the formal and /informal labour markets (Hellgren, 2014), and the institutional/political structures in different national contexts (Koopmans et al., 2005). This may prompt the growth of semi-illegal activities to facilitate survival (Ambrosini, 2018), mostly linked to the extensive social networks and informal relationships that irregular migrants rely on when trying to settle in a host country (Jauhiainen & Tedeschi, 2021).

Additionally, scholars have extensively examined the agency of irregular migrants and their active construction of subjecthood (Grønseth, 2013; Strange et al., 2017; Tedeschi, 2020). Key elements of such agency and construction of subjecthood are migrants' emotions; for example, Campos-Delgado (2019) stressed that emotions fully contribute to the spacemaking and becoming of migrants. Spacemaking consists of 'migrants' coping strategies, experiences, and struggles' (Tervonen et al., 2018, p. 140); everyday survival tactics (De Certeau, 1984); and fight against mental stress. Indeed, 'mixed and contrasting emotions and feelings such as hope and nostalgia, guilt and ambition, affection and disaffection – to name but a few – are an integral part of the life experiences of migrants' (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p. 73).

In this article, we aim to capture, from these disparate, contradictory, and in-becoming dimensions in the everyday practices of irregular migrants (survival strategies, labour markets, semi-legal/illegal activities, social networks, precarious living conditions, and practices of agency), the continuous and discontinuous spatio-temporal relationships, intersections, and negotiations underpinning the emotional geographies of irregular migrants in Finland. These geographies reveal how they survive hardship and find new ways to make ends meet in the (often rejecting) host countries (i.e. in the countries where they reside without full permission to do so—the host countries—and/or in the countries where they have applied for residence, such as through asylum, and had their applications rejected—the rejecting countries).

Specifically, drawing upon the existing literature regarding relational geographies, migration's spatio-temporal dimensions, and materiality (Blazek et al., 2019; Mendoza &

Morén-Alegret, 2013; Tolia-Kelly, 2004), the article highlights an embodied understanding of how multidimensional, disparate spacetimes come together and become materialized, via emotions, in irregular migrants' bodies and through migrants' multifaceted everyday micro-practices and relationships, using Finland as an empirical context. The multidimensionality of migrants' bodies is made of their countries of origin; the places crossed during their journeys, with their individual laws and regulations; the 'rejecting' destination country, Finland, with its legal, economic, sociocultural, and security rules; and the migrants' past experiences and anticipated futures. Irregular migrants need to fight daily for their livelihoods and survival, not only with the current/future spacetimes, but also with all past material strata of events, spaces, breaks, stressful mental conditions, and often traumas. Based on an ethnographic study, this article contributes to the literature on emotional geographies and the multidimensionality of spacetimes in migration studies by deconstructing theoretical conceptualizations into the everyday practices and relationships of irregular migrants. Despite our empirical focus on irregular migrants, the multidimensionality of spacetimes transforming individual realities via emotions can be more broadly applied to other human geography studies and beyond.

The article answers the following research question: How do irregular migrants' emotions affect their ability to negotiate their everyday lives and exploit their relationships in these multiple, contradictory, yet interrelated, material spacetimes?

The next sections will thus be devoted to outlining the spacetimes theoretical framework and its application to the fieldwork.

2 SPACETIMES COMING TOGETHER IN IRREGULAR MIGRANTS' LIVES— THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Drawing on the relational geographies and migration literature regarding spatio-temporal and emotional dimensions and their materiality, this article contributes to the irregular migration literature by showing, from both a theoretical and empirical perspective, how multiple, often conflicting levels of spacetimes (past, present, and future) coexist inseparably in migrants' various relationships and everyday experiences, and how the movements of these spacetimes, via migrants' emotions, materially transform their actions. In this way, we aim to show how spacetimes influence and transform the emotional geographies of irregular migrants in Finland.

Eminent scholars from various disciplines have examined space as an active part of individuals' lives (e.g. Anderson & Wylie, 2009; Buchanan & Lambert, 2005; Doel, 1999; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015; Shubin, 2015; Simpson, 2013). As Simonsen maintained, 'our "environment" does not arrange itself as something given in advance but as a totality of equipment dealt with in practice' (2010, p. 222). Similarly, time cannot be conceptualized only as absolute or linear, beginning in the past and moving from the present to the future: in fact, 'a number of heterogeneous elements thrive together and constitute a multiplicity of relations that give rise to the moments of becoming that we perceive as the present' (Blazek et al. 2019, p. 66). The three dimensions—past, present, and future—are different yet the same; they overlap and merge in the multiple relationships, practices, and activities that construct a space.

Additionally, multidimensional spacetimes bring together past experiences and memories; expectations and fears for the future; and the physical, social, and mental dimensions of space, which together transform the now-time (Hägerstrand, 2009). The now-time is 'at the same time the constant present and the steadily ongoing transformation of future to past' (Ellegård & Svedin, 2012, p. 21). In this sense, the article specifically analyses irregular migrants' relationships and everyday activities as a coming together of multiple, material, past–present–future spacetimes, in which past social relationships, memories, physical and digital spaces, laws, and future uncertainties all live in the present, in an endless circle constituting spatio-temporal dimensions as both the same and different (Deleuze, 1994). The present is continuously changed and challenged by the overlapping of the past and future in a relational back-and-forth movement that transforms individuals' everyday lives and relationships via their emotions.

The combinations and overlaps of the different spatial and temporal dimensions are specifically characterised by their relationality (Pred, 1981). Relational time holds that not only visible or seemingly present elements in the environment affect each other. Logically, physical objects can have an impact on each other through physical touch; however, things that are no longer visible and present (e.g. memories), or things that are not yet touchable but are already visible in the environment (e.g. an approaching group of people), may affect people and their activities (Hägerstrand, 2009; Gadd, 2016). The purpose here is not to give factual explanations for the practices of irregular migrants, but rather to delve into the many micro-interconnections, overlaps, and interpositions between various spacetime elements that

transform irregular migrants' emotions, lives, and relationships (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2008).

Shubin emphasized that 'different migration scholars have highlighted the need to look beyond the social representation of timespaces in life course theory to provide more radical interpretations of intersubjectivity and migrants' interaction with the world' (2015, p. 351).

This article articulates the ontological foundations of migrants' (inter)subjectivity and material becoming as examined by Tedeschi (2020), specifically contributing to this debate by exploring how the lives of irregular migrants can be better expressed in terms of their emotional geographies and situated and changing spatio-temporal 'happenings of the world' (Shubin, 2015, p. 351). These spacetime events (which may involve survival strategies, social networks, precarious living conditions, legal/semi-legal labour markets, practices of agency, and similar) progressively and affectively *become* part of the skin of individuals (i.e. they *become* an actual, material layer on their bodies, as an earlier study already showed; Tedeschi, 2020). They resemble scars physically marking the body, according to Fassin and Rechtman (2009), or, like Canetti's sting, they involve material traces remaining literally embedded in human bodies (Canetti, 1978). These layers (scars/stings), which are materially composed of different, multidimensional, sometimes contradictory spatio-temporal lines coming together in individuals, accumulate over time and transform individuals' emotions; thus, the materiality of the layers on an individual body is conceptualised and empirically evidenced through a person's movements and actions in spacetimes. As Papadopoulos and Tsianos maintained, 'the migrant's becoming creates the indeterminate materiality on which new connections, sociabilities, lines of flight, informal networks, and transit spaces thrive' (2008, p. 228). These lines are affective, in Deleuze's (1988) and Spinoza's (2001 [1677]) sense of combinations of disparate (human and non-human) spatio-temporal elements (Latour, 2005), leaving material traces (or layers) on a body and becoming apparent as emotions.

Irregular migrants' movements trace unpredictable spatio-temporal lines, which relentlessly combine and overlap the past (their countries of origin, with their laws and regulations, and their journeys to the destination countries), the present, and the future (in the destination countries, with new legal statuses). All these 'lines' are material and are fully part of (strata laid on) migrants' bodies. Different irregular-migrant bodies carry disparate, often contradictory layers of spacetimes. In general, the layers of spacetimes come together and

accumulate in individuals, transforming their emotions. In particular, ‘migrants and asylum seekers often experience the acute stress of uncertainty when they inhabit temporal, spatial and psychological limbo associated with interstitial times and places’ (Conlon, Hiemstra, & Mountz, 2017, p. 144). The overlapping and conflicting spacetimes irregular migrants use to negotiate their everyday lives are very intensively layered onto their bodies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and, as a consequence, their lives (their processes of becoming-in-spacetimes) undergo extensive, non-linear transformations in often relatively short periods of time. This has practical consequences when studying the situatedness of their everyday lives and relationships; for instance, they live in manifold, diverse spacetimes simultaneously. They can feel to be both in their country of origin *and* in Finland at the same time. It has been shown that traumatic experiences (negative emotions) do not go away, but remain carved into the body (Ehrkamp et al., 2019), to such an extent that the body relives them as if they exist in the now-time, despite them being in the past. Individuals may therefore walk in Finnish cities, but materially ‘see’ their country of origin:

There are cases where the past is so present and vivid in the body of the person that he relives it by seeming to see the actual space where the event(s) occurred ... as well as smelling and touching it in the present (Tedeschi, 2020, p. 11).

Thus, the material layers (or, using other metaphors, the scars and stings) on/in one’s body are not only manifested as physical and visible scars or bruises, but also internally and emotionally; for example, in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder caused by extreme stress, which continues after the actual traumatic event has passed, making people’s hippocampi work less efficiently and narrowing their attention (Brewin et al., 1996). This remains invisible to the eye, but is no less destructive. Ultimately, the layers are materialised and manifested through the embodied movements of people transforming their movements in spacetimes. In this sense, individuals walking in Finnish cities experience the environment based on how they *feel* they will *survive*. If the scars from the past make people feel as though they are living and walking in their country of origin, despite being in Finland with its different rules and regulations, they will adapt their movements and relationships accordingly.

3 MATERIAL AND METHODS

The data collection relied on qualitative methods, which were mainly ethnographic and included interviews (individual and in small groups) and participant observations with 70 irregular migrants (24 females and 46 males of different nationalities and ages) conducted in the capital—the largest urban area in southern Finland—for one year (2018), one to two days and nights per week on average.

The migrants were not pre-selected and were difficult to locate, since the majority of gatekeepers feared breaches of confidentiality (Jauhiainen & Tedeschi, 2021). Nevertheless, some gatekeepers facilitated initial communication with irregular migrants by informing some of them about our research. There were gatekeepers with and without migrant backgrounds, some of whom were former asylum seekers. Some gatekeepers worked in NGOs providing advice and services for migrants; in projects funded, for instance, by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations; or in institutions such as churches. The trust some gatekeepers showed us facilitated the communication between us and the participants. Interpreters were present in the conversations if necessary; otherwise, either Finnish or English was used to directly speak with the participants.

The participants were mainly new irregular migrants who had arrived in Finland between 2015 and 2016 and had received several negative decisions on their residence permit or asylum applications from the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) and the courts. Before 2015, Finland received around 3,000–4,000 migrants per year (Migri, 2018); however, in 2015, approximately 32,000 migrants arrived in the country, and a proportional number of negative decisions were made thereafter (Saarikkomäki et al., 2018). In 2016, a legal turnaround made immigration regulations stricter than in the past (Aer, 2016). Because of these changes in the law, it became harder for asylum seekers to gain asylum in Finland (Jauhiainen & Tedeschi, 2021). The new irregular migrants in Finland are mainly from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and some North African countries, such as Morocco, and these nationalities were represented among our research participants. The ages of the participants varied between 25 and 55 years. The majority of them chose Finland because they considered it a safe place to live, far from war and precarious socioeconomic conditions. According to many, living in Finland in a legally irregular situation was better than returning to their dangerous and unstable countries of origin.

In Finland, irregular migrants tend to live in cities, especially in the Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku areas (Jauhiainen et al., 2018). However, according to the latest data from Finnish municipalities (Jauhiainen & Tedeschi, 2021), the greatest pressure is on the capital (Helsinki), and the presence of irregular migrants is no longer as widespread across the country as it was in 2017; hence, our research was mainly conducted in urban areas in southern Finland, and especially in the capital, which has the highest concentration of irregular migrants.

We explored irregular migrants' everyday activities, practices, and relationships in Finland, as well as the places where they lived and met, and how they felt. As part of our ethnographic activities, we shared parts of the everyday lives of these people and their emotions, hopes, and fears. This enabled us to observe their demeanours in detail, including their facial expressions, postures, and reactions in different encounters (e.g. in social situations or when receiving different kinds of news), or when discussing certain topics. These embodied (re)actions, observed over time (for one year), provided significant information about the participants' particular circumstances as well as the ongoing relationships and encounters in their becoming, which could not be obtained through interviews. Such an approach meant that, during hundreds of hours of field observation, we observed and heard their perspectives and considerations, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible.

We decided not to mention the ethnic origins of the irregular migrants we talked with to avoid the possibility that others might relate their opinions and thoughts to specific ethnic groups. We respected some participants' decisions not to mention their nationalities because of the increasing stereotyping in Finland of specific ethnic groups. Moreover, the places where they met (and where we also went) cannot be revealed. In general, it is imperative that these people are not identified, so we removed all personal details from the data, as we were expected to do by the various local actors (the NGOs) helping the research participants. Although irregular migration is not a completely new phenomenon in Finland, the country has fewer irregular migrants than other European countries and, thus, we needed to be particularly cautious with the collected data. Little specific information can be provided about the participants, but for the purpose of this article, nationalities and specific locations are irrelevant.

Regarding the research material, we relied on interviews and observation notes taken during the ethnographic fieldwork. We did not take notes in front of the research participants for fear

of impairing the flow of (sensitive) conversations or biasing the relationship dynamics in different situations where we were present as mere observers; notes were therefore made later. The qualitative data regarding various elements of irregular migrants' lives were analysed theoretically and empirically using content analysis, concentrating on the elements' interlinkages, their spatio-temporal multidimensionality, and their effects on migrants' decisions and everyday relationships, practices, and emotions. Different temporal and spatial layers were identified in the participants' narratives, and the multiple interlinkages between those layers were detected through the emotions and embodied spatio-temporal micro-practices of the participants. The background material consisted of immigration laws, policy and human rights documents, newspaper articles, and documentaries.

Verbal consent was obtained from the participants, but they did not have to sign a consent form. After a few months of fieldwork, they came to expect our presence among them and some started considering us almost as acquaintances, which gave us the opportunity to enter more deeply into the lives of these individuals. Nevertheless, anonymity and confidentiality were carefully managed, since writing about their activities, where they went, and with whom they had contact could have endangered them. Finally, we always remembered that our presence as researchers generated an ontological power imbalance between us and the migrants, thus influencing the data (Düvell et al., 2010). We tried to mitigate the power imbalance by clearly stating our position as researchers, despite the close trust-based relationships that we established over time, and we explained that we could have little or no influence on their asylum or residence permit applications in Finland.

4 RESULTS

Geographic, social, and mental factors inextricably affect irregular migrants' individual life-worlds (see Gadd, 2019; Hägerstrand, 2009) in terms of relentless change in their spatio-temporal dimensions. Specifically, physical and digital spaces, social relationships, and mental conditions all have a spatio-temporal dimension: they materially become part of an individual's (a body's) emotions in terms of memories and traumas, present situations and struggles, and future hopes and fears. All these elements are tightly interconnected, affecting each other and materially transforming lives (e.g. Crawley & Hagen-Zanker, 2018). In the case of irregular migrants, our spatio-temporal analysis showed how the research participants, who did not have full access to the welfare system, materially processed the affective and emotional overlapping lines emerging from manifold spaces and temporal dimensions of their

everyday lives. In so doing, they transformed their daily activities and social interactions to counteract unfamiliar laws and regulations, precarious livelihoods, and the ever-present risk (for some of them) of being deported by the police. Specifically referring to the emotional geographies of irregular migration, it was apparent that these migrants' everyday lives, activities, and movements in the studied Finnish urban environments involved constant anxiety and mental stress, due to the overlapping lines (harmful affections, leading to negative emotions) coming from their unstable futures and past traumas; however, they also engaged in 'normal' activities (empowering affections, leading to positive emotions), such as visiting the library, spending time with friends or on social media, in places hidden from the public, or walking in natural surroundings (the seaside or parks), which helped to counter the anxiety and stress. Social relationships (or the lack of them) and emotional conditions, which oscillate between everyday mental stress and the fight against it (see also Pettit & Ruijtenberg, 2019 and the oscillation between hope and depression in young labour migrants), are key elements in irregular migrants' lives. These key elements are closely associated, not only with semi-legal/illegal activities, but also, for example, with a lack of healthcare and the use of social media. These apparently disparate elements combine in the spatio-temporal analysis because they all contribute to the creation and evolution of irregular migrants' emotional geographies in their now-times and, as such, they can be considered as various facets of the same process—the entire material becoming of these people.

4.1 Spacetimes and everyday mental stress

The hope (material future layer on migrants' bodies) for a better and safer future keep these people in Finland. They are not able (or willing) to build their futures in their countries of origin. They act and move in the now-time to overcome their past traumatic experiences (Bustamante et al., 2018; Priebe et al., 2016; material past layers on migrants' bodies) and establish future lives in Finland. However, in the majority of cases, the hope for a better future oscillates, as Pettit and Ruijtenberg (2019) rightly noted, with fear of the future (which in turn could become the overriding layer): fear of being caught by the police and deported, or of living an uncertain, hidden, and unprotected life in a rejecting country, depending on how the disparate spatio-temporal elements are (dis)connected. To survive and make ends meet in their now-times, the migrants have to come to terms with these oscillating emotions and the challenging spatio-temporal elements layered on their bodies.

During the cold winters, these people (especially families with children) need warm places to stay. Many live with acquaintances, or friends: having social relationships (a social ‘safety net’) is crucial for their survival, especially in the harsh physical environment of Finland. However, many irregular migrants frequently change the places where they live. Sometimes they live in already crowded houses, where they can stay only few weeks. One of the research participants explained:

I’m dependent on the goodwill of others, as I cannot rent my own place. I can stay here [the house of a couple] for three weeks, then I have to find a new place and learn ways of being in that particular place with the people of that place. I wake up at night screaming and wonder if they [the owners of the house] hear me. It is impossible to plan anything when I don’t even know where I’ll be.

Another one said: ‘I cannot stay in the same place for a long time. Neighbours see me and start recognizing me. They might call the police and they would come after me and my family’. So, sometimes they keep changing accommodation: they are very stressed because of the fear of being identified by the police—and not only because of the risk of being deported (Khosravi, 2010b; Sager, 2018; Snider, 2017). This fear of future events become part of the migrants’ bodies and is physically apparent in signs of stress and nervousness; the compelling need to keep moving and changing location (as in the example above); or poor appetites, excessive thinness, and dark circles under the eyes due to long periods of sleeplessness.

For many of these migrants, police are untrustworthy in their home countries; therefore, their survival instinct, shaped by their traumatic past, tell them to distrust the police in Finland also, as the quotation above shows. Thus, the person (unconsciously) predicts the future based on the past (fear of the police in the home country), which affects his movements and activities in the now-time (Snider, 2017). In general, these two quotations show how various spatio-temporal elements combine, affecting the now-time. The events belonging to spaces of the past (for example, fear of the police, or traumatic memories making participants scream), and the fear of the future in the new country, are fully embodied by these people. Their movements, micro-activities, and decisions in the now-time (such as moving frequently from place to place) are transformed accordingly. This indicates that the now-time is being continuously changed and challenged by overlaps of the same, yet always different, past

spacetimes, in the temporary form of emotions such as fear coming from the past-space (often the country of origin) and in the temporary form of uncertainties from the future-space-in-the-new-country, in a relational back-and-forth oscillation (Pettit & Ruijtenberg, 2019) that non-linearly shapes these people's lives. Different spacetimes (e.g. spatio-temporal experiences in the country of origin, the countries crossed during the journey to Finland, and even rumours about Finland in digital spaces) are and become all material in Finland in the now-time. The fear of being deported to the country of origin—meaning, the fear of again being in that dangerous space—or the fear of encountering the police are also a combination of past and future spatio-temporal affective lines coming together in the now-time, materially transforming the movements of many irregular migrants (e.g. many of them are so stressed that they go into hiding, because of this).

Additionally, the specific environmental conditions in Finland, particularly the dark and cold winters, can critically diminish the ability to cope with past traumas and painful memories of the home countries or scary migration journeys, especially in cases where healthcare or support from other people is not available. Emotionally, the mental burden worsened by the darkness (Hansen et al., 1998) may cause, in the worst-case scenarios, psychoses (in which the person thinks she is in her country of origin and acts accordingly, following her home country's rules in the actual host country of the now-time). Some irregular migrants we met believed that they were in their own hometowns and prepared themselves to react to possible dangers that might occur while outdoors; as one of the participants explained: 'If I think about it, I know that I'm here [in Finland], but what I see instead are the streets of my home country and so I prepare for enemies attacking me'. This shows the layering on the bodies and the overlapping of disparate, contradictory, and challenging spatio-temporal, relational elements, such as the fear of being attacked by potential future enemies in Finland overlapping with the traumatic and dangerous past space—all of which negatively affects migrants' behaviours in the now-time. Thus, the fear of the future, originating from the past, creates a material layer and becomes apparent in the reactions and comportments of the migrants. Additionally, the qualities of the physical environment (the darkness and cold) and the unwelcoming social environment (such as a lack of healthcare and support) contribute to current conditions in the present: they are not separated from the spatio-temporal dimension, but fully part of it. Hence, in irregular migrants' lives, different spacetimes easily become blurred and confused in the now-time and are therefore harder to navigate and make sense of,

as another participant confessed: ‘When I wake up I am lost. I don’t know where I am or what I am doing here’.

Due to this mental burden and the difficulty in navigating these disparate, contradictory, and challenging spatio-temporal elements, some migrants choose to completely isolate themselves (Sigona, 2012). This isolation from social spheres can negatively affect them, since it hampers their likelihood of finding new accommodation, employment, or even food and clothing. Emotionally, these precarious situations result in increased stress, anxiety, and challenges in coping, adding to their alarming memories of past traumas and the subsequent future uncertainties (e.g. Picozza, 2017; Schweitzer, 2017). One participant called this a vicious circle, materially exemplifying that the fear of the future, ‘penetrating the body’, is strong enough to radically transform his experience of the now-time:

It is challenging. I would need 80% of my capacity to figure out how to legalise my stay, but all my energy is spent on being afraid. I should sleep and eat to build up my energy, but I cannot do either of those things because of my anxiety. It leads to a situation where I don’t meet people I should meet and I’m not in the places where I should be. All this causes even greater anxiety. What a vicious circle.

The current spatio-temporal coordinates of the person become confused and blurred in the now-time (‘I’m not in the places where I should be’), overwhelmed by fear of the future. Additionally, people who are mentally or physically ill and cannot access proper healthcare often isolate themselves, consequently experience difficulty in developing self-esteem and creating social relationships and a ‘safety net’. The participants of this research avoided contact with hospitals or official healthcare services (see also Schweitzer, 2017); hence, it was irrelevant for them whether the municipality was offering only basic or extended health services to irregular migrants, since they rarely accessed them anyway. As mentioned above, many were afraid of being apprehended by the police (Khosravi, 2010b; Triandafyllidou, 2016), which was why they tended to avoid public spaces, such as hospitals. It was part of their survival strategy; their own alternative way of making sense out of disparate, contradictory, and challenging spatio-temporal dimensions.

4.2 Spacetimes and the struggle against everyday mental stress

The majority of irregular migrants, after escaping life-threatening situations in their home countries and surviving dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean, are traumatized; however, some cope well with past traumas, to the extent that they are able to overcome their fear of the future and live invisible everyday lives by finding semi-legal/illegal employment and their own lodgings through unofficial routes. Indeed, many research participants were very willing to work, to help, to do almost anything (Tedeschi, 2020). Work and the possibility of helping others gave them relief from the mental stress of their precarious situations (due to the overlapping of the traumatic past with the uncertain future; Picozza, 2017; Sager, 2018). They were tired of being inactive and wanted to socialize or forget about their mental stress, even if that meant accepting underpaid (or unpaid) jobs, without paying taxes. One participant, who (like the majority of the ones we met) suffered from a traumatic past, was living in a small municipality in a rural area and said: ‘In the beginning these people [local Finns] collected money to pay my family’s rent. Now I have found a job here. It is good for my self-esteem. The state rejected me, but not the people’. In Finland, the participant found a welcoming municipality, where the residents spontaneously decided to help him and his family by paying their rent. Additionally, in this same place, he also found a job—in the grey market, as by law he was not entitled to work. This made him feel better: he became independent and could thus support his family on the money he earned. This example shows how relief from mental stress and low self-esteem due to past trauma and an uncertain future can ultimately be negotiated in the now-time: the welcoming municipality (the new survival space) positively empowered him in the present by materially becoming a layer on his body, leading him to build a ‘positive’ future for his family, rather than a negative one. The rejection by the other space (the state) had also become a (affectively negative) layer on his body; however, the empowering space where he finally settled helped him to partially overcome the stress and fear (the harmful, negative emotions) linked with spatial rejection by the state. More generally, some migrants feel positively affected and emotionally empowered by living in a local community, being active, and feeling productive, which reduced their stressful mental conditions. As the quotation above shows, this helps them to better process and negotiate their everyday lives with the current rejecting environment and deal with the uncertainty of the future (Hellgren, 2014; Picozza, 2017) that it (the new environment) carries, as well as with their traumatic pasts, linked with their home countries and their

migration journeys. This is how the movement of the spacetimes shapes the irregular migrants' emotions and life-worlds in the now-time.

Others, unable to find a job even in the grey market, needed to find different roundabout, non-linear ways to come to terms with the stressful situations hampering their physical and/or mental health in the now-time. One participant, who had difficulties in dealing with his traumatic past in the home country and the fear of the future in the new country, said: 'I relieve my stress by running, walking, or going to the seaside'. Another participant, who suffered from a similar condition, had yet another strategy: 'I practice my religion more here than in my home country. Without that, I don't know how I would manage in this situation'. Disparate spatio-temporal dimensions come together in the individuals' now-times. In the case of the majority of irregular migrants we met, these dimensions were challenging and stressful, and to survive in the present they needed to reinvent themselves and come up with (always new and unpredictable) survival strategies to generate positive and empowering emotions.

Others, who were unable to overcome their past traumas and were not able or willing to form social relationships in local communities or with their peers in the new environment, looked for yet other empowering, positively affecting spatio-temporal dimensions, especially in the digital space: 'Keeping in touch through social media with my family [back home] helps me, even if I keep reliving the situation back home and don't come up with solutions to my case here'. Our research shows that the use of social media helps relieve the mental burden caused by the overlapping of past traumas and an uncertain future, albeit for short periods of time; however, some informants felt that their countries of origin and their host country were blurred in the present and said that social media made them anxious about the events occurring in their previous spaces (home countries). In other words, they felt that the latter spaces were not separate from Finland and could still materially and emotionally affect their movements, actions, and decisions in the now-time in Finland (see Khosravi, 2010a; Shubin, 2015). The hope for a better future made the migrants rely on unofficial and unreliable social media channels 'selling' false stories about the future in Finland, such as how to obtain a residence permit in Finland, as various participants revealed. One participant told us: 'I don't know anyone who can give me advice. I look for information in social media groups and try to decide what to do. I came to Finland because I thought I would get asylum here'. In general, the research findings show that irregular migrants in Finland rely more on the

information they obtain through social media or their social relationships than through official websites. According to the research participants, a rumour is circulating in social media that it is easy to live in Finland, even as an irregular migrant. These rumours claim that the unofficial networks are so well developed and established that it would be easy to find accommodation and work and, thereafter, legalize the residence. Smugglers are also advising migrants not to apply for asylum directly, but to find an irregular job and legalize their stays later. They are all selling a 'false future', in this fashion manipulating migrants' emotions and heavily affecting their movements, activities, and decisions in the now-time. This 'false future' relentlessly becomes and changes the present: the rumours about Finland materialize in the migrants' bodies as a layer of emotions, including hope and aspirations for a dreamed-of, non-existent space (Carling & Schewel, 2018), even before they arrive in the country.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The article has applied a theoretical approach to irregular migration based on spatio-temporality, as it has been developed in the migration literature and beyond. Accordingly, it shows that irregular migrants' everyday lives and practices consist of different spatio-temporal dimensions, which come together in the now-time. All these dimensions are material, shaping the emotional geographies of irregular migrants in terms of how their mental stress, fear of moving, hopes for the future, and (dis)trust in social relationships have concrete consequences in the labour market, healthcare, and digital spaces, to cite but a few, in the case of Finland.

The article shows how irregular migrants negotiate their everyday lives, emotions, and practices through multiple, contradictory, yet interrelated, material spacetimes. Some strategies they use to materially negotiate their way through the manifold spacetimes are not fully conscious. They follow non-linear, non-predefined paths whereby migrants, if they are not able to reach a goal, such as coping with the stressful, current situation, look for other empowering, emotionally positive activities, such as religion, physical activities, or the use of social media. Already, the fact that these people have decided to remain in Finland is a concrete example of negotiation of the past and future spacetimes in the now-time.

Fears, traumas, and hopes for the future emerging from the past and present countries overlap and become layers on the migrants' bodies, positively or negatively affecting them and transforming their now-time. Some people are able and willing to have social relationships,

whereas others isolate themselves. Some mitigate the fear of the future (of being deported/detained by the police) by changing locations frequently or trying to find jobs in the grey market. Some try to overcome mental stress by working and/or staying in touch with family and friends. Some try to build social relationships and obtain information via the internet to relieve mental stress or search for alternative possibilities to legalize their stay. All these are strategies for negotiating the manifold, often contradictory and challenging, spacetimes shaping their lives and relentlessly reconfiguring their emotions. Ultimately, in these roundabout (non-linear) ways, they acquire the capacity to dealing with/negotiate the situation at hand.

Overall, the article aims to contribute to the migration literature by showing new interlinkages between disparate spatio-temporal elements. In this manner, emotional geographies of irregular migration can be mapped and traced in the migrants' own movements, choices, everyday practices, places, and actions. This approach does not apply to irregular migration only, but can be replicated in various empirical contexts (for example, studying the everyday lives of other vulnerable groups) in geography, urban studies, and related disciplines.

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