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MIGRANTS' EVERYDAY LIFE AND MIGRATION REGIMES: A STUDY OF MIGRANTS' LEISURELY USE OF URBAN PARKS

The article's aim is to demonstrate how migration regimes tacitly operate at the level of everyday practices. We propose to see migrants' leisure, recreational use of parks in particular, as a venue for the internalization and embodiment of migration regimes. We seek to explore if migrants negotiate and resist these regimes through their everyday practices. Our study is based on 70 interviews with Ukrainian and Vietnamese migrants in Poland, Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands, Turkish migrants in Germany, and Latino and Chinese migrants in the U.S. We present migrants' perceptions of urban parks' rules and their interactions with other park users. Particular attention is paid to migrants' ability to negotiate the existing regulations and to adjust these environments to their needs. We discuss the mechanisms that limit migrants' ability to negotiate the frameworks of migration regimes through their leisurely use of urban parks.

Key words: migrants; leisure; urban parks; discrimination; migration regimes

Introduction

Migration regimes set multiple and shifting legal-political, economic as well as socio-cultural frameworks of international mobility that migrants have to adapt to. Despite their changeability, these frameworks appear to have one common denominator: in them “the figure of the migrant” (Nail 2015) is constructed as the one that has no rights but plenty of obligations as well as the one that is a source of various threats (demographic, economic, cultural, terrorist etc.). Even when migration regimes render some mobile groups (e.g., international professionals) privileged, these very privileges are predicated on these

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groups' ability to distance themselves from other, less desirable, migrants (e.g., Kunz 2020; cf. Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013). In this paper, the question is how migrants are affected by the mechanisms of exclusion and stigmatization that are an important part of migration regimes and what their responses are.

In the context of the European "migration crisis" that started in 2015 and the increasing public support not only for the anti-immigrant political rhetoric but also for anti-immigrant political parties in North America and Europe (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, Wodak 2018; Nowicka 2018), the in-depth exploration of how migration regimes work at the grass-root level becomes an urgent need. In this article, we focus on migrants' everyday life as a sphere where migration regimes tacitly operate. We seek to understand if and how migration regimes latently work through leisure practices, and recreational use of urban parks in particular. We are interested in migrants' leisure as a venue for the internalization and embodiment of migration regimes as well as a venue for the resistance to migration regimes. We believe that by its emphasis on leisure and the everyday life, the article will contribute to a more complex understanding of migration experience (cf. Grønseth 2010; Dahinden 2016).

In what follows, we set the analytical framework of the article by demonstrating how migration regimes and everyday lives of migrants are connected, and provide a brief overview of the literature on public places as sites of exclusion and inclusion of migrants. We then describe our research material and research methodology. Hereafter, we present major research findings. The article is concluded with a discussion of the results.

Analytical Framework

As Horvath, Amelina, and Peters (2017, 303) noted, "regime" is a notion that "entered the field of migration research via different routes". According to the most influential conceptualization, migration regimes are created by national and transnational actors who set the regulations, institutional tools, as well as legitimate logics of spatial mobility (Sassen 1999, 2006). Following Krasner, "[r]egimes can be defined as sets of implicit and explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors expectations converge in given area of international relations" (1983, cited in Koslowski 1998: 736).

On a slightly different conceptual plane, the focus is on the cultural forces contributing to the regimes' maintenance, especially on the mechanisms that make the contingency and inconsistency of treatment than migrants receive appear natural and/or legitimate. Using a broader notion of "regimes of mobility", Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013: 188) deployed it to describe "the relationships between privileged movements of some and the codependent but

stigmatized and forbidden movement, migration, and interconnection of the poor, powerless and exploited.” The approach suggests to zoom in on inequalities (re) produced by migration regimes (e.g., Korteweg 2017). In this perspective, the ways of producing discourses and knowledge are of utmost importance (Baker 2016: 158; Horvath, Amelina, Peters 2017: 305). The multiplicity of migration motivations and the variety of migration experience is chucked into seemingly discreet categories of e.g., “economic migrants”, “expats”, or “refugees”. The categorizations lead to the ignorance of the complexity that the processes of migration involve (Horolets et al. 2020; cf. Yanow 2003) and reduces migrants’ opportunities to act and express themselves freely not only in strictly institutional but also in everyday contexts. As a result of the operation of migration regimes, migrants are being disciplined, even if no direct means of control are applied. When referring to migration regimes in this article we predominantly have this perspective in mind.

Nation state borders are crucial for the actualization of migration regimes through categorization and selection of those who can cross them versus those who are denied this right (Andersson 2014; Feldman 2011). Borders are not limited to territorial boundaries between the states, however. As De Genova (2015: 7) argued, “migrant metropolis tends to always also be a border zone”. The same author added that the border was “localised on migrants’ *bodies*. In effect, they wore the border on their faces, carried it on their backs” (De Genova 2015: 6). This resulted in the diffusion of migration regimes across institutional practices regulating migration as well as daily routines of migrants (e.g., Feldman 2011).

We suggest that migration regimes operate not only through selected institutionalized sites but also through **migrants’ everyday practices**. Agreeing with De Genova (2015: 7) who has drawn attention to these practices’ role in re-configuring the contemporary societies, and particularly in “remaking space at every scale”, we propose to pay closer attention to migrants’ daily lives, and **their leisure pursuits in public spaces** in particular, as a peculiar sight of their involvement with migration regimes where the public and private, structure and agency meet. We are particularly interested in how the macro-scale of migration regimes and the micro-scale of everyday practice intersect.

While institutional actors have the capacity to “create” the subjects of migration regimes (e.g., “asylum seeker” or “labor migrant”) and to act upon migrants from above (Rosello 1998; cf. Fassin 2011; Sassen 2000), migrants engage in questioning the roles ascribed to them and develop their own ways of dealing with migration regimes. We suggest that the embodied and emplaced practices of migrants’ daily lives (e.g., Biglin 2020) constitute a particularly suitable site for the inquiry into how and to what effect these negotiations unfold.

In the last two decades, research on migrant and minority use of public spaces has attracted sustained attention from leisure scholars, sociologists, and urban planners. Studies have suggested that natural environments play important roles in the lives of migrants helping them adjust to life in host societies, strengthen their ethnic identities, and develop a sense of belonging (Peters, Stodolska, Horolets 2016). At the same time, it has been noted that the patterns of use of parks and other natural environments by minority recreationists differ (Tinsley, Tinsley, Croskeys 2002) and that visitors from racial and ethnic groups are subject to scrutiny and sometimes overt acts of discrimination (Mowatt 2018).

Past studies have conceptualized parks as arenas where “regulation of difference [occurs] through negotiation and contest” (Noussia, Lyons 2004: 602) and where “diversity is thought to be negotiated” (Amin 2002: 967; cf. Valentine 2013; Wessendorf 2016). Following De Genova (2015: 7) we conceptualise parks primarily as “border zones”: the spaces where migration regimes can be latently present and can inconspicuously exert their influence on the ways the engagement with place and the encounters with others unfold.

For one, the formal and informal rules of park use constitute a culture-specific models of recreating in urban nature that can potentially diverge from the models that migrants know from their countries of origin or previous residence. The seemingly benign and banal rules such as permission of ball games or permission to walk and sit on the grass in parks not only prescribe certain behaviours but carve particular subjectivities (young vs. old; single users vs. groups) and favour certain relations with public place (active vs. passive; relaxed vs. restrained). These subjectivities dovetail with and mutually reinforce the hierarchies of welcomed and unwelcomed others encoded in migration regimes, frequently articulated through racialized/ethnicized, gendered and classed categorizations. Our aim is to register how the categorizations derived from macro-level of migration regimes and the subjectivities performed by migrants through the micro-practices of recreation in parks intersect.

The role of parks as sites for interaction between migrants and the mainstream population as well as between different minorities has been examined in previous research, but the findings were inconclusive. Some researchers pointed to the fact that parks are “transitory spaces” (Amin, Thrift 2002) and interactions there could only be cursory. They noted that urban parks are not places where unsolicited interactions often take place (Gobster 2002). Other scholars claimed that despite their fleeting character, interactions in parks can contribute to developing a sense of belonging (Peters 2011; Stodolska, Peters, Horolets, 2017) or attachment (Neal et al. 2015). Also, there are individuals and arrangements that can initiate such contacts (cf. Peters, Elands, Buijs 2009). Parks are meeting grounds for people of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds who would not come across each other otherwise. The chance

of “being together” in parks has been positively evaluated by ethnic minorities and representatives of the mainstream population alike (Peters 2010). As Peters stated elsewhere:

Doing leisure in public spaces creates different sources of interactional pleasure, such as people-watching or public sociability, and often involves interacting with others. Paravicini [1999, in De Vos, 2005] states that in the intersection and transition zones between relaxation and activity, different forms of unexpected interactions occur between people who do not know each other. Through these encounters, people are confronted with differences. Even though these differences can lead to contrast or even to conflict, they can also lead to new ways of looking at things or new social ties [Brunt and Deben, 2001] (Peters 2011: 75).

At the same time, previous research on leisure and discrimination warned that interactions could depend on how others see our identity (Stodolska 2005a, b; Stodolska, Yi 2003; cf. Amin 2002), and therefore the various cultural, social and political scripts that define “others” are likely to be of relevance.

We suggest that studying migrants' leisurely pursuits, and their recreational use of urban parks in particular, can provide insights into how migration regimes are negotiated by migrants. Another question we pose is to what extent the latent operation of these regimes in the informal and seemingly non-coercive contexts may affect migrants' subjectivities.

Methodology

The material for this article has been gathered within the framework of an international exploratory comparative research project “Natural Environments, Interracial/Interethnic Interactions and Inclusion of Immigrant Minorities”, which was carried out by the three principal researchers and three research assistants. The data for the study were collected by means of personal, in-depth interviews conducted between 2012 and 2013 with 70 migrants – 13 Latino (3 from Argentina, 1 from Uruguay, and 9 from Mexico) and 13 Chinese migrants in the U.S., 15 Ukrainian and 11 Vietnamese migrants in Poland, 9 Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands, and 9 Turkish migrants in Germany. The interviews, and not observation, were selected as a major research technique in order to elicit comparable data across the four diverse contexts. We relied on snowball sampling and theoretical sampling (Lincoln, Guba 2005) to identify interviewees. Recruitment ceased once the theoretical saturation in each setting has been achieved. The findings we present here cannot be treated as representative for the above groups in the statistical sense of the word, as generalization is not the intent of studies conducted within an interpretive paradigm (Charmaz 2006).

Rather, consistently with our paradigmatic stance, our aim was to present the reality from the perspective of the interviewees who took part in the study.

The countries where migrants resided were selected in order to include stories of those who migrated to established (e.g., the U.S., the Netherlands, and Germany) and emerging immigrant destinations (e.g., Poland) on both sides of the Atlantic. The migrant minority groups who are numerous and/or visible in the countries of residence were targeted for comparison. Some of them, e.g., Latinos, are highly heterogeneous, yet often self-identify as “Latino”, as well as are perceived and treated as a distinct cultural group by the “mainstream” U.S. population (Stodolska, Shinew 2014).

In the U.S., the initial contacts were made through migrant-owned businesses in town and the community centres serving Latino and Chinese residents. In Poland, the contacts were made through an ethnic church (Ukrainian migrants) and ethnic non-government organizations and businesses (Vietnamese migrants). Several Ukrainian and Vietnamese students acted as key informants introducing the researcher to other participants. Several contacts were also initiated in parks. In the Netherlands, initial contacts were made with a Moroccan-Dutch teacher who served as a key informant and via several Moroccan-Dutch organizations. In Germany, contacts were made in ethnic cultural centres such as a cultural coffee house as well as during special events (e.g., intercultural evening) attended by Turkish migrants.

The research participants represented different demographic characteristics (age, gender) and came from different socio-economic backgrounds. There were 30 women and 35 men, the age ranged from 18 to 74 across the sample. Prior to emigration, they resided in large urban areas and smaller towns as well as in the countryside. The majority of Moroccan and Turkish participants lived in small towns in their home countries while the majority of Chinese and Vietnamese migrants originated from large cities. Among Ukrainian and Latino participants, there was a higher variability in terms of their places of residence prior to migration. The time of arrival to the country of current residence varied from 1 to 52 years. After their settlement in the host countries, they all resided in urban centres (ranging from metropolitan areas such as Warsaw and Dortmund to medium size towns in the North American Midwest and in the Netherlands). Since this was an exploratory study, we intentionally strived to interview people of diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, as it allowed us to uncover a wide variety of socially-grounded and context-dependent reactions to and ways of making sense of migratory experience.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, English, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, German, and Dutch by the three principal researchers on the project and by three research assistants who were proficient Mandarin, Spanish, and German speakers. The authors and research assistants were all bi- or tri-lingual,

although ethnic backgrounds of the interviewers matched these of the interviewees only in two out of six cases. The partial match in ethnic background could have potentially negatively affected the rapport between the interviewers and some of the participants, although a number of measures were used to help participants feel comfortable during the interviews.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours and took place in interviewees' homes, places of work, cafes, in parks and in the offices of the researchers. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed in the languages in which they were conducted and translated into English. To protect participants' privacy, they had been assigned pseudonyms in this study. The researchers across four countries were in weekly and, during the data collection process, daily contact to share notes, conduct a preliminary data analysis and to adjust the interview script, as needed. The interviewees were asked a series of open-ended questions about their use of urban parks for leisure in home and host countries. Some of the questions included: 'Do you participate in leisure activities in urban parks and other natural environments here?', 'When you visit urban parks, do you ever interact with people who are not from your ethnic group?', 'Have you ever been treated badly because of your racial, ethnic or immigrant status during your visits to urban parks?'

Constant comparative method that involves comparing data during each stage of analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967), was performed by coding the data and developing the analytic frame (Charmaz 2006). The process of data coding included three stages: open, selective and theoretical (Glaser 1992). It was our aim to represent multiple points of view among the interviewees. From open coding, in which every thematic thread was labelled, we turned to selective coding, marking the themes that were central to our research design such as perceptions of natural environments or social interactions in urban parks.

In the next sections, following an analytical differentiation between the "institutions-focused" and "discourses-focused" notions of the regime, we will explore the research findings with regard to (1) migrants' perceptions and negotiations of park rules, and (2) the roles interactions in parks play in the reinforcing or challenging the stereotypical "figure of the migrant" (Nail 2015).

Findings

Perceptions and negotiations of urban parks' rules

Anyone coming to parks has to adapt to the rules of their use. The aim of this section is to demonstrate how migrant subjectivities inherent in migration regimes came to play a role in this process, and what potential consequences it had for migrants' ability to enjoy being in parks.

The majority of the study participants had a positive opinion about urban parks in their respective receiving countries and most of them frequented these areas often. Overall, parks were not perceived as wild areas but as regulated ones. The appreciation of the ways parks were organized and order maintained was shared by the participants of various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The regulations that were considered beneficial included the rules that curtailed littering, the existence of opening hours for parks, and designation of areas for a particular use (e.g., playgrounds, bicycle lanes, cookout areas) that made green spaces easy to navigate. Migrants appreciated the rules for being plain, understandable and allowing for quick familiarization with the “new territory”. Some rendered the top-down regulations personally meaningful: migrants considered many park rules sensible and beneficial for them, i.e., providing them with safer and more pleasant environment for relaxation.

Lorena/Mexico, 42 years old, nurse: Here [in the U.S.] everything is different because it is cleaner. [...] Here you see, and I’ve learned that, no littering. On the streets, there are trash cans. If you have a cook-out, you have to clean. There are hours that you have to respect here. From the moment I arrived in this country, I loved it. Here there is more security; here you obey the police, the government. I love that.

While orderliness was appreciated by the migrants, learning new rules made them depart from the familiar ways of using urban parks, e.g. for barbecues.

Vasyi/Ukraine, 26 years old, construction worker: Here [in Poland] there are a lot of parks, and everything is clean and tidy. The attitude to nature is better than in Ukraine. For example, in Ukraine, a lot is being cut from the woods, and here the woods cannot be cut, it is not allowed to make a fire in the woods, all these rules... In Ukraine, you want it – you make shashlik [barbecue] and here the *straż miejska* [city guard] would appear immediately, the police... I think this is a good attitude they have.

The orderliness of parks was perceived by this and other interviewees as a manifestation of the receiving countries’ high level of development. Because of the latent presence of such associations in adopting to the rules of park use, migrants became restrained and self-restraining subjects. The quotation below demonstrates how self-restraint was linked to a feeling of heightened responsibility for oneself.

Mykola/Ukraine, 25 years old, university administration clerk: One cannot go there [in park] with a beer, it is forbidden. [...] I do not drink alcohol [in public places] here [in Poland] at all. It is not allowed; this is clear... but moreover, when I am abroad, I have this feeling of responsibility... If anything [wrong] happens, one can only rely on oneself.

From Mykola’s words it follows that in his own country he would feel more relaxed, even when breaking or bending some of the rules, while as a migrant

– someone who “does not fully belong” – he took on a burden of additional responsibility: his misdemeanour would not only speak of him as an individual but of the whole group, which may be held responsible for his perceived misdeeds.

The appreciation of park safety can also be linked to the operation of migration regimes through everyday practices. Most of the research participants considered park safety an important feature of the local natural environments. For instance, Eduardo from Argentina (30 years old, business owner) commented,

Security [in U.S. parks], for example, is a good thing compared to my country. In my country, in the city where I lived, we had a major park. Very large, very nice, beautiful trees, a very nice lake, but it is very unsafe. And even dirty at times because people would throw things in there. So, these issues mark a difference. And here, for example, I believe that it is very, very safe. I go bicycling in some places like Lake of the Woods, and I will go at any time, and I have no problems. In Argentina, it is not so easy in some places.

Similarly, Moroccan participants praised Dutch parks for their safety. As Zahir (42 years old, public administration clerk) commented, “You just can take your bike and bike in nature. In Morocco, you can’t bike. [In the Netherlands] you don’t need to be afraid of dangerous things. That is very positive.” It seems common sense that people would prefer safe environments to unsafe ones. Yet, the appreciation of parks’ safety makes migrants take various forms of monitoring and surveillance for granted.

Not all regulations, however, were appreciated by all of the interviewed migrants. For instance, some participants from Turkey who originated from rural areas felt uncomfortable in Dortmund parks because of the regulations allowing nudity in public places, which was in sharp contrast with their religious beliefs and upbringing. For some Moroccan interviewees, who came from rural areas as well, the orderliness of Dutch parks was perceived as excessive and standing in the way of them being able to fully enjoy contact with nature. The ban on making barbecues in parks was also perceived as a surprising limitation by some of the Ukrainian and Turkish participants, who were used to this form of picnicking in their previous places of residence. The Turkish interviewees, however, reported that these regulations were loosened with time as Dortmund municipality began to adjust to the growing numbers of migrants from Turkey.

Engaging in the process of rule negotiation was not a very common practice, however, nor was it a form of direct resistance. Very few of the interviewed migrants admitted to breaking the rules of park use (e.g., drinking beer in a park). Only one person spoke of breaking the rules knowingly. Tuan, a participant from Vietnam (26 years old, free-lance computer graphic artist), justified his actions by his young age at a time, by the fact that he did it in a group and that this particular rule was also broken by the mainstream population. Moreover,

drinking alcohol was reserved for neighbourhood parks only; Tuan stated he would be “afraid” to do it in the more frequently visited, historic downtown parks.

The appreciation of rules and making them personally meaningful is one of the ways for migrants to internalize the subjectivity of a “good” “law abiding” migrant. Also, the scarcity or instances of breaking rules (or the reluctance to speak about it with researchers) can be interpreted as migrants’ wish to present themselves to the receiving society as law abiding citizens. It can be argued that the normalization of self-restraint by migrants themselves mirrors migrants’ “suspect subjectivity” (cf. Ragazzi 2016) and the excessive institutional surveillance inscribed in migration regimes, as well as it mirrors an expectation that migrants will be grateful to the country that “hosted” them.

Interpersonal interactions and migrants’ reactions to discrimination in urban parks

Apart from the formal rules, the interactions between migrants and other visitors that take place in the parks are another channel whereby migration regimes work in everyday life. In interactions, migrants’ subjectivities are activated by the way other park users perceive and categorize them. The first-hand contact during leisurely pursuits in the park can either reinforce or challenge these stereotypical categorizations.

The participants in our study often indicated that approaching others in parks and striking an informal conversation was rare. Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands, Ukrainian migrants in Poland, and Chinese and Latino migrants in the U.S. used parks side by side with the mainstream population in the mode of non-intrusive co-existence (cf. Peters 2010), as the following quote illustrates:

Husain/Morocco, 35 years old, IT consultant: The difference is when you walk in a park here [in the Netherlands] people mind their own business. There [in Morocco] people are curious, so people can just start talking to you, want something from you, and that’s disturbing if you just go for a walk, clearing your mind. But here nobody is talking to you ... I prefer that everyone minds their business. I don’t need someone to try to sell you flowers, or sell you something, to disturb your rest.

The styles of personal interaction seemed to be determined by both the location (e.g., informal rules regarding privacy in park settings might have been stricter than in other public places), and cultural norms of the actors. For instance, it appears that the cultural norm of “civic inattention” (Goffman 1971) was slightly stricter in Poland and the Netherlands than in the U.S., where saying “hello” or commenting on a child’s dress were reported as rather usual forms of interaction with strangers in parks. The contrast between the two quotations below demonstrates this difference:

Lan/Vietnam, 24 years old, PR agency employee: I would be scared if someone approached me [in a park] and started talking. (...) I'd probably think they want to rape me.

Eduardo/Argentina, 30 years old, business owner: We always had good experiences. (...) American people were always very nice. We sometimes play the guitar, and they gather around and get close by to tell us that they like it a lot, to talk.

Children and dogs were triggers that allowed cursory exchanges to take place; therefore, interactions in parks also depended on the life-stage and the lifestyle of our interviewees and other park visitors. Due to closer contact, however, these "conversation starters" could also cause some conflicts such as competition for park amenities or spaces, as in the quotation below:

Angelica/Mexico, 30 years old, housewife: I have gotten a chance to see people [in U.S. parks] who get bothered because the kids want the same swing. So, I do see that... that they get bothered (...). You see their appearance – like their faces.

This finding lends confirmation to research on user conflict that often takes place in natural environments (Schneider and Hammitt 1995; Vitterso et al. 2004) and on interethnic/interracial competition over the use of public resources that frequently manifests itself in urban green spaces (Sharaievska et al. 2010).

Migrants in this study also spoke about situations when they felt mainstream park visitors were unwilling to establish contact with them or even spend time in close proximity:

Chi/Vietnam, 20 years old, student: I remember that I wanted to sit on a bench, and I asked a Polish person who had been sitting there if I could sit next to her, and of course she agreed but she looked at me as if [saying] "I don't like [this] much, I don't like [this] much."

Similar observations were made by Vira from Ukraine and Lorenzo from Mexico who recounted negative treatment in parks experienced by members of visible minorities.

Vira/Ukraine, 36 years old, secondary school teacher: I've been a witness to a situation when a dark-skinned guy was passing by [in a park], of a different race so to speak, and they [Polish children] started pointing their fingers at him. (...) Should I have told these children this was bad to behave like that?

Lorenzo/Mexico, 22 years old, waiter: There were one or two occasions [in U.S. parks] that they made faces at me or that I found out that they were talking about me, "Oh, that's a Mexican. He is a Mexican." It bothered me...

On other occasions, migrants felt that they became objects of attention because of their use of native language:

Tamara/Ukraine, 24 years old, music business manager: When I spoke to my friends in Ukrainian once or twice I overheard passers-by called us "Ruskie" [a derogatory Polish

term used to describe people who speak Eastern Slavic languages], it was not very friendly. Sometimes I feel something like that, when I am talking on the phone [in public places] for instance, it's not often, but for example, when I speak in Ukrainian, I've got a feeling that in Poland one speaks in Polish and when one uses another language this is not quite all right.

One of the Moroccan-Dutch interviewees in the Netherlands also observed that speaking out loud in public places was not valued and that he took this unwritten rule into account.

This confirms the findings of previous research on the presence of discrimination in urban natural environments (Gobster 2002; Sharaievska et al. 2010) and the fact that some members of the mainstream population perceive that migrants, and undocumented migrants, in particular, do not have the right to be present in such spaces and to use publicly-funded recreational resources (Burset, Stodolska 2012). It is interesting to note that unlike the Vietnamese, Ukrainian and Mexican participants, first generation Moroccans interviewed in this study were aware of discrimination experienced by others in urban parks but did not seem to be bothered by it. As one of the interviewees who worked as a volunteer with a Moroccan organization strikingly stated, the first-generation migrants accepted certain types of mistreatment as they did not consider themselves “full citizens of the Dutch society.”

Apart from the occasions of verbal discrimination similar to the ones illustrated by the quotations above, migrants also repeatedly reported the feeling of being observed or closely watched in public spaces in the U.S.:

Angelica/Mexico, 30 years old, housewife: They look at you poorly, and you feel like they're looking at you poorly. You feel it right away when they're looking at you.

Cervando/Mexico, 35 years old, restaurant worker: We're already used to it. In the looks...in the looks, we're already used to it; we don't see it as an offense anymore.

This feature has also been reported by other researchers. For instance, Kloek, Peters, and Sijtsma (2013: 412) quoted a second-generation Dutch Moroccan participant describing a similar experience:

You can see the people look at you and your family and thinking: “It's the ‘veil family.’ What are they doing here?” People just stare at you, you know. And I understand we are a little bit different, so it is acceptable to look at us. However, I think it's rude and disrespectful when people really start to stare at my family and me when we are just walking in the woods.

The quotations above illustrate that the other park users' “gaze” can be perceived by migrants in different ways, from feeling antagonized, uneasy or uncertain to treating it simply as benevolent interest. Some migrants also “get used to”

the gaze they experience in public settings and, with time, perceive it as less offensive. Regardless of particular reactions, however, these quotes seem to emphasize the importance of performative self in leisurely interactions in urban parks. Parks, similar to other leisure settings (cf. James 2000), make people feel “on stage”. Despite the idealistic image of parks (and leisure more broadly, cf. Long et al. 2011) as a domain of freedom and relaxation, parks can function as a stage for complex games of identity construction, in which one’s prestige and social status as well as belonging are at stake. Others’ “gaze” has strong control and disciplining functions. It was striking to see that migrant park visitors and adolescent girls from Australia, who attended swimming pools in James’s (2000) study, paid similarly much attention to the way other people looked at them and were rather anxious about it. The girls who were concerned about their body image used certain tactics to deal with this “disciplining gaze”. These tactics included avoiding swimming pools altogether, spending time in larger groups or choosing distant swimming pools where no-one knew them. The tactics used by migrants in our study seemed to be surprisingly similar. Both were stemming not simply from a particular situation of interaction but from a broader regime (gender and migration, respectively) (cf. Connel 1987).

One of the most common reactions to discrimination has been **withdrawal**, or **avoidance**. For instance, many of the Turkish interviewees in Germany, who were not accepting of nudity in parks, chose to spend their free time in privately-owned gardening lots. Ignoring sneers and stares and not paying attention to other people was also reported:

Gabriel/Mexico, 29 years old, gastronomic business co-owner: Ah, looks, I don’t even notice them when I go to the [U.S.] parks. I am not aware of that because I go to a park to distract myself. I don’t go to see if they’re racist or not. I go to a park, and I don’t care if there’s a White, Chinese, Mexican, or Black. I go to a park to clear myself and get rid of the stress that I have from work, from everything that happens.

Avoidance and withdrawal as tactics for dealing with discriminatory behaviour did not mean migrants agreed with the discrimination. Rather they tried to rationalize such conduct and, paradoxically, sometimes came up with counter-narratives that were also somewhat discriminatory. In the example below a Vietnamese study participant, Lan, who belonged to higher social strata and held a white-collar job in Poland, used a language demeaning to people of lower socio-economic class to protect her dignity and to rationalize her negative experiences. In her words,

If someone thinks I take their job, although they do not have an education, knowledge and good manners, do not know languages and generally are not fit for the job that I do, I just feel sorry for such people because they never achieve anything, they just do not work

hard enough. We live in a state with a free market, and free market selects those who are the best. So, if it did not select them but me, it simply means I am better, and of course, if they will work harder, they can get my job.

While being an example of challenging the stereotype of migrants “taking mainstream population’s jobs” inherent in migration regimes, Lan’s line of reasoning simultaneously reinforces the hierarchical distinction between welcomed and unwelcomed migrants, which is pivotal to these regimes. It is also important to note that Lan was forced into adopting the tactics of withdrawal or avoidance despite her high social status, for she belonged to a visible minority in a rather ethnically homogenous Polish society, which made her particularly vulnerable in public places (cf. Grzymała-Kazłowska 2007). In other words, it was easier for her to negotiate her migrant status in work environment where her cultural capital provided her with an advantage than in public places where her migrant subjectivity came to the forefront due to her racial distinctiveness.

Yet, withdrawal and avoidance were not the only options available in conflict situations. Although such responses were rare, some migrants chose open **confrontation** with people whose behaviour towards them was unwelcoming or hostile. Lorenzo (22 years old, waiter), a Mexican migrant in the U.S. who was bothered by people making faces at him and talking about him in a park, described his reaction:

I was already annoyed, so I told them if they had a problem or something... [Interviewer: So, what happened?] Some got scared and left because I was... I think I was a little bit violent. And the other two told me that they weren’t talking about me. (...) I spoke to them in a loud tone of voice.

Confronting the others and establishing one’s right to place in an open confrontation was sometimes facilitated by a group.

Angelica/Mexico, 30 years old, housewife: Sometimes [when there are several of us], we do comment that this person is looking at us poorly. When it’s several of us, we stay [in the park] because we say, “Why are we going to leave?” But when it’s you by yourself, well, then you leave.

Although in the example above the presence of other co-ethnics in a U.S. park was empowering, the ethnically enclosed group functioned as an “alternative audience.” In other words, migrants in a group of co-ethnics became more empowered and could afford to ignore the “disciplining gaze” of mainstream park visitors or switch from retreat to confrontation as a tactic of dealing with negative treatment.

Another reaction to discrimination by migrants in parks was practicing various forms of “**invisibility**” (cf. Juul 2011; Knowles 2013). Some migrants

(e.g., Vietnamese undocumented migrants in Warsaw) tried to pose as tourists hanging a defunct camera around their necks to avert the attention of the police (cf. Kindler, Szulecka 2013). They consciously switched between the categories of mobile subjects, since in broader mobility regimes tourists were usually entitled to more privilege and freedom, compared to migrants (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Other research participants tried to “pass” as members of mainstream population or minority with a longer history of presence in a receiving country and not associated with lower socio-economic status, using their embodied characteristics or cultural capital:

Dolores/Mexico, 55 years old, translator: [replying to the question about discrimination in U.S. parks] Oh no, but not us. Not to us. And the reason why is probably because we come from Italians, so we don't look more... we don't distinguish ourselves.

Alla/Ukraine, 35 years old, project manager at an NGO: No-one looked at me as if I were a labour migrant who worked at the black market or took someone else's job. Besides, I learned the language very quickly, some basic stuff first. And also, one cannot say if I am a foreigner from my accent, at least so I was told, and if I did not have to speak a lot, no-one knew I was a foreigner.

Overall, in the context of park visitation, migrants' reactions to unwelcoming attitudes and discrimination that would challenge migration regimes' framings have been rather infrequent. The instances of resistance were far outnumbered by the cases of compliance and acquiescence. In the following section, we will consider the potential reasons for and consequences of this state of affairs.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of our research show how migration regimes tacitly operate in the sphere of migrants' everyday life, in leisurely use of urban parks in particular. These regimes act upon migrants by invoking their migrant status in situations when they simply seek relaxation, and by promoting certain migrant subjectivities, e.g., of law-abiding citizens. These mechanisms work latently and indirectly primarily through the very fact migrants have to position themselves in relation to the stereotypical preconceptions held by other park visitors they interact with. In public spaces such as parks, migration regimes operate when migrants are addressed as stereotypical others. The efficiency of the regimes' operation in these seemingly depoliticized spaces stems from the fact that migrants are taken by surprise and not prepared or even not willing to actively engage in negotiation of these preconceptions, not least due to the fact that they come to parks for relaxation.

Our findings corroborate earlier research suggesting that migrants often wish to remain “invisible”. For instance, Valenta (2009: 356) who examined identity

construction among ex-Yugoslavian and Iraqi migrants in Norway, stated, “my informants have experienced discrediting in interactions with Norwegians. [...] everything from a lack of respect to direct verbal racist insults.” He referred readers to the early work of Eidheim (1969) who “focus[ed] primarily on how members of a stigmatized ethnic group experience varying degrees of discrediting and discriminatory practice” (Valenta 2009: 356) and suggested that this represents a manifestation of “a burden of ethnicity” in everyday life. It is hardly surprising that both in our and in Valenta’s (2009) studies, “passing” as a member of a mainstream group was frequently used to overcome the experience of discrimination (cf. Juul 2011; Harrison, Moyo, Yang 2012). Although, in the short run, this strategy can make individual migrants’ use of parks more enjoyable and satisfactory, in the long run, it can reinforce the subaltern status of the group in the host society (cf. Truong 2011). In the context of migration regimes, migrants’ wish to remain invisible in parks can be read as a strategy to exit the very framework that these regimes lock them in. Yet, since the full exit in all dimensions of social life is hardly feasible, the partial exit actually reinforces migration regimes in the long run, even if it alleviates their pressure in a given moment.

At the same time, not all migrants can “pass” due to their being “visible” minorities, especially in public places where one’s racial and ethnic background is visible and audible to others (Stodolska 1998; cf. De Genova 2015: 6). When one cannot “pass” as a member of the mainstream and also has no means of openly challenging the existing patterns of interaction (e.g., no group support or protection from the law enforcement), the only possibility is withdrawal. Withdrawal to their own group for protection and support, however, can strengthen the negative perceptions among the mainstream and deepen symbolic fragmentation of public space. Withdrawal reproduces the very idea of treating migrants as a discrete and separate group by turning it into social practice.

The rewards for withdrawal and invisibility are more readily available than those for the attempts to resist the already established perceptions among the mainstream population that constitute a part of migration regimes. While migrants’ resistance in the form of seeking support in one’s own group or individual acts of confrontation did take place, they might have unintentionally reinforced an image of migrants as threatening, which incidentally fits master narratives of migration regimes. Thus, the latter remain largely invisible in the acts of spending free time in parks, yet they exert latent influence on migrants. The very wish of migrants to find relaxation and their desire to have an enjoyable time in urban parks reinforces migration regimes by gently pushing migrants to invisibility or withdrawal. This finding provides a new understanding of how migration regimes and leisure practices are interlinked.

Our study has been exploratory in nature and we cannot draw conclusions that would be representative for the groups whose members took part in the

project. Yet, some differentiation was noticeable not only between the studied groups but also within them. As our comparison with adolescent girls (James 2000) signalled, the intersectionality of exclusion (cf. Korteweg 2017) has to be considered when further studying how migration regimes operate in urban public places. The factors that should be taken into consideration can be placed on the scale from macro (e.g., the history of relations between home and host country, including the post-colonial or post-socialist involvement) to mezzo (municipality policies, current socio-political situation) and micro (e.g., features of particular parks or individual migrants' resources and aspirations).

What we can tentatively conclude is that not all migrants were similarly affected by the latent operation of migration regimes in urban greenspaces. The embodied visibility of migrants as compared to other park users was one important differentiating feature, regardless of their length of stay in the host countries: for the migrants who were visibly different or used different language/spoke with an accent it was more likely that their migrant status would be invoked in interactions, especially in more ethnically/racially homogenous societies (such as Poland). While "invisibility" tactics were generally not available to them (unless they masked as tourists, i.e., switched the categorization of their difference), "visible" migrants could withdraw or resist when they had additional resources, such as social capital. For instance, Mexican migrants in the U.S. reported that when provoked by other users' hostility, they sometimes used confrontation tactics when recreating in a group of co-ethnics. Confrontation was, however, rare across groups. The avoidance tactic was far more frequently used, which would include both ignoring/rationalizing discrimination and refraining from the use of certain places altogether.

Similarly, gender and age were among factors that further differentiated the way migration regimes acted upon migrants in parks. For instance, young men who belonged to visible minorities were discriminated against more often than women from similarly visible groups, and thus men's potential for negotiating the subjectivities ascribed to them appeared to be more limited than that of women. Migrants who stayed in host countries for a longer period had chances to devise more sophisticated tactics of withdrawal or avoidance, yet the length of stay did not prevent their migrant identity being invoked at the moments when they least expected it and/or least wanted it to be brought into an interaction (e.g., due to the slight accent they possessed). The probability that migrant status – and not other aspects of migrants' subjectivities – will be invoked appeared to be higher during anonymous interactions, i.e., not in the neighbourhood parks where people gradually came to know each other if not by name than by sight, but in the parks where visitors were complete strangers to each other.

Migrants' interpretations of discrimination and discomfort they had experienced in parks seemed to indicate that they attributed them rather to

individual characteristics of the members of the mainstream population than to the systemic features of the host societies (i.e., discrimination being a part of the institutional system, see Bonilla-Silva 2003; Kamali 2009). For instance, when asked about discrimination experienced in parks, several participants either denied having been exposed to any mistreatment or said that people who had engaged in these acts were “uneducated”. Similar attitudes were registered among Korean migrants in the U.S. who had attributed discrimination to their lower socio-economic status (and not ethnicity) or to the personality traits of the perpetrators (Yi 2005). These attitudes have also been observed among Dutch-Moroccan women whose strategy of negotiating discrimination in parks included justification of the perpetrators (Kloek, Peters, Sijtsma 2013: 414; cf. Kloek, Peters, Wagner 2015). Migrants’ proclivity to ascribe negative experience to individual rather than systemic causes as well as to seek justifications for discrimination can be linked to the “transparency” of migration regimes in everyday life settings such as urban parks. Migration regimes’ latent operation is unnoticed by the subjects whom they control.

Does it mean that the future is bleak, and the subaltern position of migrants will be constantly reproduced, also in leisure contexts? Not necessarily. Although in our material there was just one such instance (in response to Turkish migrants’ park use preferences, the previously prohibited barbecue pits were introduced in Dortmund parks), there are examples of change in the rules of parks use due to migrants’ collective action or their collaboration with NGOs (cf. Vasishta, Angelo 2009). There are also proposals of interventions aimed to foster migrants’ inclusion in urban greenspaces (Rishbeth, Blachnicka-Ciarek, Darling 2019; Ganji, Rishbeth 2020). Yet, while we do not see migration regimes as unchangeable, in this article our aim has been to draw attention to their high potential for reproducing through everyday practices.

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