

3 *Education sentimentale* in migrant students' university trajectories

Family, and other significant relations

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Studying – the many-years-long passage through university – is a process of personal transformation that is forged in affective constellations. Dynamic in itself, studying is especially demanding when students migrate, spatially and socially. Their mobilities go hand in hand with different forms of transgression that bear upon personal relationships (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2017). As young adults, most students maintain their familial attachments while also finding significant new relations (Sadrudin 2017; Hurrelmann and Albrecht 2016; Pietsch 2017). Since families are “regimes of belonging” (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2012), mostly offering a wide range of resources while restricting personal freedom, the affective bonds, especially between generations, are often experienced in ambivalent ways (King 2014). On the one hand, individual aspirations are often intertwined with those of close relatives (Raiser 2007), whose care and support often comes with very high expectations as well as a fear of failure. On the other hand, while thriving on (affective) support, social and spatial mobilities may occur at the cost of alienation and conflict – because belonging has a price.¹ Under these circumstances, emotional interaction styles are likely to become an object of reflexivity while studying that may question cultural certainties and challenge established constellations between kith and kin. Furthermore, while negotiating family roles as “offspring”, numerous students engage in establishing new families, which add to the range of affective ties, possibly instigating new pressures.

This chapter follows the trajectories of students enrolled at a German university and is driven by an interest in affective attachments unfolding in interpersonal constellations that bear upon the process of fitting in to academic life. The students in question have their migrant background in common.² And precisely this commonality will be object of a closer scrutiny because the collectivizing marker of migrant is too often taken as an important personal attribute without further investigation. The suggested procedure is therefore to trace individual trajectories and analyse how they are enabled and constrained by individual properties, by affective constellations evolving in interactions (see Slaby 2016), by resource endowment as well as by the power of symbolic boundaries (Lamont and

Molnár 2002) at work in the social realm of their university. I start by discussing the process of studying as a period of transition between late adolescence and early adulthood. The passage through the university (see Pfaff-Czarnecka and Prekodravac 2017) is analysed with regard to the interplay of different kinds of mobility involved. Special attention is paid to circumstances in which academic education became a means of social mobility.³ On the basis of four distinct trajectories, affective work in relational and its importance in negotiating different kinds of boundaries, symbolic and otherwise, is discussed. These four trajectories evolve in several social domains of practice: in the complex social space of university, in parental homes; and in peer constellations both within and outside university. These social domains of practice have crucial effects upon affective interactions that shape and are shaped through the pathways of educational trajectories.

Studying: between adolescence and adulthood

While more and more persons enter universities at a later stage in life (see Archer *et al.* 2001), the students this inquiry focuses on are all in the third decade of their lives and have come to university shortly after having completed their school education. The dramatic edge of transition from school to university is still vivid in the accounts. The dramatis personae in the forefront of this analysis all agree that academic studies have significantly shaped the coordinates of their life course. University study has some very different properties to the learning experience at high-school level. It is understood as more specialized in terms of the selected subject, while being more comprehensive in the sense of acquiring a range of knowledge and properties considered conducive to fulfilling one's aspirations. Enrolling at university often leads to leaving home and often the home town; it always means engaging in new interpersonal relations. While adolescence is seen as a period of developing a sense of self, often accompanied by different transgressions – including challenging interpersonal constellations such as “family orders” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1971; King 2014) – the pathway through university can reinforce inner struggles between conformity and a quest to challenge boundaries encountered on the way. Numerous students struggle with the pressures of studying being considered a self-defined pathway while trying to disentangle themselves from specific familial pressures and still thriving upon the backing provided by their natal home (Röttger-Rössler, Chapter 4). Seen from the vantage point of boundary work (Zolberg and Woon 1999), the process of studying is, in any case, ambivalent: full of discipline (also due to the ongoing economization and managerialism of contemporary universities); yet providing a largely protected space-time for personal transformation.

Migrant-student family constellations have already been the object of several scholarly inquiries (Raiser 2007; King 2014). Familial environment

has been depicted time and again as crucial in deciding on peoples' chances in the educational field (Bourdieu and Passeron 1971). Today, scholars concur that the possession of economic, social and cultural capital matters in terms of enhancing or restricting the chances in an academic course of study. At the same time, scholars disagree with regard to their assessment of the power of institutional barriers for successfully completing a course of study.⁴ Some claim that these continue to impede the course of studies,⁵ whereas others suggest that the salience of social boundaries, resulting from the interplay of different capital forms, has loosened within university realms, with university premises increasingly opening up to, so-called, "non-traditional students" (Archer *et al.* 2001; Kristen *et al.* 2008). Notwithstanding the differences in assessing the salience of social background, the importance of familial support (Raiser 2007), and that of "significant persons" (El-Mafalaani 2012), encountered in the course of education is generally seen as crucial, not only for tackling the passage from school to university, but also for successfully completing one's course of academic study.

Studying at university level is, in any case, a process of movement that bears as much upon students as it does on their interpersonal relationships. Acquiring knowledge accompanies the individual process of subjectivation. In their biographic navigation (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013), students are tasked with weighing their diverse attachments, commitments, aims and aspirations against one another. It is essential they make choices and these usually result from negotiating visions (e.g. those that are individually developed vs. those embraced in family constellations), self-perceptions, properties and resources. The support and expectations espoused by closer (and often not so close) relatives (and acquaintances) influence individual pathways. Their resource endowment makes students more or less exposed to different barriers and boundaries. For students from an academic background, for instance, a sense of belonging to the academic realm is probably present from the outset, while they are enrolling at the university. Students lacking such a background, however, may suffer from a sense of alienation, at least during the initial stage of studying (Pietsch 2017). They might feel like trespassers – or can be made to feel as such.

Context: contemporary universities

Universities are made and unmade as much by external forces bearing upon them as by individual and collective transformations occurring in their realms. Universities can be seen as places of friction (Tsing 2005), as they bring different entities together, such as formal university structures, regulatory practices, teaching staff and students. The global race for resources, status, authority and influence prompt universities to engage in manifold reforms (Shore and Wright 1999; Münch 2011; Huber 2012). While global

university rankings have intensified the drive towards elitism, simultaneous efforts to enhance equity (or egalitarian representation) and to accommodate diversity have opened up universities to, so-called, non-traditional students.⁶ With the ongoing diversification, or indeed heterogenization, of student bodies – in terms of ascribed criteria, resource endowment, skills, imagination, expectation and aspiration – universities are turning into dynamic spaces of social encounters, in which very diverse personal trajectories may intertwine, confront or run parallel to each other.

Whereas knowledge production as such is a perennial process of transgression (Mecheril and Klingler 2010), for instance by challenging epistemic horizons, the sociality involved in interactive research and learning processes maintains and contests manifold symbolic and social boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Tilly 2005). Such boundaries are set by differences in resource endowment, possibly coming to the fore as "class characteristics" (Bourdieu 1988), as well as through different kinds of diacritical markers such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race.

Encounters and negotiations along and across these diverse boundary lines may take place in lecture halls, in seminar rooms, in private student-teacher interactions as well as in many other venues frequented and used by students, increasingly including social media. Students cohabit (a term introduced by Butler, see e.g. 2015), partaking in close encounters in locations that are partly self-selected (learning groups, leisure activities, sharing flats, political engagement) and partly imposed or provided (obligatory courses, sharing dormitories). In this vein, contemporary universities are sites of social production and reproduction where the modalities of social relations are interrogated, contested, negotiated and transformed.

Four trajectories

For the purpose of this analysis, four student trajectories have been selected. These are based upon long conversations entailing semi-structured and narrative parts and have followed the grounded theory method. The four students with a migrant background are all enrolled in the Legal Studies Department at City University, located in western Germany.⁷ The empirical material used here was collected in the framework of the SFB 882 "From Heterogeneities to Inequalities" by the author. The ethnographic present is the year 2013. All personal names have been changed. The sample used here consists of open and partly narrative interviews. An important criterion for selecting the interviewees was their acquaintance with the German education system, that is, having had a prolonged experience at German schools, resulting in a very good command of the German language. Out of the 13 cases on legal study students (along with others from different disciplines) collected in this project, four were selected for this analysis. They reveal commonalities in the observed pathways of "sentimental education", while also bringing

significant variation to light. The four cases do not represent "typical" kinds of affective variation mirrored in the broader sample but were selected to show important differences between them.

Samir

Samir came to Germany, with his parents and siblings, as a refugee when he was three years old. According to him, his parents are analphabets. He decided to study law early on. Samir's main motivation developed on the basis of repeated situations of rightlessness experienced by his family. He initially enrolled at another university but shifted because he found the atmosphere too hierarchical and exclusive. Having enrolled in his desired study course, he has developed a strong perception of not fitting in. He finds himself surrounded by fellow students from academic backgrounds, many with parents working as lawyers. In this vein, Samir's affects are strongly buttressed by his perception of difference *vis-à-vis* his peers (see Rötger-Rössler 2016, p. 11). He has developed a strong sense of being left alone. Samir claims: "I have never met anybody who would explain to me how the university works." He is at a loss when putting his courses together and he doesn't know what to learn and what to ignore. Fellow students do not share their transcripts; exam questions from previous terms are withheld: "Of course they all knew it, but they did not tell me." He also feels that his close friends went into hiding before an exam and re-emerged after it was over.

Samir has to cope with health problems, increasingly realizing that his peers are progressing significantly faster than himself. His lack of social and cultural capital is matched by financial problems. His stipend granted by a political foundation does not provide the means for receiving tutorials or for buying additional course materials. Samir is also pressed for money because he has established his own family, with two young sons, which also bears on his time resources. At the same time, he is happy that, when meeting his friends, he can take his elder son along. When reflecting upon his own difficulties, Samir expects that his struggles will at least benefit his children:

I always said that even if all this here does not bring me much; should I lose it, then still I have made the experience ... so that if my son comes to me one day, asking "what am I to do now?", I can tell him: well, you can apply at this and this university, you can study this or that and this is how you can obtain the relevant information.

Samir never received any such advice from his parents:

My parents never influenced me, well, they never have seen a school report of mine. They never could support me in the sense of telling

me which is the proper way, and which is not. But they have always supported me by saying: whatever you do, we stand behind you.

This support is under pressure, however:

In our culture circle, people talk. When you change university, people will say "he couldn't cope" ... Well, I wouldn't go under should I not be able to complete my study course, but I think that it would be a social manslaughter for the entire family and friends.... So there is always this fear that they will say: "he did not make it".

In his university parcours, Samir suffers from the fact that he cannot pass the required exams or proceed at a similar pace to his peers. Lacking academic teachers who support him, he also finds little backing among his friends, who are only available in their leisure time and do not include Samir in joint learning activities. The lack of peer support is echoed by the lack of parental support. In fact, Samir is the one providing backing for his parents in dealing with offices and hospitals due to his language skills and to his command of "how the German society works". He is the family pioneer who has entered the academic world. His practical knowledge of how a university works will, as Samir expresses, hopefully be of use to his children. Samir expects parental warmth and respect, whether he becomes an academician or not. But his fear of failure nags at him, possibly even more so as his ambitious plans are scrutinized by relatives and family friends.

Ekin

Ekin came to Germany at the age of two as a refugee. Ekin lives with her divorced mother, who works as a teacher, and with three significantly younger siblings, and she gives her mother a hand in daily care. She talks of her siblings with love, but highlights time and again that looking after them puts substantial demands on her schedule/time budget. Besides, she finds it difficult to learn with all the noise, but she has learned to cope. When attending school, she felt ashamed of her family's poverty that showed, for instance, in her worn clothes ("I still remember how humiliated it was when the teacher indicated to a hole in my trousers."). She talks about the many dismissive glances her family received while shopping and their difficulties in coping with language deficiencies in administrative procedures.

Ekin perceives herself as a really disciplined student, comparatively more successful than a number of her fellow students:

Contrary to my fellow students, I progressed rapidly. I still ... progress very well, because I pass most of the exams at the first try, and in legal studies it is essential to cover all modules.

She sees her study progress as lying in general principle of motivation and diligence, which are crucial for success. Her words reveal the perennial comparison that goes on between students. While Samir fares badly in comparisons, Ekin stands out. She does not engage in peer teaching, but goes her own way. She knows that she still has a long way to go; at the same time, she considers herself prepared for her journey:

Next year, I will start preparations for my final exam and I have to participate in two internships. And then, hopefully, writing the exam and passing it. Well, I would have big difficulties, but the good God knows how much I have learned. And it is not always easy for me to learn, since I also spend a lot of time supporting my siblings. But this was never bad for me. But always with hurdles, always with hurdles, and one day one is hardened and goes through life comparatively well.

Ekin is particularly fascinated by social law. She thrives on such topics as accommodating religious difference in immigration societies and asylum law. In "her" professor she found a role model who is very bright, socially engaged, human and civically oriented. She is happy to be employed as a student assistant to her professor. This is where she has found her sphere of belonging; her study and her work feel like home. It comes as no surprise that she is thinking of pursuing an academic career and aspires to become a professor.

Tamira

Tamira came to Germany as a refugee at the age of four, with her parents. Her father works as a skilled labourer, her mother is a housewife without any school education, but one of her uncles is a barrister who practises in her country of origin. She has experienced her parents as touchingly supportive of her and her siblings:

(The educational success of their children) is very important to them. What they did out of love for us, what they wanted above everything, because they could not do it, for various reasons. And that's why they wanted to keep all opportunities open for us ... so that we have a chance ... they wanted to give us a chance.

The interactions with her uncle have contributed to her selecting this course of study, after more than a year of searching after completing her *Abitur*. In her account, she is happy with her selection of law but, similar to Samir, she is not without angst, and is anxious that she may fail the final exam: "and then we have nothing at hand. This is a big danger that retrospectively I perhaps wouldn't have taken."

Unlike Samir, upon enrollment at the university she immediately found friends with whom she could share leisure time and learn. Early on she moved into a shared apartment with three female fellow students from the same country of origin; according to Tamira, "culture somehow attracts you". At the same time, she acknowledges that only upon coming to know the others has she realized how religiously and culturally diverse her country of origin is. The four women love cooking together and they cooperate in peer teaching/learning.

An important venue for establishing friendships among her fellow students was a course dedicated to law in her country of origin. The German professor conducting this course turned into both a role model and a mentor. Perceiving his interest in the legal and social dimensions of her country of origin, she found, to her surprise, that her migrant background was a resource. Tamira's boy-friend is of German origin. It is thanks to his (family) contacts that she was able to go through an important internship experience in a large barristers' chambers. Now, she can draw upon her partner's experience, skills and his outlook on life. Tamira thinks highly of her partner's family's religiosity. Not sharing the same religion, they all nevertheless put a similar emphasis on religious values and practice.

Tamira always seems to be confronted with national, religious and cultural boundaries, while navigating them without huge difficulty. She reflects upon concentrating her friendships on peers from her own country of origin, hinting at the possibility that some forms of cultural distancing are noticeable in her university's everyday life. And yet, she sees encountering other forms of life and different legal norms as enriching. In her daily practice, she is accustomed to shifting between different cultural forms and to travelling between her country of origin and Germany. Her major quest is to make herself useful to society. Legal knowledge appears to be a useful means for doing so.

Dritan

Dritan came to Germany as a refugee at the age of four. His father was a skilled worker in his home country, who engaged in politics. After he was thrown in jail, his mother had to give up her university studies and is now employed as a worker. Dritan's school education in Germany started with pronounced difficulties, but he and his parents soon developed an aspiration that he become a lawyer. Upon completing his primary education, the teachers gave Dritan a recommendation for a *Hauptschule* – the type of secondary school that leads to mental or technical jobs (at best). It was Dritan's mother's boss who made her aware that attending *Hauptschule* was incompatible with the aim of becoming a lawyer. Upon his parents' insistence, the teachers agreed to enroll Dritan at the junior high school (*Realschule*) for a trial period, where Dritan had positive experiences with

his teachers. He realized that they saw his potential, which boosted his self-confidence significantly.

It made me fly, in the sense that, when I changed the school all my friends from the *Hauptschule* said. Wow, now he made it, he managed to change to a better school.

Learning now came significantly more easily to him so that he could move once again, to a *Gymnasium* that gave him the route for enrolling in legal studies. In his long narrative, this was the emotional moment, when he sensed recognition, after a long history of interactions that had given him the sense of being problematic. Henceforth, the sense of self-empowerment boosted Dritan's educational pathway, a turning point that buttressed his vital energies of becoming (Slaby 2016, p. 7).

University has offered different openings to Dritan. He enjoys his course of study and takes the opportunity to participate in specialized workshops and seminars, where he can get himself noticed by his professors. Two have offered him a position as a student assistant. While deepening his legal expertise, Dritan has realized that he wouldn't want to concentrate purely on legal studies. He is increasingly fascinated by the interrelation between law and politics, so he has also enrolled in political studies. At the time of the interview, he was studying both courses simultaneously. These two subjects could completely fill his time, but he also engages in sports and artistic activities, while earning money as a journalist. Dritan says that he wants to understand the interconnections between different spheres of societal organization, notably between law and politics. He aims to become a professor.

What do these pathways have in common?

Samir, Ekin, Tamira and Dritan all look back at great hardships their families encountered around their exile to Germany. They have been made aware of the discrimination experienced by their families in their countries of origin through family stories; as children, they witnessed the difficult years upon arriving in Germany, their new country of residence. They all experienced their parents as vulnerable, lacking language skills and general cultural know-how. Samir needed to assist his parents time and again in offices and in hospitals, acting as a (cultural) translator. Dritan saw that his parents knew little about the German educational system, initially accepting the teachers' decision to send him to a *Hauptschule*. All four students are aware of their parents' economic struggles. They know that their parents have tried their best to provide a good foundation for their children's future. They all speak with great respect and warmth of their close relatives.

All four students are experiencing the university as a space of opportunities, or, in more general terms, as a space of "openings" on new

horizons. They are proud to dwell in the world of knowledge and they understand their individual pathways as a combination of academic learning and personal development. Legal studies – with the joint emphasis on public, humanitarian and asylum law – give them the opportunity to acquire knowledge about structures that enable people to realize their rights. Thinking about their upbringing in Germany, all four look back at their migration experience, but their attitudes are those of concerned citizens. Their knowledge is expected to be put at the service of society and not of a specific ethnic or religious community. In fact, while reflecting on their course, none of the interviewees has depicted himself or herself as a migrant. This is not a category they would use in the midst of the academic realm. What the four cases have in common is their experience as political refugees. This may be the reason that Samir, Ekin, Tamira and Dritan are particularly politically alert and socially engaged.

All four young persons come across as reflexive agents, especially when remembering how their parents put their own needs second to the urge to give their children a "bright future". When they look back at humiliating experiences of being aliens and poor newcomers, they see their personal and professional futures as an important project. The interviewees display a characteristic that has often been observed in the children of migrants, namely that of feeling more in command of "local knowledge" than their kin. They reveal a high esteem for their parents and for family norms; none of the four overtly addressed the issue of alienation vis-à-vis their natal family that could result from academic exposure.⁸ And yet, the quest to forge new ties of belonging runs through all four accounts. The strong sense of home stemming from vibrant family constellations seems to be translated into an urge to forge new spaces of becoming in the academic world. The mission "to become" is possibly all the more urgent as all four interviewees are reflexively undergoing a process of climbing the social ladder through education.

Varieties in affective relations

Samir, Ekin, Tamira and Dritan tell different stories of how they manage to forge their belonging in the academic realm and how they reconcile the different dimensions of their commonalities and attachments and differ in their "affective repertoires" (Slaby 2016). They are guided, on the one hand, by emotional patterns derived from values and norms espoused by their families. On the other hand, the new domains of practice that come with higher education shape new kinds of affective interactions. These can be at odds with one another. Against the backdrop of his study struggles, Samir expresses a strong ambivalence vis-à-vis the world of his parents. He reports familial warmth and his parents' openness with regard to his choices. As compared to other migrant parents, he says that his exert less pressure and reveal a lower ambition. At the same time, they are

embedded in a wider community whose pressure bears heavily on the parents and – in consequence – on Samir. Failing in his studies would negatively impact the entire family's honor. Samir also repeatedly expresses his sense of feeling alone. While voicing a diffuse support, his parents could not provide him with guidance on how to study. This is where he puts his emphasis when saying that one day his sons will get the proper kind of support a student requires for successfully going along an educational path. What he couldn't get from his parents will be put at his sons' disposal.

In Samir's *education sentimentale* his peers (whom he calls "friends") leave him with a sense of struggling on his own in the academic realm. In this vein, peer constellations match the family constellations; Samir's world is relation-rich, but only in the private realm. He cannot take advantage of social capital in his vicinity – be it from family or friends – to successfully gain a foot professionally. At the same time, the command of new cultural-capital acquired in the academic field confronts him with the risk of alienation from his parental home – even if he does not want to see it. This is all the more troublesome as, between the lines in his narration, the world of his childhood appears oppressive. University space is where he wants to immerse himself, but he is experiencing a dissonant distancing (Slaby 2016, p. 4) from the social body of peers.

Ekin thinks of her personal trajectory as going well, in fact, particularly well, despite the many hurdles on her way. The hurdles appear to lie in the situation at home (support for her mother and siblings) and in the cumbersome facets of her economically poor upbringing. That she had found her belonging at her law department is pronounced with much emphasis. Deserving "to dwell" there comes from her hard work, from excelling, from striving hard to negotiate all the hurdles encountered on her way through the educational course. The skills she has acquired at home come in very useful for successfully going through her studies and possibly also for gaining ground in a future professional life. They have made her resilient. In Ekin's narration, her fellow students are particularly remote, neither do they count in her description of learning, nor when socializing outside the classroom. She positions herself vis-à-vis the elder generation (i.e. her mother and her key academic teacher) and vis-à-vis her much younger siblings (i.e. in vertical terms). Negotiating her belonging between her mother's home and the *Lehrstuhl*, works at the price of being distanced from her peers. She manages to combine her familial and her professional belonging but at the price of ongoing effort and continuous strain. While Samir needs support in learning, Ekin would be able to provide it, but she is under severe time constraints and is very much concentrated on her newly acquired role of student assistant. Her self-reliance makes her better equipped for the widespread competition among law students (see Pfaff-Czarnecka and Prekodravac 2017).

Tamira makes her way through university in a different constellation, but sees it as rather exceptional. Soon after she mentioned her parental home, the main attention in the narrative is shifted to the "horizontal" realm of all the persons, especially peers, she met upon enrolling in her study course. Her upbringing – embedded in a larger, transnationally strongly interconnected family, which includes a barrister – has prepared her for crossing worlds and for moving between different social worlds. Her sense of dwelling in the world and the process of finding her purpose occur in close exchanges with her female friends, co-residents and her partner. Her learning about the world and studying is strongly intertwined with affective negotiations in interactions with her room-mates – one important social "domain of practice" (Slaby 2016, p. 2) – and with her partner. Little effort is required to differentiate between leisure time and study time; sometimes they are separated and sometimes combined, depending upon circumstances. Tamira seems to thrive while encountering difference. In her experience, difference does not instigate inequality, but is a factor in expanding intellectual and emotional horizons. (She briefly talks about some academic teachers not being "sympathetic" to students seeming "alien", but quickly drops the subject.) Her sense of belonging is closely intertwined with the high value stress on civiness and, in this vein, with her urge to be useful to society.

Dritan also thrives on crossing boundaries and on his ability to combine different interests and occupations in his young adult life. His parental home provided him with the strong urge to engage politically and civically. An important aspect of his commitment is the quest to understand "things". It is not sufficient for him to become a lawyer and handle the legal system; Dritan wants to understand how law works in the field of power relations. Having gone through difficult times at school where – similarly to Samir – he had a troubled relationship with his teachers, at least in the initial years, he then became aware of his potential. This sense is continuously nurtured as he engages in social fields; sports, theatre and journalism are spaces where he can realize the sense of leading a purposeful life for society. The world of his parents is an important starting point for developing a strong sense for political engagement. Dritan's "politics of becoming" are geared towards establishing his belonging in the world of knowledge – knowledge that can be put at society's disposal. Like Tamira, Dritan is combining worlds and displaying an overtly civic attitude. Having moved away from his parents' home in social terms, he is managing to integrate the different realms of belonging quite effortlessly. Dritan's pride in having "achieved" is matched by his academic teachers' assessments.

These four students struggle in different degrees with angst and alienation. Samir knows them well and experiences how they are intertwined. For Dritan these emotions are not very noticeable within the university realm, but were strongly felt throughout his childhood. Tamira chooses to

ignore instances when teachers do not comport themselves in "sympathetic ways", but is well aware that her concentration on friends "with a migrant background" is a strategy to ignore social distance. And the thought of possibly failing her final exam confers a feeling of angst. All four students have developed new affective ties of attachment to significant others while acquiring and shaping their sense of navigating the academic space. Hence, they have forged their belonging based on personal liking and their own attitudes and, above all, through acquiring knowledge – academic as well as emotional.

University parcours

In light of this analysis, the *process of studying* at university level must be seen as an interplay of formal university structures with the ways in which individuals negotiate their passage through the university. The concept of "university parcours" (Pfaff-Czarnecka and Prekodravac, 2017) aptly captures the dynamic nature of studying as well as the power of boundaries at work. Thus, the process of studying unfolds as an interplay between passing through formal changeovers (e.g. exams); interactions (e.g. students and teachers) as well as "*Vergemeinschaftung*" (community formation), especially among peers. Taken together, these constellations result in a student's parcours entailing more or fewer challenges. "Passing" through a university parcours is in any case a transformative experience – as all four cases have brought to light.

The concept of parcours enables inquiries into individual learning processes and into an individual student's entanglements with the other *personas* acting within the academic environment. In this vein, studying is a thoroughly social experience. Individual progress in learning is perennially assessed, measured and compared with that of fellow students – with Samir's and Ekin's experiences in striking contrast. Academic teacher-student interactions may work as enabling (for Ekin, Tamira and Dritan) or as constraining, as opening new horizons of aspiration, or invoking critique, shaping subjectivities in unpredictable ways. Peer constellations may prove vital in forging and questioning symbolic boundary lines, evoking contention and shaping activism along political (Dritan) or social – which all four students embrace – aspirations.

This analysis brings to light that students are embedded in multiple domains of practice, they are simultaneously family members, possibly breadwinners, civil society agents, sportswomen/-men, persons engaging in particular hobbies and activities. In student lives, learning and living may be multiply intertwined. Even "ratio" and "emotio" work together closely: students may find a "home" in the realm of law or at a *Lehrstuhl* where they develop a sense of "fitting in" (finding passion in a topic such as asylum law);⁹ they may also make their "home" in a space where learning and exchanging with teachers and peers is possible and rewarding.

In this vein, the *Lehrstuhl* provides an "affective atmosphere" (Slaby 2016, p. 9), shaping the studying process.

The four discussed trajectories show that students experience their university parcours in different ways, but some important similarities come to light. In their interactions: Ekin, Tamira and Dritan managed to engage with professors and gained their support, so that they received academic guidance that went beyond the usual interactions between teachers and students. Through their employment as student assistants, Ekin and Dritan found attachment at their *Lehrstuhl*, that is, a social basis that may provide an important precondition for forging an academic career.¹⁰ While the bulk of Ekin's and Dritan's private interactions are outside of the university, for Tamira peer constellations as a domain of practice proved to be immensely important for finding her feet in her studies. Samir's example illuminates, though, that it is not the sheer fact of having contacts that is important, but rather the nature of those contacts. Exams are crucial for developing one's sense of belonging. They are a linear measure of progress that provides a scope for comparisons with peers and are accompanied by particular "affective regimes". Success boosts self-confidence; failure is a throwback, especially in legal studies – a course of study characterized by a high degree of competitiveness and selectivity. Passing an exam provides students with the sense of belonging to a "class" of those faring well, of those who are fit to study law and who deserve to practise it.

Belonging matters!

Does inquiring into personal pathways through the realm of higher education touch upon the question of belonging? It should have become obvious from this analysis that it does – in many respects. Belonging and inequality are linked. For some decades now, studies on education have inquired intensively into access, inclusion and exclusion that are particularly burning problems for students lacking capital (economic, cultural and social) who are seeking to enter universities and are striving to complete their studies successfully. There is a mass of German research analysing the constellations that impede children from participating in their desired educational courses. Until a few decades ago, the intersections of class, gender, religion and region (i.e. intersections that Ralf Dahrendorf's formula "*katholische Arbeiterkinder vom Land*" aptly captures)¹¹ informed early preoccupations with inequality in education; more recently, migrant children, especially those from Muslim backgrounds, have occupied centre stage in the critical literature (Geißler 2005).

While Bourdieu and Passeron's (1971) powerful critique of schools as reproducing social inequalities continues to be highly influential, more recent contributions provide important additional perspectives, such as addressing the power of "institutional discrimination" (Gomolla and

Radtke 2009). To give one example: Britan's narrative revealed that school teachers can act as gatekeepers in deciding a pupil's fate. If Bourdieu and Passeron's model focused on pupils' capital endowment (especially their economic, social and cultural capitals), the "institutional discrimination" model concentrates on the other side, that is, on the exclusionary power of institutions oriented by ideas of who does and who does not fit their premises. It goes without saying that the concept of "fitting in" (see Alheit *et al.* 2008) is closely related to that of "belonging".

That the field of higher education can be interrogated as an embattled social space was only established in recent years (see especially Eribon 2016; also Ahmed 2012). As long as the number of, so-called, non-traditional students enrolled at universities was low, inequalities in access to higher education were hardly an issue in academic inquiries. This state of affairs has changed since the field of tertiary education has expanded significantly, hand in hand with opening university premises to new kinds of students: Archer *et al.* (2001) inquired into inequalities around gender, age, class and race boundary line; contributions to Lange-Vester and Sander (2016) reveal the magnitude of the inequalities resulting from a lack of capital endowment. More fine-tuned studies, such as that by Losch (2017), concentrate on specific boundaries (e.g. the changing face of IT courses that, until recently, comprised only male teachers and students, which created a male culture that gave female students a sense of not belonging). Numerous publications follow the trajectories of international students (e.g. Jongyoung 2011) and show their difficulties in gaining ground in a foreign education system. Forms of othering are found in dis-courses on international students, as well as on those with a migrant background, that come from university administrators' efforts to provide special services for student categories considered "problematic" (Iverson 2012; Ahmed 2012). Yet another thrust of publications question the post-colonial underpinnings of the global higher education system (Madge *et al.* 2009).

Despite difficulties or obstacles, more and more non-traditional students manage to enter universities and finish their envisaged course. At the time of their interviews, Ekin, Tamira and Dritan had not completed their courses, but their steady progress suggested that they were likely to obtain the university degree they aspired to (whereas Samir clearly expressed doubts regarding completion). Whether their high-flying ambitions can be realized is another question – beyond the scope of this analysis. Their trajectories, and those of numerous other students analysed in recent publications (El-Mafalaani 2012), give an idea that the realm of higher education cannot be seen as an inaccessible fortress for those lacking the relevant capital forms. The question is then not whether students "coming from outside" (wherever "outside" is) can forge a belonging in the academic realm, but rather under what conditions.

Discussion: multiple belonging and social mobility through education

To combine different lifeworlds that have little interpersonal and/or cultural continuity and overlapping requires a lot of endurance, will, socializing, support and creativity. All social worlds have their own codes, and specific codes are especially resented under particular circumstances. "Dwelling" in a social world requires specific forms of knowledge and these different forms can be at odds with one another. Transgressing social boundary lines requires knowledge considered valuable on both sides of the boundary, along with the knowledge of how to negotiate social boundaries. According to Bourdieu (2007), a broad spectrum of knowledge and personal characteristics is required. Among which are attentiveness, apprehension, command of the rules on proximity and distance, as well as social feeling rules, everyday knowledge, social intelligence and many more. Self-confidence is particularly important when crossing social boundary lines in the upward movement through social space. Those who have managed to enter new social spaces guard their boundaries against "trespassers" (as the academic realm may view outsiders) and may develop new layers of resilience and gain "experiences of individual empowerment" (Calhoun 2003). These inform the human intuition of what is possible and what is not. Success is likely to trigger further success; failure may restrict the personal horizons of aspiration. The ability to combine different lifeworlds and to navigate through different domains of practice give people the ability to move in the world with more ease. But persons can also strive to abandon former lifeworlds that may be seen as too restrictive or oppressive. They can find new belonging in a profession or in a function as adults, after their childhood was experienced as prone to alienation.

It goes without saying that individual in/ability to negotiate boundaries is embedded in societal settings. Institutional discrimination, categorical differentiation (often resulting in discriminatory attitudes) and class privilege are important preconditions for boundaries to come to life and make actors struggle to negotiate them. The four students whose educational trajectories have been discussed here come from countries that, in Germany, are usually associated with a low level of educational skills and aspiration. All of them mentioned that they are "seen" as "migrants" by others, particularly Samir who comes from a family with little economic, social, cultural or symbolic capital. His privileged position has certainly influenced the scope of difficulties in his educational path and has possibly instigated the exclusionary practices he has had to endure. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to assess why some of the four have been more successful in their study course than others, but it is quite striking that the biggest educational success is with those whose mothers have gone through a substantial amount of formal education.

Conceiving of biographical navigation as a process of weighing and combining different constellations of belonging casts a special light on social mobility. Social "climbing" cannot be seen as linear. Different social worlds are separated by symbolic boundaries that have the effect of social divisions. Salient habits make people gravitate towards the established spaces of belonging unless the personal urge to forge a new belonging or to abandon one's restrictive life world becomes so pronounced that the hard work of boundary crossing becomes a pressing issue. Specific constellations of belonging are significantly easier to combine than others. The personal trajectories discussed above indicate the dynamic nature of moving across social boundary lines and negotiating belonging.

The careful observation of students with a migrant background must make us cautious not to engage in "methodological migrantism". To be sure, the migrant experience has significantly shaped the four students' life experiences. Indeed, looking back at migrant experience has possibly created "affective regimes" (von Scheve 2016, p. 18), that is, forms of patterning through discourse, language and ideologies within which all four persons continue to dwell. Their family constellations are similar in the sense that parents want their children to reach beyond their own possibilities and because parents depend upon their children's knowledge and skills, to a large extent. However, the available literature on social mobility reveals that family constellations without a migration experience also frequently conform to this pattern, the difference being that migrant children's success is especially linked to a family's "successful arrival". In the intersection between migrant background and class the two dimensions reinforce each other – as can be seen in the example of Samir. Growing up in a social world where he never met a person who had seen a university from the inside (as is often the case with many "social climbers") he is paired in his case with the importance of helping his family with language and practical skills, time and again, to fulfill the promise of "achieving". The other three trajectories can be seen as "migrant trajectories" because their quest to achieve and their family support are pronounced. As children of families who had to leave their countries as refugees and were acknowledged as such, they reveal a strong sense of justice and social sensitivity. At the same time, they share pathways of moving socially upwards through education with non-migrants. The four educational parcours reveal a fair amount of variation, making it difficult to simplify inferences on "migrant background" as a personal property. If there is a strong common trend, then it is that they narrate manifold experiences of being seen as migrants in the society of arrival.

Conclusion

"Fitting in" to the university was analysed here as affective work. This notion may evoke Arlie Hochschild's terminus "emotion work" (1979) in

the sense that affective work is unfolding in interactions structured by different kinds of inequalities and boundary lines. In the case of "affective work", the emphasis is not on conforming to accepted norms of emotional expression, but on the affective efforts involved in integrating oneself into a new social domain. *Education sentimentale* is "affective work", it encompasses the never-completed effect of challenging established norms and finding one's own emotional ground through exchanges with significant others. Navigating through late modern organizational settings – in these cases universities – reveals the importance of affective relations. The educational process throughout the study course is accompanied by meeting, observing and engaging with a number of significant persons that enable the process of boundary crossing – except in the case of Samir. Studying cannot be reduced, therefore, to acquiring academic knowledge. It is a process shaped by social relations, by navigating boundaries, by perception and performance of social closeness and distance. Most pronounced are the affective relations between fellow students, but encounters with academic teachers are of equal importance.

Even in one single study course, that of the Legal Studies Department at one German university, that an individual will adapt to an academic norm is not entirely predetermined. Contemporary universities allow for a range of personal positionings and a range of habitual forms. Accordingly, students can retain strong ties to their parental home, especially when living there or close-by, or try to sever those ties completely (not found in the sample used in this analysis). A number thrive by establishing new spaces of personal belonging and they experiment, combining different worlds. The time spent at university is a period of transgression – an important element of adolescence and early adulthood (King 2014) – that is balanced with the quest to "fit in" to a student body and eventually into a professional role. In the four cases discussed, these transgressions may not seem striking, but they are relevant: from the point of view of all four interviewees, they have entered the academic realm, to which most of their parents did not belong, and have acquired new skills and habits. From the point of view of academic "self-certainties" a migrant entering the academic realm of an elite study course such as Law is certainly a transgression.

"Fitting in" is affective work because a study course depends so strongly upon social relations.¹² The sentiment of belonging can be enhanced by communicative proximity with professors and peers. Acquiring the essential skills of interpersonal communication in academic settings can significantly boost the individual sense of empowerment and widen the personal horizon of possibilities and aspirations. Performing commonality (including perceiving it) with peers or the department enhances the sense of belonging to the university.

The entire process of sentimental education at the cross-section between a pre-structured course and the partly unexpected personal

constellations of affective relations during study is a crucial element of subject formation when navigating between natal family, peers and significant others. All those who study undergo a thorough transformation of attachment configurations. They have to rethink and refigure intimate social relations with kin, friends and peers against the background of a new social environment. As Röttger-Rössler (2016) argues, navigating between different spaces of belonging instigates affective dynamics while being driven by them. While the trajectories followed here were largely a continuation of affective patterns experienced at home, the social space of their university provided a broad range of new affective relations that forged a sense of future possibilities.

Notes

- 1 As discussed in the EASAS panel "The Price of Belonging", organized by Hölzle and Pfaff-Czarnecka in July 2016.
- 2 In this chapter the notions "students" and "studying" are limited to university education.
- 3 On this concept, see especially the collection edited by Lange-Vester and Sander (2016).
- 4 Such as Pott 2002, Raiser 2007 and Lange-Vester and Teiwes-Kügler 2004.
- 5 See the collection edited by Lange-Vester and Sander (2016).
- 6 This problematic term responds to tacit notions of "academic normality" in terms of class, gender and race. Depending upon national, university or disciplinary context the category of "non-traditional" student may also include further dimensions of difference, such as religion, LGBT-orientation or internationality.
- 7 All names have been anonymised.
- 8 See, Chapter 4 in this volume.
- 9 A *Lehrstuhl* is a typical German academic institution, a research and teaching unit organized around one professorial chair.
- 10 In the German system student assistant employment is considered an important first step towards an academic career. Numerous professors started as SHKS at a *Lehrstuhl*.
- 11 See Dahrendorf (1966). With this formula he captures the intersection of the dimensions "labour class", "landed", "gender", and "catholic religion" (that at the time of writing was considered especially detrimental to women's education), which reduced chances in educational pathways.
- 12 On the concept of "fitting in", see especially Alheit *et al.* (2008).

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