

## **Images & memory: the contemporary trajectory of migrants**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6093/2532-6732/7474>

### **Abstract**

The relation image/migrants/memory allows to elaborate a form of representation of everyday life where the smartphone, as a technological device, becomes the receptacle of a new memory. For a lot of migrants, images and technological medium help to produce a structure of life stories. Our reflection is built on a theoretical-methodological dynamic focusing the importance of images as a constructive act where memory is inseparable from our environment. In a perspective of sociological exploration including the memory participation of images in the migrant's trajectory, our paper gives an account of an empirical research on the current migration issue between Brazil and France. Migrants express themselves in daily life through visual traces that make up the trajectory between past, present and experiences. Through the visualization of digital images, smartphones crystallize the living memory.

**Keywords:** Migrants; Memory; Images; Technology; Narration.

### **Introduction**

Migratory questions increasingly characterize social change in our contemporary societies. Migrations are a complex social phenomenon, where various social elements are woven together. Their understanding is necessary in order to provide a framework for vision and reflection around this question, which singularizes the dimensions of the spirit of our times.

Our proposal is based on an interrogation stemming from a theoretical-methodological reflection on a Franco-Brazilian research project (CAPES-COFECUB) on the theme of migrations in France and Brazil. It focuses its attention on the role of images in structuring migratory journeys and their influence as a representative element of memory. The aim is to understand the subjectivities and experiences of migrants. Through the methods of visual sociology, by focusing on fieldwork in France and Brazil, we show how the use of visual tools, such as smartphones, intervenes in the migratory process. This allows the elaboration of the phenomenon through the relation image/migrant/memory, shaping the representation of lived experience through technological devices as receptacles of a memory, elements testifying of a presence in the world.

The methods of visual sociology are thus used to draw up a cartography of daily life: understanding the migratory trajectory also means understanding everyday life and its texture. The idea is to co-develop with migrants around pictures taken with mobile phone devices in order to comment a series of photographs of significant importance for them.

This allows us to understand their way of living in the city but above all, the way daily life is structured. This is achieved by conceiving images that are produced by migrants via their smartphone and developing a sociology of the image where we question the images already existing in the social world and which represent the migrant phenomenon in various facets. The analysis of visual data treated in a thematic and iconographic way allows us to explore modalities of the migrants visual universe, in a dynamic enhancement of their daily life through a methodological approach which aims at the understanding of ordinary life.

### **Sketches of visual sociology**

How to think about the relationship of migrants with the images they produce? What is the strength of the image when it makes the invisible visible? And again, what does photographic image represent? Is it a simple reproduction of reality or "a way of seeing", as Susan Sontag (1977) would say? Based on these questions, we try to understand and see how visual sociology represents a relevant support in order to think and establish a reflection on the current migratory questions.

Thus, the approach of visual sociology is the result of a long socio-historical trajectory which has seen the image erected as a methodological tool. Through its theoretical function it is an indispensable element for the enunciation of social reality. This leads to a recognition of visual sociology as a discipline with its methods of use "with" and "through" image (Collier, 1967; Prosser, 1998; Faccioli-Losacco 2003; La Rocca, 2007; Harper, 2012; Hamus-Vallée, 2013; Vander Gutch, 2017). This is where one finally recognizes the image as an investigative tool and a means of understanding. Further details on the methodological steps of visual sociology would be too long to fully develop and thus cannot fully find its place in this paper, therefore, for further detail, please refer to illustrated works in the bibliography (of course non-exhaustive).

We nevertheless underline the importance of comprehension, which represents one of the keys to reading a visual work through photography. Let us not forget that photography is a specific mode of knowledge (Maresca, 1996) which indicates a social construction giving meaning to the actions of individuals. It subjectively reveals details and informations on what the subject wants to communicate in relation to his daily life. It is in this strategy that we can understand the relationship between images and migration, understood as a construction of a table of thought where images contribute to reflection and understanding of the object (Meo, 2016). The place of the image should not be considered as a simple illustration, but on the contrary as a research tool that gratifies the sociological value of the gaze in the process of knowledge. From a methodological, epistemological and "culturological" point of view, in the sense given to that word by Douglas Harper (2012), it is a means of analyzing photographs of the social world in order to find elements indicative of culture and social relations. In that sense, images reflect a sensitivity that is key to understanding the social dimensions of the world. The approach of visual sociology is to be thought of as a possibility of knowledge aligned on an in-depth gaze, operated by the polysemy of photographic image.

It is obvious that in this discourse images must be considered as a social product (La Rocca, 2007) of human activity. Moreover, the photograph must be seen as an important document for social analysis. In other ways, the image must be reconsidered as a source of knowledge that allows us to interpret the sociological information contained in the visual

document and thus to construct an argumentation based on the image. It is a way of seeing the world through the eyes of others and through the visual construction of daily life: subjects put into action visual narratives staging their lives and their existence. It also reveals a presence in the world that is reinforced by image as a source of identity. It can be considered as an idealization of the world, where people live and act, and an indication of the way they structure this same social world.

In this dynamic, the relationship between image and migration has a certain strength in the sense that it allows the possibility of showing, visualizing one's existence. We often speak of a new "civilisation of the image". This also indicates an intensification of the use of the image and of the process of visualization. It reveals the social fabric through the proliferation of digital devices and the conditions of transmission, sharing and distribution of images. It is also one of the very foundations of image: it must circulate in order to raise awareness and be "alive". This is a sign of the establishment of a thought of seeing and an accentuation of the sensible, enabling us to look at the world and make it visible. Isn't this also the very objective of the use of photographs by migrants? To "make themselves seen" and "make their existence seen" in all its states? We can read in this direction, for example, the various images that migrants capture during their situation of the migration. These images are taken by their smartphone and kept for memory and also as proof of their existential condition.

In these conditions, the image probes the conditions of possibility of the knowledge of a world as an instrument of capture of lived daily life. The multiplication of images can be read as an act of visualization of a state of consciousness of life. It is not only as a simple journalistic-mediatic illustration, but also the understanding of its effects. It can be seen as a power of bringing things to life and to penetrate the tragedy of existence. One could even say it is a clarifying glance to see the world. One of the foundations of the image, from our point of view, is to function as a permanent mirror of our gaze, which is highly operative in the study of migratory trajectories.

Indeed, as a mirror, the image simultaneously offers argumentative possibilities, i.e. to organise a discourse based on the image itself. This is also what the construction of the migratory vision consists of: to see through one's eyes what one wishes to show of his daily life, of his existential journey. It is also in this strategy that our research and our methodological approach fits in: using the image to "make migrants talk" and reveal their experiential universe. The methodological application in the field is, on the one hand, that of native image making, a term introduced by Jon Wagner (1979) as a technique of anthropological origin, which allows us to understand cultures in their daily activity, and therefore a possibility for individuals to visually narrate different aspects of their lives. A reflexive modality which has the aim, in the construction of visual narratives, to consent an apprehension of the subjective meanings of individual representations and to found the significant values of social action. This is done by showing the habits, paths and symbols that constitute lived experience.

### **The relationship between image and everyday life**

What is at stake is the narration of everyday life as a flow of experiential life where image accompanies and, at the same time, structures this same flow through expressive traces? These are linked to the reality of experience: this represents the very essence of a thought of the image, if we refer here, for example, to the scientific contribution of Albert

Piette (1992; 2007). These traces are modalities of a confrontation of glances allowing a vision of the other and his daily life. Moreover, let us not forget the centrality of everyday life in many research projects based on visual sociology, both filmic and photographic, where, rightly, the image is revealed as a necessary instrument for making visible the everyday features of a population, a culture, a neighbourhood...

What is important is not only the intrinsic characteristics of images as a documentary form - yet an element to be retained as essential - but above all the fact that the language of the image must be capable of provoking reflection. That is to say, the image that documents everyday life is the basis for reflection on the experiential life course of the population in question in the study, and makes it possible to focus the gaze on certain conditions and practices. The gaze, as François Laplantine (2009) shows, is one of the foundations of knowledge of the other. Thus, a kind of visual "alteration" is generated in this relationship to the image. By this fact, we can agree that we see with our own eyes and those of others through the photographic trace allowing us to construct, in a research strategy, a collaborative dimension or a collaborative approach where the research actors have an active involvement in putting into perspective the knowledge of the world. This world is that of everyday life experienced by these same actors where the image in this type of participative and collaborative process allows to widen the vision of things and to multiply the points of view. In this sense, the photograph used in the research will be considered as a trace of social activity and will inform us about this activity and the construction of meaning. The idea is to give meaning to the action through photography where the subject of the study - the migrant - shows his or her journey and what is in his or her eyes relevant. This reveals a visual narration of personal experience. At the same time, the analysis of circulating images reveals they are also the object of participation in the understanding and vision of the phenomenon. This work of memory created by and with the image has a strong impact on memory and the way in which the image structures and forms this path and allows the memory to be sustained, reconstructed and revived.

The memory/image issue influences the process of conceptualizing life experience and represents an inseparable relationship (Agamben, 2014): the image is a 'memory crystal' as Giorgio Agamben (2014) called it. It is this same crystallization that can be found today in the sharing of images which is achieved through technological devices and in particular mobile phones. This last element has a predominant role in a reflection on migrations because it represents a tool for capturing the experience during the migratory journey. It also serves as a memory framework which visually transcribes life history in the act of migration. Memory cannot be dissociated from its environment, as Maurice Halbwachs (1925) pointed out. Then it is clear that the function of the mobile phone and the digital image for people in a migratory situation is a way of perpetuating this relationship in the course of the experience.

This visual narrative, if we stay within Halbwachs sociological perspectives (1950), functions as a "collective memory", and through this feedback of images, we participate in its acquisition. We enter into their vital dimension and thus have a glimpse of their memory, or of how images are captured and shown can contribute to building individual and collective memory. This type of image represents a perpetuation of the group and an example, in keeping with the theoretical perspective of Halbwachs, of a construction of an "affective community" that enables us to experience things together.

Photographs as testimonies of reality, as evidence, as impression-images, typical of Roland Barthes' famous *ça-été* (1980), constitute the classical essence of a thought of image

and its understanding of social phenomena. While there is always an indexical relationship between image and the world, between image and reality, it is important to note that, in addition to the "having been there", they also bear witness to what is here and now by showing a reference to a world and therefore to a being there. We propose to call that dimension photographic *dasein* in the sense that the image allows one to be visible, to visualize existence: a "being there" that it represents one of the essences of the image and of its indexical relationship to reality and functions here as a visible trace on the representation of being in migration.

This constitutes an order of the visible which puts into perspective the formation of a collective imaginary shared by the whole of society. It is also a social imaginary specific to a group or a social condition. It is an imaginary that is correlated in its representation via the image crystallizing a social existence where this imaginary, according to the approach of Cornelius Castoriadis (1975), also consists of what is perceived and named by society. In this way, the image consists in a "mode of signification" of social imaginary because it structures this same imaginary of social life. It shows, for example in the case of migration, the effects of daily life and by connotation of the spaces of the journey while generating a socio-historical reality.

Images tell a story and simultaneously describe a condition using one of the indispensable capacities of the image: its emotional function. The emotions are part of our social life and we must consider them also in relation with the social change as a narration. (Bory, 2012). Emotions are very much present in visual narratives, and we can even add that emotional narration establishes a kind of social order, or an action in the world that allows us to convey a vision of reality. Through this point, an effective imaginary is realised as it denotes, shows and visualizes a condition of existence and presence in the world. It also passes through the context, an important element in the research strategy and in the understanding of images, as Howard S. Becker (1995), one of the main theorists of visual sociology, pointed out. He focuses on the place where the people who are the object/subject of the investigation live and remain and from which it is possible to examine and observe the practices and reciprocities manifested in daily life. This idea, i.e. the contextualisation of existence through photography, also shows us the places of experience and makes us attentive to the structuring of what, in connection with Hulf Hannerz's urban analysis (1983), is referred to as "accessibility to everyday life", a strategy of social integration through various actions.

## Methods

The methodological approach taken is inductive and comprehensive in order to analyse migratory trajectories. In this framework, the people met during the field research had a large part of free expression and chose images they felt were relevant. Moreover, in line with comprehensive sociology, it is necessary to consider that the social world can be interpreted through the understanding of meanings aimed at different social actors as well as the intentions that will guide their actions, following Max Weber's (1921) theories. Understanding the trajectory of a person will also be understanding the subjectivity of her/his universe of representations. We will also be grounded in an ethnomethodological perspective, using the tools of visual methods and in particular photography. The target group is that of persons going through the process of migration. The CAPES-COFECUB research project is still in progress and the contribution here is based on some of the

preliminary results. The field research is divided between France (Montpellier and Calais<sup>1</sup>) and Brazil (Brasilia), as each field has its own specificity. Visual methods are at the center of the analysis of life stories, with the aim of building and retracing trajectories.

We've worked on the memories of a group of migrants in Brasilia. Their *route* is commented by photography as well as an emotional mapping with significant images allowing migrants to share their cultural attachments. In the case of Montpellier and Calais, for each interviewee, this trajectory analysis is carried out in two stages. The first is the life story, following modalities described by Patrick Bruneteaux (2018). In the course of a long interview, the person explains his or her journey. We ask him/her to explain the reasons for the migration process, his/her experience of the situation, family life, difficulties and breakdowns, the issue of discriminations, but also everyday life. In often difficult situations, what is the texture of everyday life?

In a second phase, the story is deepened by memorial work around visual supports. The smartphone is considered as a memory medium, just as family photographs were a way of writing history and staging a micro-history on the scale of a lineage. In his time, Pierre Bourdieu (1965) described the social function of photography, which consisted in making familiar moments solemn and reinforcing the group's sense of unity. We can apply this statement to the situation of migrants who, through the images they incorporate, comfort their unity and reinforce their experience by capturing the ordinary of their social reality. It is a visual modality of intersubjective communication in an emotional and symbolic register. It perpetuates their memory via the use of the photographic image as the source of a being. We start from the hypothesis that the smartphone has become the receptacle of individual memory because of its role as a place to store photographs. For people engaged in a migratory trajectory, this is all the more essential.

During our research, the importance of smartphones as a tool for connecting with family and friends appeared as an important element, especially during our interviews in a field workshop carried out with migrants in Calais. In this specific case, when they recount their aggression by far right-wing activists, it is not so much the blows and the spraying of tear gas that is traumatic as much as the loss of their smartphone (Gardenier, 2018). Therefore, the smartphone as a memory tool is one of the features that characterizes the current situation of migrants insofar as it records and documents their lived moments.

The research approach consists in asking the interviewee to highlight images that are particularly significant among the photographs stored in his or her smartphone. After selecting images, we ask him/her to speak freely around the photographs, and we sometimes ask further questions, but always with a view to inductive deepening. When a person seems to have exhausted the subject, she is asked to move on to the next photograph and repeat the operation. The photographs are analyzed in relation to their commentary by the interviewee, in order to identify not the meanings evoked to the researcher, but those they hold for the person with whom the interview is conducted. Finally, the photographs are also interpreted as a whole in relation to what they represent in a person's everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> In this article the field on Calais is just mentioned. The analysis will show in another future article with its particularities that must not take place here. We want also to point out that we decide to not show the images for copyright reasons.

This method is experimental in the sense that we started to develop it around the trajectory of the various people who wanted to participate in this sociological work.

This collection of life stories is positioned in an ethnographic perspective, considering that the description and retranscription of the feelings and orientations of the people's actions, collected through these interviews, beyond the understanding of the motives for the action, open up an interpretative possibility due to the descriptive force of these elements. We will draw in particular on the work of Bruneteaux, who collected the views of people in emergency shelters in an ethnographic way: faced with difficult situations and experiences, it is necessary to be able to position oneself in such a way as to collect the views of people, but also to take into account the difficulties encountered (Bruneteaux 2018). In this perspective, photography as a memory tool acquires an additional dimension, giving depth to the life story. It is thus possible to refer to the research of Sylvaine Conord (2007) who uses photography in a dynamic of ethnographic description.

### **Journeys of memorial imaginary**

Working with images also means providing a vision: images are a device allowing the visibility of a condition by focusing attention on the way the surveyed subjects look at their belonging and how their condition structures memory. In practice, the workshops are organized in Brazil with a group of migrants (4 migrants from Africa, Morocco, India, Haiti). The participants selected images to construct a discourse often related to their way of life and habits in their country of origin. At the same time, the workshops were photographed to preserve the memory of the moment and the sharing of sensitive experience in situ. This also represents a way of building a photographic memory, or a visual perceptive memory with the aim of giving meaning to memory and constructing an experiential cartography.

In this process, image gives a visible reality and presence that focuses attention on the aspect of an "aesthetic feeling": a pooling, a sharing of experience. Indeed, life stories were constructed through images that document and inform us about their journeys. On the other hand, given linguistic difficulties, the image also functioned as a literacy allowing expressiveness and understanding. "A picture is worth a thousand words", to paraphrase Confucius, seems to us to be an adequate expression here in a form of expressiveness and communication. The migrant group spoke through images, showing the features of their culture as a form of presentation-representation of self to the other in a dynamic of making oneself available to others typical of the process of otherness. Showing daily life in their country of origin is often a proof of perpetuation of memory and fortification of identity; while the images taken and shared among the group at the time of the experience served to reinforce the moment, to leave a trace of a new shared experience, of a presence in another socio-spatial dimension.

One could even speak of a type of photo-*souvenir* capable of composing memory as a type of puzzle of the experiential imagination going towards a quest for identity. Taking the photos in the act of the workshop is proof that an image reveals and presentifies lived reality. The feeling of the migrants was precisely that of being and of emotional sharing. Perhaps even a modality of "archive of memory" as Baudelaire said, or again as a complex relationship between identity and memory in the relationship between photo and time as Régis Debray indicated in his "*médiologie*". The relationship between memory and identity had become, in the practice of the workshop, a basic matter in the sense that the memory

triggered by the photograph called into question the identity of the participants and their recognition. It is clear that there is a very close relationship between photography and identity. For migrants this represents a basis of their journey: evidence shown by casual images of their lives.

If Proust was looking for identity in Time, in this case migrants are looking for it in images. Living images speak for themselves and function as an element in the construction of an individual memory and a collective social and historical memory, according to Maurice Halbwachs' terminology (1997). The images shown by the migrants make up a geographical map where they position their journey and their presence, to continue with images of daily life with the representation of neighborhoods, houses, faces, smiles, children, cooked dishes, village festivals: thus they are an identity atlas showing the lived social reality. Photography is "the most common language of our civilization", as said Gisèle Freund (1974: 204). This seems to be a major stake in the construction of migratory memory.

Let's remember that for the famous Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado, photography is the mirror of history. It seems obvious that the role of the photographic image shapes migrant's history and contributes to reinforce their belonging, identity and life experience. The visual narration of migrants has the objective of visualizing existence and building a narrative of the experience through stimuli images allowing each person an associative experience, in the sense of association with the world and with others, built on a symbolic level, that of the images that bring them together.

### **Smartphone as memorial medium**

In the fieldwork in Montpellier, the first interview with E. was supposed to be a life story, but in the end, it revolved mainly around the three issues E. was facing in her daily life: finding a job, the question of care arrangements and social isolation. In order to deepen the discussion, a second meeting was agreed upon to discuss the use of photographs as a visual tool. Indeed, the elements that she had put forward during the first interview informed us about the nature of her economic and social problems as well as the difficulties that a single mother of non-European origin encounters, but in the end, her subjectivity, her way of looking at things was not sufficiently apparent from this first account... The use of visual tools allowed us to go further into the discussion in order to better understand the texture of her daily life beyond the elements presented here, which are, after all, relatively objective.

Moreover, the mobile phone tool proves to be a practical instrument that responds well to the profusion of technology in everyday life, which at the same time transforms the way in which research is carried out. This is also a consequence of socio-technical transformations and perceptive modalities where, rightly, "the centrality of the visual experience and the visualization of the world are contaminated by the technological effect that brings a transformation in the appropriation of images by the social observer" (La Rocca, 2015). The reproducibility of the image via the smartphone thus becomes an ordinary act in everyday life. Migrants use the smartphone in order to preserve a visual memory and give a vision of their experience in the most common gestures. Moreover, it is easy to understand how the smartphone has become one of the symbols of the migration process serving as a communication tool, but also as a translation into the



various languages of the countries crossed and as a network contact (Gillespie et al., 2016).

One could thus think, from the point of view of images, that via the mobile phone, migrants try to produce a singularity of images since, it should be remembered, they are always representative of a singular event. The analysis that we can make of these images chosen by migrants is to consider how they are representative, symbolic, of a will to show their daily life in the most ordinary effects with also the meaning of being a social image. It is then to make the photograph speak, to which the respondent gives importance thanks also to the technological future of the image: that is to say, to consider the advent of digital technology which influences at the same time the way of doing research, the very fields of research and its study phenomena and also survey instruments. The mobile phone is part of this strategy and seems to us to be an instrument of documentation, thus constructing a discourse of reality. It itself becomes a language for writing and describing everyday life as an eye-witness account that gives depth to sociality in the sense of showing it in its "raw" reality. This method therefore seemed to us to be favorable in a field survey with a population of migrants insofar as the photograph immortalised in their smartphone is precisely a form of writing about their reality, an important document in their social life.

We met with E. to discuss the photographs that were important to her. She then commented on the images she had chosen to show us. The method is comprehensive in the sense that she is encouraged to speak freely without pre-established questions. The first photograph she shows us is of her daughter playing, whom she says she "likes to see cheerful and smiling". They were able to take advantage of various stands for the children. She says "as long as my daughter feels well, I am fulfilled", putting her well-being directly in line with that of her daughter. She adds that the presence or not of the sun is an extremely important factor: She doesn't want to do anything or go out when there is no sun, an absence that pushes her to "not want to do anything: it's laziness".

Another photograph was taken during an internship with UNICEF in Burkina Faso, during a focus group with "mothers and children" in a remote village to understand why malnutrition persists, despite a treatment by UNICEF. She says she really enjoyed this professional experience. She was able to apply the knowledge she acquired during her training in a concrete way. From what the mothers have told her, she realised that during the winter period, the work in the fields is too demanding for mothers, who neglected their children, when it is the lean season and the children do not necessarily have sufficient nutritional intake. In addition, health centers are too expensive and families do not have the means or time to bring their children there. Moreover, there are understaffing problems in these centers because health workers do not want to live in certain rural areas. She did this internship during her Master's degree in nutrition. She tells us that she likes to understand the problems of nutrition in order to help the children.

She then shows us a young girl whom she presents as the daughter of a couple of friends who live in Brittany and who went on holiday in Senegal to discover the country. The mother sent her the photograph, which made her nostalgic. They seem, to some extent, to be a second family, giving her a foothold in France, for example by spending Christmas together. She then shows us a photograph she saw on Facebook of a three or four year old, girl who looks like her daughter, cutting out banknotes with scissors. She tells us "for her, it's a game", but "it's a waste, I don't know how her parents will react", she laughs several times. When asked how she would react, she says she would be angry.

Two salient elements stand out from these images. The first is the strong bond maintained with her child. This fusional bond seems common for mothers who live in a context of isolation and social disqualification. The frequency of this situation was highlighted during interviews with social workers on the problems faced by single migrant women. C., professional integration counsellor at the CIDF in Montpellier, explains that these women often focus their entire lives on parenthood. The consequence of this isolation is social disqualification, with a huge loss of confidence, but also an almost complete absence of interaction with adults. She tells us that this can go as far as a loss of ability to have relationships with adult people. Moreover, having no other social identity than that of a mother, they close themselves up on this function in order to be able to value themselves. With the exception of the photograph representing a friend, all the images presented are related to children and motherhood. The first represents her child, but it doesn't stop there: the second represents mothers and their children in Burkina Faso and serves as a support for the description of her dreams and projects. Here again, the mother-child couple remains paramount: her skills as a highly qualified worker (she holds an engineer degree) in the ideal projection of her activity would be put at the service of other mothers in order to improve their lives as mothers. Finally, the photography that represents relaxation and fun also features a child making a joke to his mother.

The second element that emerges is that of absence and remoteness, a theme which, in our view, belongs to what Abdelmalek Sayad (1999) called 'double absence'. Indeed, if his daughter and the parent-child bond are indeed present, E.'s memory universe is characterized by the almost total absence of other references. This absence is first of all shown by a striking element: the very small number of photographs that E. considers significant. Thus, while she arrived relatively recently in France, there are no reminders of life before in Senegal, no images of her Senegalese friends or family. This choice is in our view significant of a break with her former world, probably caused by her family's refusal to accept her motherhood and her choice to raise her child alone. She tells us that the photographs she has selected are the only ones she is happy to show us and which evoke positive things, and that there are others that she does not wish to comment on because they do not bring her positive emotions.

The photographs are also symbolic of absence and remoteness. The photograph taken during a training course showing mothers in Burkina Faso is significant. She is geographically distant in the sense that she is located in a country that is neither her country of origin nor her country of residence. It is distant in time in the sense that it refers to the past. It is a significant moment in her journey, but before the break-up that is motherhood. Photography also represents a perspective to be reached in the future: finding a job that corresponds to her qualifications and at the same time helping mothers to raise their children. However, it is clear that the perspectives projected in this photograph are very distant, if not unattainable. They involve finding a job, whereas due to her status as a foreigner from outside Europe and the constraints of single parenthood, E. despairs of finding a job. It is therefore the present situation that makes this image extremely remote, beyond the constraints of time and geography.

Similarly, the photograph of the daughter and of her couple of friends who live in Brittany is symbolic of absence and distance: she never sees this family of friends who live far away and she is only rarely in contact with them. Finally, the image of humor will also mark this absence, after showing three photographs, the fourth represents a Facebook "meme" and not people around her: this image perceived as significant does not represent

a memorable event or people she knows, but is an element of relaxation seen on social networks, Facebook in this case, replacing an absence of real sociality with an electronic simulacrum.

More generally, the choice of these photographs shows the centrality of motherhood. This is the possibility of maintaining a rewarding identity for the person through valuing and identifying with the maternal bond with the child. This centrality also highlights a twofold absence, i.e. a strong restriction of the link with the country of origin and the potential claim and integration into networks of sociability linked to origins, but also, on the other hand, the lack of integration in the host country, trapping E. in a sort of intermediate situation where the link with the culture of origin is, to a large extent, distorted or even broken. On the other hand, the situation of single parenthood makes it impossible to integrate satisfactorily into the host society, pushing the difficulties of acculturation to the limit (Abou, 2006), as the photograph showing E.'s dream situation, far away chronologically and geographically, and almost impossible in view of the difficulties of integration into the labour market, linked to the care arrangements and the difficulties encountered by non-European foreigners in finding work, clearly shows.

## Openings

How to bring the reality of a situation to life through image? The objective of our reflection is part of a comprehensive approach. Via an ethnomethodological construction the aim is to grasp the meaning of everyday life through images. Seeing is also letting see: an intention on what the subjects surveyed consider relevant to them in order to construct a discourse on the trajectory of their experience. In this sense, seeing reveals social life and images (object of the act of seeing). Thus it conveys a certain symbolism by giving us at the same time an insight into the life of migrants and allowing us to learn something from the subjects. If we insist on the effect of everyday life in this research, it is also because it represents an access to everyday life.

Taking an interest in daily life and representations of migrants through life stories and photographs captured by the socio-technical device that is the smartphone, photographs that they choose based on a subjective desire to show and comment, is to give meaning to the experience through the assembly of verbal and visual (or non-verbal) communication allowing us to give life to a broader understanding of the phenomenon. We can see how today, in the contemporary migratory context, trajectory is increasingly accompanied by this nomadic technical tool. At the same time, the gesture of taking photographs also represents a ritual of the daily life, a simply existential modality which, in their condition, nevertheless becomes a strategy of access to being. It is also significant to note that some of the images they have decided to show us are representative of an expression of joy, which shows the desire to show the simplicity of life, the spontaneity of a look and childlike joy, for example. We are in this case: in front of the other and with the other, as Emmanuel Levinas (1947) would say. It also means seeing the world through the eyes of others, which is what the image in its essence of significant value of a social product and human activity allows.

Showing the photographs taken and selected by migrants means subjectively choosing what they want to show and communicate about their daily life, therefore showing a photograph to represent a real and lived reality also through the emotions. Thus, the choice of photographs takes on its full meaning when it is cross-referenced with the

elements entrusted to us during the life story. It is only by interpreting them in the light of this data, but also of the comments, that we can really understand the lived experience as well as the extent of the suffering entrusted to us. The passage through photography then allows us to subjectivise the data previously collected during the life story, confirming and deepening the elements touched upon during the narrative: the choice of images and their commentary then take on their full meaning.

It is also in this sense that the image reveals its essence of argumentative faculty, of questioning by intensifying the gaze on social conditions, on significant fragments that bear witness to reality. In our reflection, as an element of the field experience, it is also significant to illustrate the fact that emotional orientation emerges in the perception of the everyday life of migrants and their stories. Emotion is one of the inherent characteristics of the image. It forms a reciprocity allowing us to have access to the social environments where the subjects live and experience. It allows us to gain the awareness that looking and showing is the same as questioning the world.

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