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Reconfiguring Desecuritization: Contesting Expert Knowledge in the Securitization of Migration

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces desecuritization as the missing supplement of the conception of securitization as a dispersed social process. It calls for the creative development of approaches that destabilise the credibility of security professionals' claimed expert knowledge. To illustrate the potential of this approach, the article combines insights from the sociology of ignorance (agnotology) and the autonomy of migration literature to deconstruct the framing of migrants as cunning tricksters, a narrative that features prominently in processes of securitization. Within the Schengen visa regime discussed in this article, the trickster narrative emerges in the portrayal of visa applicants as deploying various modes of deception like 'document fraud' or 'visa shopping'. Based on ethnographic fieldwork at consulates in North Africa, this article demonstrates, in contrast, that practices like applying at a consulate known for a more liberal decision-making practice constitute coping strategies by which migrants try to mitigate the uncertainty that a culture of suspicion, the discretionary power of consular staff and the heterogeneity of opaque decision-making criteria create for them. Ultimately, the analysis shows that security practices produce not only knowledge, but also various forms of nonknowledge which provoke the instances of 'trickery' that ever more pervasive security practices are supposed to forestall.

In October 2011, the Visa Information System (VIS), one of the largest biometric databases in the world, started to operate. It stores the fingerprints of the up to 20 million people who annually apply for a Schengen visa for a period of five years. The VIS is just one of a growing arsenal of migration-related information systems that have been introduced by the European Union (EU). Other systems include EURODAC, which stores fingerprints of asylum seekers, unauthorised border crossers and apprehended illegalised migrants, or the Schengen Information System (SIS), which stores records on deported migrants with a re-entry ban (cf. Broeders 2011). All these information systems are meant to contribute to 'stability and security' (EC 2004, 4) in the EU by tracing the identities, bureaucratic trajectories and partly also the whereabouts of third-country nationals. The implementation of biometric

databases is justified with the alleged need to identify 'tricksters' among third country nationals travelling to Europe. The trickster narrative frames aspiring migrants, particularly those from developing countries in the global South, as cunning rational-choice actors using various modes of deception to migrate to Europe. This narrative features prominently in processes of securitization as it is mobilised to call for ever more pervasive security technologies. This can be illustrated through an impact assessment on the VIS, which was supposed to advise policy-makers on whether to introduce this vast biometric database. The section entitled 'problems in the current situation' notes:

> 'There is a sizable proportion of people who currently try to obtain a Schengen visa on dubious grounds [...]. At present Member States have difficulties in ascertaining whether a visa applicant is using a false identity to obtain a Schengen visa. [...] Information on stolen or false travel documents and information on dubious references to support visa applications (persons or companies) is not readily available to consular posts and border checking points. The study concluded that the existing system for exchanges of information does not ensure that information reaches the missions or border control points that require it and need it on time' (EC 2004, 5).

The report cites more examples of migrant trickery such as 'visa shopping',[1] 'overstaying'[2] or 'document fraud' before highlighting insufficiencies of existing control mechanisms in order to conclude that '[i]nclusion of biometric data in the VIS would [...] significantly support the assessment of applicants in view of preventing "visa shopping", fraud and threats to internal security [...]' (EC 2004, 32).

This example illustrates what the editors of this special issue call a 'state of suspicion' : The trickster narrative suspects third country nationals of representing cunning tricksters with excessive agency that has to be tamed through ever more pervasive security technologies like biometrics. The example shows, furthermore, that the securitization of migration is not reducible to performative speech acts by political elites, as suggested by the *Copenhagen School* (CoS) (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde. 1998). It rather illustrates the conception of securitization as a dispersed social process by the *Paris school*. Accordingly, processes of securitization are facilitated by a multiplicity of technologically mediated security practices of various security actors who compete over budgets, areas of responsibility and the definition of threats (Amoore and De Goede 2008; Balzacq 2011; Balzacq et al. 2010; Bigo 2002, 2006, 2014; Huysmans 2011, 2006). Hence, the implementation of biometric information systems for migration-related security purposes raises a question that has not received much attention so far: How to think and initiate a *desecuritization* of migration if securitization is understood as a dispersed social process?

In general, the question of whether to desecuritize migration boils down to an ethical-political decision since processes of securitization raise questions about the kind of society we want to live in and the kinds of politics we want (cf. Aradau 2004). If securitization is understood as a dispersed social process,

there are at least four reasons for thinking more about how to desecuritize migration: First, securitization limits policy options to measures aiming at identifying, distancing and minimizing the risks and dangers that are associated with migration (cf. Huysmans 2006). Secondly, securitization facilitates undemocratic politics. The reason is not so much a shift from normal to exceptional politics, as in the framework of the Copenhagen school (Aradau 2004). In the Paris schools' framework, the undemocratic implications of processes of securitization rather reside in security professionals' capacity to monopolise the definition of threats by invoking access to an exclusive expert knowledge (Bigo 2002). Thirdly, the securitization of migration normalises and intensifies fears of migrants and foreigners, at times intertwined with the reification of racist stereotypes and Islamophobia (Kaya 2011). Finally, the securitization of migration contributes to a generalised state of fear because processes of securitization are, in fact, veritable processes of insecuritization that hinge on fearmongering and the proliferation of risk and threat narratives (C.A.S.E 2006). This is also the reason why desecuritization constitutes the indispensable but so far missing supplement to processes of securitization in the framework of the Paris school, as I argue in the first section.

Consequently, this article calls for the creative development of approaches that can destabilise the authority of security professionals' claimed expert knowledge and the credibility of related regimes of truth. Following Bigo (2002), it is this claimed expert knowledge which explains the predominance of the security framing of migration and the marginalization of alternative discourses. To illustrate the potential of approaches that aim at undermining the epistemic foundation of processes of securitization the article combines insights from the *sociology of ignorance* (Gross and Lindsey 2015) with the *autonomy of migration* approach in order to destabilise the trickster narrative in context of the Schengen visa regime.

The article proceeds in three moves: The first section introduces desecuritization as the missing supplement of the conception of securitization as a dispersed social process. The second section argues for the creative development of situated approaches of desecuritization that delegitimize and undermine security professionals' claimed expert knowledge. After outlining three potential theoretical sources for such approaches, the article combines insights from the sociology of ignorance with the autonomy of migration approach to a framework that can help to deconstruct the framing of migrants as tricksters in context of the Schengen visa regime. The third section puts this framework to use. Drawing on fieldwork that was conducted in 2012 in and around consulates of Schengen member states in a North African country,[3] this final part delegitimizes the trickster narrative. It shows, in brief, that security practices produce not only knowledge, but also various forms of nonknowledge which provoke the very instances of trickery that ever more pervasive security practices are supposed to forestall. Ultimately, the Schengen

visa regime emerges as an unpredictable regime of institutionalised suspicion that animates this dynamic in the first place.

Reconstructing Desecuritization 2.0: The Missing Supplement of Securitization

To date, migration has been the most prominent case of securitization theory as numerous monographs and countless articles illustrate. The question of how to desecuritize migration has in comparison received little attention so far. This is surprising insofar as Ole Wæver (1995) introduced desecuritization as the twin concept of securitization in his pioneering work. In general, the concept of 'desecuritization has [...] remained seriously underspecified' (Aradau 2004, 389) despite the importance the Copenhagen school (CoS) around Wæver attributes to the unmaking of securitizing moves. This is implied by the CoS' understanding of securitization as a performative speech act by political elites that shifts an issue out of established democratic procedures by framing it 'either as a special kind of politics or as above politics' (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde. 1998, 23). Hence the CoS favours desecuritization as the preferred 'long-range option', vaguely defining it as 'the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere' (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998 29, 4; cf. Hansen 2012).

However, partly due to its undertheorization, the concept of desecuritization has been interpreted in various, sometimes contradictory ways (Taureck 2006, 59). Hansen (2012) identifies, for instance, four different conceptions of desecuritization. These include *détente* (a slow move of an issue out of security discourse), *replacement* (of a security issue by another one), *rearticulation* (of a securitized issue in a non-security frame) and *silencing* (which occurs when an issue disappears from the security discourse) (ibid.). What Hansen's overview shows is that existing attempts to think desecuritization all relate to the CoS's conception of securitization as a performative speech act by political elites. Yet, no attempt has been made so far to think what desecuritization might mean if securitization is understood – along the lines of the *Paris school* – as a dispersed, messy social process that is facilitated by a multiplicity of security actors and technologies (e.g. Amoore and De Goede 2008; Balzacq 2011; Balzacq et al. 2010; Bigo 2002, 2006, 2014; Huysmans 2011, 2006; Muller 2011).

Bigo (2006), one of most prominent scholars of the *Paris school*, understands securitization for instance with Bourdieu as the effect of a field of (in) security in which various networks of security professionals compete with one another over the definition of threats and the means and resources for the abatement.[4] In this reading securitization no longer appears as an intentional strategy of powerful political elites that may try to divert public attention from other political issues or win elections by invoking an existential threat. It

emerges as an uncoordinated, messy mode of government that is facilitated by various security actors that compete with one another over influence, budgets and agendas in a professional field of practice (C.A.S.E 2006, 457 f.).

Developing a notion of desecuritization relating to such a conception of securitization is important because the latter has gained increasing influence in critical security studies (CSS) in the past two decades. It is also crucial in political terms because of the implications of processes of securitization. Concerning migration, processes of securitization imply, for instance, a normalisation and intensification of fears of migrants and foreigners. The figure of the migrant becomes, according to Bigo (2002), a kind of *shibboleth* through which different security actors exchange and combine threat narratives to justify increased cooperation between their agencies. The circulation of these threat narratives is at times intertwined with the reification of racist stereotypes and Islamophobia, for instance if particular crimes or security risks are attributed to particular ethnic or religious groups (Kaya 2011).

The fact that processes of securitization involve the proliferation of fears confirms an important observation by Hansen (2012) for the understanding of securitization as a dispersed social process. In her seminal article *Reconstructing desecuritization*, Hansen (2012) contests the inferior role that has been attributed to desecuritization by framing it, in Derridean terms, as the necessary supplement to securitization. This move allows Hansen to think desecuritization as the indispensable conceptual twin of the CoS' understanding of securitization because 'were there only securitizations, there would be only hyper-politicisation and no "normal politics" for securitization to separate itself from' (2012, 531). A similar conclusion holds for desecuritization if securitization is understood as a messy, dispersed social process. There are two reasons for this.

First, desecuritization emerges as the logical, indispensable supplement of processes of securitization because the latter are, according to the Paris school, inseparably intertwined with processes of insecuritization. The reason is that security actors, in their competition for budgets and competencies, act as veritable 'fearmongers' (Bigo 2002, 78) that create a generalised state of unease as they construct various social phenomena as sources of risk and danger in order to promote their security 'solutions'. Regarding migration, the fear of outsiders is exploited as a 'political currency' (Huysmans 2006, 52) by various security actors that disseminate threat narratives like the trickster narrative in order to call for larger budgets, more prerogatives and the most advanced security technologies. This dynamic results in a veritable 'security-dilemma' as 'the politics of maximal security are also politics of maximal anxiety' (C.A.S.E 2006, 461). From this follows that desecuritization is not only the more desirable option from an ethical-political point of view, but the *indispensable supplement* of securitization. For without instances of desecuritizing we would live in a state of complete insecurity and processes of securitization would

become superfluous as security actors would lack any issues that have not yet been framed in terms of risk and danger.

Secondly, desecuritization emerges as the much-needed supplement to securitization if we follow scholars like Bigo (2002) and Huysmans (2006) who have convincingly shown that securitization implies the marginalization of alternative policy options beyond strategies of identifying, distancing and minimizing the risks and dangers that are associated with migration. The reason is not a lack of alternative discourses but their lack of authority. Due to their exclusive access to surveillance and information technologies like biometric databases and sophisticated knowledge practices such as algorithmic risk profiling, security professionals can invoke the authority of a privileged expert knowledge that allows them to monopolise debates about the definition of threats and the best practices for their neutralisation (Bigo 2002, 74–75). This claimed expert knowledge provides the epistemic foundation for the predominance of securitizing discourses. It explains why 'it is not by directly arguing for migrants and against securitization that critical discourses can change the situation' (Bigo 2002, 66). Following Bigo, these discourses lack the authority that the claimed expert knowledge of security professionals accords to their threat narratives.

This argument points to the importance of the production of knowledge and expertise and the construction of related truth regimes in processes of securitization. However, so far the contestation of technologically mediated and dispersed processes of securitization has been primarily been thought in terms of resistance, either by the targets of securitizing practices such as migrants (e.g. C.A.S.E 2006, 456; Epstein 2007; Muller 2004), or by professionals of fields of practice bordering on the field of (in)security such as human rights lawyers and NGOs or critical artists and academics (C.A.S.E 2006, 459). Yet, resistance is primarily a category of power that does not sufficiently account for the crucial role that regimes of truth and related knowledge practices play within processes of securitization. Hence, resistance, either by the targets of security practices or their allies, such as migrant support groups or human rights lawyers, is an insufficient category for countering and undoing processes of securitization.

Regarding migration, this argument is well-illustrated by the trickster narrative. The latter enables security actors to recuperate migrants' practices of resistance in order to turn them into a driving force for further securitization (cf. Scheel 2018). In brief, the trickster narrative permits security actors to frame migrants' practices of subversion and resistance in terms of delinquency in order to call for more prerogatives and better technology as a way to tame migrants' excessive agency. Hence, the celebration of migrant resistance as a source for undoing security practices can indeed be counterproductive. What is needed is an alternative term that accounts for the crucial role of knowledge production and expertise in processes of securitization.

Understood as the conceptual twin-concept of securitization, the notion of desecuritization can be said to offer such a term. This raises a question I turn to now: how to think and enact such processes of desecuritization in practice?

The Contested Politics of (Non)Knowledge in Processes of (De-) Securitization

In brief, I propose to think desecuritization in direction of approaches that destabilise the epistemic foundation of processes of securitization, namely security professionals' claimed expert knowledge. This starting point follows from the importance that the Paris school attributes to the expert knowledge claimed by security professionals. Following Bigo (2002), it explains why security professionals are capable to monopolise the authority to define threats and related security debates. However, Bigo is rather ambivalent regarding the possibility to contest the claimed expert knowledge of security professionals. On the one hand, he denies it when he asserts that it is 'the *internal logic* of the field of professionals in the management of unease [...] that structures the speakable and the unspeakable concerning immigration and the practices of security agencies' (Bigo 2002, 85; my emhasis). In other words, anybody positioned *outside* of the field of (in)security lacks the authority to challenge security professionals' truth claims. On the other hand, Bigo attributes the potential to critical scholars to contest the claimed expertise of security professionals when he claims that 'the role of critical sociologists is not to invent new slogans but to challenge [...] the positions of the so-called experts and to reopen a way of thinking that they actively try to forget' (2002, 87, fn, 15).

This article sides with the second position. To claim that scholars and other actors like NGOs or critical think tanks have no stake in the field of (in) security because they have no access to the latter's insider knowledge is not convincing. After all, the production of knowledge claiming the status and authority of scientific rigour sits at the core of academic work. The production and critical evaluation of knowledge claims are essentially the turf of academics. Hence, critical scholars *do* possess the cultural and symbolic capital – in the form of academic titles, institutional affiliations, accredited procedures and methods etc. – needed to interfere in the field of (in)security by questioning and contesting the credibility and validity of security professionals' knowledge claims and threat narratives.

This position requires, however, a particular conception of expert knowledge that does not understand such knowledge as the exclusive domain of a particular profession or a specific field of practice. Hence, this article draws on Christina Boswell's (2009) work to propose an understanding of expert knowledge as fluid, contingent and subject to contestations. Boswell relies on STS-scholars like Sheila Jasanoff (1987) to argue that 'the boundaries dividing

expert and non-expert knowledge are blurred, fluid and frequently contested' (Boswell 2009, 25).

This stance does however not imply that any knowledge can claim the status of expert knowledge. Rather, the production of expert knowledge requires certain sets of competencies, skills and access to technological equipment like laboratory tests, knowledge of complicated methodologies or 'familiarity with a large body of empirical knowledge that may only be available to someone professionally specialized in the area' (Boswell 2009, 25). Besides these specific characteristics of the knowledge itself, the status of expert knowledge also stems from the institutional context in which it is produced (2009, 24). To qualify as 'expert knowledge', its producers must demonstrate certain credentials, such as educational training at prestigious institutions, related titles or ranks, a professional affiliation to relevant institutions or publications in recognised formats and outlets. However, access to such credentials is not necessarily tied to belonging to a particular (professional) field of practice.

Such a conception of expert knowledge is very close to Bigo's understanding of security professionals' knowledge as a form of 'administrative' (2002, 83) or 'institutional knowledge' (2002, 74). Following Bigo, it is precisely security professionals' exclusive institutional access to data produced by high-end surveillance technologies and the 'know how' of related techniques like risk profiling which creates an 'ethos of shared knowledge' (ibid) among security professionals, granting their knowledge claims a particular form of authority. In this reading security professionals' exclusive access to high-end technologies and particular methods of knowledge production operate as form of boundary work, which enables them to enact the field of (in)security as a distinct social sphere and to monopolise the definition of threats. To be sure, in Bigo's conception security professionals' expert knowledge is contestable, but only in-between communities of practice belonging to the field of (in-)security.

In more recent work, Bigo (2017) elaborates this point by distinguishing between different 'transnational guilds' of security professionals whose 'struggles and solidarity at a distance are connected with a profession and, inside this profession, with a specific craft [...].' Importantly, these struggles revolve around the *validity* of competing bodies of security knowledge. Each body of knowledge relies on a different set of dispositions, practices, skills, technologies and competencies. In relation to the securitization of migration and borders, Bigo (2014, 211) identifies, for instance, 'at least three different social universes that are intermingling in the process of controlling borders [...]: the military–strategic field, the internal security field and the global cyber-surveillance social universe.' Importantly, each of these social universes revolves around a community of practice that shares a set of dispositions and particular methods of knowledge production. Consular staff and senior officers involved in the processing of Schengen visa belong for instance to the

internal security field. This community of practice conceives of borders primarily as '"filters" for managing human mobility' as its members try to identify and sort out 'illegal migrants' within flows of legitimate travellers (Bigo 2014, 213). To this end, consular staff rely on border security practices that are mainly informed by a local practical knowledge based on experience, as I discuss in the article's second part.

The crucial point is that the adoption of an STS-inspired conception of expert knowledge as fluid, contingent and contested allows to dispense with the imagination of the boundaries of the field of (in)security as inpenetrable barriers separating 'insiders' (security professionals) from 'outsiders' lacking the authority to make any credible claim in security-relevant debates. The boundaries of the field of (in)security become more fluid and permeable if we comprehend expert knowledge and credible knowledge claims with STS-scholars like Jasanoff (2003) or Steven Shapin (1984) as sociopolitical, contestable accomplishments. In this view, expert knowledge resembles a context-specific, fragile, reversible and contested product of competing knowledge practices, rather than as an immaterial, atemporal substance that can be accumulated and put into play in any context or situation (Nicolini, Gherardi, and Yanow 2003). In CSS such an STS-inspired, practice-oriented conception of knowledge is advanced by Aradau's and Huysmans (2019). In this view the assembling of credible security knowledge relies on a range of practices, sources and alliances that also include non-security actors. Consequently, the production of security-relevant knowledge and expertise – and related struggles of credibility and validity – are no longer exclusively located *within* the field of (in-)security. They are situated in 'transepistemic arenas' (Knorr-Cetina 1982) in which the assembling and contestation of the credibility of knowledge claims takes place across multiple sites and epistemic communities. Hence, struggles about the credibility of security-relevant knowledge involve security *and* non-security professionals as key protagonists.

In this way the conception of expert knowledge and credible knowledge claims as sociopolitical, context-specific accomplishments unlocks the conceptual space needed to think tactics of desecuritizing that aim at destabilising and discrediting the validity of security professionals' claimed expert knowledge. There are in fact already numerous scholars that have engaged in this challenge, albeit without explicitly labelling their work in terms of desecuritization. Researcher of the project *Forensic Oceanography* show, for example, how data generated by a vessel tracking system used for avoiding collisions on heavily frequented shipping routes has been repurposed by activities to document and contest the non-rescue of migrant boats in distress in the Mediterranean (Pezzani and Heller 2019). In another study they combine satellite images with data from migrants' distress calls, interview data with survivors, modelled data on winds currents and to reconstruct the trajectory of the 'left-to-die boat' to demonstrate the failure of both commercial and NATO

warships in the region to rescue migrants in distress (Heller and Pezzani 2014).[5] Their analysis was used as evidence in a court case against NATO, thus directly challenging border security practices of abandonment and the related securitization of migration. Bruno Magalhães (2016) draws, in turn, on Michael Lynch's notion of *phase-work* to show how questionable decisions to deny asylum are invested with an aura of objectivity by case workers in migration administrations in Brazil. His study illustrates how case workers displace potentially controversial issues of their assessments either by deferring them to a later stage of the procedure or by framing them as already settled. Finally, Aradau and Blanke (2015) mobilise knowledge from computer science to contest claims by which security professionals seek to justify practices of mass surveillance in legal proceedings after the Snowden revelations. What all these works exemplify is that critical scholars, activist and other producers of counter-knowledge have the capacity to challenge the credibility of security professionals' expert knowledge and related regimes of truth.

These examples also illustrate the second key feature of the notion of desecuritization advanced here: instead of a quest for a universal conception of desecuritization, I propose a situated approach that embraces conceptual diversity, rather than problematizing it. If securitizing is understood as a messy, dispersed socio-technical process, securitizing processes will operate differently in different sites. Hence, there can be no universal answer of how to desecuritize particular phenomena in a specific situation as this depends on the kinds of securitizing practices and the types of knowledge that are operating in that situation. What is needed is the creative development of site-specific, tailor-made strategies of desecuritization. These should draw on a range of conceptual resources whose choice depends on the kinds of securitizing practices that are at work in the situation under consideration. The shared impetus of all these approaches is that they challenge, question and destabilise the credibility of security professionals' claimed expert knowledge in order to deprive processes of securitization of their epistemic foundation.

In the following I outline three – of many thinkable – theoretical resources for such approaches. First, CSS-scholars can mobilise concepts and methodological sensitivities that have been developed in STS to question the construction of scientific 'facts' as well as related methods and devices of truth production (e.g. Knorr-Cetina 1999; Latour and Woolgar 1986; Law 2004; Mol 2002). What animates this body of scholarship is the endeavour to challenge the assumption of clear-cut boundaries between scientific and other social practices in order to contest the authority and often-exclusionary power effects of claims to 'scientific objectivity' and universal truths. Hence, this body of scholarship tries to demonstrate, through detailed ethnographic analysis, that scientific practices are messy, prone to error and heavily invested with political agendas and economic interests. Numerous STS-scholars have also successfully demonstrated this for knowledge

production outside the laboratory. In his account of France's administrative court Latour (2010[2002]) shows the enactment of administrative law to be a messy, highly self-referential process that is shaped by various non-juridical factors, instances of bargaining and unforeseen coincidences.

A second source CSS-scholars may mobilise to destabilise the expertise and knowledge regimes of security professionals is *agnotology*, a branch of STS-scholarship that is concerned with the production of nonknowledge (Proctor 2008). One crucial insight of the sociology of ignorance is that nonknowledge is not simply the negative side of knowledge, but rather productive in and of itself (Gross and Lindsey 2015). Inspired by this scholarship, Aradau (2017) calls on scholars to study how security-relevant knowledge is productive of and intertwined with various forms of nonknowledge, such as secrecy, error, ambiguity, uncertainty or ignorance. Such an agnotological approach is particularly relevant for the study of security practices which, precisely because they are mobilised to tame risks and unknown futures (e.g. Amoore 2013; Chamlian 2016; De Goede 2008), often operate 'at the boundary of what is knowable' (Krasmann 2015, 200).

A third possibility of destabilising the credibility and authority of security professionals' expertise and regimes of truth resides in what Foucault (1980 [1972], 81) calls an 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges.' One form of subjugated knowledge that is particularly relevant for projects of desecuritization is what Foucault calls 'disqualified knowledge' i.e. bodies of knowledge that are framed as inferior, illegitimate, naïve and so forth. As examples Foucault cites the knowledge of ill people or delinquents. He characterises these as a local and specific form of 'knowledge of the people' [savoir des gens] that 'owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it' (ibid, 82). This is why disqualified knowledges – if rehabilitated as valid knowledge (for instance through ethnographic research by academics) – offer a rich source for destabilising the credibility and authority of security professionals' regimes of truth. These are just three of many thinkable theoretical sources for the creative development of strategies of desecuritization whose conception is tailored to the specificities of the situation under consideration.

To offer an example for such a situated conception of desecuritization, this article combines the second (sociology of ignorance) with the third approach (uncovering disqualified knowledges) to a theoretical framework that allows to destabilise the trickster narrative in context of the EU's Schengen visa regime. The so-called autonomy of migration approach is useful here, because it inverts the state and control centred perspective that informs processes of securitization. In securitizing discourses and threat narratives migration is usually assessed from the nation-state point of view of the receiving society (cf. Bigo 2002). The autonomy of migration approach inverts this security-oriented viewpoint by inviting scholars to investigate the means and methods

of border security regimes from migrants' perspective (Mezzadra 2011; Scheel 2019; Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe 2007). This is why the autonomy of migration approach offers a useful analytical starting point for uncovering the subjugated knowledge of the securitized in order to turn this knowledge into a source for destabilising security' professionals' regimes of truth.

This potential of migrants' subjugated knowledge is explained well by Donna Haraway who emphasises that 'the vantage points of the subjugated' offers a better vision than 'the brilliant space platforms of the powerful' (1988, 583). The reason is that the subjugated – in this instance migrants framed as tricksters – are 'knowledgeable of modes of denial through repression, forgetting, and disappearing acts' that are characteristics of an allegedly 'objective' knowledge that promises to 'see everything from nowhere' (Haraway 1988, 583, 581). It is these modes of denial and ignoring, and the different types of nonknowledge they help to generate, that need to be uncovered through ethnographic research of migrants' viewpoints, experiences and practices. For these moments of denial, forgetting, ignorance etc. permit critical scholars to show that border security practices, in their attempts to render migrants' as knowable subjects, produce various forms of nonknowledge for migrants, such as secrecy, uncertainty, ambiguity or error (Aradau 2017). The crucial point is that – as I show in the remainder of this article – it is these forms of nonknowledge which entice migrants to engage in various practices of subversion i.e. the very 'trickery' that more pervasive and intrusive security practices and technologies like biometric databases are meant to forestall.

Deconstructing the Trickster Narrative in the Securitization of Migration

The aim of the article's second part is to demonstrate the potential of desecuritizing approaches that undermine the regimes of truth and claimed expert knowledge of security professionals. Hence, the following analysis serves illustrative purposes and is not a full-fledged study of the security practices and decision-making procedures of the Schengen visa regime (for such analyses see for instance: Infantino 2019; Zampagni 2013) (see also Scheel 2017, 2019). Rather, it destabilises, in three subsections, the framing of migrants as cunning tricksters by demonstrating that it are the operational logics of the Schengen visa regime which compel many visa applicants to engage in various tactics of subversion and practices of appropriation. If detected, such instances are then taken as evidence for the trickery 'of a sizable proportion of people who currently try to obtain a Schengen visa on dubious grounds' (EC 2004) and the related claim that more and better surveillance technologies like the VIS are needed to control the excessive agency of migrants.

Before I begin with this analysis two remarks are necessary. The first one concerns the question why the following analysis focuses primarily on the exclusionary effects of the Schengen visa regime and related border security

practices. According to official figures the refusal rate of all member states for Schengen visa applications was 9,6% in 2018 (EC 2019). In other words, nine out of ten visa applications are successful according to these figures. At a first glance, these numbers then seem to confirm the official representation of Schengen visa policies as being more about facilitating rather than restricting mobility. However, these numbers obscure many of the securitizing logics and exclusionary effects of the Schengen visa regime I am interested in. First, these numbers do not reflect that many people in the global South do not even apply for a visa because they cannot satisfy the formal and informal requirements they need to meet for being granted a Schengen visa (Scheel 2017). Secondly, these numbers invite us to ignore that an essential element of the operational logic of the Schengen visa regime is a 'suspicion by default' approach (Zampagni 2013, 96) that efficiently frames more than half of the world population as a potential security risk, as I explain below. Finally, I focus on the exclusionary effects and securitizing logics of the Schengen visa regime because it is these effects and logics which provoke practices of subversion and appropriation that are taken as evidence for the trickster narrative and the alleged need to implement more and better security practices and technologies. It is precisely this dynamic that I seek to expose in the following pages in order to deconstruct the trickster narrative.

The second remark concerns the fieldwork on which this study is based. As indicted in the introduction, the following account draws on fieldwork that was conducted in 2012 in and around consulates of Schengen member states in a North African country. During two fieldtrips in May and October 2012 I was able to observe all steps of visa application and decision-making procedures at a medium-sized consulate. Due to tremendous difficulties in obtaining field access, all research participants were promised absolute anonymity. This included the promise to only use the information obtained from them in a way that enables neither the consulate nor the country where the research was conducted to be identified. Thus, I refer to the consulate where I was eventually able to conduct observations only as consulate Z. These observations have been complemented by more than 40 interviews with visa applicants, consular staff and heads of mission of other consulates. Hence, the following account does not offer universal truths about the Schengen visa regime or the trickster narrative. It rather offers context-specific insights and observations that cannot applied to other regions where the trickster narrative might play itself out in different versions and variations. This is also because the expert knowledge informing the processing and decision-making on visa applications in the consulates is a local, practical form of security knowledge that is primarily based on the experience of local staff, as I explain below. Consequently, the following account underscores the need for developing

situated, site-specific strategies of desecuritization that are attuned to the particularities of the securitizing practices under study.

Regarding the context of the following account, it must finally be emphasised that North Africa is heavily securitized regarding migration to Europe. Numerous Schengen member states, including the one represented by consulate Z, have experienced significant levels of immigration from North Africa in the past, leading to the formation of transnational spaces and connections between the two regions. Hence, the demand for Schengen visas is high in all North African countries, just as respective rejection rates. According to official figures, the rejection rate for Schengen visa ranged between 18% in Morocco to 45,5% in Algeria in 2018 (EC 2019). That migration from North Africa is heavily securitized is also reflected by the fact that North Africa was chosen as the first region in which the VIS started to operate in October 2011 (EC 2010). Hence, North Africa offers, precisely because it is heavily securitized context, a very suitable case for developing strategies aiming at a desecuritization of migration.

At the Consulate: Confronting a Culture of Suspicion

Given the Schengen visa regime's objective to reflect the mobility of potential migrants deemed unwanted, while facilitating the mobility of 'bona fide' travellers, it is not surprising that many visa applicants I interviewed reported that they felt mistrusted and disbelieved by consular staff. What this widely shared experience confirms is that visa applicants effectively enter consulates as 'suspects' (Bigo and Guild 2003, 93). I could observe this first-hand during fieldwork at a consulate of a Schengen member state in a North African country (in the following consulate Z). While observing the visa application procedure I experienced how visa applicants are subjected to interrogations by consular staff whose often highly intrusive questions express high degrees of distrust, as the following account illustrates.

A young woman approaches the counter. She has completed a master's degree in English at a local university and is applying for a visa to take up an internship with an NGO working with people with special needs. 'How did you find this internship?' 'Why do you want to work for this NGO?' 'Is this the first time you have applied for a Schengen visa?' While the woman replies 'yes' to the last question, the employee of consulate Z writes in the 'opinion' section: 'note that the education of the applicant has nothing to do with her envisaged internship.' When I ask her why she has entered this unfavourable judgement, she replies that the young woman has just finished her studies and is 'apparently' looking for work: 'Her visa application will probably be refused.'

This account offers a glimpse of the culture of suspicion that reigns in the consulates of Schengen member states. This culture of suspicion has frequently been identified as a central feature of the visa application procedure

(Alpes and Spire 2014; Bigo and Guild 2003; Bonelli 2003; CIMADE 2010; Infantino and Rea 2012). The latter has been characterised as a bureaucratic process in which 'suspicion by default' (Zampagni 2013, 96) is regarded as 'a sign of professionalism' (Alpes 2011, 125). The interview at the consulate resembles, in fact, what Haas and Shuman (2019, 14) call a 'technology of suspicion', that is, a technology that is used to assess the trustworthiness of visa applicants and to test the credibility of their narratives. Importantly, this culture of suspicion is *not* created by instances of 'fraud' (Alpes and Spire 2014, 167), though it is certainly animated by them. It is inscribed in the Schengen visa regime's risk management approach. This is reflected in the Community Code on Visas (CCV), the legal basis for the Schengen visa regime. Article 21 states that the principal objective of the visa application procedure is to

> 'assess[…] whether the applicant presents a *risk of illegal immigration* or a *risk to the security* of the Member States and whether the applicant intends to leave the territory of the Member States before the expiry of the visa applied for' (EP and Council 2009, 12; my emphasis).

Through this clause, the mere wish to travel to Europe becomes the subject of general suspicion. Consequently, the assumption of innocence is reversed in the application procedure: consular staff always start from the negative and it is the applicant who has to convince consular staff that she does not intend to migrate. It is thus the notion of risk itself that creates a culture of suspicion in Schengen visa regime consulates.

However, the notion of risk also constitutes an indispensable element of the Schengen visa regime. The imposition of a visa requirement on the population of a particular country enables Schengen member states 'to control the mobility of third country nationals *prior* to their entry into the country, i.e. *extra-territorially*' (Parusel and Schneider 2012: 5; auhor's emphasis). It is this dislocation of border controls in space and time which constitutes the raison d'être of the Schengen visa regime. What justifies the imposition of a visa requirement on a particular country enabling this pre-screening of travellers is the evaluation of the population of that country on terms of risk, 'relating inter alia to illegal immigration, public policy and security' (Council 2001, 3). Thereby, the entire population of a given country is subjected to a general suspicion, based on the assumption that each of its citizens constitutes a *risk* in terms of migration and security (Bigo and Guild 2005, 236). During the visa application procedure applicants subsequently have to prove, contrary to the general suspicion that led to the imposition of a visa requirement in the first place, that they do *not* pose a 'migration' or 'security risk'. A culture of suspicion at consulates is therefore as integral to the operational logic of the Schengen visa regime as the notion of risk itself.

The crucial point is that this culture of suspicion creates uncertainty for visa applicants who feel disbelieved and can no longer be certain that the answers they provide in the interview at the consulate – no matter if they convey the truth or not – will satisfy consular staff. Hence, in their attempts to generate knowledge about the 'true intentions' of visa applicants, consular staff generate uncertainty for the latter. *Uncertainty* is understood as a form of nonknowledge that describes a continuum of various degrees of probability below absolute certainty, ranging from relative likeliness to high degrees of improbability and unlikeliness (cf. Aradau 2017, 6–9). As consular staff's interrogations make visa applicants feel like suspects who have something to hide and thus have to justify and defend themselves this culture of suspicion operates, ultimately, like a self-fulfiling prophecy. Feeling uncertain of how to calm consular staff's suspicious minds visa applicants may, for instance, make up fictive narratives as a way to reassure the former of their will to return. They may even try to back-up these fictive narratives with manipulated or falsified documents that suggest a more stable socio-economic situation. Such tactics are taken as evidence by consular staff that 'applicants use all sorts of tricks to get a visa', as the head of consulate Z's visa section (hereafter: M) put it. But rather as a confirmation for the trickster narrative, these 'tricks' and 'lies' emerge as coping strategies by which visa applicants try to negotiate the uncertainty that a culture of institutionalised suspicion at the consulates creates for them.

Encountering an Unpredictable Bureaucratic Process

During my fieldwork on Schengen visa policies, I was frequently approached by visa applicants who regarded me as a source of advice and information about a bureaucratic process that they experienced as confusing, unpredictable and unfair – in particular in regards to its outcomes. These widely held perceptions by visa applicants have been confirmed by many other studies on Schengen visa policies (e.g. Alpes 2011; Bigo and Guild 2003; Bonelli 2003; CIMADE 2010; Infantino 2013). Many applicants asked me to assess their chances of being granted a visa, while others asked me to clarify the application procedure or explain to them the criteria that guide consular staff's decisions. These enquiries highlight the high degrees of uncertainty that the unpredictability of the Schengen visa regime generates for applicants.

One important source for the unpredictability of the visa application procedure is the discretionary power of consular staff who are granted a wide room for manoeuvre in their decision-making. The CCV permits consular staff for instance to grant a visa despite the lack of important documents, but also foresees the option to request additional documents from an applicant.[6] What this legally inscribed room for manoeuvre in consular staff's decision-making highlights is that discretion constitutes an indispensable element of

the operational logic of the Schengen visa regime. Discretion is an irreducible 'part of the reality of policy implementation', because it permits street-level-bureaucrats on the frontline to adapt abstract laws and regulations to individual cases and local circumstances (Bouchard and Carroll 2002: 242; Lipsky 1980, 16). This is also acknowledged by Max Weber, the proponent of the ideal bureaucracy as a rational, transparent procedure guided by legal norms whose outcomes are calculable for the governed (Weber 1978). He regards the preoccupation with the 'freedom and paramountcy of individual circumstances' and the adaptation of abstract legal norms to these individual circumstances as the core of 'administrative activity proper' (Weber 1978, 979). This process of adaptation of the law to individual circumstances through the official's '"creative" activity' remains, according to Weber (ibid), nevertheless calculable since 'behind every act of bureaucratic administration [... stands] either submission under norms, or a weighing of ends and means.' My research suggests, however, that discretion introduces a moment of interpretation into the 'creative activity' of consular staff, which makes their decisions inconsistent and unpredictable for applicants.

Whenever I asked consular staff during my research about the criteria guiding their 'assessment' of visa applicants' 'migration risk', I received the same evasive answer as Spire (2009, 80) in his seminal study on French migration administrations: 'on a case by case basis'. Consular staff usually added that the definition of any clear-cut criteria would prove to be impossible, because 'each dossier is different'. Yet, after I persisted with my question, M enumerated the following criteria: the existence of a sponsor and his or her reliability, the applicant's relationship to the sponsor, the applicant's age, whether she is married, whether she has children and finally the applicant's job and income. But M, who decides on visa applications on a daily basis in his back-office, also insisted that evaluation of these criteria always depends on the applicant's 'individual profile' and therefore 'varies from case to case'. During two days of observation that I spent with M in his back-office while he processed and decided on visa applications I was able to confirm this evaluation. The practical implementation of article 21 of the CCV to 'assess' an applicant's 'migration risk' requires an irreducible moment of interpretation. The discretionary power of consular staff resides in their capacity to prioritise one criterion over another or to identify a particular feature of an application as decisive while obscuring others when deciding on visa applications. In practice, 'each element [is] considered individually within an application [and] assumes a different meaning when linked to other criteria' (Alpes and Spire 2014, 271). Hence, even if clear-cut criteria for 'assessing' an applicant's 'migration risk' were defined in legal texts, they would not eliminate the irreducible moment of interpretation upon which *both* the decision-making *and* the discretionary power of consular staff are based.

Since 'each dossier is different', consular staff have to interpret it in order to adapt it to the general provisions of abstract legal regulations. But the 'creative activity' of consular staff is *not* bound by the legal norms it seeks to implement, as suggested by Weber (1978, 979). The legal norms consular staff seek to implement through their 'creative activity' rather serve as a resource to dress up their subjective interpretations as 'objective' legal criteria (Alpes and Spire 2014, 271). Instead of a lack of clearly defined criteria for 'assessing' an applicant's 'migration risk', it is this irreducible moment of interpretation *inherent* to any assessment of risk which results in decisions that vary from one visa section to the next (cf. Spire 2009, 61).

From this highly inconsistent decision-making praxis of consular staff follows that the outcomes of this bureaucratic procedure – the 'assessment' of an applicant's 'migration risk' according to article 21 of the CCV – is *not* calculable for applicants. It is the operational logic of the Schengen visa regime, namely a risk management approach, which makes the outcome of this bureaucratic process unpredictable for applicants. In their attempts to generate knowledge about visa applicants' intentions and possible future actions consular staff thus expose the former to high degrees of uncertainty regarding the outcome of their application.

This conclusion casts serious doubts about the credibility of the trickster narrative which frames visa applicants as cunning, calculating rational choice actors that hope to achieve certain predictable outcomes with their actions. What the above analysis shows is that the outcome of their application is *not* calculable for visa applicants due to the moment of interpretation that is involved in consular staff's assessment of an applicant's migration risk. Hence, rather than as sly strategies of cunning rational-choice actors trying to 'play the systems', practices like applying at a consulate that has the reputation of being less strict than the consulate responsible for processing the person's application emerge as desperate attempts of insecure people trying to improve the chances of success of their visa application in the face of a largely unpredictable regime of institutionalised distrust. Nora Stel (2016) diagnoses a similar dynamic in her account of the 'regime of institutional ambiguity' that Lebanese authorities impose on the settlement of Palestinian refugees who are – in a context of legal limbo – constantly threatened with evictions that are rarely implemented. Palestinian refugees respond to duplicate this institutional ambiguity with deliberate ignorance of the looming evictions, hoping that their implementation will be postponed (ibid, 1410). Just as this ignorance functions as a protection mechanism for Palestinian refugees, the trickery that is cited by security actors as evidence for the need to expand their prerogatives and to introduce more advanced security technologies emerges as a mitigation strategy, by which visa applicants try to negotiate the uncertainty that the Schengen visa regime's risk management approach creates for them.

Outsourcing Uncertainty: Decision-making with Incomplete Information

There is a third important source of uncertainty for visa applicants: the latter do not know the criteria against which they are judged. This is why the outcomes of the application procedure are largely unpredictable for them. Consular staff's decisions are informed by a 'practical, local knowledge' that varies from one visa section to the next as it is 'embedded in local experience' and therefore 'exceptionally difficult to teach apart from engaging in the activity itself' (Scott 1999, 311, 313). This local practical knowledge circulates among consular staff in the form of advice and stories about 'legendary prototype cases' (Infantino and Rea 2012). According to Federica Infantino (2019), this local knowledge also circulates among senior staff, who often work in the back-office without direct contact to applicants and who rotate jobs every two or three years, through informal exchanges like dinner parties, leading to a harmonization of Schengen visa policies from below. Hence, consular staff's decision-making on visa application is shaped by a 'prior knowledge' (Gilboy 1991) that allows for comparing the features of a particular case with the features of established categories or 'profiles', as they are known among consular staff. Importantly, this local practical knowledge, while being situational and primarily based on experience, resembles a form of expert knowledge that 'legitimates the experiential-contextual as a type of specialisation that is (under certain circumstances) equal in value to scholarly-academic [expertise]' (Yanow 2004, 12). Hence, the local practical knowledge informing consular staff's decision-making constitutes a form of expert knowledge that Bigo (2014) sees as emblematic for security professionals of the internal security field. This practical local knowledge then constitutes 'a specialised, experiential, contextual, and interactively derived [form of] expertise' that shapes the actual implementation of Schengen visa policies on the street-level, as Infantino (2019) aptly observes.

What explains the circulation of this local practical knowledge is that the task to assess a person's 'migration risk' creates uncertainty not only for visa applicants but also for consular staff. The task of 'assessing' the 'migration risk' posed by an applicant compels consular staff to make decisions under conditions of time-constraint, incomplete information and uncertainty. 'We cannot look inside peoples' heads', a senior official responsible for visa policy at a foreign ministry admits in an interview. What this admission demonstrates is that the assessment of a person's migration risk constitutes an anticipatory security practice that operates, precisely because it aims at anticipating an unknown future event, 'at the boundary of what is knowable' (Krasmann 2015, 200). Since consular staff have no direct access to applicants' intentions, their 'assessment' of an applicant's 'migration risk' operates on the terrain of the unknown (ibid.) and is thus primarily based on interpretation. But this interpretation does not occur in a void. It is shaped by practical knowledge and

informal decision-making criteria that circulate among consular staff in the form of stories about 'legendary prototype cases' (Infantino and Rea 2012) which function as reference points for consular staff's decisions.

'This applicant shows the profile of a young person from a deprived area in the South who seeks to establish relationships with tourists, enabling him to apply for a visa to Europe. A possible marriage cannot be ruled out.' This is one of the many entries by counter staff at consulate Z that features the notions of 'risk' and 'profile'. It illustrates that consular staff interpret a particular combination of certain biographical features as indicators of the presence or absence of 'migration risk'. But this example equally shows that these interpretations are shaped by local practical knowledge that surfaces in the form of prototype cases. Consular staff 'assess' the 'migration risk' of an applicant by looking for patterns in the biographical features and narratives of visa applicants in order to compare them with and allocate them to one of the 'profiles' of these prototype cases. In this instance, it is the applicant's age, origin and social class and relationship to his host which serve as indicators for 'migration risk', as they correspond to 'the profile of a young person from a deprived area in the South who seeks to establish relationships with tourists.'

The variability of these prototype cases across visa sections, as well as of the informal criteria that inform the correlations consular staff draw between certain patterns of biographical features and the presence or absence of a 'migration risk', demonstrates the inherently biased nature of these correlations. Hence, consular staff do not so much 'assess', but rather actively *ascribe* a 'migration risk' to visa applicants through an 'imputation of dangerousness' (Castel 1991, 283). Importantly, this ascription is not based on what the applicant herself has done in the past. Rather, the presence or absence of a 'migration risk' is inferred from what other people with similar biographical features have allegedly done in the past. But these correlations between certain biographical features and a 'migration' risk' vary from one consulate to the next. What makes the decision-making on visa applications unpredictable, then, is that visa applicants do not know the criteria against which they will be judged.

Ironically, then, it is the Schengen visa regime's risk management approach and the attempt to render unknown future behaviours knowable and predictable that make the decision-making procedure unpredictable for applicants. What consular staff do when they draw correlations between certain biographical features of applicants and their probable future behaviours is to shift onto visa applicants the uncertainty that the task of 'assessing' the 'migration risk' of an applicant creates for them. This dynamic confirms the conclusion that 'risk never makes uncertainty disappear' (Ericson 2005, 668). The use of legendary prototype cases and 'profiles' of risky applicants as reference points for their judgements renders consular staff's decision-making unpredictable for applicants, as it introduces informal and thus opaque decision-making

criteria that vary from one consulate to the next and that are not known to visa applicants. Hence, in their attempts to render unknown future behaviours knowable, consular staff create uncertainty, understood as a form of non-knowledge, for visa applicants.

Conclusion

This article argues for the creative development of situated approaches of desecuritization that, while drawing on a variety of theoretical resources, aim at destabilizing the credibility and authority of security professionals' expert knowledge and related regimes of truth in order to undermine the epistemological foundation of processes of securitization. As a way of example, I have combined elements of the autonomy of migration approach with insights from the sociology of non-knowledge to delegitimize the framing of migrants as cunning tricksters in the context of Schengen visa policies. The analysis of the visa application and decision-making procedure from migrants' perspective casts, indeed, serious doubts about the credibility of the trickster narrative. Rather than as elements of rational, transparent bureaucratic procedures, the knowledge practices consular staff mobilise to assess the trustworthiness of visa applicants are carrying a culture of suspicion that creates high degrees of uncertainty for visa applicants. This uncertainty is amplified by opaque decision-making criteria that vary from one visa section to the next. Instead of deceit, trickery and fraud, practices like applying at a consulate that has a reputation for being less 'strict' than the representation of the member state that constitutes an applicant's travel destination, or concealing biographical features that may be interpreted as an indicator of a 'migration risk' by consular staff emerge as attempts by which visa applicants try to mitigate and negotiate the high degrees of uncertainty that the visa application procedure generates for them. Contrary to their representation as cunning tricksters, therefore, visa applicants engaging in these and other tactics are not calculating, cunning rational-choice actors deliberately deceiving consular staff. Rather, they are compelled by an unpredictable regime of institutionalised suspicion to increase the chances of success of their visa application through various coping strategies. By uncovering this dynamic this analysis demonstrates that the prerogatives and high-tech devices security professionals call for to tame the allegedly excessive agency of migrants are, along with the trickster narrative, part of the problem they are meant to solve.

The important contribution to desecuritizing migration is that the delegitimization of the trickster narrative through adoption of migrants' perspective opens up a political space to think about alternative policy options beyond the implementation of more security technologies and increased prerogatives for security professionals. Such alternatives could for instance be offered by more liberal visa policies, including introduction of humanitarian visa for people

fleeing political persecution and a family visa for close relatives.[7] As the above analysis underscores, such alternatives should however not be limited to attenuating the harshest effects of restrictive visa policies. They should also involve a reconsideration of the basic premises and operational logics of the Schengen visa regime, most notably its risk management approach. The latter implies not only a culture of institutionalised suspicion in the consulates but also requires consular staff to take an impossible decision on the basis of guess work and incomplete information. Rather than as security experts trying to identify cunning tricksters, consular staff emerge as street-level bureaucrats who, in order to negotiate the uncertainty that the Schengen visa regime generates for them, outsource this uncertainty on visa applicants by basing their decision on opaque profiles of legendary prototype cases. Ultimately, the Schengen visa regime and its risk management approach emerge as the very breeding ground and raison d'être of the trickery that ever more pervasive security technologies are meant to forestall.

Notes

1. *Visa shopping* refers, first, to the lodging of further applications at consulates of other Schengen member states after an initial application has already been turned down, and secondly, to the lodging of a visa application at the consulate of another member state than the one that is responsible for processing the application. Following article 5 of the Community Code on Visa (CCV), applicants are required to apply for a Schengen visa at the consulate of the member state that constitutes 'the main destination of the visit(s) in terms of length or purpose of stay' (EP and Council 2009, 6).
2. It is believed that so-called *visa overstayers* account for the largest share of illegalised migrants in Europe, but also in other destination countries like the United States. In contrast to unauthorised border-crossers, visa overstayers arrive perfectly legal with a valid Schengen visa at an official entry-point in the EU and only become 'illegal' once the permitted stay of their visa has expired (Düvell 2011).
3. I provide more details on the context of this ethnographic fieldwork at the beginning of the article's second part.
4. Bigo (2006) calls the field of security professionals field a *field of (in)security* because 'processes of securitization and of insecuritization are inseparable' (C.A.S.E 2006, 461) since the construction of social phenomena as threats and security risks works through the generation of fears and a general state of unease (Bigo 2002).
5. In the 'left-to-die boat' case 63 of the 72 migrants trying to escape from war-torn Libya in March 2011 lost their lives. After it ran out of fuel, migrants' boat drifted for fourteen days in the NATO maritime surveillance area enacting an embargo against the Gaddafi regime, despite several distress signals and repeated interactions with border control authorities, including one encounter with a military helicopter visit and another one with a military vessel (cf. Heller and Pezzani 2014).
6. While article 14(6) stipulates that '[c]onsulates may waive one or more of the requirements [...] in the case of an applicant known to them for his integrity and reliability', article 21(8) establishes that 'consulates may in justified cases call the applicant for an interview and request additional documents' (EP and Council 2009).

7. In Germany there exists a campaign for a family visa to spare close family members repeated time and resource intense visits to consulates: http://familienvisum.de/(29.03. 2019).

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