BORDER STRUGGLES WITHIN THE STATE:
Administrative bordering of non-citizens in Finland

Abstract
Drawing on interviews with non-EU citizens, who arrived as asylum seekers or students in Finland, I examine different aspects of materialisation of borders within the state. This article focuses on non-citizens' negotiations with the immigration bureaucracy, in particular on administrative procedures in residence permit applications. The analysis of non-citizens' immigration trajectories and various border struggles during the conditional period before obtaining a permanent residence permit reveals the non-linear nature of immigration. The immigration process involves transitions in the legal status, which consequently affect non-citizens' position in the labour market, access to welfare services, and the terms of family reunification. The concept of administrative bordering introduced in this article highlights the significant role of the bureaucratic procedures in migration management. I argue that administrative bordering related to the inclusion and exclusion of non-citizens creates pervasive insecurity about one's presence and future as it can potentially modify individual immigration trajectories.

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Introduction

In this article, based on an empirical research in Finland, I examine different materialisations of borders during the immigration process and migrants' negotiations with the immigration bureaucracy. Immigration does not designate a linear path towards citizenship; rather, it consists of transitions in legal positions and overcoming various institutional and bureaucratic requirements for legal residence. Immigration is fundamentally a bureaucratic process, yet surprisingly, little attention has been paid to the concrete administrative practices in the migration literature. Migration governance continues inside the national space, but even the critical analysis of border controls focuses mainly on the repressive practices at external borders and the consequent irregularisation of migration (e.g. Karakayali & Rigo 2010; Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013). While in the migration literature, it is often assumed that legally residing migrants are more or less in a similar position compared to citizens (Sainsbury 2012: 129), the immigration system establishes diverse legal statuses for non-citizens, which differentiates the duration of residence and the access to labour markets and welfare services depending on the assigned reason of immigration (Könönen 2018). In addition to the immigration officials, who determine the legal status of non-citizens

by making decisions on residence permit applications, also various other state institutions and non-state actors – such as social services, embassies, employers, and even banks – play a role in controlling non-citizens' inclusion and exclusion in the society either directly or indirectly.

Borders denote for non-citizens a field of struggle "that take[s] shape around the ever more unstable line between 'inside' and 'outside', between inclusion and exclusion" (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013: 13). Here, I use border struggles as an analytical tool to trace the different materialisation of borders during the immigration process, which emerges as migrants try to negotiate a more secure position in the society. Empirically, the analysis is based on interviews with non-EU migrants without permanent status who had worked in the low-paid service sector in precarious conditions in Helsinki. In the empirical analysis, I discuss the complications in the organisation of everyday life caused by the lack of identity documents, bureaucratic processes in the residence permit applications, collateral effects of the different types of legal statuses on the social position of non-citizens, and the pervasive insecurity related to presence and future. I introduce the concept of *administrative bordering* to emphasise the significant role of the administrative practices and discretionary power in migration governance. This article contributes to a better

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understanding of the concrete functioning of immigration controls from the perspective of migrants and demonstrates insecurity and unpredictability related to the outcomes of administrative bordering.

Administrative bordering as part of migration governance

Balibar (2004: 109) wrote at the turn of the century that while borders "should be *at the edge of territory*, marking the point where it ends, it seems borders and institutional practices corresponding to them have been transported *into the middle of political space*". Through the conditional legal statuses, borders follow migrants into the national space for years, where they can materialise in workplaces, schools, tax offices, social services, or banks – in fact, anywhere one needs to prove his or her identity or "wherever selective controls are to be found" (Balibar 2002: 84). Immigration law establishes internal borders inside the state or as Bosniak (2007: 2551) wrote: "Indeed, it is the internalized border that defines aliens as aliens, that imposes conditions on their presence, and that claims the authority to detain and deport them in various circumstances". De Genova (2002) had emphasised the importance of shifting the focus from the visibility of enforcement of border controls or the "border spectacle" to the differentiating operation of the immigration law, which is the invisible foundation for migration management. The multiplication of legal statuses and the consequent differential inclusion of non-citizens form a complementary instrument for the border regime, enabling the regulation of immigration within territorial borders (Könönen 2018; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

Here, I understand borders as an institution that regulates the presence and access of non-citizens, not only at the external borders but also within the given society (see Balibar 2004; Rigo 2011). In contrast to the conception of borders as places of exclusion at the territorial edges, the idea of borders as an institution enables to capture the operation of migration governance as a complex and multilayer system, extending its tentacles to potentially all over the society. The residence permit system forms an extension of the border regime, which allows states to control non-citizens by other means and differentiate non-citizens' access to labour markets and social services. Various legal statuses and respective legal identities function as a kind of travel pass, which enables bordering not only at the territorial borders as well as urban spaces but also with respect to all instances in which a person can be obliged to prove identity (see Lyon 2011). Therefore, due to the lack of identity documents or permanent residence status, non-citizens may encounter borders in the private sphere, for example in opening a bank account or in renting an apartment. Depending on the personal and legal situations, internal borders can be unnoticeable in everyday life, yet they can materialise unexpectedly due to changing circumstances or whenever access to institutions or services is denied. Internal borders are articulated in different and interrelated ways in the lives of non-citizens, becoming personalised borders, which exist for only some and not others.

Bordering processes continue inside the EU space, where non-citizens are targets of various exclusive practices, whether symbolic, racialised, or judicial. Here, rather than general everyday bordering[1] (Yuval-Davies, Wemyss & Cassidy 2018) or bordering as spatial practice (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen 2002), I want to draw attention to the administrative bordering practices, through which borders are actually controlled and introduced inside the state (see Weber 2013). Thus, administrative bordering refers to the

negotiations and processes concerning the presence and access of non-citizens that are both a fundamental part and a consequence of immigration policies. Bureaucratic procedures on the identification of non-citizens and qualification for the residence permits are a precondition for migration governance, as they are an essential instrument in the prevention of irregular migration (Fassin 2011). In addition to residence permit applications, bureaucratic procedures extend to various instances providing documents necessary for residence permit applications or otherwise regulating non-citizens' access to the services, such as local registry offices, embassies, social services, or banks, which become involved in administrative bordering of non-citizens. The procedures concerning inclusion or exclusion of non-citizens are administrative in nature in that they are based on the discretion of legislation. Methodologically, the concept of administrative bordering indicates the examination of law in action (Calavita 2010): in the field of immigration, the gap between law-on-the-books and law-in-action is more significant than in the other spheres of legislation (Schuck 1990).

I argue that in order to obtain a more detailed understanding of immigration policies, we need to examine migrants' encounters with the immigration bureaucracy and the collateral effects of the legal status for the social position of non-citizens. For non-citizens, the complex immigration bureaucracy and administrative bordering often cause uncertainty and unpredictability of the outcomes, as they struggle to fulfil the bureaucratic requirements for residence permits or secure access to necessary services. Like all bureaucracies, immigration policies schematise and simplify reality (see Graeber 2015) in determining the preconditions for different types of immigration, such as work, marriage, education, and their various sub-categories. Consequently, the residence permit system has a performative function in shaping migrants' behaviour (Karakayali & Rigo 2010: 130) in that migrants need to modify their lives to fit the required procrustean schemas in order to obtain a residence permit. Immigration officials and other street-level bureaucrats have an influence on individual immigration trajectories because the immigration law leaves wide discretionary powers to determine the status and entitlements of non-citizens (see Eule 2013; Lipsky 2010). Border struggles emerge in situations in which migrants' subjective aspirations run up against the rigid structures of immigration bureaucracy.

For analytical purpose, it is justifiable to focus on legal status, which designates a different level of exclusion compared to race, gender, or class (Bosniak 2006: 11). In addition, residence right represents a common field of struggle for moving populations, regardless of personal attributes. As a Nordic country, Finland offers an interesting context in which to examine administrative bordering because of the significant role of the state in providing and regulating social services. In the Nordic countries, the technologized regulatory systems mediate access to different institutions, and consequently, identity documents and legal status profoundly affect the organisation of everyday life. Border struggles take different forms, depending on the institutional and legislative settings, yet the analysis presented here has a wider significance in demonstrating the material and subjective consequences of administrative bordering within the state for legally residing non-citizens as well.

Data and methods

This article focuses on non-citizens' border struggles in the context of the residence permit system in Finland. In 2017, 21,340 new

residence permits were issued for non-EU migrants, officially called as third country nationals, on the basis of employment, studies, and family relations. Additionally, 3,748 people received a residence permit through the asylum process. In the migration research, entry categories are usually used as an indicator of distinct social groups, consequently reproducing the governmental framework in academia (see Crawley & Skleparis 2018). Yet, governmental categorisations are external to migrants' subjective reasons, as highlighted in the discussion on autonomy of migration (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013; Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013). Moreover, autonomy of migration takes place also inside the state as migrants work regardless of the entry category or apply for a residence permit on new grounds. Instead of conceiving the entry categories as identities or migrants as representatives of ethnic groups, I focus here on the migrants' negotiations with the immigration system before obtaining permanent residency. Regardless of the entry category, conditional legal position forms a common feature in the immigration process (see Golding & Landolt 2013: 15–16). Indeed, the legal residence status as such does not necessarily guarantee a secure position. For example, in Finland, non-EU students are excluded from the welfare state services, including public health care, consequently being in a relatively precarious legal position comparable to asylum seekers (see also Maury 2017).

This article is based on 32 semi-structured in-depth interviews with non-EU migrants from Africa and Asia,[2] who shared in common the conditionality of their legal status and a precarious position in the labour markets. Interviewees had arrived in Finland mainly as students and asylum seekers, yet at the date of the interview, in most cases, their legal status had changed, consequently resulting in a series of aberrant combinations between the governmental categories of asylum, work, study, and marriage. The interviews were conducted primarily in 2010 in Helsinki by the author in English, except for four interviews in Finnish. On the date of the interview, the participants had been in Finland for approximately 2–4 years. Of the interviewed migrants, 26 were men and 6 were women, and most were between 25 and 35 years of age. The interviews lasted for approximately 90 minutes and were transcribed for the analysis. The themes discussed in the interviews included participants' migration history, experiences in the labour markets, residence permit process, and organisation of life in Finland. The transcriptions used in this article are slightly edited for purposes of readability, when necessary. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the interview extracts are contextualised only with respect to nationality, permit type, and residence time. In addition to the interviews, the analysis is informed by the author's 10 years of experience in migration solidarity activism in Finland. Practical experience in translating bureaucratic regulations and assisting in residence permit applications provides valuable information about the practices of administrative bordering on immigration and supports the analysis of the interview data.

The empirical analysis concentrates on different, yet interrelated, aspects of bordering during the immigration process. First, I address how the lack of identity documents complicates the organisation of everyday life. Second, I concentrate on the bureaucratic struggle involved in applying for a residence permit. Third, I examine the collateral effects of the legal status for the social position of non-citizens. Fourth, I address the pervasive insecurity related to the immigration process. The observations in this article are not generalisable to all migrant populations in Finland; rather the aim of this article is to highlight different instances of administrative bordering and its consequences for non-citizens.

Everyday obstacles in organisation of life

Regardless of the entry category, migrants pursue their personal aspirations and are involved in different social spheres but under different legal preconditions. In this chapter, I address the problems in organising life without official identification documents, which concern mainly asylum seekers who do not have a passport and face similar problems as undocumented migrants (see Bloch, Sigona & Zetter 2014). The asylum process can proceed linearly, and the immigration office issues alien passports for recognised humanitarian migrants, who they direct to integration services. Yet, the interviewed African migrants in particular were disillusioned with the asylum system and aware of the slight possibility of being recognised as a refugee. In Finland, a controlled reception system, in which asylum-seekers are entitled to free accommodation in reception centres often in peripheral locations, exists alongside the freedom to move and independently arrange accommodation. The asylum process, including the appeals, can take years to complete, which gives migrants borrowed time to consider alternative plans for legalisation. Often, asylum seekers have only the reception centre card, which complicates organisation of everyday life and can, for example, prevent entrance to nightclubs because of unconfirmed age, as one interviewee explained:

> They give you some ID-card to live in Finland. But this is not an official ID. I can't use it for anything. I can't even have a bus card or go to nightclubs. It's just a piece of paper; nobody takes it seriously. It's almost useless. [...] I also have a paper that says I can work legally, but if I go with that paper to employers, they don't give me a job because it looks like I have made it myself. (Sri Lanka, asylum seeker, 1 year in Finland)

Those interviewees who had moved to Helsinki during the asylum process shared apartments with acquaintances. According to the interviewees, ethnic communities facilitate the organisation of everyday life by sharing information and resources, such as providing assistance in finding employment and making informal accommodation arrangements (see Wills et al. 2011). To maintain the right to the reception services, asylum seekers need a registered address, which can be difficult to obtain because of the restrictions on the number of inhabitants permitted in rental agreements. Opening a bank account is another problem complicating the everyday life of those who do not possess a valid passport, because banks are obliged to authenticate client's identity due to the legislation to prevent money laundering and the financing of terrorism. According to the interviewees, some banks had refused to open a bank account for asylum seekers despite having a passport. Banks represent an instance of administrative bordering in that they regulate non-citizens' access to necessary services, but different interpretations of the regulation caused confusion for the interviewees. The absence of a personal bank account increases dependency on third parties in handling practical matters and produces shadowy arrangements:

> Even now, I don't have a bank account. I went to the bank, but they say no, we cannot open an account for you because you don't have a passport. My boss has a separate account, where he pays the salaries and gives us the money in cash. I am not the only one who is in this situation; there are other people who have the same problem. (Nigeria, asylum seeker, 2 years in Finland)

The complex immigration legislation causes confusion also for employers who may be suspicious of asylum seekers' permission

to work legally, even if they get a certificate for the right to work. In Finland, asylum seekers are allowed to work without restrictions after 3 or 6 months, depending on whether or not they possess valid documents on arrival. The purpose of the regulation is to sanction intentional disposal of identity documents before arrival, although there is no evidence to support the aforementioned claim (e.g. Valenta & Thorshaug 2012). However, the tax office issues tax cards for non-citizens and creates a temporary social security number for taxation purposes, even if the person would not be entitled to work legally. The possession of a passport facilitates the organisation of everyday life, yet arrangements of a bank account, a registered address, and other bureaucratic procedures are part of the immigration process, even if one has a residence permit at arrival. One interviewee, who had arrived in Finland for the purpose of study and later applied for a work permit, summarised the immigration process as an acquisition of "every kind of paper":

> *Here, you people love papers and stamps. [...] All the time you have to apply for permits; all the time you have to go the police station. You need to acquire every kind of paper. At one point I thought about going back to my home country because this country is becoming so difficult for me.* (Cameroon, student/work permit, 3 years in Finland)

Migrants do find alternative ways to overcome everyday obstacles, such as using acquaintances' bank accounts, sharing travel cards, or borrowing identification documents, but obtaining a residence permit becomes the primary concern in the immigration process if the asylum application is rejected or the legal residence status is set to expire. A residence permit can also be applied for in Finland, but it necessitates initiative and networks due to the absence of official support services for residence permit processes.[3] Moreover, the immigration system demands "interpretative labour" (Graeber 2015) from applicants to understand the complex immigration bureaucracy, which can be difficult to navigate, even for Finnish citizens. Yet, even if one has a valid ground for a residence permit, administrative bordering practices complicate the application process.

Negotiating the residence permit system

For migrants in irregular situations, there are three options in addition to the asylum system for obtaining a residence permit: marriage, employment, and study programmes, each of which designates different bureaucratic preconditions. Status mobility (Schuster 2005) is an inherent feature of immigration controls because first residence permits are transient in nature (Freedland & Costello 2015: 4). While most legal statuses allow migrants a continuation towards permanent residence, non-EU graduates in Finland only can receive a 1-year (previously 6-month) extension of their residence permit for the purpose of job hunting. As a result, after graduation, student migrants can be in situations similar to those of rejected asylum seekers in that they need to find new grounds for continuation of residence. For the interviewees, the main legalising strategy was to apply for a work permit. Yet, the tight work permit policies caused problems for employed interviewees despite being able to support themselves, either because of irregular working hours or on the basis of labour market testing, as in the following case:

> *Yes, I applied for the work permit, but they didn't accept it. Because they say we are giving work permits only for cleaning*

> *jobs. For my job, I'm in the restaurant field. They say there are enough Finnish people to do restaurant work, so there is no need for foreigners. But there are still a lot of open vacancies in the Employment Office. And my boss said we need you at the workplace. We can take care of ourselves, but they didn't give the permit.* (Nigeria, student, 2 years in Finland)

The sectors eligible for work permits are dependent on the labour market testing, i.e. assessment of labour shortages in the different sectors in the country. Because of the labour market testing, cleaning has become the principal sector that allows migrants to obtain a work permit without prior qualifications. Trade unions and representatives of employers have a hand in administrative bordering in the labour markets as they participate in the formulation of guidelines of the availability of labour (see Alho 2013). In practice, the work permit application is contingent on the benevolence of employers due to the requirement of a full-time employment and long processing times (Könönen 2015). In addition to the bureaucratic application form, which consists of several pages of questions on the applicant's work and personal situation, the employer needs to provide attachments to work permit application detailing the company's recruitment history and financial affairs. Employers act as border guards through the obligation to control non-citizens' legal preconditions to work (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy 2018), but they can also directly sanction non-citizens' residence along with the state (Rigo 2011: 208). Residence permits are contingent on the existence of the grounds for which the permit is issued; thus, termination of the employment contract can lead to "illegality" with respect to work permits, as divorce can endanger the residence right of marriage migrants. For example, ineligibility for a permanent residence after a divorce came as surprise to a comfortably settled interviewee.

> *It's amusing because, in six months, my permit will not be valid anymore. I went to reapply for the permit a couple of weeks ago. They asked directly what I am still doing here because I have divorced the Finnish man, which is why I came here. I have to go back to my home country or explain the reason why I really want to be here. I said I have a permanent job, I have friends, and all my life is here. [...] And I have a man I love, a fiancé: we are getting married. But he [the police] said that these are not good reasons. I don't know; the process takes four months. Let's see if they accept it or not.* (Morocco, marriage, 4 years in Finland)

Marriage is another option for legalisation for non-citizens, yet the application for a marriage permit can be a complicated and time-consuming process as well if the country does not have an embassy or consulate in Helsinki. To get married at the local registry office, in addition to having a passport, a non-citizen needs to request certification of bachelorhood from the country of origin. For example, for West African nationals, the requested certification needs to be individually verified by a consulting law firm, charging currently considerable 580 euros for their services. The mandatory twofold process creates a profitable business for a private agency, an example of the privatisation of the administrative bordering and the growing migration industry (see Andersson 2015). Because of the processing fees, currently up to 520 euros for the first residence permit application, a non-citizen may need to spend more than 1,000 euros in total in applying for a residence permit on the basis of marriage. In addition to the processing fees, the income requirements for the issuance of residence permits caused financial problems for the interviewees, especially for non-EU students, who currently need

to demonstrate possessing 6,720 euros of available funds per year. Although the existing work contract can be accepted as an indicator of self-sufficiency, the practices of the immigration office appear to be very strict, as in the following case:

> *I was very, very depressed. When I made the school application, I didn't have the money, that's true. But they had my working contract, they had my payslips. Normally, the condition is that if you don't have the 6,000 euros, but you can show you are self-supporting, if you get around 500 euros per month, it's fine. [...] Then I was getting about 800 euros per month so I didn't really understand. The lady who made the decision said she wasn't sure if I really wanted to study; she thinks that I know a bit about the system and the law, and so I want to play some kind of trick to get the permit, and she's not sure I'm going to study.* (Cameroon, asylum seeker/student, 3 years in Finland)

The interviewee lived undocumented for a year because of the negative decision until he was granted a study permit. The application was rejected based on the paragraph on circumventing entry regulations, which give the immigration authorities broad discretion. Paradoxically, knowledge of the immigration system, which is a prerequisite for legalisation, can turn against the applicant. Based on the interviews, administrative bordering seemed to target African migrants in particular, whose applications were subjected to rigorous scrutiny. In a similar way, other studies have highlighted a culture of suspicion in the decision-making practices in family reunification processes (see Leinonen & Pellander 2014; Tapaninen & Helen 2013). Indeed, while many research participants did manage to get a residence permit on new grounds, at least two interviewed African nationals were deported, despite having applications pending.

Collateral effects of legal status

The binary distinction between legal status and "illegal" status has little analytical value in understanding the immigration process because the preconditions of residence and non-citizens' entitlements vary significantly between the various legal statuses (Könönen 2018). Goldring and Landolt (2013) refer to the immigration system as "chutes and ladders", where one can climb upwards to a more secure position, yet can just as easily slide downwards to "illegality". While the acquisition of any kind of permit is an acute concern to migrants in irregular situations, the type of residence permit that is issued shapes the immigration trajectory and have collateral effects on the social position of non-citizens with regard to family life, access to social services and labour markets, therefore creating yet another level of differentiation. Interestingly, after receiving a work permit, one asylum seeker commented, "It was in a way better not to have this permit":

> *Somehow it's better because I now have municipal residency, which I didn't have before. And now I got my passport back so, for example, I could travel somewhere if I want. [...] I'm just worried about what kind of continuous permit it is. Does it mean I have to continue in this sector until the end of my life? Because it's not the job I want. But sometimes you don't have a choice.* (Afghanistan, asylum seeker/work permit, 4 years in Finland)

Work can become a substitute for international protection, but overcoming one obstacle can mean having to confront others, in this case, restricted mobility in the labour markets. Work permit holders are allowed to work only in the prescribed sector, whereas non-citizens are exempted from the sectorial restrictions in the labour market, including asylum seekers. The sectorial work permit allows a person to change employer in the prescribed sector, but switching to another sector requires a new procedure and carries with it the risk of a negative decision. The work permit increases dependency on the employer in that the residence right is connected with employment until a permanent residence permit is obtained. The limitations to labour market mobility further immobilise migrant workers, restricting their "exit power" from poor or even intolerable working conditions (cf. Alberti 2015).

Obtaining a work permit or a residence permit other than an international protection status can also affect directly on the family life because only international protection statuses entitle to family reunification without a proof of income. Income requirements depend on family size and currently amount to 2,600 euros of net income per month for a family of two adults and two minors. Although there is the possibility of individual consideration and state subsidies can reduce the income requirement, based on this research, the decision-making at the immigration office seemed to be inflexible. One interviewee, who had received a residence permit on individual reasons instead of international protection, had been separated from his family for years because of the income requirement for family reunification. Although the court later overruled the decision, he was frustrated on the situation at the date of interview.

> *I have tried to apply for family reunification, but they say I need 3,000 euros income per month. What kind of job can I do to have in hand 3,000 euros per month? Maybe if you are a doctor you can, but I am not a doctor. But what can I do if the authorities decide that way? [...] It's really hard to live apart from your family. I cannot go back there, but I am not sure if I want to live like this.* (Congo, asylum seeker/humanitarian permit, 4 years in Finland)

Officials can use discretion also for the benefit of a non-citizen: for example, one interviewed student did receive extensive treatment in a hospital despite being undocumented at that time. The welfare services are an important site of administrative bordering, both at the municipal level and the level of a national insurance institution because of the complex intersections between immigration and social security legislation (see Könönen 2018). Despite the residence-based welfare system in Finland, access to public services is contingent on the legal status instead of *de facto* residence (see Corrigan 2014). Yet, in Helsinki, the registry offices have interpreted the municipality law to mean that unconfirmed identity prevents registration, thereby excluding those legal residents who do not have an original passport from municipal services. This happened to one interviewee, who was denied a registration in the municipality after obtaining a work permit.

> *I work in Helsinki, I study in Helsinki, I live in Helsinki. I have a residence permit, but they won't give the municipal residency. I want a permanent social security number. I went to the local registry office, but they say they cannot give it because I don't have a passport. I have an alien passport, but they won't register me because my identity is not clear. I don't understand that. Now, I cannot get a bus card, and if I get sick, I don't know if I can go to the doctor.* (Kenya, asylum seeker/work permit, 2 years in Finland).

In the interviews, negotiations with the welfare institutions were not emphasised, because the participants were employed or were not

entitled to public services. Nevertheless, rather than designating a straightforward inclusion in the society, obtaining a residence permit can mean new obstacles and complications in the immigration process. In addition to the type of legal status, administrative bordering and strict interpretations of legislation can significantly modify non-citizens' social position. In the interviews, administrative bordering appeared primarily as inflexible practices, consequently creating insecurity and unpredictability of the outcomes.

Enduring insecurity of presence and future

Along with the external obstacles explored in the previous sections, administrative bordering shapes non-citizens' social position and modifies their orientation in the world. While it has been suggested that legal status is relevant only insofar as it concretely restricts the activities of migrants (Cvajner & Sciortino 2010), borders invade the mind and get under the skin. In addition to the long-lasting consequences for migrants' position in the labour markets (see Goldring & Landolt 2011), precarious and conditional legal statuses cause enduring insecurity of presence and future for non-citizens. Based on the interviews, the participants were often confused about their legal position. In addition to bureaucratic language, inadequate translation services on the decisions delivered in Finnish can exacerbate the obscurity of the immigration system. Exclusion of personal contact between the subject and the decision-makers contributes to social indifference but the impersonal bureaucracy and administrative bordering also increase the fear of unexpected turns in the immigration process, however unlikely. Insecurity materialises in calls to appear at the police station or in decisions arriving at unannounced times by mail, as one interviewee who was waiting for the final appeal on the asylum decision explained:

> It's the kind of a process in which we have to get used to always waiting. For me, for example, as I am living in Finland, every day when I open my door, I am just shocked on receiving some mail; what kind of mail is waiting for me today? It's my everyday life thinking... Because I and other foreigners like me are living in such conditions that any day any kind of decision can be outside our door. We don't know; we can't be sure about it. This is something that psychologically causes huge pressure. Because you are not sure about your situation: what will be the next step, the next decision? Because it's very easy for Finns or somebody who is living normally; they do not have to be surprised by any mail, everything is ok. For us, every day we are wondering, will your decision arrive today? (Afghanistan, asylum seeker/work permit, 4 years in Finland)

Insecurity of the residence right extends beyond the present and is experienced as confusion and psychological stress, as described in the quotation above. The residence permit system divides the immigration process into waiting periods, which involves a possibility of a negative decision regardless of the length of residence. The immigration process is characterised by "institutionalised uncertainty" (Anderson 2010), which affects the experience of time and the possibilities to make plans for the future. Insecurity of presence and future relates to the lack of security and assurance against unexpected events. In the end, a permanent residence status designates an important threshold in that it guarantees a position similar to citizen status and mitigates insecurity about residence, although a criminal

sentence can trigger the deportation process. While the permanent residence permit can be applied for after 4 years of legal residence, in practice, it takes longer due to various combinations of different permit types. Somewhat confusingly, only half the time spent on a temporary permit is acknowledged in calculating the total residence time. The insecurity and prolonged waiting for permanent status complicate the settlement, as one interviewee explained:

> It is a really difficult and long process to get the permanent [permit]; they give the permit for a year and then for another year. Next year I can apply for a permanent [permit]. I don't know why we have to wait so long, like 7 or 8 years; then you might get the permanent [permit]. Because of the waiting time, how can I adapt to this society when I don't know what will happen tomorrow? [...] I have had serious depression. I am constantly afraid that Finland will deport me and my child. And there [in the home country] we don't have anything. The child goes to school here, she has adapted to life here. (China, asylum seeker/work permit/international protection, 6 years in Finland)

Residence permit processes are emotionally laden in that an entire future and every type of investment in the migration are at stake – not only for oneself but also for accompanying minors and potentially for other family members. While the psychological stress of the asylum process (e.g. Rider 2014) and immigrant detention (Turnbull 2016) have been addressed in the migration research, similar mental pressures can characterise the whole residence permit procedure until the securing of a permanent status. Psychological effects of the immigration system for non-citizens highlighted by the interviewees resemble to some extent the mental and psychical disorders of the oppressed, which was examined by Fanon (2008) in the context of colonialism. Several interviewees talked about the depression caused by fear of deportation, which is highlighted in the situation of prolonged deportability (de Genova 2002). One interviewee ended up being undocumented because the police could not implement the removal and the immigration office did not issue a temporary residence permit to him as was stipulated by the law at the time. He related how the immigration authorities "are killing me slowly" and that he is "a zero man" because of his lack of a residence permit:

> My life depends on this. I can't do anything, I can't study, I can't work. What can I do? As I said, I live in a prison: not in one room: I can walk around in the city, but it's still like a prison for me. [...] I just want to have the permit first, be sure that I can live here, and then officially marry my partner. And then travel, get somewhere out of Finland, travel sometime, a month or two weeks. (Iran, asylum seeker/undocumented, 5 years in Finland)

The conditional legal status shapes non-citizens' temporal orientations (Villegas 2014), affecting also intimate relations. In other words, the insecurity of residence can designate a *suspended life*, in that preconditions for independent life are contingent on the residence permit process (Könönen 2015). While the subject positions established by the immigration controls are external to migrants' diverse life situations, legal status can become an embodied condition as the immigration law becomes inseparable from life. Internal borders and related practices of administrative bordering shape non-citizens' being-in-the-world in different ways, depending on the available resources and support networks, yet with enduring consequences, even for settled immigrants.

Conclusions

In this article, I have examined administrative bordering and the different materialisations of borders during the immigration process based on the interviews with non-citizens in Finland. The focus on non-citizens' border struggles reveals the non-linear nature of immigration, which consists of negotiations with the immigration bureaucracy and overcoming various bureaucratic obstacles. Moreover, the immigration process may involve transitions between the immigration categories, for example from humanitarian migrant (asylum seeker) to labour migrant (work permit holder). The residence right represents the primary field of struggle for non-citizens, yet the residence permit application for the purpose of studies, employment, or marriage requires various documents and proofs of qualification, whose acquisition can complicate the immigration process, even if one has valid grounds for the permit. Additionally, the type of residence permit that is issued can designate new borders with respect to the labour markets, family reunification, and welfare services. While personal situations and available resources affect the relevance of internal borders, complex bureaucratic procedures and practices of administrative bordering increase the insecurity and uncertainty of non-citizens' presence and access.

While the empirical observations here are based on the analysis of border struggles in Finland, I argue that administrative bordering is an essential part of migration management, which takes place increasingly within the state. Contrary to the prevalent conception of external borders as sites of inclusion or exclusion in the migration literature and the idealised view of integration as an adaptation of cultural norms, non-citizens are in a conditional legal position for years before obtaining a permanent residence permit. The immigration process can and often does proceed linearly when non-citizens follow the designated entry path towards citizenship. Nevertheless, during this transitory period, non-citizens are subject to various administrative processes, which can significantly shape their social position and the immigration process. While immigration involves encounters with "new social–cultural boundaries" created by everyday bordering practices and related to the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy 2018), the concept of administrative bordering introduced here emphasises the concrete practices of migration management. In addition to the state bureaucrats, administrative bordering incorporates all the instances that participate in the regulation of non-citizens' presence and access or inclusion and exclusion. Analysis of the micropolitics of immigration controls or law in action should be essential in migration research,

because beyond the border spectacle, migration management is essentially a bureaucratic business.

Immigration policies cannot be reduced to a simple application of legislation because the immigration law leaves state authorities a significant discretionary power in its implementation. The inflexibility of immigration policies causes insecurity not only for non-citizens but also for their family members, fellow employees, friends, or partners. Increased bureaucratisation of immigration is motivated by security concerns and the prevention of irregular migration, but the rigid practices of administrative bordering can complicate the immigration process and, in the worst case, transform non-citizens to undocumented migrants. There is a need to develop more inclusive practices in immigration policies to acknowledge variations in life situations and thereby endeavour to facilitate migrant settlement. In the context of immigration, bureaucracy as a depoliticised and impersonal mode of government can produce the most personal and political outcomes.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Yuval-Davies, Wemyss & Cassidy (2018: 229) defined bordering as "the everyday construction of borders through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of transnationalism".
2. The interviewees were from Afghanistan, Cameroon, China, Congo, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Zimbabwe.
3. Currently, all the applications need to be left in person for purposes of verifying the applicant's identity and recording biometric identifiers, carrying the risk of a detention order for those having an effective removal decision. Additionally, an administrative regulation (introduced in 2016) necessitates the applicant to acquire a passport from the country of origin in order for a residence permit to be issued.

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