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### Cinematic ethics of migration

*First-person voices in contemporary documentary*

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## Summary

### **Cinematic Ethics of Migration: First-Person Voices in Contemporary Documentary**

This PhD research joins the growing interdisciplinary scholarship concerned with the relationship between migration and media by focusing on the ethical demands of first-person voices in contemporary documentary. First-person filmmaking, as I argue in this dissertation, comprises an everyday practice that is integral to migrants' negotiation of various bordering mechanisms in Europe towards more sustaining ways of sharing the world with others. This raises two questions: How can first-person voices negotiate the confining forces of the European border regime to envision and enact alternative configurations of the everyday? And what are the ethically salient aspects of the collaborative labour involved in the production of first-person voices? To answer these questions, I draw from critical border studies, affect theory, and film-ethics to offer an audio-visual and production analysis of a corpus of films that together address diverse experiences of migration in Europe, including the decision to migrate, the migration journey itself, and the experiences of displacement and belonging.

With this theoretical and methodological backdrop, I examine how first-person voices interrogate the various impasses created by the European border regime's confinement of migrants' knowledge production, mobility, inclusion and belonging. On the basis of this analysis, I argue that first-person voices enact *migrants' epistemic rights* by defying the European border regime's discursive practices; *the right to autonomy* of migration by grappling with the processes of migrant interpellation by the European border regime; *the right to opacity* by resisting the racialising, homogenising and reductive forces of the European border regime; and *the right to in-betweenness* by refusing the European border regime's conflation of belonging with a singular location. In addition, on the basis of interviews with the directors of the films in corpus, I articulate how the process of expressing a first-person voice involves an extensive negotiation of vulnerability, trust, as well as contractual and creative rights. Overall, this dissertation elaborates how first-person voices in contemporary documentary advance a cinematic ethics of migration that is invested in transgressing the confinement effected by the contemporary coloniality of migration in Europe.

## Samenvatting

### Filmische Ethiek van Migratie: ‘First-Person Voices’ in de Hedendaagse Documentaire

Dit promotieonderzoek sluit zich aan bij het groeiende interdisciplinaire onderzoek naar de relatie tussen migratie en media door zich te richten op de ethische eisen die worden gesteld door documentairemakers die vanuit een persoonlijk perspectief filmen; zogenaamde *first-person voices* in de hedendaagse documentaire. Deze vorm van filmmaken, zoals ik in dit proefschrift zal beargumenteren, omvat de alledaagse praktijken die een integraal onderdeel uitmaken van de manier waarop migranten omgaan met de verschillende grensmechanismen van Europa, met als doel een duurzamere manier te vinden om de wereld met anderen te delen. Dit roept twee kernvragen op: hoe gaan deze filmmakers om met beperkende krachten van het Europese grensregime om alternatieve configuraties van het alledaagse leven voor te stellen en te beleven? En wat zijn de ethisch relevante aspecten van de gezamenlijke arbeid die gepaard gaat met de productie van deze documentaires? Om deze vragen te kunnen beantwoorden, put ik uit kritische grensstudies, affecttheorie en filmethiek om een audiovisuele en productieanalyse uit te voeren van een aantal films die gezamenlijk verschillende migratie-ervaringen binnen Europa laten zien, waaronder de beslissing om te migreren, de migratiereis zelf, en de ervaringen van ontheemding en thuishoren.

Ik analyseer de films tegen deze theoretische en methodologische achtergrond en onderzoek hoe *first-person voices* de verschillende impasses bevragen die zijn veroorzaakt door de inperking van kennisproductie, mobiliteit, inclusie en het gevoel van thuishoren van migranten door het Europese grensregime. Op basis van deze analyse stel ik dat *first-person voices* de volgende rechten oproepen: *de epistemische rechten* van migranten door de discursieve praktijken van het Europese grensregime te trotseren; *het recht op autonomie* van migratie door te worstelen met interpellatieprocessen van migranten door het Europese grensregime; *het recht op ondoorzichtigheid* door zich te verzetten tegen de racialiserende, homogeniserende en reducerende krachten van het Europese grensregime, en *het recht op in-betweenness* door de manier waarop het Europese grensregime thuishoren tot een enkele locatie beperkt af te wijzen. Daarnaast beschrijf ik, op basis van interviews met de regisseurs van de films in kwestie, hoe het proces van het uitdrukken van een *first-person voice* gepaard gaat met uitgebreide onderhandelingen over kwetsbaarheid, vertrouwen, en contractuele en creatieve rechten. Samenvattend zal dit proefschrift dieper ingaan op hoe *first-person voices* in de hedendaagse documentaire een filmische ethiek van migratie oproepen die gericht is op het

ondermijnen van de inperkingen die worden veroorzaakt door de hedendaagse kolonialiteit van migratie in Europa.

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