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Crises, Migration and (Im)Mobility: Towards a Reflexive and Multilevel Approach

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Crises, Migration and (Im)Mobility: Towards a Reflexive and Multilevel Approach

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Abstract

Scholarly inquiry into the intersections of migration, mobility, and crisis has mainly focused on international migration. The scope of this scholarship underscores the continuing influence of methodological nationalism in the field. We argue for a broader exploration of mobility (and immobility) perspectives. Accordingly, we embrace an encompassing understanding of crises as particular events and structural conditions with rather "extensive and large-scale changes and effects" (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022: 5). We further adopt what Bösch et al. (2020: 5) call a reflexive perspective "in which the constructivist dimension remains acknowledged" without relativizing a more objectivist view of "the real causes and effects" of the crises in question. Our approach builds on the concept of the Migration-Mobility Nexus (see Piccoli et al. 2024) and its interplays (continuum, enablement, opposition, and hierarchy) to study the crisis-induced shifts between migration, mobility, and immobility. To understand the complex and potentially intertwined ways in which crises interact with the Migration-Mobility Nexus, we propose to combine a multilevel analysis of experiences, practices and agency, perceptions and attitudes, and governance.

Keywords

Crisis, Migration-Mobility Nexus, Objectivist, Constructivist, Governance, Attitudes, Practices

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Contents

1 Introduction

Research on the interplay between crisis, migration, and (im)mobility is burgeoning, whether regarding crisis migration (Martin et al. 2014; McAdam 2014), the politicization of migration in times of crisis (Bitschnau et al. 2021; Hutter and Kriesi 2022), or migration being constructed as a crisis (Ambrosini et al. 2019; Lindley 2014).

Scholarly inquiry into the intersections of migration, mobility, and crisis has mainly focused on international migration, defined as the act of crossing national borders with the intention of establishing long-term residence, though short-term and circular migration are not entirely neglected. This focus on international migration has undoubtedly provided valuable insights into understanding how crises influence migration practices, discourses, and political responses to migration, as well as insights into understanding the construction of migration as a crisis in itself. However, the restricted scope of this scholarship underscores the continuing influence of methodological nationalism in the field (Dahinden 2016; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), where the broader relationship between human mobility dynamics and crises remains insufficiently explored and conceptualized.

We argue that a broader exploration of mobility (and immobility) perspectives (Sheller and Urry 2006) is useful to fully understand the intricate relationship between human movement and the concept of crisis. We are inspired by existing efforts to formulate comprehensive interdisciplinary and widely cast approaches to understanding crises (e.g., Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022; Bösch et al. 2020) and by McConnell's (2020: 2) plea to "recognize and celebrate diversity of use(s) rather than seeking single definitions" of crisis, and in this paper, we present a reflexive and multilevel framework with which to study the impact of crises on migration, mobility, and immobility.

This reflexive framework – "in which the constructivist dimension remains acknowledged without having to relativize the real causes and effects" of crises (Bösch et al. 2020: 5) – is based on the analysis of the following three levels: 1) the experiences, agency, and practices of individuals; 2) the perceptions and attitudes of different actors in the public sphere (media, nongovernmental organizations and other associations, regional and local governments) ; and 3) the governance of and through crisis by different institutions (international organizations, national governments, local authorities, corporate actors, private organizations, and nongovernmental organizations). By referring to the Migration-Mobility Nexus (Piccoli and al. 2024) and drawing on examples from political crises such as the ongoing war in Ukraine, public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and economic crises such as the recent Euro crisis, we argue that the focus on crisis is instructive for seeing social phenomena related to migration and mobility and the interplays between them (continuum, enablement, opposition, and hierarchy) that lie beyond the limit of methodological nationalism.

2 Crisis Research, Migration, and (Im)Mobility

2.1 Crisis Research in the Social Sciences

The occurrence of periods and events that are experienced as crises and the potentially controversial narratives of different actors that frame certain developments and situations as a crisis are part of human history and of our current time in particular. The increasingly obvious effects of climate change, the humanitarian plight unfolding in the context of the so-called refugee crises, and the global and manifold disruptions caused by the fairly recent COVID-19 pandemic are just a few examples of many crises that are ongoing at the time of writing.

Koselleck and Richter (2006: 381) argue that we have been able to speak of an "age of crisis (...) since the turn of the nineteenth century." They justify this not by claiming that there has been a growing number of events that could be understood as a crisis, but because of the "frequency of its use," that is, use of the word crisis. In a similar vein, Krasteva (2019: 6) points out that "nowadays, crisis has been assigned a central place in the conceptual arsenal by which the contemporary world is conceived and evaluated." In social science research, the term crisis is referred to and theorized in multiple, flexible, and potentially divergent and partly vague ways (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022; Koselleck and Richter 2006). And while the use of the word crisis, which comes from ancient Greek meaning a decisive moment or turning point, is widespread in many European languages, there are also many related words in various languages across the world which refer to similar conceptions and which should be taken into account.

To provide an initial orientation in our understanding of crisis, we broadly distinguish two (not necessarily contradictory) approaches to analytically using the notion of crisis in diverse fields of social science research. The first approach, in some strands of scholarship, mainly perceives a crisis as a structural characteristic or long-term condition of a given social, political, or economic constellation, that is, as something systemic. In the second approach, other researchers see specific events and processes as crises and either study their emergence, unfolding, and aftermath on different levels of social organization or focus on how and why crises are socially and narratively constructed and represented.

The first approach can be identified in literature that is mainly concerned with abstracting descriptions of social, economic, or political constellations from the macro level of social organization such as capitalism, international relations, or political structures. It understands such large constellations as being in a latent crisis or sees the occurrence of crises as a built-in effect of the structural constellations of social organization. Building on Marxist thought which understands economic crises as a recurring feature of capitalism, Habermas (1976) argues in his early work that advanced capitalist development not only causes economic and ecological crises but also creates a crisis for the legitimacy of the liberal democratic system. For a variety of social and political reasons, authors like political scientist Castells (2018) see the model of liberal democracy as existing in a "crisis of legitimacy" which is able to erode established processes in democratic systems (Merkel 2020). Beck's (1986) seminal notion of the "global risk society" is folded into larger scholarly discourses on "modernity." He coined the term "reflexive modernity" to refer to what he designates as a period in human history which entails uncontrollable risks and uncertainties

at the global level – in terms of both their potential impact and their increased recurrence. Building on Beck's work, Moralli and Allegrini (2021: S833) introduced the term "crisis society" to show that "we are nowadays facing an amplification of the key characteristics of the 'risk society' (...) and an increasing 'embeddedness' of such elements in our human conditions." Other authors (e.g., El-Tayeb 2020) add a postcolonial perspective to this larger field of debate and point to the unequal, capitalist power structures, shaped by colonial continuities, in which the current global system is rooted and which render it inherently unstable and a constant producer of different (economic, social, ecological, and political) crises.

In some research, a structural perspective with a different emphasis considers "crisis" to be a continuity of everyday dynamics (Dobry 2009), which can be studied at the level of individuals' experiences. Such literature discusses the normalcy of crises by referring to case studies conducted in the Global North (e.g., Fassin and Honneth 2022) but notably also in the Global South (e.g., Rydstrom 2022). Depending on the specific circumstances, events that are perceived as global crises, like financial crises or the COVID-19 pandemic, can be experienced as aggravating already dire situations rather than as moments of rupture in their own right. Such a perspective therefore helps to reconsider the alleged globality of crises (Marino and Ruedin 2023) as well as what "normality" is (Marino and Hategekimana 2023).

A second strand of social science research shares an understanding of crises as specific, delimitable incidents. They are perceived as – real and/or constructed – "events" (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 371) leading to a threatening situation that deviates from a state of normalcy (McConnell 2020). A crisis may happen suddenly or have a slow onset. A crisis can vary in terms of duration, but at some point it is marked by a sense of "urgency" (Meyer 2012: 272) that demands "decisions and choices" to be taken (Koselleck and Richter 2006: 358). Thus, crises are often seen as critical turning points (Habermas 1976) that potentially bring about change (Bauman and Bordoni 2014; Koselleck and Richter 2006). There are, however, variations where social research takes a more objectivist or constructivist stance on the crisis events being investigated (McConnell 2020). At one end of this analytical spectrum, studies start by taking a crisis as a fact and mainly focus on examining the causes and impacts of that crisis from various angles: why it came into existence, what effects it had, and what the responses to it were. Walby (2015: 14), for instance, defines a crisis as "an event that has the potential to cause a large detrimental change to the social system." However, like much "objectivist" crisis research, Walby's work (2015: 14) integrates a reflexive view by stressing that "[c]rises are both 'real', in the sense of actual changes in social processes, and socially constructed, in the sense that different interpretations of the crisis have implications for its outcome." This implies an awareness of the politicization and securitization that often go hand in hand with the objectifiable emergence of a critical situation. As Kriesi et al. (2021: 2) point out, "[t]here is discretion, contingency and possibly even interest in turning massive policy problems into crises."

Taken a step further, this conceptual spectrum also comprises scholarship that concentrates on the social construction of crisis in narratives, perceptions, and interpretations – often with a particular focus on the media, politics, and policy making. Seen from such a perspective, crisis is a "notion that gains substance through its dialectical relation to the empirical condition it seeks to explore" (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022: 480). Crises cannot be analyzed outside the discursive framework that defines and interprets them as such (e.g., Roitman 2013), since "much of the meaning, power, and ultimate impact of a crisis are functions of the ensuing network of narratives" (Seeger and

Sellnow 2016: 9). Accordingly, crises can be analyzed as forms of "claims" (Saward 2006) justifying the need to take immediate action (Marino and Ruedin 2023). In this sense, crises appear to be defined by the ways in which they accumulate meaning by being analyzed as empirical events that happen across time and through space. As a result, the meaning of a crisis can be shaped, constructed, perceived, and understood differently by different societies and societal actors (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022; Masco 2017).

Most contributions in both of these fields highlight specific aspects, representations, effects, or outcomes of a crisis event or condition. However, arguably, they struggle to sufficiently do justice to the dynamic, highly complex – real and/or constructed – nature of a crisis (Bergman-Rosamond 2022) and the causal or temporal overlapping of different critical conditions, developments, and situations. This applies in particular to crises' differential construction, the perception of them, and their impact on various levels of social organization (macro, meso, and micro) and on different groups of people.

Moreover, the very concept of crisis and the word itself are mainly Euro-American centered. As such, the conceptualization of crises is still mainly dominated by research and approaches that are developed in and mostly based on empirical evidence from the Global North. As Masco (2017: 65) puts it, "crisis" – and "normalcy" as its counterpart – is embedded in the "modernist Euro-American project," both as a common-sense term and in the form of its varied mobilization as a scientific concept. De Sousa Santos and Menese (2019: 43) argue, accordingly, that contemporary crises are foremost the crises of a particular world, "the dominant form of Euro-modernity (capitalist, rationalist, liberal, secular, patriarchal, white…)." This broadly mirrors the epistemological tradition of social science research, which is largely shaped by colonial continuities of knowledge production in academia (Bhambra 2014). Hence, the postcolonial continuities immanent in the emergence, perception of, and management of international "crises" still call for critical reflection and empirical research. In addition, it is also important to consider phenomena that can be regarded as crises without naming them as such. This is particularly relevant for research conducted in and on the Global South, where words other than "crisis" might be used to refer to a similar concept. This is a limitation on much of the research on crisis, but the scope of this working paper will not allow us to address it in depth.

2.2 Crisis, Migration, and (Im)Mobility

When it comes to the interplay between crises, migration, and human (im)mobility, Lindley (2014: 1) points out that the notions of crisis and migration are contemporary buzzwords with "intriguing parallels. Both are often viewed as exceptional phenomena (...) [and] (...) threatening, crises as jeopardizing social systems and human welfare; migration as undermining the integrity of the nation-state and bounded identities." These ideas are reflected in the frequent claims that we are in an "age of crisis" (Koselleck and Richter 2006) and in an "age of migration" (de Haas et al. 2019), and both these terms are often seen as fundamental characteristics shaping contemporary societies.

Relatedly, the research on crisis, migration, and mobility is burgeoning and diversifying, and oftentimes the different potential angles mentioned above are adopted to understand crises. We broadly distinguish three main strands in this field of scholarly inquiry: the first focuses on how

critical conditions and events lead to migration and mobility; the second analyzes how migration and mobility are reframed and politicized in times of crises; and the third studies how migration in itself is perceived as crisis.

In the first strand of research, we detect a tendency to understand migration and mobility as consequences of crises that is paired with a strong interest in policy making. For instance, studies that have developed the concept of crisis migration (Martin et al. 2014; McAdam 2014) look at how critical events such as humanitarian crises, climate change, etc. and "underlying structural processes" (McAdam 2014: 10) trigger migration and affect human lives broadly and the mobility of humans more specifically. McAdam (2014: 10) further claims that "what constitutes a 'crisis' and spurs migration will depend upon the resources and capacity of those who move, as well as upon the ability of the state into or within which they move to respond to their plight."

Crisis migration is often a key focus of the global governance of international migration, especially in light of the so-called migration-development nexus which considers how policies which seek to manage migration are aligned with those that focuses on reducing poverty in the Global South, and the other way around (Nyberg–Sørensen et al. 2003; Van Hear et al. 2003). However, a more critical stance recognizes that "the connection between migration and development is the product of a political and scientific construction" and so is crisis migration (Geiger and Pécoud 2013: 369). By fixating on crisis migration in the Global South, development actors have reproduced particular (neocolonial) imaginaries about what causes migration, where crises occur, and where migrants come from.

Relatedly, the second important strand of research stems from the scholarly literature studying the process of politicization, broadly understood as the act of transporting an issue or an institution into the sphere of politics (Zürn 2019). Within this field, a distinct line of inquiry has emerged that delves into the politicization of migration during periods of crises. These studies identify specific critical periods labeled as crises to explore whether these "moments of truth" (van Middelaar 2016: 495) had an impact on the salience of and actors' polarization regarding migration and examine the determinants of politicization and polarization.

Notably, Bitschnau et al. (2021) undertake an investigation into the politicization of immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis of the 1970s and the later financial crisis of the 2000s. Their findings reveal a nuanced perspective, suggesting that crises, while not inherently escalating politicization, can serve as pivotal catalysts by creating fertile ground for its cultivation. Concurrently, Hutter and Kriesi (2022) explore the politicization of immigration across Europe amid what is widely described as the 2015 "migration crisis." Their research underscores the impact of this crisis on amplifying pre-existing trajectories of immigration politicization, and shows that the role of radical right parties is a major driving force of politicization. In many places, however, the distinction between the radical right and mainstream right parties with regard to their politicization of migration is increasingly disappearing (Hadj Abdou and Ruedin 2022; Norocel et al. 2020).

Third, there is abundant scholarship on how migration is framed as a crisis. Overall, social science research on migration crises examines "what constitutes migration crises and who and what defines them" (Menjívar et al. 2019: 2) and the resulting policy responses. In line with the rationales that

play out when crises are politicized in general (see above), framing migration and mobility as crises can be instrumental. It may enable governments to "scapegoat" or "securitize" migrants "as a means of channeling domestic discontent and cementing the power of dominant elites" (Lindley 2014: 17) and to "amplify a range of other agendas in regard to for example welfare crisis, national identity and anti-Europeanisation" (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022: 9).

A notorious case is the 2015 "migration crisis," also called from a more critical perspective a "refugee (reception) crisis" (see Ambrosini et al. 2019). Several scholars (e.g., Carasthatis et al. 2018; Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2014) have examined why and how the public sphere, including politicians, experts, and the media, perceived the arrival of mostly Syrian refugees in Europe as bringing about a crisis. A related and important strand of literature designates the EU's failure to formulate a coordinated response to the arrival of refugees as the actual crisis (e.g., Lavenex 2019; Panizzon and van Riemsdijk 2019). The literature on migration and development also refers to the way crises are framed. For example, Almustafa (2022: 1065) proposes conceptualizing the "European crisis of migration" as emanating from a "crisis of protection" of refugees in the Global South.

Overall, the academic inquiry into the intersections of migration, mobility, and crises has led to a discernible focus on international migration, narrowly defined as the act of crossing national borders with the intention of establishing long-term residence. Scholarship on crisis migration, the politicization of migration, or its framing as a crisis have accordingly focused on how international mobility is triggered and perceived in relation to critical developments, especially at the national and international scales. This focused body of literature has undoubtedly yielded valuable insights into comprehending how crises influence migration practices, discourses concerning migration, and political responses to it, as well as the construction of migration as a crisis in itself.

However, Lindley (2014: 1) points out that constructing human mobility as a (cause of) crisis corresponds to a more general "deep well of sedentarist thinking, which in some sense frames migration as crisis, and staying put as the natural and desirable human condition." This orientation becomes particularly apparent in relation to forced migration movements following political crises (Oesch 2014). The literature on transnational and circular movements of refugees has examined how "in contrast to the migratory strategies developed by the refugees, the three solutions to the problem of the refugees promoted by the UNHCR (voluntary repatriation in the country of origin; integration in the host country; resettlement in a third country) are based on the idea that solutions are found when movements stop" (Monsutti 2008: 58).

3 Crises and the Migration-Mobility Nexus: A Reflexive and Encompassing Approach

The sedentarist bias and the focus on longer-term migration between nation-states underscore the lingering influence of methodological nationalism within the field (Dahinden 2016; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) wherein the broader spectrum of human mobility dynamics in times of crises remains insufficiently explored and conceptualized. Our argument herein contends that a more expansive exploration of mobility perspectives (Sheller and Urry 2006; Zufferey et al. 2021) is

useful to fully understand the intricate relationship between human movement and events and conditions perceived as crises.

Notably, there is also a need to better understand the relationship between crises and immobility (Lindley 2014; Martin and Bergmann 2022) in the context of various crises. This has become even more obvious with the mobility restrictions issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Piccoli et al. 2021; Piccoli et al. 2022) and the differential impact they had on different groups of (im)mobile and (im)mobilized people (Martin and Bergmann 2021; Xiang et al. 2023).

In this paper, we aim to go beyond the existing approaches to the interplay between crises, migration, and mobility, which we believe are still too narrow. Accordingly, we embrace an encompassing understanding of crises as either particular events or structural conditions with rather "extensive and large-scale changes and effects" (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022: 5) and adopt what Bösch et al. (2020: 5) call a reflexive perspective "in which the constructivist dimension remains acknowledged" without relativizing a more objectivist view of "the real causes and effects" of the crises under investigation.

Our approach builds on the concept of the Migration-Mobility Nexus (see Piccoli et al. 2024) and its interplays (continuum, enablement, opposition, and hierarchy) to study the crisis-induced shifts between migration, mobility, and immobility. To understand the complex and potentially intertwined way in which crises interact with the Migration-Mobility Nexus, we propose to combine a multilevel analysis of experiences, practices and agency, of perceptions and attitudes, and of governance.

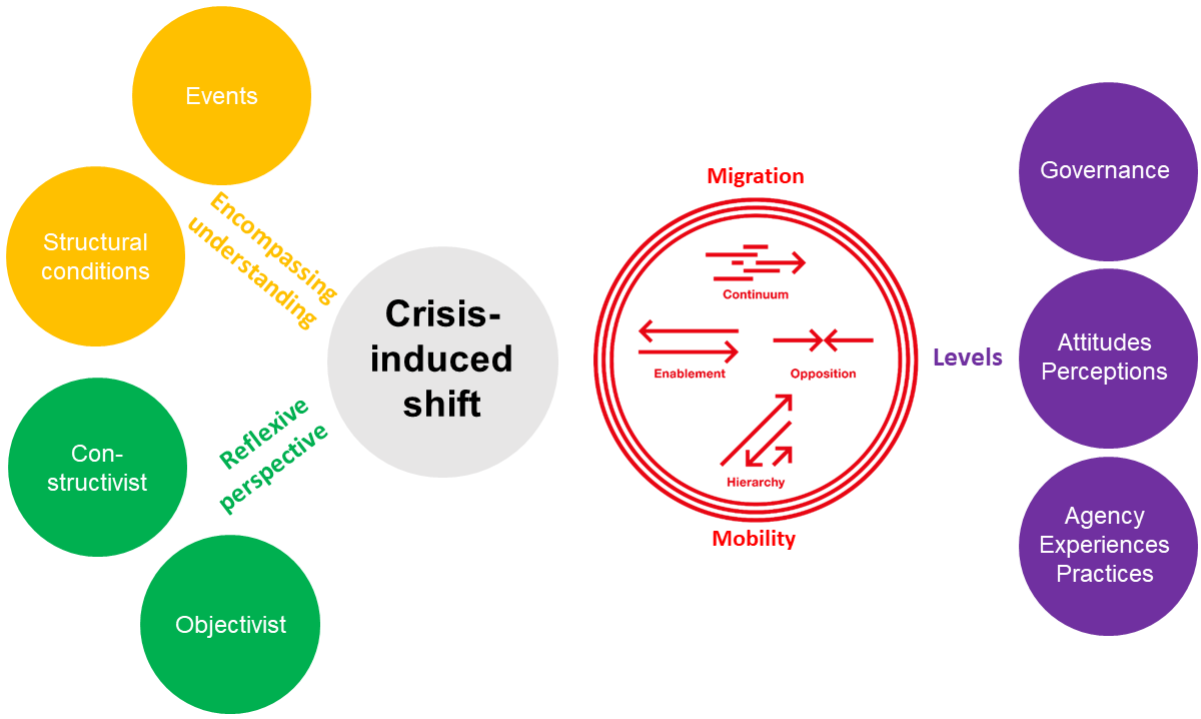

Figure 1: A reflexive and multilevel approach to crises, migration and (im)mobility

3.1 The Migration-Mobility Nexus

The Migration-Mobility Nexus (MMN) invites researchers to question how and why migration and mobility are bound together and what consequences this entails (Bitschnau and D'Amato 2023; Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik 2020; Piccoli et al. 2024; Steiner and Wanner 2019). While the MMN does not provide strict definitions of "migration" and "mobility," it recognizes that the two terms refer to two closely related yet distinct concepts that have been treated separately in the academic literature, each with its own unique focus and approach.

Migration typically refers to the permanent or semipermanent movement of individuals or groups from one place to another that occurs within the context and under the conditions of the nation-state order. Migration studies have traditionally concentrated on understanding the reasons behind people's decisions to relocate from one national jurisdiction to another, the social and economic impacts on both sending and receiving societies, and the legal and policy frameworks governing migration. In contrast, mobility encompasses a wider range of movement. First, it extends beyond human mobility, with considerable scholarship dedicated to examining the movement of goods, capital, and technologies. It also transcends spatial dimensions, as the concept inherently carries a stratified aspect, such as "social mobility." Finally, mobility is not just about permanent movement, as it also includes temporary or cyclical movement, and it is not limited to movements between nation-states – "internal mobility" is a relevant consideration as well. When mobility studies investigate human movement, they focus on its dynamic nature, highlighting the interconnectedness of different forms of mobility, including commuting, tourism, daily travel, and virtual mobility through digital technologies.

While research has traditionally studied migration and mobility as separate subjects, the Migration-Mobility Nexus postulates that we cannot fully understand one without considering the other. Treating some people as migrants and others as mobile individuals can produce complementarities, dualities, contradictions, and/or tensions. The focus on such dynamics, on their analysis and explanation, contributes to a better understanding of human movement and its political, social, economic, legal, and moral implications.

Against this background, the Migration-Mobility Nexus (nccr – on the move 2019; Piccoli et al. 2024) outlines four possible ways in which the interplay between migration and mobility can manifest itself: 1) enablement, where migration might enable mobility, or the other way around; 2) continuum, which stretches between the poles of "migration" conceptualized as long-term and permanent forms of movement and "mobility" as more temporary and fluid forms of movement; 3) hierarchy, where migration and mobility are political categories that are used to determine or legitimize hierarchies of movements; and 4) opposition, where migration and mobility represent exclusive conceptions of movement.

The MMN thus allows us to discern and analyze these crisis-induced shifts within migration and mobility hierarchies, providing a framework that accommodates the complexity of human movement during times of upheaval, and to consider both mobility and immobility. For instance, the sudden eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions highlighted how established hierarchies of human movement were reshaped. Paradoxically, this crisis immobilized traditionally highly mobile groups like tourists, while facilitating the movement of "essential"

workers who were now deemed pivotal to upholding societal functioning. It is also helpful to distinguish between systemic and system-endemic crises: while systemic crises are driven by factors external to the entity being researched, like pandemics, system-endemic crises arise from failures within that given entity, for example collapsing national regimes.

3.2 Understanding the Practice, Perception, and Governance of Migration and (Im)Mobility in Times of Crisis

Crises, their characteristics, and their experience and management are complex and potentially overlap. They are dealt with differently at different levels of society (Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022) and the changes they entail can be seen as structural, group-related, or individual. The following subsections outline how the interaction between critical events and/or conditions and the Migration-Mobility Nexus can enable a comprehensive understanding of the manifold impacts of systemic and system-endemic crises on migration, mobility, and immobility dynamics. First, we delve deeper into the concepts of agency, experiences, and practices; next, we investigate attitudes and perceptions and, finally, governance.

3.2.1 Agency, Experiences, and Practices

The impact of a given (economic, environmental, political, and/or public health) crisis largely depends on both mobile and immobile people's roles, positions, resources, and personal situations (Rydstrom 2022; Zittoun 2007). Three basic concepts are pivotal to our approach: experiences, agency, and practices. Employing a bottom-up sociocultural perspective enables a deeper understanding of how individuals deal with crisis and how crisis interacts with the Migration-Mobility Nexus at a given time and in a specific location. Such a perspective also facilitates the understanding of the interplay between crises, the Migration-Mobility Nexus and broader structures of social and political organization.

Based on the work of Faizullaev (2007: 532) on individuals' experiences of states, we conceptualize individuals' experiences as "direct, observational knowledge of the world" and as the conscious perception of reality in everyday life. The state can also be experienced by individuals that may perceive it as a holistic, intentional entity with its own interests, emotions, and power.

Methodologically, first-hand accounts offer an authentic and intimate lens that provides a view of how people experience and make sense of different crises and their concrete manifestation in everyday life (Muller Mirza and Dos Santos 2019; Zittoun et al. 2008). The study of people's diaries in particular can be used as a way to access lived experiences (Bernal Marcos et al. 2023). Combining this with a life-course perspective offers another pathway to studying the accumulation of crises and their impact on people's lives (Gray and Dagg 2019).

Agency is defined as the capacity of individuals, including the most vulnerable, to act, to make decisions, and to influence outcomes within their environments. It is therefore seen as a conversion process (Bazzani 2023). While agency is inherent in every actor, it also develops relationally in

exchange with other actors and is influenced by particular contexts, in particular if these are shaped by critical developments.

Empirically, agency can, for instance, be examined in interactions between forced migrants and solidarity activists in the context of so-called refugee crises following the wars in Syria and Ukraine. Both groups of actors interact and deal with liminal situations (Hartonen et al. 2022), in particular with regard to their mobility and immobility practices (both cross-border and internally) but also regarding other challenges of everyday life, such as dealing with legal or health problems, searching for accommodation and work, and accessing different types of care. Studying how crises and liminal situations are experienced and narrated by those most affected by these crises provides an insight into the process of how they mobilize agency on a personal level. By referring to the concept of enablement of the MMN, we can claim that migration caused by crisis may lead to (im)mobility and that forced migrants make use of agentic resources to become or remain mobile.

Last but not least, we define practices as the routines and behaviors of persons, groups, or institutions, especially within crisis contexts (Reckwitz 2002). These can range from mobility patterns to everyday interactions such as seeking accommodation or work. Practices can influence and be influenced by larger structures, for example government policies. Significantly, practices are adaptive and can evolve in response to crises, often integrating technological changes.

Individuals' practices can be investigated within the context of various crises, for instance the global COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturns such as the Euro crisis. Researchers with a more qualitative focus may explore how specific practices change, for example regarding the use of technology such as traceability applications as a response to crisis and its governance (Power 2019), and how mobility governance is shaped by a socio-technical transition. In this context, traceability encompasses not only international flights between countries but also everyday mobility activities involving various modes of transportation. We can observe the continuum of these mobilities within the framework of MMN. Employing quantitative methodology, on the other hand, offers a holistic perspective on multiple cases of mobility, health outcomes, and labor market results at both national and international scales. Taking into account various factors such as skills, gender, and migration status, it also allows, in the same vein as a qualitative approach, an emphasis on the differentiated impact of crises on individuals' (im)mobility practices and related hierarchies of human movements in the nexus between migration and mobility. In this context, migration has an impact on enabling mobility, as indicated in the MMN. This perspective recognizes the multidimensional nature of individuals' experiences during crises, which in turn influences agency. Ongoing research, for instance, indicates that the COVID-19 crisis affected the residential behavior of foreigners, possibly accompanied by changes in migration strategies, for example in terms of their decision to leave a particular place or stay, to move or not to move.

Against the background of these conceptual approaches to experiences, agency, and practices, a crisis can be studied from two angles: as an event or condition (from an objectivist view, which sees a crisis as a context or incident) or as a construction (from a constructivist viewpoint, that is, understanding how a situation or process is problematized and perceived as a crisis) (Brubaker 2013). The "reflexive" understanding of crises that integrates both angles shows at the micro level how critical situations are "made" through people's experiences and responses but at the same time how they are "facts" manifesting themselves in the practices of different actors, some of which have

an impact on the meso or macro level (e.g., societal discourses, governance tools, or regimes), and how they influence each other.

At the same time, there is a tension between systemic and system-endemic crises and their interaction with the relation between what is treated as mobility and what is labeled as migration, which might arise from their external and internal origins, respectively. Systemic crises, driven by external factors like pandemics, can lead to forced mobility or immobility practices, disrupting established patterns (Duque-Calvache et al. 2021; Tønnessen 2021). System-endemic crises, arising from internal failures, might result in immobility or controlled mobility practices due to economic or political constraints (Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2021; Tilly 2011; van Mol 2016). The agency of migrants interacts with these dynamics as they navigate challenges posed by each crisis type. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic (a systemic crisis), forced immobility occurred due to global health concerns, while during the Euro crisis (a system-endemic crisis), controlled mobility was seen due to economic instability.

Our approach allows us to acknowledge that systemic crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have universal and long-lasting consequences that affect how individuals globally navigate the nexus between migration and mobility through their experiences and practices and through the agency they mobilize by engaging in this navigation. Simultaneously, it provides a basis for delving into system-endemic crises, like the Euro crisis, in which internal factors triggered economic downturns that intricately interacted with migration and immobility dynamics in people's everyday lives. Within these crises, then, it is possible to spotlight the diverse experiences of mobile or immobile populations that are shaped by their unique attributes and circumstances and influenced by their agency to navigate challenges posed by crises. This underscores the effect of the intricate interplay of systemic and system-endemic factors on migration patterns and (im)mobility practices, thereby enriching our understanding of how individuals adapt and respond in complex crisis contexts to the dynamics we look at through the lens of the Migration-Mobility Nexus.

Beyond this, as elaborated in more detail in section 3.2.3, the concept of "regimes of mobility and immobility" can be combined with our previously outlined interest in experiences, agency, and practices to link the dynamics just sketched out to societally impactful attitudes and perceptions (3.2.2) and to governance aspects (3.2.3).

3.2.2 Perceptions and Attitudes and Their Effects

Experiences and practices of crises, migration, and (im)mobility discussed in the last section have to be understood against the context of related perceptions and attitudes of larger social groups (e.g., majority populations) or impactful institutional or political actors (e.g., media or nongovernmental organizations/civil society) in a given public sphere or society. This subsection first conceptualizes the terms "attitudes" and "perceptions" as useful tools for analyzing these actors' dynamics regarding crises and migration, then discusses how diverse larger social groups may shape how crises are perceived and evaluated and, lastly, outlines examples of contemporary research on societally and politically impactful perceptions and attitudes.

Perceptions and attitudes are similar yet distinct concepts. For the definition of the term attitudes, we follow social psychology and the study of human relations for which it is an "indispensable concept," classically conceptualized as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, [and] exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's [or community's] response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Allport 1935: 810). Importantly, attitudes are necessarily evaluative, either positively or negatively valenced, and are known to have emotional, cognitive, and conative (i.e., intention of action) dimensions (Rosenberg and Hovland 1960). This description is similar to the description of perception in as much as both attitudes and perceptions comprise forms of (individual or collective) "thinking," but attitudes have an evaluative component that perception may or may not have. We refer to perceptions here as sense-making and as being used to understand a situation or social context, while attitudes necessarily reflect evaluations of the same situation or social context (or group, actor, or any other attitudinal object).

When we look at perceptions and approaches to crises in this section, we focus on larger social groups and actors that function as intermediaries in social or political systems, such as international organizations or media platforms. Intermediaries that typically appear path dependent and stable might decide to change their attitudes when dealing with these perceived points of critical junctures (Soifer 2012). Indeed, when (alleged) disruptions occur and are dealt with, new perceptions and attitudes play a role and become mainstream and institutionalized as part of the organization going forward (Kreuder-Sonnen and Tantow 2023). According to sociological institutionalists, international organizations can also be viewed as intermediaries with self-preservation interests that want to expand their responsibilities, power, and influence. Their ability to take on new tasks in times of perceived critical junctures depends on their ability to define problems and solutions in ways that require the expansion of their responsibilities (Kreuder-Sonnen and Tantow 2023). For them, crises can thus, at times, serve as opportunities to redefine perceptions, attitudes, and solutions through novel mandates and the expansion of their activities, which can ensure their future relevance and reinforce their intermediary role in how crises are governed and dealt with by individuals.

When investigating the role of intermediaries, actors such as media platforms appear to be particularly important. Communication between political actors and the public through the action of intermediaries has an impact on perceptions of crises and their role with regard to (im)mobility. Media platforms, for example, have been analyzed as platforms on which reality is presented in specific ways that make these perceptions seem sensible, rational, and reasonable to the public (Boswell et al. 2020). Their role in shaping perceptions and attitudes has largely been investigated with a focus on communication and narratives around specific issues and their impact on the perceptions and attitudes of the public (Bitschnau et al. 2021; Buonfino 2004; Grande et al. 2019). It is through communication platforms and tools that specific representations of reality are spread to a greater or lesser extent. Given this, migration and (im)mobility scholarship, which is specifically interested in discourse and communication tools, has recently elaborated on representation in the media as a significant contribution to the creation of discourses around migration and (im)mobility that are widely socially shared (Bello 2022; Valente et al. 2023).

The perceptions and attitudes of these powerful actors influence the creation and development of the public's perspectives and attitudes. Referring for a moment to the Migration-Mobility Nexus (Piccoli et al. 2024), for example, these perceptions and attitudes may play a role in the

"opposition" interplay between migration and mobility: movements of people might be perceived as either migration (long-term, permanent) or mobility (temporary and fluid). Furthermore, people on the move might constitute flows that are positioned in different hierarchical positions depending on how perceptions and attitudes towards these specific movements have been created and nurtured.

While contemporary research is increasingly analyzing how diverse actors in the public sphere may shape perceptions and understandings of crises in relation to migration and (im)mobility, as outlined above, scholars have also, as already mentioned, investigated crises as objectifiable events (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, economic crises).

Researchers who are currently considering attitudes and practices that developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are examining, for example, how this crisis has impacted internal and external (im)mobility and related attitudes, health indicators, dynamics on the labor market (e.g., actions of recruiters), employment, earnings, and inequality in the medium term (Baert et al. 2015; Borjas and Cassidy 2020). Ongoing evidence has already suggested that the COVID-19 crisis has altered mobility-related attitudes (i.e., border closure preferences) among national populations.

When the consequences of the war in Ukraine are considered in current research, there is an examination of how identity dynamics and associated affects shape the way national majorities in various host countries show solidarity with (Ukrainian) forced migrants, as well as how Ukrainians who have remained in Ukraine show solidarity with (other) internally displaced peoples in the context of the war. Recent evidence has already suggested that identifying with Europe, for example, increases solidarity with Ukrainian forced migrants among nationals in Western European countries, above and beyond prosocial dispositions (Politi et al. 2023). This coincides with existing research on the mobilization of solidarity initiatives, also sometimes referred to as mass emergency behavior (Drury 2007), in the context of various crises (Cassar et al. 2017; Chantarat et al. 2019; Rao et al. 2011).

Ongoing research is also examining how the application of (new) policies following the onset of the war in Ukraine have led to better hiring opportunities for Ukrainians compared to other immigrant groups, and whether the arrival of Ukrainian forced migrants (in Switzerland, for example) has exacerbated hiring-related discrimination against other immigrant groups. This example illustrates the double standards that can also ensue when reactions to a crisis mean prioritizing one group (which is in a situation of need) over other groups (which may have already been, and still are, in situations of need; Krings et al. 2021). This example illustrates quite clearly a hierarchy, in reference to the MMN interplay, which points to how certain individuals' movements are viewed as more legitimate than others', resulting in the hierarchical categorization of various forms of movement.

Other research has investigated how economic crises affect wages and, consequently, perceptions of and attitudes towards specific kinds of movement. During the rather recent Euro crisis, for example, the sharp appreciation of the Swiss franc entailed an important real wage increase for cross-border workers but not for resident workers. Consequently, as ongoing research shows, this might have sparked the belief in Switzerland that migrants should earn 10% less and cross-border workers 20% less than native workers. These findings illuminate our understanding of the conflicts that arose in the wake of this crisis in firms employing both residential and cross-border workers. They also add

a layer of complexity to our conventional understanding of the hierarchy between mobility – typically evaluated positively – and migration – typically evaluated negatively –by illustrating a situation in which mobility is perceived as less valuable than migration.

Still concerning the labor market in Switzerland but in the context of (historical) economic downturn and recovery (e.g., in the 1990s), ongoing research is investigating the actions of employers following the restriction of the seasonal permit to EU countries in 1991 and the abolition of that permit in 2002, as well as how seasonal workers reacted to longer-term residence permits in the context of these changes. It is based on existing research interested in the impact of legal status regulation on wages (Naidu et al. 2016).

Systemic processes, such as longer-term political or environmental crises (e.g., democratic backsliding, climate change), also often result in disproportionately negative effects for groups which are already experiencing pervasive disadvantage, like Indigenous peoples (Gonzalez et al. 2022) or other minority groups (Bağcı 2023), and may therefore even look systemic despite the fact that they can also be construed as a collection of isolated, objectifiable (and perhaps intensifying) events. These processes again speak to the hierarchical interplay in the MMN framework by depicting how such crises have tended to exacerbate and deepen existing hierarchies between groups, further entrenching inequality. Ongoing research is investigating how such crises (differentially) affect the expression of the political voice of Indigenous peoples in Chile and New Zealand (Gale et al. forthcoming), as well as their appraisals of events and their attitudes and behaviors towards newcomers/immigrants. Further research investigating the erosion of democratic norms (see e.g., Castells 2018; Krishnarajan 2023) in the context of immigration and ethno-racial diversity in the Global North (the US, Switzerland, and Belgium) and the Global South (Turkey and South Africa) identifies varying conceptions of the demos, also known as the imagined political community (Anderson 1991), as a missing piece in discussions around the erosion of these democratic norms.

3.2.3 Governance in and through Crises

As previously outlined, crises can be considered as episodes when social organization is re-ordered because policy actors reconsider attitudes and approaches that no longer seem to work in a situation where the future does not seem predictable. To grasp these impacts, we elaborate in this last section on the governance of crises and its impact on the nexus between migration and mobility, in particular when it comes to the hierarchization of human movements.

Governance can refer to how a specific moment or the longer-term conditions of crises are managed and dealt with by different actors and institutions. This focus can demonstrate how such moments reveal structures of power and inequality, thus making them more visible, which means it is easier to study them. In this section, we put forward a distinction between governance of crises and governance through crises. If we take both of these types of governance together, we can approach in a nuanced way the systems, processes, and structures that are in place and that govern migration and mobility and the concurrent interplay with crises.

Starting with governance of crises and human movements, it is important to recognize that governance of crises can manifest itself in many different forms. It comprises practices that immediately react to a crisis, devise possible responses to a crisis, and guide the behavior of others affected by the crisis. For instance, the emergency measures put in place when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, including border closures, national lockdowns, and transnational repatriation operations (Chu et al. 2020). Governance of crises also involves the production of knowledge informing different responses and framings of what should be seen as the main problem to be solved. Staying with the example of COVID-19, we have seen a massive expansion of research investigating how human mobilities affected the reproduction rates of the virus, directly impacting public health policies that shaped the ways we moved through places (Klauser 2023). The COVID-19 crisis initiated changes in the governance of migration and mobility, which partly inverted the hierarchical interplay between both phenomena. Traditionally highly mobile groups, such as highly skilled professionals and business elites, were forced to stay put, while the movements of particular workers from systemically relevant professions were facilitated. Conversely, the sanitizing logics at the center of public health policies shaped the governance of the EU's borders, which Tazzioli and Stierl (2021: 539) argue were "exploited to enact deterrence" against migrants as "corona spreaders" at the southern borders of Italy, Malta, and Greece.

At the same time, governance involves a variety of actors involved in complex policy domains involving human migration and mobility. The diversity of actors participating in the governing of crisis again highlights the intricate links between the different levels of social and political organization and organizational scales. They can include state and nonstate actors alike, such as international organizations that coordinate crisis responses (see previous section), national governments, local authorities, corporate actors, private organizations, and nongovernmental organizations supporting individuals affected by the economic fallout of a crisis (Geddes 2022; Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022; Triandafyllidou 2022). The diversity of actors is also related to the dynamics within organizations or groups of organizations, which are not necessarily aligned but also work through negotiations and hierarchies. In this vein, we might also imagine crises of governance, which refer to these inner tensions that manifest in political crises, conflicts, and controversies within states and political regimes. Crises can present an opportunity for states to assert a "renationalisation narrative" that reconstitutes the fragmented governance landscape with the promise that the national state can re-establish control and solve the "crisis" (Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022: 1). Sahin-Mencutek et al. (2022) link this with rising populist rhetoric within governments, particularly where migration is framed as a scapegoating mechanism for other societal problems.

Crises can also open up cleavages in the governance of movement, in the sense that they present opportunities for individual actors, groups of actors, or organizations, and for a redistribution of power through the assertion of other voices, prioritizing different forms of expertise and forming new connections and collaborations. If a crisis is defined by the departure from a stable path, it is a moment when conventional modes of governing are no longer applicable and new procedures and solutions must be invented instead (Snow et al. 2007). This redistribution of power can have more just outcomes for people on the move, for example through the empowerment of grassroots organizations, civil society organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (Cuttitta et al. 2023). In such a moment of crisis, different actors compete with alternative solutions and narratives that explain the source of the situation, its nature, and ostensibly the best solution to the situation. Put

differently, the governance of crisis is a highly contested endeavor and shapes and reshapes power relations.

In this situation, actors and organizations have incentives relating to self-preservation: they want to stay relevant despite a changing context. At the same time, actors and organizations may seek new responsibilities and gain more prominence via those new responsibilities in the form of the governance of a policy domain. In the field of human migration and mobility, for instance, the pandemic brought forward opportunities for novel policy choices that had long been advocated by human rights groups, including the regularization of migration status in countries such as Portugal (Mazzilli 2022). Given the opportunity delivered by the crisis to reframe the "problem" of irregular migration as an issue of accessing healthcare, the governance of migration was in many ways redrawn, at least in the short term. These regularization processes speak to the hierarchical interplay in the MMN framework, as the political response to the COVID-19 crisis could potentially have transformed established hierarchies of human movement by integrating marginalized categories of migrants into the mechanisms of the welfare state.

The productivity of power also comes to the fore in the perspective of governance through crises. In this case, a crisis itself is of less interest, and the focus lies on how moments of disruption reveal and work through existing power structures and how individuals and organizations shape and are shaped by these (Kjaer 2023). Here we can discern two research streams. In the first stream, the focus can be on the action of governance: the shaping of and being shaped by power and how individuals and organizations navigate policy spaces. In the second stream, on the other hand, the focus can be on the construction of an event as a crisis and on the narratives, labels, and categories employed in such a situation.

Regarding the actions and practices of governance, it is important to recognize that crises and the way crises are governed have implications for individual lives. Narratives, practices, and government are entangled to create specific consequences for different actors – even actors who are not directly involved in the governance of a crisis. To understand the interconnections between narratives, practices, and government, the concept of regimes can help illuminate specific constellations and can be used to study how they affect different actors. In this perspective, the interaction between different individuals, between different institutions, and between individuals and institutions is of central interest. Crises can reveal existing power relations and complexities and can highlight how there is always a political dimension to governance. "Regimes of (im)mobility" are defined as the intricate and disputed interactions that take place among diverse actors, practices, rules, and technologies that govern and mold how mobility and immobility occur and are perceived. The concept of regimes, although transdisciplinary and broadly applied, might refer to a national or regional regime of migration governance. But regimes might also refer to conceptual regimes, for example, a socio-technical regime or a race regime that are working broadly towards the aim of holistically capturing how complex systems contribute and (re)produce the governance of social phenomena (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). A crisis may, for instance, be the instigator of new forms of digitalization as a way to govern populations, but this may also invite everyday users to change their practices regarding the use of certain technologies as a response to crisis. As we have already discussed, the evolving use of technology illustrates how governance of crisis can provide opportunities that redistribute power within the regime (Geels 2002).

Scholars who focus on the act of constructing an event as a crisis have also turned to the processes involved in this construction: the narratives, categorizations, and labels involved in describing an event as a crisis (Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022). Historical legacies from previous crises and power struggles influence how subsequent crises are negotiated and constructed (e.g., Dzenovska 2020; Klotz 2024; Yan 2023). In this perspective, the interplay between different actors and between different spheres of knowledge and narratives is examined to understand, for instance, why certain kinds of human migration or mobility are constructed as problematic and not others. The actions of individuals matter, including individuals in organizations acting in an official function, such as bureaucrats.

Despite the different foci, what unites governance of crises and governance through crisis is that there is an understanding that a crisis is limited in time and will therefore end. The end of a crisis is defined by newfound stability and path dependency, but it is important to acknowledge that this stability may only exist on the surface and that a new crisis can reveal underlying tensions that become legacies in subsequent crises.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, we elaborated on ways in which crises are conceptualized and analyzed in contemporary research and in relation to migration, mobility, and immobility in particular. We argued that a more comprehensive consideration of mobility (and immobility) perspectives can help overcome the limitations of methodological nationalism and grasp the multifaceted relationship between human movement and crises. Following existing attempts to develop broad and interdisciplinary approaches to understanding crises, we presented a broad and reflexive framework that is related to the Migration-Mobility Nexus to study the impact of crises (Piccoli et al. 2024).

We outlined different ways to investigate the impact of crises by reflecting on how people deal with crises in everyday life and how perceptions and attitudes interact with and shape agency and practices, and elaborated different ways of approaching conceptually how crises, migration, and (im)mobility are governed.

Individuals' experiences offer a lens through which we can view how individuals navigate the challenges they face. Agency underscores the inherent capacity of even the most vulnerable person to influence their journeys and the lived realities they encounter. Concurrently, practices, both static and adaptive, mirror real-world behaviors, illuminating the dynamic interplay between individual choices and larger social structures. At the same time, the examination of the perceptions and attitudes of larger social groups of a given society (e.g., majority populations) or of impactful intermediaries (e.g., media, international organizations, or recruiters) discloses insights into how crises are dealt with and impact various migration- and (im)mobility-related dynamics at play in societies and public spheres. We also highlighted how combining different understandings of governance in and through crisis helps analyze in a nuanced way the systems, processes, and structures that are in place to control institutions and societies and migration and mobility in crisis contexts.

While the approach we have presented allows for a more multifaceted understanding of the interplays between crises and the Migration-Mobility Nexus, its potential to expand the broadly Euro-American centered perspective of research in the field remains to be further explored, especially in close collaboration with scholars from the Global South (Raghuram and Sondhi 2023). By bringing together emic, reflexive, and more objectivist research angles, our argument may inform the empirical investigation of varied critical situations and longer-term constellations in a way that allows a broadening of existing stances. By unveiling and questioning the differential understanding, impact, and perception of crises and human (im)mobility at different levels of social organization, the presented approach contributes to the ongoing project of going beyond essentialist limitations in social science research, in particular with regard to sedentarist and methodologically nationalist biases but also with regard to postcolonial continuities in knowledge production. At the same time, a concise and yet comprehensive and empirically grounded theorization of crises and their manifold consequences undoubtedly remains a challenge that requires further interdisciplinary conceptual thinking and research. We hope that our attempt at formulating a reflexive and multilevel approach provides a fruitful and thought-provoking impetus for future work in this direction.

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