

ISRF Early Career Fellowship 2015/16

Migrant Narratives of Citizenship: A Topological Atlas of European Belonging

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The project was driven by fieldwork and developed the idea of a journey as a form of a spatial ethnography that is located but attends to the relations across spaces that migration produces. An under current within the work was the relationship between visualisation, ethics and the role of witnessing within social research. During a two-month journey from Istanbul to Odessa, we carried out interviews with ca. 80 people, including migrants and representatives of NGOs working with migrants and refugees. These included ca. 30 hand-drawn maps by migrants that showed aspects of their journeys. The fieldwork was carried out with a video artist, Cressida Kocienski, and the resulting films were an integral part of the research output.

Although a list of main outputs has been listed below, in many ways the research is ongoing and has led into a bigger project that aims to rethink what a map can do as a spatial analytical device. Traditionally, maps either operate as topological devices, for example network diagrams, or topographical devices, as is the case with geographical map. The notion of the Topological Atlas, moves across this divide from the topological to the topographical and vice versa. This offers new ways of thinking and analysing, in this case, migration and borders. Whilst the broader literature on these topics speaks of the need to think relationally while still being firmly located somewhere, the divide between relationality and locatedness is incredibly strong in the way that maps are conceptualised.

OUTPUTS AND APPOINTMENTS

During the fellowship, I had a position as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies, University College London (Jan – Aug 2016), which has been useful in enlarging my academic network and in providing a different context for my work.

I have edited a special issue of the journal *GeoHumanities* 2(2)(2016) on 'Border Topologies', which deals with the broad themes of the fellowship and I have also published the following:

- N. Awan (Nov 2016) 'Digital mapping and agency: The ethics of engaging with places at a distance', *GeoHumanities* 2(2): 311-330
- N. Awan (2016) 'Edges of Europe: Visuality, ethics and witnessing in social research', *ISRF Bulletin*, issue 10: 10-15

The visual material was exhibited at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in a solo exhibition and it has also been developed into a mobile installation, which will be exhibited for the first time at the ISRF Workshop (June 2017) and will also be exhibited at the British Council in Ankara (date tbc) and Thessaloniki city council (date tbc).

- *A Topological Atlas of European Belonging*, Solo exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK (31 Oct – 27 Nov 2016)

There is an accompanying website that hosts the maps produced during the fieldwork, as well as the films: <http://www.topologicalatlas.net/hotglue/migrantnarratives>

I have presented the work at a number of invited talks, some of which are listed below:

- Pitch at Sheffield DocFest for a documentary based on some of the work produced during the fellowship (June 2017)
- 'Edges of Europe', Institute of Advanced Study, UCL, Talking Points series (31 May 16)
- 'Ethics of engaging with places at a distance', Yohsin Centre for Social Development, Habib University, Pakistan (17 Feb 16)
- 'Topological Maps' at Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, UK (14 Oct 15)

Finally, the fellowship resulted in an application to the European Research Council for a Starting Grant: 'Topological Atlas: Mapping contemporary borderscapes'. I have been short-listed for an interview to take place in June 2017.