

DISSERTATION / DOCTORAL THESIS

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“Languaged Work/ers
An Ethnography of Linguistic Labour and Professional
Selves in Refugee Support Work”

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Transcription symbols

Transcription of audio data follows in principle the GAT conventions (*Gesprächs-analytisches Transkriptionssystem* ‘discourse and conversation-analytic transcription system’, Selting et al. 2011). A brief overview of my usage:

(.)	very short, i. e. barely perceivable (micro-)pause
(-)	short pause
(- -)	medium pause
(- - -)	long pause
(4.5s)	longer pause in seconds
()	unintelligible stretch of talk
(xxx xxx)	unintelligible stretch of talk, two syllables (‘xxx’ standing for one parsable syllable)
(so)	imputed wording
(zu/so)	alternative interpretation of segments
UPPer case	emphasis
a: a::	lengthened segments
o'mar	word-level stress (if object of interactive processing)
↓	lower pitched segment
↑	higher pitched segment
ʕ	voiced pharyngeal fricative
ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
FEM/MASC	morphological marking of (feminine/ masculine) grammatical gender
((chuckles))	description of para- and nonverbal activities
<name of NGO>	comment on/ addition to transcription and/or translation

<<laughing>	description of paraverbal activities
draufgsetzt>	accompanying verbal segments, scope indicated by angle brackets
	boundary of intonation phrase (if notated in one line as in a minimal transcript, Selting et al. 2011: 7)
?	high rising pitch in intonation phrase
,	rising pitch in intonation phrase
-	level pitch in intonation phrase
;	falling pitch in intonation phrase
.	low falling pitch in intonation phrase
=	latching between intonation phrases
=ja?	tag question
ja=	turn-prefacing discourse marker
[segments]	overlapping stretch of talk

Part I

Situating the study

1 Introduction

Sami¹ joined the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* ('housing counselling centre') as a counsellor briefly after I had started my fieldwork there as a novice doctoral researcher. He had worked in refugee support before, with another NGO in Vienna, Austria, and, as many of his other colleagues, he had a social science degree. From very early on in my fieldwork I noticed that Sami's and two of his other colleagues', Yasmin's and Mona's, linguistic repertoires would receive regular attention among the staff of the counselling centre. The three of them spoke different varieties of Arabic – Sami, for instance, had acquired an Egyptian variety as a child in contact with one of his grandparents – which figured as first languages and lingua francas among a substantial part of the clients. In certain circumstances, this would set them aside from the rest of the team, for instance when dividing up work tasks. The fact that they understood and spoke Arabic was regularly put to use at work by themselves and by their colleagues, for instance, when helping out with a phone call to a client.

While my initial interest had lied in dynamics of professional legitimacy and labour relations between volunteers and paid NGO staff in refugee support, observations of this kind² pressed me to look deeper into the management of linguistic resources, its politics and the experiences of the concerned speakers. And indeed, the two issues seemed to be connected: While Sami, Yasmin and Mona usually conducted their counselling sessions with Syrian and Iraqi clients

1 All proper names of people as well as organisational units are pseudonyms. References to specific places in Vienna such as street names are fictitious too. Furthermore, in accordance with the NGO, no detailed case histories of clients are documented in this ethnography. These measures are taken to protect the privacy of those involved in my research.

2 Throughout the thesis, I use the genre of the ethnographic *vignette* – a scenic assemblage (cf. B. Busch 2022: 300–301) of selected pieces from my fieldnotes – and of the *montage* in which several analytical threads are weaved together (cf. Jonas & S. Hassemer 2022: 59–65) to provide – hopefully – tangible, scenic accounts as well as a condensed analytical understanding of the practices and people involved.

in Arabic, a greater part of counselling activities happened with the support of interpreters – most of them unpaid volunteers and asylum seekers themselves. At some point, Sami started avoiding to talk Arabic at work. *It's partly a curse*, he once said: earlier in his other workplace, speaking Arabic had come as a handy resource, useful now and then; but this had changed since the number of arrivals from Middle Eastern countries had surged in the previous few years. It was summer 2016 and indeed, the year before in 2015, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs had recorded a sharp increase in the number of asylum applications by (and positive decisions for) people from conflict regions such as Syria and Iraq where varieties of Arabic play a role as first languages and lingua francas (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2014, 2015a)³. Having listened to his venting, his colleagues Carla and Anna, sitting with him in the backoffice after the staff meeting on that day, asked him, back then, what this meant for him in the distribution of tasks among the team. Sami explained that he felt that with the increased number of Arabic-speaking clients, he could no longer work according to his professional function, i. e. work on his own cases, because he was always concerned with everyone else's cases. That it was difficult for him to *set boundaries* and that he felt his professional fulfillment was subordinated to his role as a mediator. Later, it was Sami in particular who pushed for a standardisation of work practices in what was called the *boundaries of counselling*, that is, an agreed-on, written definition of what should and what should not be offered as services by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

Observations of this kind motivated the ethnographic project underlying this thesis which is aimed to explore the construction of linguistic and professional selves in refugee support work under the political-economic conditions of present-day Austria, specifically, of the years following the so-called *refugee crisis* of 2015 when people fleeing from violent conflicts, war, political persecution and instabilities in several regions – most prominently Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan – arrived in Europe. Thus, in this thesis, I seek to trace through ethnographic engagement with the specific organisational site of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* what it means for the different actors to work in refugee support under political-economic conditions I delineate in more detail below. This means that I am interested in

3 This was true for other conflict regions as well, especially Afghanistan, where varieties of Arabic have a less or no particular role as first languages or lingua francas.

how boundaries are being drawn among the workforce and around material and symbolic resources, with which consequences for the individuals and how they navigate these circumstances. I argue that forms of communicative and language-related work and their appropriation as communicative and linguistic resources (Heller & Duchêne 2016: 153) by the NGO play a crucial role in the ordering of institutional, professional, moral and 'language' subjectivities in the context of refugee support work. Here, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* functions as an emblematic site which is to be understood in a web of contexts of various scale, the Austrian welfare system, migration policies, the nation-state as well as individual biographical histories (Heller 2007: 651–652). I thus ask the following, more specific research questions: Which understandings of speakers' and workers' subjectivities (cf. B. Busch 2021b; Urciuoli 2008) circulate in the organisational context? How do they relate to discourses circulating within and beyond the organisational site, dynamics of change within the institution and trajectories of actors and resources (cf. Heller 2007: 651)? How are relations of difference among subjects and practices discursively (re-)produced, circulated and regimented? Which processes of *differentiation* (sensu Gal & Irvine 2019: 138–164) are at work? How do subjects position themselves (Spitzmüller, Flubacher, et al. 2017) and how do they navigate such contexts? A specific focus of my analysis lies on the way phenomena of order reproduce liminalities, thresholds and spaces of in-betweenness (V. Turner 1969: 94–97, see also Thomassen 2015: 48–50), how speaking subjects position themselves towards and inhabit such liminal positions (J. Hassemer 2018, cf. also Steen 2015: 102–113). A case in point is Sami in the above vignette: how he experienced being cast in an in-betweenness of professional 'roles', at the margins of what he considered to be his job (or better his 'calling' as an ideological, embodied and moral representation of work). The orders of language and work, we shall see, produce a range of such phenomena of thresholds and in-betweenness for workers' speaking subjects – thresholds between construed 'roles' of institutional order and professionalism such as clients and counsellors, counsellors and interpreters, interpreters and clients, between paid and unpaid work, work and non-work, and so forth.

Underlying this study is a long-term and in-depth ethnographic engagement with a particular organisational site: the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. The *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is a local Viennese branch of an NGO which operates several

different projects and services, for instance, in the fields of housing, education and German-as-a-second-language teaching for refugees in all of Austria. Located in an outer living district of Vienna, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* offers individual generalist social counselling and specialised legal counselling in the domain of private housing to newcomers, independently of their legal status, but with a focus on asylum seekers and those under subsidiary protection. This is what, in the eyes of Sara, the head of staff/manager of the team, set the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* apart from other similar institutions in Vienna: being there, indiscriminately, for everyone, especially for those without the secured legal status of refugee, was an important feature of the morals of service and identity discourse of hers and her team's. Guidance on the housing market, brokering apartments, applications for housing-related social benefit schemes, checking rent contracts, conflict resolution and support in the persecution of fraud etc. were some of the main areas of service and expertise offered by the counselling centre to its clients.

This prevalently 'communicative' service of counselling had not always been the primary service offered: initially, the counselling centre had originated as a project with the purpose of organising private accommodation ('donated' by real estate owners) in the federal states of Lower Austria and Vienna to asylum seekers from the direly overcrowded accommodation facilities at the Eastern Austrian border (the so-called *Bundesbetreuungsstelle Ost* in Traiskirchen, Lower Austria). Like other accommodation facilities, the *Bundesbetreuungsstelle Ost* is run by a commercial contractor – in the case of the *Bundesbetreuungsstelle Ost* this is the Swiss company ORS – with its funding coming from the Federal Ministry of the Interior (see Rechnungshof Österreich 2022: 26–30). In public discourse at that time, the locality of *Traiskirchen* – standing as a synecdoche for the *Bundesbetreuungsstelle Ost* – became an often cited example of the failure of the state-sponsored structures to provide humane dwelling conditions to those seeking protection in Austria⁴. In this context the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* was initiated with the

4 See for instance, the report for Amnesty International on the reception centre in Traiskirchen (Bisko & Pichler 2015, cf. also del Biaggio 2020), critical news coverage (e.g. ORF 2015; Schmidt 2015) and a rebuttal statement made by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2015b). Traiskirchen and the reception centre also became the site of mediatised populist anti-immigrant politics (see for instance Hentges & Wiegel 2021: 89). The reception centre had already been criticised earlier, for instance, the *Refugee Protest Camp Vienna* had started its activities in 2012 as part of a protest against the living conditions in the reception centre (Ataç 2016).

aim of mobilising resources in the form of housing from the local population and distributing it to those who were at that time living in institutionalised accommodation structures. The *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* would thus function as a *broker* (cf. Lindquist 2015; Stovel & Shaw 2012) mobilising, bundling and regulating the “trajectories of resources and actors” (Heller 2011: 10, *emph. i. O.*) in the institutional space by campaigning with donors and recipients, bringing the parties together and watching over the legality of contractual relationships. This arguably comes with ethical dilemmas entailed in the role of the broker – namely whom to give access to the desired yet scarce resources and how to account for the consequences of bringing large numbers of asylum-seekers from institutionalised mass accommodation into the individual dependence of private rent relationships – which was, as we shall see, ‘carried across’ and reconfigured in the process of institutional transformation to the more communication-centred services of counselling. It is thus of particular interest to trace in my analysis how the moral order is negotiated in relation to institutional order (Heller 2007: 652) and discourses of professionalism (Sarangi & Roberts 1999b: 16–19).

Understanding the moral order necessitates to look beyond the institutional level of scale, especially contextualising it in its relation to the state (cf. Heller 2007: 651). In Austria, like in other countries in Europe⁵, many services to asylum-seekers and refugees are provided by NGOs as subcontractors to state and government bodies (in a similar way as the private companies are subcontracted by government bodies, de Jong & Ataç 2017: 29). Subcontracting means that the personnel of the NGOs is at least partly funded in the form of projects by state institutions – such as, in the Viennese case, the *Fonds Soziales Wien* (‘Vienna Social Fund’, see de Jong & Ataç 2017, on the architecture of refugee support in Austria) which funds the services of the Viennese *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*⁶. In this context, resources are almost always short in supply – adding to the general tightening on the private housing market in Vienna which weighs on the job of those working at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. This concerns the supply of funding for labourforce in refugee support work itself which depends on

5 See for instance Codó & Garrido (2014: 390–391) on migrant reception services in Catalonia, Spain, and Bonduelle (2022) on such structures in France for in many ways parallel situations in Europe.

6 The activities in Lower Austria were funded by Lower Austrian regional government before their discontinuation in 2017.

third-party funding and is hence limited in time and scope. This has at least two important consequences: (1) It ties the logics of service, at least to a certain extent, to the agenda of the funding bodies. As has also been noted by de Jong & Ataç (2017), this proximity to and indirect dependency from the state creates ideological tensions among institutional actors and within organisations regarding the moral and political conceptions of work, as it risks to limit the space for political, activist conceptions of refugee support work ('political approach' vs. 'problem-solving approach', in de Jong & Ataç 2017: 30). And (2) the scarcity of resources has the consequence that crucial parts of the services are being carried out by unpaid volunteers, which is, in the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, especially the case with interpreting and translation tasks which are essential to the functioning of the services. In an infrastructure of *community interpreting* services in Austria which has been deemed underdeveloped by scholars of the field (Pöchlhammer 2000: 49–50), this crucial language work is pervasively carried out by volunteers who are themselves asylum seekers and/or refugees (as well as by people like Sami, in addition to or at the expense of the job they are actually being paid for). The already vulnerable situation of the target groups of the institution of refugee support, their 'clients', is thus not only 'doubled' as it comprises both those seeking and those offering advice (cf. N. Busch 2005: 51), but tripled, as it comes with a further internal differentiation of the workforce in unequal labour relationships (cf. also Bonduelle 2022: 49).

In order to tackle the questions introduced and outlined above, I assembled a range of ethnographic data from my regular engagement with the organisational site between April 2016 and September 2018 – observational notes, audio-recorded and transcribed stretches of workplace interaction as well as semi-structured research interviews, institutional documents and other collected materials (such as photographs etc.). These data, co-constructed and emerging from *ethnographic contact* (cf. Slembrouck 2005: 628; see Chapter 3) feed into an analysis of subject positioning (Spitzmüller, Flubacher, et al. 2017), pathways of uptake and entextualisation (cf. Wortham & Reyes 2020: 61–64) and their material effects in terms of lived experience (cf. B. Busch 2020) and access to material and symbolic resources (cf. Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 55). The analysis is organised around three focal phenomena which follow from the overview over contextual, institutional and political-economic dynamics given above, (1)

the transformation process from brokering to counselling undergone by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, (2) institutionalised practices of reflection and situated notions of reflexivity among the staff and volunteer interpreters, and (3) the division of linguistic labour and the management of linguistic resources. On an (admittedly) abstract level, the focal phenomena correspond to three constellations of positioning and boundary-making, namely counsellors (and volunteers) positioning themselves (1) towards the ‘outside’ Other of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, that is, clients and external stakeholders (2) towards images of their own subjectivities (as a self-referential positioning), and (3) towards the ‘language’ subjects, interpreters and Arabic-speaking counsellors, as Others within.

With its underlying aims and questions, the present thesis inserts itself in the research fields of critical sociolinguistics (Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018, see also Spitzmüller 2022: 221–291) and multilingualism research (Blackledge & Creese 2010; B. Busch 2021a; Kristine & Weber 2017; Roth et al. 2018), more specifically those subfields dealing with the institutional processing of migration (for instance Codó 2008, 2013; Duchêne, Moyer, et al. 2013; Lehner 2018) and contexts of work/labour (Del Percio 2021; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013). This means that my research object is language as a social phenomenon in a social context – that is, linguistic practices, linguistic and/or communicative repertoires, lived experience of language and discourse on language/metalinguistic discourse (B. Busch 2021a) in the specific context of refugee support work. The aim is to trace and understand the different ways in which language and communication come to matter in refugee support work – to *matter* (Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 4–7) in the sense that they come to be involved in the differentiation of the workforce, construed as a terrain where refugee support work is being (or ought to be) carried out, an object of manipulation as part of the work process and a resource of work. Thereby I want to produce a critical sociolinguistic account which contributes to an understanding of what it means to be a counsellor in refugee support in Austria as of today: under political-economic conditions which have been aptly described, with regards to the professional field of social work and welfare services, as those of a post-migration society (ogsa AG Migrationsgesellschaft 2021a) and the neoliberalisation of the welfare state (Bakic et al. 2008; van Dyk & Misbach 2016; Lessenich 2008). With the term post-migration society, oga AG Migrationsgesellschaft (2021b: 11–12) point to discursive constructions of

difference, othering and misrecognition in present-day Austria where migration and displacement are everything but exceptional and recent phenomena, but are still treated as such by state institutions and government policies, as well as society at large, marking subjects across generations. Under the labels of *neoliberalisation*, *economicisation*, or *marketisation* of welfare services, and specifically social work, ongoing processes have been described of how the social sector is subjected to economic rationalities (Bakic et al. 2008; and for the distinct, yet in many ways parallel German context see Dewe 2013; van Dyk & Misbach 2016; Lessenich 2008), with self-reliance and responsabilisation as central logics, and services sub-contracted to for-profit and non-profit non-governmental actors (cf. de Jong & Ataç 2017: 30) such as the NGO under concern. A critical sociolinguistic understanding of these processes – which can build on parallel findings in several societal fields by critical sociolinguists (such as gathered, for instance, in Duchêne, Moyer, et al. 2013 and Martín Rojo & Del Percio 2019a) – will allow not only to explore the role of language, conceived as practice, resource and embodied repertoire, in these processes, but also to trace the discursive and semiotic processes which undergird and regiment these processes.

Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised in three parts: the first part (Part I) has the function to situate the study in academic knowledge production, in its relation to academic discourse and as research practice. Following this introductory chapter, comes what is conventionally called a *state of research* or literature review in which I assemble the research works and conceptual sources relevant to this thesis in four major ‘threads’ of academic knowledge production (Chapter 2): (1) *subjects and order*, (2) *differentiation and gatekeeping*, (3) *professionalism, reflexivity and reflective practice* and (4) *value, labour and political economy*. In the ensuing chapter, I elaborate on the reflexive ethnographic epistemology and methodology underlying my study of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Chapter 3). At the centre of the chapter lies an operation of scaling distance and intimacy between my researcher’s self and the researched field as part of ethnographic professional vision.

The second part (Part II) is made up of the analysis of my empirical data, a

number of case studies which are organised around the three focal phenomena or themes introduced above as well as corresponding analytical concepts. The conceptual apparatus which is introduced earlier in Chapter 2 as part of literature review is spelt out in detail within each of the chapters themselves. Every empirical chapter closes with a discussion of the analytical findings. In the first of the three empirical chapters (Chapter 4)⁷, I trace the reoccurrence of a particular discursive form – the phrase *we have no apartments* – across my gathered materials. This analysis of *pathways* between discursive events (Wortham & Reyes 2020: 20) allows me to map boundary-making processes, and get analytical access to the emergence of institutional order and of the counsellors' agency within that order. In terms of perspective, the chapter sheds light on the positioning of institutional agents – counsellors and (volunteer) interpreters – towards the 'outside' of the organisation – that is, first of all, their clients. The second of the three empirical chapters (Chapter 5) combines three conceptual angles on 'reflexivity' as a valued quality of personhood and practice: a dimension of *enregisterment*, that is semiotic processes of value ascription and acquisition of social recognisability (Agha 2007: 190–232); a dimension of *embodiment*, with a focus on subject-making and lived experience (Bucholtz & K. Hall 2016; B. Busch 2020); and finally a dimension of *inequality*, focusing on unequal access to and distribution of resources or capital (Bourdieu 1986; Gal 1989; Irvine 1989; Philips 2004). The chapter thus explores self-reflexive and self-referential positioning practices of institutional agents. The third and final empirical chapter (Chapter 6)⁸ is centred around the notion of *linguistic labour* (Ahamer 2013; Boutet 2008; Cavanaugh 2016; Duchêne 2011; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013). In this chapter, I assemble three case studies in which I explore 'language'd practices of work in their contextual embeddedness, looking into processes of semiotic differentiation and political-economic value production. The three case studies are centred on different perspectives – the positioning of volunteer interpreters towards the institutions of refugee support and of the

7 The chapter is an extended and revised version of an article which has appeared in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (see J. Hassemer 2021). The already published parts are marked by footnotes at the beginning of the relevant sections.

8 The chapter reproduces an extended and revised analysis already published in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (see J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020), the *International Journal of Multilingualism* (see J. Hassemer 2020), and the *Osnabücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie* (see J. Hassemer 2018). The already published parts are marked by footnotes at the beginning of the relevant sections.

Austrian asylum system, the positioning of Arabic-speaking counsellors within the team and towards clients, and the positioning of volunteer interpreters by counsellors and institutional processes. Thus, this last empirical chapter (Chapter 6) sheds light on positioning practices towards and of the ‘Other within’, the subject position(s) which I call the *language Other of refugee support work* – that is, those whose linguistic repertoires are ascribed and given a particular function within the institution. With the third part (Part III, Chapter 7), I assemble the results of the empirical chapters and draw conclusions on the role of language in refugee support work, with the aim of formulating a critique of the politics of difference and inequality which structure refugee support work today in Austria.

2 Mapping the conversation

2.1 Research in context: critical sociolinguistics

In his introduction to sociolinguistics, Spitzmüller (2022: 289) distinguishes a *metapragmatic* from a *critical sociolinguistics* as two closely related strands: the first, a sociolinguistics which is primarily concerned with the *semiotics* of discourse building on such central notions as *indexicality* (Silverstein 1976, 2003) and *sociolinguistic differentiation* (Gal & Irvine 2019; Irvine & Gal 2000) from linguistic anthropology; the second a sociolinguistics which emphasises more the material situatedness of discourse building on the anthropological and sociological notions of *political economy* (Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017; Gal 1989; Irvine 1989), *inequality* (Bourdieu 1977; Hymes 1996; Philips 2004), *power* and *hegemony* (Blommaert 2005a; Heller & McElhinny 2017, building on, among others, the work of M. Foucault and A. Gramsci) in language¹ (cf. Spitzmüller 2022: 221–291). In the European academic context, these approaches have come into fruitful contact with (critical) discourse studies (see Blommaert, Collins, et al. 2001) which will also play a role in the following overview. While this thesis is conceptualised primarily as a critical sociolinguistic project, I draw on both strands in terms of research agenda and analytical pathways.

Following Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. (2018: 23–25), I understand critical sociolinguistic research as a *conversation* which draws together a range of diverse *contexts*, lived experiences of people, social practices and political processes. Ethnography

1 Of course the opposition between the two strands is emphatic – ironically, there is a considerable overlap in conceptual sources and their usage. However, there is a difference between approaches primarily aiming at an analysis of reflexive processes of differentiation in language and society and those aiming at an analysis of social inequality and power relations in language (cf. Spitzmüller 2022: 289). I draw on concepts and analytical instruments from both strands. Park (2021: 70–71), for instance, proposes to mobilise metapragmatic theory for a critical perspective on language and /in politics of inequality which is what I attempt to do here too.

is often understood to provide the means to account for such a wider range of contexts in linguistic analysis (see for instance Cicourel 1987: 217–218; Blommaert 2001; 2005: 39–67; Rampton 2007: 585), though seen from an ethnographic perspective, the boundaries of the very notion of context – for instance, what separates it from the more prototypically ‘linguistic’ object, the *text* – do not form an independent reality (cf. Jacobs & Slembrouck 2010: 243; Silverstein & Urban 1996: 1–3, see also Bauman 2004: 4; Blommaert 2001; 2005: 39–67²; Nakassis 2016). As (ethnographic) research is a social practice in itself (cf. Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 10), the research encounter (which is constitutive of ethnography, see Chapter 3) is situated in relation to multiple and layered contexts (and texts!) with, for instance, bodily, spatial and interactive dimensions, which will have to be rendered as ‘text’ (and context vice-versa) in writing (Silverstein & Urban 1996: 1–3; see also Blommaert 2001). Such entextualisation of context – which is at the same time a contextualisation of text – entails not only discourses on the research site (experiences, documents, encounters which become diverse kinds of ‘data’) but also, crucially, discourses and politics of knowledge production, especially academic discourses of knowledge production. Entextualisation and contextualisation in research practice are selective, transformative (cf. Silverstein & Urban 1996: 1–3; Urban 1996: 27) and dependent on specific genres (cf. Briggs & Bauman 1992). In dissertation theses, the context of academic knowledge production enjoys a privileged position through the form of an institutionalised genre, the *state of research*. The term in itself (‘state’) might suggest an additive understanding of academic practices – knowledge which positively accumulates or advances – and as such does not match a critical sociolinguistic approach which treats “knowledge [a]s a social, historical and political animal” (Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 8). In this thesis and in line with Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. (2018), research practice is understood as perspectival, dialogical and productive in relation to its contexts and hence, the state of research as a contextualisation of the thesis in academic knowledge production.

In the necessarily selective task of ‘mapping the conversation’, that is, entextualising the context of my research and contextualising the unfolding text, I organise relevant research works around four main conceptual ‘threads’ around which

2 In his methodological discussion of text–context relations, Blommaert (2005a: 47) also refers to the notion of entextualisation in Silverstein & Urban (1996).

the thesis is assembled: (1) the making of boundaries and difference, among people and practices at the counselling centre, but also towards the outside; (2) communicative practices of moral (self-)reflection; and (3) the ascription of value to communicative practice and linguistic repertoires under specific political-economic conditions. These three analytical threads intersect in a fourth which consists of (4) the construction of speaking subjects and / as professional Selves working in refugee support. *Multilingualism* (Blackledge & Creese 2010; B. Busch 2021a; Kristine & Weber 2017; Roth et al. 2018) – which could have formed a fifth thread in this overview – is treated as a cross-cutting topic and introduced as such within each of the threads / sections. I start with the last thread expanding on the notion of the subject (Section 2.2) and then lead through the first three in what follows: differentiation and boundary-making (Section 2.3), reflexivity and reflective practice (Section 2.4) and value, labour and political economy (Section 2.5).

2.2 Subjects and order

Speaking subjects

At the centre of the ethnography are subject-making processes, that is, processes in which individual actors are aligned and align themselves with, inhabit, take up and negotiate positions in discursive order. In my usage, the notion of the subject connects to a range of traditions: First of all, this is a post-structuralist understanding of subjects as being constituted by and in discourse in the sense that social legibility and existence depend on the subjection to categories and logics which predate them (Butler 1997b; Foucault 1982; Laclau & Mouffe 1985). The notion of *interpellation* (Althusser 2014 [1970]: 264) pictures subjectivation as a scene of address in which a subject, responding to a hailing, *subjects itself* to ideological categories. Such acts of interpellation which confer recognisability, but also bear the risk of misrecognition, function, according to Althusser (2014 [1970]: 269), to reproduce hegemonic capitalist ideology (*the reproduction of the relations of production*, Althusser 2014 [1970]: 246–253). In her reception of Althusser (2014 [1970]), Butler (1997a: 40–41), however, also locates a transformative potential in such scenes of address, as the subject may respond in a way which recontextu-

alises and subverts the act of address, and thus may not just reproduce, but also *resignify* discursive order.

The post-structuralist notion of the subject has been taken up in multilingualism research (cf. B. Busch 2021a; Kramsch 2009; Purkarthofer & Flubacher 2022), directing the attention to the social constitution of speaking subjects and of their linguistic repertoires. In her work on the *lived experience of language*, B. Busch (2017b, 2021b) adds a phenomenological dimension of the bodily, affectively perceiving speaking subject. This approach which owes much to the study of language biographies and socialisation (B. Busch 2017a, 2018b) thus analytically understands the speaking subject both as a product of discourse and as a perceiving being in the world (cf. B. Busch 2017b, 2021b). These approaches study the *linguistic repertoire* (building on the notion of the *verbal repertoire* developed by Gumperz 1964) of individual speakers and /in social contexts as formed by their biographical trajectories (Blommaert 2009). Crucially, this notion of the linguistic repertoire denaturalises the understanding of language as a resource which one *has*, casting it as a biographically shaped, bodily and affective phenomenon beyond individual command and control instead (cf. B. Busch 2021b: 196–197). Taking a slightly different perspective, sociolinguistic studies of labour have looked into how speaking subjects are not only constituted by – and themselves enact – discursive order, but also how they are managed and governed as a workforce (drawing on Foucauldian notions of *governmentality*, see Martín Rojo & Del Percio 2019b) as they (are made to) enact discursive templates of practice (so-called *scripts*, for instance, Del Percio 2016, 2018a; Lorente 2018) or moral rationales (see for instance Martín Rojo 2019) which function to interpellate them in an Althusserian sense (Del Percio 2018a: 245).

Positioning

The post-structuralist notion of the subject has been taken up too in discursive psychology where the notion of *positioning* has been coined to point to the fluidity and dynamicity of categories of identity in interaction (Davies & Harré 1990; Wetherell 1998, cf. also Harissi et al. 2012). In linguistic and anthropological studies of practices of narration, this understanding has received further methodological nuancing – most importantly through the analytical distinction of different levels

within the practice of narration (Bamberg 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Wortham 2000), but also through the integration of fine-grained conversation-analytical categories of analysis (see for instance Deppermann 2013b). Central to the notion as I use it in the following is a metapragmatic understanding of positioning which connects practices of positioning with practices of evaluation – that is *stance* (cf. Du Bois 2007; Jaffe 2009; Ochs 1993, 1996). The metapragmatic dimension of positioning allows me to move beyond a positioning in the interactional here-and-now by systematically integrating typified construals of subjectivities and practices (or *figures of personhood*, cf. Park 2021) in the analysis (Jaffe 2016; Spitzmüller 2013b, 2015), as well as by tracing their emergence across communicative events, contexts and scalar levels (Wortham & Reyes 2020: 17–39; see also Georgakopoulou 2013; Hill 1995).

Order

The metapragmatic dimension of analysis allows not only to understand how subjects *subject* themselves to discursive orders of various domain and scale (institutional, professional, moral order, cf. Heller 2007; Sarangi & Roberts 1999a), but also, crucially, how they construe order, that is, how *order* is reiterated as an ideological construct. Order is thus understood on a theoretical level as co-dependent with, that is emergent from and contingent to, practice (cf. Heller 2007 who draws on Giddens 1984 and the work of A. Cicourel [for instance Cicourel 1987]). A similar argument can be made on the basis of post-structuralist notions of order where it is conceived as a historical (cf. Foucault 1966) and performative (cf. Butler 1999) phenomenon and totalising yet, at the same time ultimately, unstable and unfixable (cf. Laclau 1990).

A ‘classical’ domain of linguistic scholarship is the analysis of order on the interactional level of scale – the *interaction order* (building on the work of Goffman 1983). Seminal work in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (such as the work of H. Garfinkel, H. Sacks, G. Jefferson and E. Schegloff) was aimed to show how participants in verbal and embodied exchanges produce the orderliness of their activities locally (cf. McNamara 2019: 120–123). Since then, integrating phenomena of order of larger time-scale into the same frame of analysis or relate them to phenomena of interactional time has been of interest to researchers of so-

cial interaction in order to understand how more durable forms of order (specific forms of knowledge, categories of identity, institutional arrangements) emerge from and within encounters (cf. Spitzmüller, B. Busch, et al. 2021: 2; McNamara 2019: 119–120). In their conceptualisation of the ‘missing link’, authors mobilise metaphors and concepts of, for instance, *sedimentation* (Goodwin 2013), *chains* (Agha 2007: 69–72), *iterativity* (Georgakopoulou 2013) and *pathways* (Wortham & Reyes 2020: 67).

Institutional and *professional* (Sarangi & Roberts 1999b) as well as *moral order* (Heller 2007, see also Jayyusi 1984)³ are conceptual names for forms of social or discursive order (Sarangi & Roberts 1999b: 4) of higher scale. These concepts put the ordering of activities on different levels of scale and within different domains into focus. Scholars have shown how it is of particular analytical interest to look into how these different domains and scales of order intersect and interact with each other (Heller 2007; Sarangi & Candlin 2011; Sarangi & Roberts 1999b). The concept of *indexical order* (Silverstein 2003) shall provide a model connecting orders of higher scale – “macro-social frames of analysis” (Silverstein 2003: 193) – with interactional (micro-level) exchanges. The underlying concept of indexicality rests on the idea that signs acquire meaning by being construed in usage as pointing to certain contexts of appropriate use (Silverstein 2003: 195). This pointing-to allows the interpretation of certain behaviours as instantiation of specific norms of usage (for instance, as belonging to a specific register), as appropriate (or not) to specific contexts (for instance, an institutional setting with a set of ‘roles’⁴), as having a specific social value or prestige, as well as as meaningful commentaries on these contexts (for instance, as ironic or embracing performance). Indexical meaning is thus ordered in layers, rather than a top-

3 The concept traces back to the work on morality by sociologist E. Durkheim, see for instance Durkheim (2018 [1957]), cf. Beckert (2009: 69–74).

4 As a conceptual term, I am aware that *role* stands in a certain contradiction to the concept of positioning – indeed Davies & Harré (1990: 43) put forward the notion of positioning in a critique of the notion of ‘role’ which they retained static (many thanks to J. Spitzmüller for critically scrutinising my usage of the term). For the purpose of this thesis however, I use the term ‘role’ differently, namely as a hyperonym for emic categories of personhood or what Agha (2007: 249) calls *role designators* – lexical items or metapragmatic discourses about persons. These play a role in my materials for instance when metapragmatic categories of personhood are mobilised as resources in interaction (cf. Sarangi 2010) and when certain positionings are evaluated as *role conflict* or *role hybridity* in metapragmatic discourse (cf. C. Hall, Slembrouck, Haigh, et al. 2010; Sarangi 2011).

down manifestation of higher order on the scale of a single interaction (Silverstein 2003: 227). Indexical order, hence, is a sort of 'meta-' order which ties orders of different scale and scope – interaction order, institutional order, moral order – together in a *dialectic* (Silverstein 2003) process of meaning-making. Building on this concept, Blommaert (2005a, 2010) uses the term *orders of indexicality* to analyse differences in the value (for instance, what counts as 'good' or 'bad language', Blommaert 2010: 127) attached to 'the same' linguistic object in different locations in time and space. For instance, Blommaert (2005a: 78–83) uses the example of textual products which index the mastery of a prestigious linguistic resource in one location, and a language deficit in the other – aptly speaking about "texts that do not travel well" (Blommaert 2005a: 78).

The production of order (independently of the level of scale) produces boundaries, divisions and thresholds. In anthropology, the notion of *liminality* (V. Turner 2009 [1969]: 94–97, see also V. Turner 1977) has been used to describe such phenomena of the threshold. Initially, the concept was coined to describe rites of passage (for instance V. Turner 1967, 1969; Van Gennep 1909), that is ritual practices accompanying a number of individuals' passage from one social position into another (for instance rites effectuating coming of age, marriage, funeral etc.). The concept, however, has been widely extended (already by Turner himself) and applied to phenomena of various domains (space, time, subjectivity) and levels of scale (from the singular encounter to large-scale processes on a global, historical and societal level, cf. Thomassen 2015: 48–50), including, in sociolinguistics, interactional phenomena, categories of languages and actors, positions in time and space etc. (Baynham & Simpson 2010; Brumfit 2006; Rampton 1995, 1999). Liminality comes associated with an ambivalence in agency ascribed to those who undergo it: the transient loosening of social structure, differentiation and hierarchies – what V. Turner (2009 [1969]: 96–97) calls *communitas* – on the one hand and ritual control and segregation on the other (V. Turner 2009 [1969]: 94–97). When applied to practices of creativity and play, the loosening from structure is sometimes called *liminoid* after V. Turner (1974) to distinguish it from those instances where ritual *control* is more salient. In linguistics (as in other disciplines), the concept has been deployed to argue for a permeability of (still however perceivable) boundaries and creativity in playful practices (for instance in the work of Rampton 1995). In this thesis, I use the concept to point specifically

to an unpredetermined ambivalence of agency at the interstitials of emergent and contingent orders. The concept of liminality leads me back to the first analytical thread and to processes of differentiation, boundary-making and gatekeeping.

2.3 From differentiation to gatekeeping

Order and difference

Discursive order relies on difference, in a double sense: difference within, if we understand order to be a system of differences, and difference towards its outside, that is, that which lies outside the scope of a specific order or, more generally, which is *disorderly*: Foucault (1971) for instance distinguishes two sets of procedures regulating discourse – ‘internal procedures’ of discourse which produce order through classification and distribution/attribution (*procédures internes*, Foucault 1971: 23) and ‘procedures of exclusion’, among which he names the prohibition of speech, but also seclusion and rejection of discourse (*procédures d’exclusion*, Foucault 1971: 11)⁵. In a Foucauldian understanding, difference and order are thus both productive and reductive operations of power (cf. Foucault 1971: 12).

Studies in the field of multilingualism research (partly making use of the concept of liminality) have pointed to the creative and emancipative potential of ‘crossing’ (Rampton 1995, 2017) between orders, especially orders of language, and have developed various notions to highlight aspects and implications of such phenomena for the conception of ‘languages’ (which then should be understood rather as processual phenomena than as a priori bounded entities, cf. for instance Møller & Jørgensen 2009; Pennycook 2016). There have been, however, calls in the field not to forget the political salience and consequentiality of *language boundaries* (Rampton 2017; Rampton et al. 2019) – especially the popular notion of *translanguaging* (cf., among others Wei & García 2014) has attracted criticism under this premise (cf. Jaspers 2018). Other sociolinguistic work has indeed shown how ‘gaps’ between orders which confer meaning can have significant consequences for the speaking subject, for instance in asymmetrical institutional

5 In her work on gendered and sexed bodies, Butler (1993: 3) uses the term of the *object* to designate that which is excluded when becoming a subject in the binary order of sex.

settings (cf. Wodak 1996)⁶ and in contexts of global, social and/or geographical mobility (see Blommaert 2005a: 78–83), namely in terms of how subjects are able to make themselves understood and pursue their ends, make use of their rights etc.

Sociolinguistic differentiation

With the elaboration of a theory of semiotic differentiation, Gal & Irvine (2019) and Irvine & Gal (2000) lay a foundation for much critical sociolinguistic work as they provide a framework of analysis for semiotic processes which order perceivable phenomena in contrasts and link such contrasts across domains (and thus ideologically associating geographies, languages, peoples' bodies and psyche etc., cf. Gal & Irvine 2019: 112–122). Thus, Gal & Irvine (2019: 112–137) conceptualise difference as inherently comparative, that is as perspectival and as having an evaluative dimension which allows to project hierarchies and asymmetries. The term *fractal recursivity* (Gal & Irvine 2019: 127, see also Gal 2016a), specifically, points to cases where such linkages span across scalar levels, reproducing a contrast on different levels of social organisation. These linkages (for instance, between a geographical location and a way of speaking) can be construed and taken up in discourse in different ways, as more or less “fused” (Jaffe 2016: 87), or ‘natural’ relations of resemblance (*iconicity*) or mere cooccurrences (*indexicality*, Gal & Irvine 2019: 96–97).⁷ These processes play a role in the making and un-making of linguistic and social boundaries (cf. Gal & Irvine 1995), although Gal

6 Wodak (1996) indeed mobilises the metaphor of *disorder* in this context.

7 Gal & Irvine (2019) use a conceptual apparatus that goes back to C. S. Peirce to theorise such semiotic uptake. My brief overview is necessarily sketchy as the theoretical apparatus is much more complex than what can be fitted into this chapter. Is the relationship between a sign and an object construed as one of *resemblance*, that is, the sign ‘depicting’ the object, then the sign relation is called an *icon* (Gal & Irvine 2019: 96). Is the relationship understood as one of contiguity or cooccurrence, a ‘pointing-to’ then they speak of an *index* (Gal & Irvine 2019: 96–97). How a sign relation is construed depends on its contextualised uptake and is thus perspectival: “Cultural knowledge (as linguistic ideology), social positioning, and political project define which kind of sign relation is made salient” (Gal 2016b: 122). The corresponding processes of transformative uptake of signs, *rhematization* (uptake of a relationship of cooccurrence as one of resemblance) and *dicentization* (uptake of a relationship of resemblance as one of cooccurrence), function as ideological schemes in the positioning of subjects towards social categories (Jaffe 2016) and have potentially powerful consequences, as they provide the semiotic basis for further discursive processes of (de-)naturalisation and (de-)essentialisation (cf. Gal 2016b: 124).

(2016: 124, building on McIntosh 2005) notes that processes of essentialisation and naturalisation of associated contrasts rest on discursive formations of wider scale than single instances of uptake, and thus call for ethnographic investigation.

In the field of language and work, sociolinguistic studies have looked, for instance, into the correlation of social differentiation and unequal distribution of both forms of language and of labour (under the label of *the language division of labour*⁸, see Alarcón Alarcón 2021), the differentiation of the workforce within organisational workplaces (J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020), and into the construction of difference (and distinctive value, see Section 2.5) in global labour markets (Lorente 2018). Moreover, critical sociolinguistic studies in the field of migration have looked into the construction of difference and Otherness in processes of political domination, regimentation and exclusion (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Flubacher & Yeung 2016). These studies all show that social differentiation does not only produce and justify forms of social order, but also that it has hierarchising and exclusionary effects.

From boundaries to gatekeeping

Not only are relations of difference constitutive of order and meaning, but as these are part of practices, they have wider social effects, materialising in (moral, physical, etc.) boundaries (Lamont & Molnár 2002; Lehner 2022)⁹ of more or less abstract categories of, for instance, personhood, institutions, and political formations (prototypically the nation state). Moreover, the construction of difference is, in institutional contexts, often linked to processes of evaluation and selection – a process which has been described under the notion of *gatekeeping* (Erickson & Shultz 1982; Gumperz et al. 1979; Roberts 2013; Roberts et al. 1992; Tranekjær 2015). Gatekeeping links construed (and perspectival) difference – in other words *Otherness* (cf. Tranekjær 2015) – to the selective granting of access to resources (in the case of this study, housing and labour, but also workplace

8 The term *division of labour* relates to another thread of sociological research which will only marginally be touched upon in Chapter 6, going back to sociological notions of societal change as social (Simmel 1890) and functional differentiation (Luhmann 1977; Parsons 1961).

9 The conceptual differentiation between the notions of *border* and *boundary* has been the object of debate in the social sciences (for a detailed discussion see Lehner 2022: 16–28). In this thesis, I understand ‘boundary’ as the more general term for categorial and material divisions and delimitations (Lehner 2022: 25, drawing on, among others, Lamont & Molnár 2002).

infrastructure) in asymmetrically ordered institutional settings (Tranekjær 2015: 54). Tranekjær (2015: 54) proposes a more general understanding of the term as the production of asymmetries and hierarchies within workplaces. Based on this, gatekeeping can be understood as relational and material forms and effects of differentiation.

Gatekeeping in institutional contexts

In sociolinguistics, the study of gatekeeping is especially linked to contexts of migration, ethnicity and racialisation, often in work-related domains (cf. Erickson & Shultz 1982; Gumperz et al. 1979; Roberts 2013; Roberts et al. 1992). In the Austrian context, a strand of critical discourse analytic work (not necessarily making use of the term gatekeeping) has looked into how classed, migrantised, ethnicised and pathologised subjects are treated unequally in institutional contexts such as schools, hospitals and court (among others Krausneker & Larcher 2006; Menz 2013; Menz & Lalouschek 2005; Wodak 1996). These and other studies beyond the Austrian context often focus on or at least take departure from specific, institutionalised (frontstage) encounters and their consequences such as student counselling (Erickson & Shultz 1982), medical consultation (Menz 2013; Menz & Lalouschek 2005), job / internship interviews (Roberts 2013; Tranekjær 2015) and job counselling (Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018) or the bureaucratic apparatus of the state (Codó 2008). In these encounters, not only primary institutional agents – counsellors, administrative clerks, physicians etc. – have been described as gatekeepers, but also interpreters (Davidson 2000; Menz 2013; Wadensjö 1998). An important field of sociolinguistic research for this thesis is especially that which deals with state and para-state institutions (so-called *street-level bureaucrats*, Lipsky 2010 [1980]) managing migration and asylum. This is in particular research on the work of migrant- and refugee-support NGOs (Codó & Garrido 2010, 2014; Del Percio 2016, 2018a,b; Garrido & Codó 2017) as well as administrative bodies of the state (Codó 2008; Del Percio forthcoming), but also, relating to the wider context of asylum and displacement, research on, for instance, interpreting practices (Dabić 2021; Inghilleri 2005; Jacquemet 2011; Pöllabauer 2004; Rienzner 2011), language ideologies with regards to narrative practices (Blommaert 2009; Lehner 2018), and linguistic repertoires (Blommaert

2009; Dorn et al. 2014; Maryns 2017), as well as textual practices in the construction of credibility (Jacquemet 2009; Lehner 2018) in asylum procedures. Those working in these institutional settings, the street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 2010 [1980]), counsellors, social workers, trainers and interpreters etc., are often subject to ideological tensions and ethical dilemmas or doubts which come with the position of the gatekeeper (cf. Lipsky 2010 [1980]: 71–75; see also Bonduelle 2022). These tensions and dilemmas are manifest in discourses on professionalism, morality and reflection in the respective work domains which are addressed, with a focus on social work and interpreting, in the following section.

2.4 Professionalism, reflexivity and reflective practice

Professional discourse, professionalism and professionalisation

Within language studies, scholars have sought to empirically describe various dimensions of communicative practice (talk, writing) in professional contexts (cf. Bhatia 2002: 40; Kong 2014: 1–3). Some of the early efforts stem from a pre-occupation with providing for specialised second language teaching for certain occupations (Bhatia 2002: 48), under the label of *specialised discourse* or *specialised language* (cf. Bathia et al. 2011), or with a more general interest in making communication in professional practice more effective (Gunnarson, Linell, et al. 1997a: 4; Gunnarson 2009: 3–4). A critical strand of the field is concerned with questions of communicative barriers, hierarchies and control (for instance, Wodak 1996). The conceptions often resonate with an understanding of *professions* as institutionalised bodies which organise and control knowledge and practices in specific occupational fields, characteristic of static approaches in sociology of professions (Pfadenhauer & Sander 2010: 373–374). The understanding of professions as bounded entities – or ‘discourse communities’ (Swales 1990, building on Hymes 1972, see Kong 2014: 35–38) – has also been critically scrutinised within linguistics and the boundaries of the term ‘profession’ tend to be more fluid than, for instance, in sociological work (although in linguistics too, prototypical professional domains such as medicine, law and education are recurrent as research objects, see for instance the topics covered in Gunnarson, Linell, et al. 1997b). Both within linguistics (Kong 2014: 1) and sociology (Evetts 2003, cited

in Pfadenhauer & Sander 2010), it has been proposed to extend the notion of professionalism beyond the ‘traditional’ professions (medical doctors, lawyers etc.) to the emerging professions in the service industry where, however, the notion functions more as a mode of control ‘from above’ (rather than as the prototypically assumed self-control of established professions, cf. Evetts 2018: 45–46; see also the notion of ‘audit culture’, Strathern 2000, as cited in Heller 2005: 3). The role of communicative practice as sites where ‘professions’, the ‘professional’, and specific forms of knowledge are constructed and reproduced are seen as crucial and have been made the object of study in professional discourse (for instance Gunnarson, Linell, et al. 1997a; Sarangi & Candlin 2011; Sarangi & Roberts 1999b). *Professionalism*, thus, has also a performative dimension: in the words of sociologist M. Pfadenhauer (2003), we can understand professionalism as an ‘institutionalised competence to display competence’ (*institutionalisierte Kompetenzdarstellungskompetenz*), a mise-en-scène by actors. This notion highlights the dimensions of socialisation, practical achievement and ascription of professionalism (see also Pfadenhauer & Sander 2010).

At the heart of this thesis are two domains of professional discourse which are recurring objects of inquiry in social scientific research on professionalism: interpreting (e. g. Inghilleri 2005; Pöllabauer 2013; Tipton 2016; Valero-Garcés & Tipton 2017; Wadensjö 1998) and social work (e. g. C. Hall, Sarangi, et al. 1997, 1999; C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006; Lillis 2017; Petrenko 2017; Pick 2020a; Tipton 2016). Both occupational domains’ status as a profession has historically been contentious and is until today subject to as much scholarly as political debate which is articulated in the proliferation of scholarly work on processes of *professionalisation* (and *de-professionalisation*) of interpreting and social work practice, respectively. Professionalism is linked to specific forms of knowledge (and its ascription to actors and forms of practice by others) or expertise, that is, legitimate forms of knowledge of a certain domain which needs to be enacted in communicative form – Carr (2010: 20), drawing on Agha (2007) (among others), uses the term of *expert registers*. However, as Oevermann (1996: 70–71) notes, professionalism cannot be conflated with expertise as he insists that professionalism – as opposed to expertise – responds to specific practical problems (and hence, he argues, privileging expertise can drive processes of deprofessionalisation). A seminal linguistic-anthropological concept in this respect is that of *professional*

vision (Goodwin 1994) which connects questions of legitimate knowledge and performance thereof, as well as a dimension of professional socialisation, with a discourse-producing /-shaping dimension of professionalism. Professionalism is, following Goodwin (1994), not only an ascription of legitimacy to knowledge and to the person articulating such knowledge (or a claim to a legitimate position), but also a generative principle by which social reality is produced, transformed and manipulated – in other words the (re-)production of order, knowledge and ideology (cf. Heller 2007; Sarangi & Candlin 2011; Sarangi & Roberts 1999b; see also Kong 2014: 51).

Ethics have formed a central dimension of social scientific research on professions and professionalism (for instance Banks 2004; Garzone & Catenaccio 2022; Valero-Garcés & Tipton 2017), to the point that an ‘independent’ *professional ethics* has been posited as a defining property of the category of profession in itself (cf. Banks 2004: 19–20; see also Valero-Garcés 2017). Looking into the ethical dimension of interpreting and social work has thus been of scholarly and political concern for researchers of different disciplines (Garzone & Catenaccio 2022; C. Hall, Sarangi, et al. 1997; Valero-Garcés 2017). While some of these studies take written ‘codes of ethics’ and/or ethical stances in research interviews as their object (Garzone & Catenaccio 2022; Valero-Garcés 2017), other sociolinguistic studies have looked into ethical evaluation and decision-making, more specifically into the interactive negotiation and (co-)construction of *responsibility* in contexts of interpreting, social work practices and others (C. Hall, Sarangi, et al. 1997; C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006; Östman & Solin 2016; Pöllabauer 2004). With regards to professionalism, ethics are thus both an object of discourse by which boundaries among forms of (professional) practice are set and negotiated, and an interactive process (cf. also the concept of *ethical affordances*, Keane 2015: 30–32).

Debating professionalism

The increased arrival of refugees in Austria in the years from 2015 onwards led to an intensification of debates on professionalism and professionalisation in various occupational domains connected to Austria’s migration governance infrastructure: German language teaching, (legal) counselling and support. Both

the increase in untrained workforce as well as a lack in fair payment were critically commented upon by civil society actors, professional associations and in the press (Dengscherz et al. 2016; Hodoschek 2018; Kraml et al. 2015; SprachenRechte 2015, 2017; Stuhlpfarrer 2016; UNIVERSITAS Austria 2015, 2016). With the *Qualifizierungsmaßnahme für DolmetscherInnen im Asylverfahren* ('qualificatory measure for interpreters in asylum procedures', short *QUADA*), a training curriculum with a textbook for interpreters in asylum hearings (Bergunde & Pöllabauer 2015) was put in place at the Austrian adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*) as a measure for professionalisation of untrained interpreters which were – and are – a pervasive phenomenon in the Austrian context of asylum¹⁰. These discussions in which concerns for the quality of services offered and for the quality of labour conditions are entangled have a longer history. Especially social work and interpreting share a continuous effort to define themselves as professions (Tipton 2016: 465, with reference to Inghilleri 2005) and can thus be regarded – despite their differing histories – as parallel cases, so Tipton (2016: 465). Regarding interpreting, civil society actors such as the *Refugee Protest Camp Vienna* had articulated discontent with the quality and availability of critical interpreting services already in 2012 (RefugeeProtestVienna 2012) and Pöchlhammer (2000) locates professional lacunae in the field of community interpreting in Austria.

Professionalism in social work is the topic of a long lasting debate in the social sciences (and within social work studies). Since, apart from a few exceptions (for instance Tipton 2006, 2008, 2016), this debate is more developed in the field of social work than interpreting and since, for instance, translation scholar R. Tipton in her work (Tipton 2006, 2008, 2016) makes explicit reference to the social work literature, I will focus more on the strand of social work in the following. Academic publications on social work professionalism in the German-speaking context paint a picture of social work as a profession under pressure (see, for instance, Becker-Lenz, Busse, et al. 2015), having to re-affirm the *legitimacy* of its status as a profession over and over again. There is a bulk of literature covering

10 This course and the textbook were the result of a project by S. Pöllabauer and A. Bergunde with same acronym, different title, *Qualitätvolles Dolmetschen im Asylverfahren* ('high-quality interpreting in asylum procedures', QUADA) – funded by the *European Fund for Refugees* and the *Austrian ministry of domestic affairs* (BM.I), see [https://ucris.univie.ac.at/portal/en/publications/projekt-quada-entwicklung-eines-trainingsprogramms-fur-dolmetscherinnen-im-asylverfahren\(ada7fd7d-54af-4ce8-bfd8-cb77b91abc99\)/export.html](https://ucris.univie.ac.at/portal/en/publications/projekt-quada-entwicklung-eines-trainingsprogramms-fur-dolmetscherinnen-im-asylverfahren(ada7fd7d-54af-4ce8-bfd8-cb77b91abc99)/export.html) (last checked: Sept. 29, 2022).

diverse aspects of this problematic, with accounts referring to the history of its academic disciplines of reference (Austin 1983), its historical roots in charity and the vicinity to volunteer work (Tipton 2016: 465, drawing on Banks 2004: 36–37; Nadai et al. 2005: 67), its dependency on state welfare policies or its *double mandate* – a constitutive tension between its mandate to exert social control on behalf of the state and advocacy for its clients – (Böhnisch & Lösch 1973; Eppenstein 2010; Lutz 2011; Scherr 2015), and current pressures from policy-makers towards the marketisation, standardisation and taylorisation of social work which are analysed as resulting in a *de-professionalisation* of social work (Bakic et al. 2008; Dewe 2013; Oevermann 2000).

Reflective practitioners

Based on the work of Oevermann (1996, 2000) on *professionalisation*, authors argue that social work is ‘in need of professionalisation’ (*professionalisierungsbedürftig*), because its practice requires autonomous problem-solving and not mere application of scientifically generated knowledge, as it deals with a reality which is not standardisable and thus cannot be reduced to the application of expert knowledge produced elsewhere (e. g. Becker-Lenz & S. Müller 2009). Instead, social workers have to deal with uncertain situations without pre-established solutions or logics. A number of authors hence invest in the concept of the *reflective practitioner* (D’Cruz et al. 2007; Dewe 2013; Staub-Bernasconi 2013)¹¹. Developed by Schön (1983), this concept was developed as a critical response to theories of professionalism in which the professional legitimacy primarily hinges on academic expertise (in Schön’s words, *technical rationality*, 1983: 21). Instead, Schön (1983) proposes a model of *reflection-in-action* where knowledge is produced by practitioners themselves: “Clearly, then, when we reject the traditional view of professional knowledge, recognizing that practitioners may become reflective

11 There are, however, different theoretical groundings which nevertheless also invest in specific forms of reflexivity as conducive to an enhanced social work practice: Riemann (2004, 2009) invests in an ethnographic notion of reflexivity based on the *bestrangement* (drawing on the work of sociologist Schütze) one’s own practice through analytical procedures applied on self-reflexive writing (see also Reichmann 2022: 227–244). White (1997) proposes a practice based on *epistemic reflexivity* (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Ebert & Klüger (2015) base their work on van Manen (1977) who in turn draws on Habermas’ work and Freire’s *pedagogy of the oppressed* (Freire 1992; Habermas 1963).

researchers in situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and conflict, we have recast the relationship between research and practice” (Schön 1983: 308). Moreover, Schön (1983: 61) sees reflection as a tool to challenge established routines resulting from professional specialisation. Such “self-reinforcing systems of knowing in practice” (Schön 1983: 281) are regarded as limiting the critical and generative force of reflection. In order to be successful, reflective practice thus needs a reflexive element which not only focuses on the situation at hand but also on the “system of knowing-in-practice and to reflection-in-action itself” (Schön 1983: 282) – thus the underlying logics and practices in which the practitioner operates¹².

Based on the model of the reflective practitioner and paralleling its argument, so-called *evidence-based* approaches to social work professionalism are contrasted with *reflexive* approaches (Dewe 2013; Staub-Bernasconi 2013). But more than a mere academic notion, Dewe (2013) criticises so-called evidence-based approaches as a politically enforced model of social work professionalism in the context of neoliberal transformation processes of the (German) welfare state. As they derive the legitimacy of professional practice from its measurable efficiency and success, reducing the role of knowledge to the mere question of ‘successful’ application. While being conceptualised as measures for professionalisation, Dewe (2013) argues that instead, evidence-based approaches foster deprofessionalisation and economisation of social work. In his model of a *reflexive professionalism*, it is not the *application* of knowledge generated elsewhere in a detached academic sphere, but the capability to reflexively *interpret* a situation at hand by drawing on a broad foundation of knowledge (Dewe 2013: 107).

Numerous professional papers and books have been published both in English and German which describe reflexivity as a technique for social work practice and professional development (Bager-Charleson 2010; D’Cruz et al. 2007; Dewe 2013; Ebert 2008; Ebert & Klüger 2015; Miehl & Moffatt 2000; Morley 2012; Riemann 2004, 2009; Staub-Bernasconi 2013). Apart from questions of professional knowledge and practice, reflective practice has been described as being beneficial

12 This point of the theory has been repeatedly criticised with a focus on time, namely whether reflection in the course of action itself is at all possible or whether this means leaving the course of action – while what happens in the moment of action itself can only be the mobilisation of tacit knowledge (see Ixer 1999, drawing on Eraut 1995).

for practitioners' wellbeing in situations where they have to cope with moral tensions (Oliver 2013). Approaches under the label of *critical social work* argue to invest in reflexive procedures for a social work practice that works towards social change for more equitable societies (Ebert 2008; Ebert & Klüger 2015; Fook 2015; Morley 2012, 2014).

Professionalism and reflexivity

While criticism of the model of the reflective practitioner comes from different angles – see, e. g., Ixer (1999) who voices strong concerns about the implementation of the model in social work training –, I will focus on two theoretical angles relevant to this thesis: (1) From an ethnomethodological (e. g. Lynch 2000) and an interactional-linguistic (Bulcaen 2016; C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006) point of view, the heuristic potential of the notion of reflection (and the assumed contrast with 'evidence') has been called into question, and (2) the effects of an institutionalisation of reflective practice in professional training and at the workplace have been critically scrutinised from a governmentality perspective.

In ethnomethodology and in interactionist approaches in linguistics, the notion of reflexivity serves a different purpose: it describes a fundamental principle of the social (Garfinkel 1967: 7–9, see also Heritage 1984). This serves Lynch (2000) to critically examine notions of reflexivity and reflection which he argues are deceiving in that they promise epistemic superiority by presupposing an 'unreflexive' counterpart, while the specific effects of such practices depend on their specific contexts in which they are enacted and taken up (Lynch 2000: 47). Similarly, Bulcaen (2016: 145–147) argues that reflexivity in discursive practice is not innovative or transformative per se, but may serve different purposes. C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi (2006: 1–14) use this argument to insert their contribution into a political debate on social work professionalisation (in the Belgian context which has its parallels in the Germanophone debate): In this debate, so-called *evidence-based approaches* (Smith 2004) – privileging the application of methodically controlled scientific evidence in professional decision-making – are contrasted with *reflective approaches* (cf. D'Cruz et al. 2007; Dewe 2013) – emphasising more the reflexive calibration of knowledge, the need to deal with difference in the client–social worker relationship and the uniqueness of contexts

of decision-making (cf. Dewe 2013: 107). In the German-speaking literature on social work professionalism, evidence-based approaches have been associated with the political attempts to standardise and economise social work (Dewe 2013, see also Bakic et al. 2008 for the Austrian context). In this contentious debate, C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi (2006) argue for a turn towards (linguistic, ordinary) *reflexivity*: reiterating the ethnomethodological critique (Lynch 2000; C. Taylor & White 2000), they describe their aim as to describe social workers' professional practices as *mundane activities* which inevitably form the context of both gathering evidence and doing reflection as part of everyday social work practice (C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006: 10, 167).

A different form of criticism comes from a Foucauldian perspective of governmentality (Ball 2010; Cushion 2018; Dierckx 2016; Fejes 2008, 2011; Gilbert 2001; Hajar et al. 2020; Perryman et al. 2017; Ross 2011). These studies critically examine the power dynamics enacted in institutionalised reflective practice in the context of professional training and practice as forms of disciplining subjects through practices of confession, surveillance and control. These criticisms, both the ethnomethodologically grounded one and the Foucauldian, however, are similar to the approaches they criticise in the sense that by proposing a cultural model of reflexivity, they make certain claims about what reflexivity does (and what it does not).

Both criticisms provide an important base for my understanding of the phenomenon in this thesis as they put a question mark behind celebratory notions of reflective practice. Thereby, they open a way to an ethnographic investigation of situated practices of reflexivity and their ideological and material, historical embeddedness. An investigation of reflective practice in its sociomaterial contexts does not have too many precedents (for instance, Del Percio 2022, on practices of reflexivity in job counselling and Pérez-Milans & Soto 2016, in youth political activism)¹³, and none in the field of refugee support work. One difficulty is, however, that the term is invested with a wide range of conceptual understandings which – at least at a first glance – seem incommensurate or contradictory.

13 However, as noted by Del Percio (2022), such an approach to reflexivity can build on existing scholarly work on affective/emotional work (referring to Carr 2011; Flubacher 2020b; Hochschild 1983; Lorente 2018; Tebaldi forthcoming[a],[b]).

The many notions of reflexivity

Reflexivity is a difficult term in itself. This is because it is claimed – as related terms and concepts – by many traditions of thought (Archer 2010: 3–4). In a rather basic understanding, it describes a quality, figure or *Gestalt* of something ‘bending back’ onto itself (see, for instance Archer 2010: 2). Often, contrasting pairs – reflexive and reflective – are used by authors mark conceptual differences imbued with social evaluation (for a critique, see Lynch 2000). These definitions, for instance in Fabian (1983: 90) and Archer (2010: 2), revolve around questions of agentivity and/or intentionality, that is, on whether the process denoted is thought to trace back to a willing subject. In both conceptions, *reflexivity* as a notion involving a subject, not only as the agent of the practice but also as its target, is contrasted with reflection which is thought of as more mechanistic.

A few attempts to put order into the scholarly discourse exist, coming from different theoretical and disciplinary angles, such as critical discourse studies (Zienkowski 2017), linguistic ethnography (Pérez-Milans 2016), ethnomethodology (Lynch 2000), and social work theory and practice (D’Cruz et al. 2007; Fook et al. 2006). Building on Zienkowski (2017)¹⁴, I want to distinguish four concepts of reflexivity based on the values and effects they ascribe to this quality: (1) *semiotic*, (2) *critical* or *professional*, (3) *time-diagnostic* and (4) *governmental* notions of reflexivity.

Under the term of *semiotic reflexivity*, I subsume those notions of reflexivity which describe it as a universal principle of the social, language or semiosis. This is mostly coherent with the first category in Zienkowski (2017) who traces this notion back to early pragmatist philosophy and symbolic interactionism. Emblematic of this strand are, for instance, the notions of *interaction* and *performance* in Goffman (1990 [1959]), *accounting* in Garfinkel (1967) and *metapragmatics* (Silverstein 1993). Some of the concepts privilege more the actor as an agent of reflexive processes while others, such as metapragmatics, invest more in a systemic notion of reflexivity: Consider, for instance how Agha defines *reflexive*

14 He differentiates “(1) reflexivity as a general feature of interaction and subjectivity; (2) reflexivity as a methodological praxis in the social sciences; (3) reflexivity as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems; and (4) extended reflexivity as a key feature of late modernity” (Zienkowski 2017: 3).

activities as “activities in which communicative signs are used to typify other perceivable signs” (Agha 2007: 16).

With the label *professional* or *critical reflexivity*, I want to designate those notions which conceptualise reflexivity as a specific *method*. This notion is a *professional* one in the sense that engaging in it presupposes that one accepts that there are right (legitimate, efficient, good) and rather wrong (illegitimate, useless, bad) ways of doing reflexivity and that one has to acquire the appropriate ‘method’ or certain competences of (doing) being reflexive. The notion is *critical* in the sense that its aims lie in making a difference for the (supposedly) better. Examples are the aforementioned *reflection-in-action* (Schön 1983) and also all sorts of reflexive research methodologies, such as the Bourdieusian *participant objectivation* (Bourdieu 2003) and *reflexive sociology* (Bourdieu 2004a,b; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). The specific value of these concepts is ascribed to the fact that the subject systematically explores the conditions and / or logics of its own contributions to practice. For instance, participant objectivation is defined as “the *objectivation of the subject of objectivation*, of the analysing subject” (Bourdieu 2003: 282, *emph. i. orig.*) – projecting a research practice which systematically analyses its own conditions of knowledge production as elaborated in Bourdieu (2004a). In contrast to the categorisation scheme proposed by Zienkowski (2017: 6–7) I do not want to limit this category to scholarly practices, as conceptual sources, motives, and methods cannot be exclusively claimed by social science (as it is well-illustrated by discourses on reflexivity in social work and social work research, cf. D’Cruz et al. 2007; White 1997).

What I label here as a *time diagnostic notion of reflexivity* refers to a strand of sociological literature going back to Beck’s *risk society* (Beck 1986) and the concept of *reflexive modernisation* (Beck et al. 1994). The concept also gained attention in language and discourse studies (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). It conceives of reflexivity as a specific historical (or time-diagnostic) phenomenon: The confrontation of modern societies with the ecological, social and political risks produced by their own industrial development, catalysing profound transformations of these societies. As a consequence, individuals experience the disembedding from traditional (pre-)industrial social order – self-reflection thus also becomes an affordance to the subject of a *post-traditional* modernity (see also Archer 2012).

The last on this list, *governmental reflexivity*, subsumes an ensemble of theoretical

concepts which are usually not primarily circulated under the label of 'reflexivity'. It corresponds largely to the third category proposed by Zienkowski (2017), of *reflexivity as a property of discursive and non-discursive systems*. It comprises post-structuralist accounts of subject formation and government, with the foundational work of Foucault (1982, 1997a,b) and Butler (1993, 1997a,b). With the notion of *governmentality*, Foucault (1997b) looks at the conjunction of "technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals [...] [and] technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1997b: 225). Similarly, Butler (1997b: 3) looks at how subjects are constituted by submitting to, and internalising or embodying power. Rather than being an actor engaging in reflexive action, the subject is conceived as constituted by a reflexive operation of discourse and power. Drawing on Laclau & Mouffe (1985), Zienkowski (2017: 3) adds that such reflexive operations of subject formation only allow for partial fixations of meaning which necessarily produce a constitutive outside. Or in Butlerian terms, drawing boundaries between intelligible and unintelligible subjects which, by definition, troubles the norms of intelligibility whose validity depends on the existence of what they negate (Butler 1997a: 133). Reflexive operations are thus productive, partial fixations of meaning by which power is exerted.

With all their incongruences and differences, these notions of reflexivity have one thing in common – a basic figure or *Gestalt* of 'bending back' (see Archer 2010: 2). However, *what* or *who* bends back on *what* or *whom*, the domain, the level of abstraction, the supposed logics and imputed effects differ among the various approaches. For instance, in some of the concepts, reflexivity is rather a feature of a system than something which actors do – with metapragmatics (Agha 2007) and reflection-in-action (Schön 1983) as contrasting examples. However, this contrast does not clearly separate what I have called here *semiotic reflexivity* from *professional* or *critical reflexivity* – the notions of interaction, performance (Goffman 1990 [1959]) and *accounting* (Garfinkel 1967) do foreground the actor more than Agha (2007) does in the cited definition. A related difference concerns the 'location' of the subject with respect to reflexivity, where governmental approaches differ in

that they conceive of the subject as a product rather than as an active agent of reflexive operations. Most pointedly formulated by Butler: “This figure [of turning back upon oneself, Butler 1997b: 3] operates as part of the explanation of how a subject is produced, and so there is no subject, strictly speaking, who makes this turn” (Butler 1997b: 3). *Professional* or *critical reflexivity* and *post-traditional reflexivity* designate very specific, delineated phenomena, while *semiotic reflexivity* is, in ethnomethodological diction, understood as a mundane, “uninteresting” (Garfinkel 1967: 7) property of social or semiotic organisation. Finally, they differ with regards to their respective emphasis within a field of tension between transformation and reproduction, i. e. whether they conceptualise reflexivity as a motor of change or fixation. This tension is fractally reiterated within the logics of the respective concepts themselves¹⁵. Consider for instance the model of the reflective practitioner: Primarily it is a concept which promises change, where reflection-in-action is intended to serve to break with routine contexts and practices. But Schön (1983: 281) does acknowledge that reflexive engagement with one’s own practices can do the exact opposite and reinforce existing logics. A somewhat opposite logic applies to reflexivity in metapragmatics: Here, reflexivity is a mechanism which ties signs to contexts and thereby re-actualises construals of such contexts (Silverstein 2003), but in the same mechanism lies the possibility to break with context via uptake and recontextualisation, and to reconfigure sign relationships (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 72–78; Gal & Irvine 2019: 138). From a metapragmatic perspective, there are, moreover, different degrees of explicitness of reflexivity to be taken into account (cf. Verschueren 2004: 56–57) – with explicit forms functioning as reflexive commentaries on practice and thus allowing for agentive and transformative appropriations of reflexivity (but also for fixation).

In this thesis, I conceive of this tension between reproduction and transformation not so much as a theoretical problem, but more of a productive tension. Similar to Del Percio (2022) who looks into the mobilisation of reflexivity as a form of practice in labour market counselling, this ethnography of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* sheds light on ambivalent effects of counsellors’ reflexive stances. I complement these explorations of reflective practice and reflexive stances towards

¹⁵ Thanks to Jürgen Spitzmüller for first pointing this out in a discussion of an earlier draft of this argument.

these practices with a more micro-analytic look into reflective practices and trajectories of moral decision-making across encounters (see for instance C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006). This processual view, I contend, opens a view onto the dynamics and tensions of transformative and reproductive effects in practice.

Speaking subjects in counselling and social work

The strands of research explored so far in this section have been more concerned with social workers' professional selves than with a conceptualisation of them as speaking subjects. In this vein, scholars have worked on the negotiation of tensions in the institutional encounter of counselling (understandings of aspirations and normalcy, support and control etc.), and the construction of professional roles, boundaries and the client Other from a professional discourse (see for instance C. Hall, Juhila, et al. 2003; C. Hall, Sarangi, et al. 1997, 1999; C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006; Lillis 2017; Petrenko 2017; Pick 2020a,b). In my study, however, I intend to connect this perspective, with its attention to interactional and textual processing, to a sociolinguistic perspective which directs the focus on multilingual repertoires and practices as well as notions of speakerhood in the work context. In this field, there are a few critical ethnographic studies on the institutional treatment and management of linguistic diversity and communicative repertoires in counselling services for migrants (Codó & Garrido 2010, 2014; Del Percio 2018a,b; Garrido & Codó 2017; Sabaté-Dalmau et al. 2017) as well as on circulating notions of 'intercultural communication' (Del Percio 2016), both in the European context (Catalonia, Spain and Italy). Although the tendency in these studies is to focus more on the people processed by these encounters, the 'clients', some of these works also include observations on counsellors as speaking subjects – for instance, Codó & Garrido (2010: 307–310) analyse how multilingualism is imagined among workers in a state legislation office and a migrant support organisation, namely as rather exceptional and 'tokenistic', and Del Percio (2018a) dissects the ways in which counsellors imagine the effectiveness of their interventions on their clients' communicative repertoires (see also Brüning et al. 2019 for a recent study on needs and barriers in student and job counselling in Austria and Germany from a counsellors' perspectives). A focus on the counsellor as a speaking subject, however, is rare – with the notable exception of Harrison

(2007b, 2009) who discusses the ambivalent value ascriptions to biographical linguistic selves – as linguistic capital and as a site of difference – for minority speakers in social work in Australia (see also Harrison 2006, 2007a; Harrison & R. Turner 2011). Being based on interviews with bilingual practitioners in various social work domains (Harrison 2007b: 75–76; Harrison 2009: 1085–1087), the study allows insights into the workers' construction of their linguistic selves, but it does not contain ethnographic details on institutional structures and practices in specific contexts of work. My thesis thus fills a gap in the (socio-)linguistic literature on counselling and social work practice as it connects the existing threads of ethnographic and interactionist scholarship on professional and linguistic selves with a distinct focus on the position of counsellor as a speaking subject and languaged worker. This notion requires a further mapping of the concepts of *value*, *labour* and *political economy* central to the critical ethnographic approaches cited above.

2.5 Value, labour and political economy

Language and political economy

Historically, the syntagm *language and political economy* marks a position within linguistic-anthropological theorising which was prominently articulated by Gal (1989) and Irvine (1989) arguing against the separation of the study of the 'linguistic' from domains of the 'political' and the 'economic' (Gal 2016c: 331–332; Del Percio 2021: 1017). Their work traces and highlights the politically conceived, economic and material dimensions of linguistic phenomena and semiotic processes, that is, their involvement with the (re-)production of value in material resources and in exchange practices, as well as ways in which linguistic phenomena acquire themselves economic value (Irvine 1989). Parallel arguments, namely to situate sociolinguistic phenomena with respect to the political and the economic have been made by Coulmas (1992) and Gee et al. (1996). Contemporary approaches to political economy in language studies (Block 2018; Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017; Heller & Duchêne 2016) refer back to these seminal texts, as well as other seminal sociolinguistic and linguistic-anthropological studies connecting linguistic phenomena to phenomena of social value, inequality and class (Bernstein 2003

[1971]; Hymes 1974; Labov 1972a, 2006 [1966]) and Bourdieu's engagement with language and linguistics with the much-received notions of the *linguistic market* (see also Kelly-Holmes 2016) and (linguistic) *capital* (Bourdieu 1977, 1997).

Block (2018: 27) insists more on 'classical' political economy as a conceptual source for language studies, arguing for a reception of, among others, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx as well as later developments in the field. Indeed in the term *political economy*, a series of early works are referenced of the emerging field of (political) economy and its critique (cf. Tribe 2001). Especially the Marxist conceptual ideas have also influenced the work of Boutet (2008) who proposes to conceptualise 'language' and 'work' as co-constitutive and co-dependent, fundamental phenomena in social life (see also Rossi-Landi 1975). Similarly, Irvine (1989: 262–263) proposes to see material and semiotic value as co-dependent (see also Coulmas 1992: 1–22), pointing to anthropological findings on the symbolic dimension of exchange systems. These are more than 'homologies' (Block 2018: 5 on Coulmas 1992) between the linguistic and the economic, but, in the words of Irvine (1989: 262), propose "a more comprehensive conception of 'value,' so that the various kinds of sign-values and material values can be seen in their complex integration". While Block (2018: 1–30) argues for linguists to privilege more (political-)economic theory, other authors argue for an understanding of linguistic phenomena as historically and materially situated (cf. Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 57), but also of linguistic theory as a theoretical repository for critique of economy (cf. Comer 2019: 316 on Block 2018). Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. (2017: 57) criticise 'classical' Marxist understandings of political economy in that they treat language as epi-phenomenal of economic processes. Instead they "contend that language and political economy are intrinsically interconnected and interdependent [...] argu[ing] for a processual understanding of political economy: a historically situated, dynamic, and contradictory activity that is discursively enacted and organized by institutions and actors through the mobilization of forms of knowledge, thus justifying and legitimating these activities and their consequences on the roles and functions of languages and speakers" (Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 57). In this vein, language and political economy designates an approach to the study of linguistic phenomena where they become a terrain in which "access to the valuation as well as to the production, distribution, and consumption of

symbolic and material resources” (Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 55) is regulated and/or negotiated, and they propose to do so through a focus on “material and historical conditions” of inequality and difference (Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 55). Specific interest lies on the consequences for individual speakers – who is able to profit and who is not under given market conditions (see also Heller & Duchêne 2016: 153) – that is, the ways in which individuals are affected by and themselves ‘navigate’ (that is, appropriate, muddle through, cope with) the specific conditions of social difference, inequality, in- and exclusion they find themselves in (cf. also Del Percio 2021; Lorente 2018; Tsing 2015). This focus resonates with the understanding of economy in Narotzky & Besnier (2014: 4–5) as *social reproduction*, and as an inquiry into the ways in which people ‘make a living’.

Valorising language

Value is a crucial term both of (political-)economic and linguistic theory since structuralism despite critical conceptual tensions between the prototypical notions of commodity value and functional value (Coulmas 1992: 5–11). The anthropological study of *commodities*, things acquiring – and losing – value under specific socio-historical circumstances (cf. Appadurai 1986), builds a conceptual bridge as it situates commodity value in social practices of exchange and socio-historical contexts. Accordingly, in a political-economic approach to sociolinguistics, value ascribed to linguistic ‘resources’ (linguistic phenomena which become resources qua ascription of value) is thus understood as situated and caught in historically dynamic processes (cf. Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017). Agha (2011: 25) critically comments on an understanding of commodity value as a mere result of exchange processes, advancing the argument that the concepts of *use value* and *exchange value* from classical economic theorists A. Smith and K. Marx are not adequate to the complex, mediated and indexically laminated ways in which values – *commodity formulations* – circulate. However, the Marxist understanding of value as ‘congealed labour’ (Block 2018: 14), while it does not determine ‘value’ per se as critically remarked by Agha (2011: 51), allows to formulate a critique of forms of work as exploited labour (cf. Del Percio 2021: 1022–1023) – that is, a configuration in which work does yield no or less returns to the labouring

subject (exchange value), but allows the employer to accumulate value as capital, the so-called *surplus value* (Karlsson & Månson 2017: 111). Thus, while Agha (2011) criticises an exclusive focus on moments of exchange when looking into processes of valuation and their meaning in social life, it is certainly helpful when advancing a critique of conditions of value (re-)production (cf. Del Percio 2021: 1023). Such a notion of value which is focused on processes of exchange or *conversion* analytically rests on the reception of Bourdieu's *forms of capital*, by which he argues for a broader notion of the economic, namely beyond exchanges which directly involve monetary values (Bourdieu 1986: 280–281). The concept of capital value is here, on the one hand, understood as the materialisation of labour – as “accumulated labor” (Bourdieu 1986: 280), and on the other hand, as a function of its convertibility into other forms of capital; a process which, as Bourdieu himself observes, transcends the specific moment of exchange, as it potentially involves longer time frames of, for instance, investment in social relationships (Bourdieu 1986: 287–288). The discrepancy between the two, the cost or loss in conversion, is consequential for subjects. A range of sociolinguistic studies have fruitfully incorporated such broader dimensions of value drawing more or less explicitly on the Bourdieusian notion of capital, for instance, for access to the labour market (see for example Del Percio 2018a; Flubacher 2020a; Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018; Lønsmann 2020; Roberts 2013; Van Hoof et al. 2020) and social (up- and downward) and/or geographical mobility (as for instance Highet preprint; Highet & Del Percio 2021; Kraft 2019; Lo & Choi 2017; Lorente 2018; Martín Rojo 2013; Park 2011; Park & Wee 2012; Pujolar 2007; Tabiola & Lorente 2017).

In this vein, scholars have been looking into ways in which linguistic phenomena – practices, artifacts, and embodied repertoires – become commodities exchangeable for money, that is, they become commodified (Heller 2010b; Petrovic & Yazan 2021). The study of the commodification of language which often bears a strong time-diagnostic argument structure (‘late capitalism’, ‘new economy’ being central notions, cf., for instance, Duchêne & Heller 2012; Heller 2003) comprises contexts in which such linguistic phenomena become commodities themselves, such as when linguistic repertoires as labour power in (multilingual) call-centres (for instance Boutet 2012; Cameron 2000; Flubacher 2012), or add value to such products (*added value* as in multilingual, communicative or

affective repertoires as soft skills, cf. Urciuoli 2008) which can also serve as a precondition to the commodifiability of objects in saturated markets (cf. Heller 2010b: 102–103), and of labour power, as argued, for instance, in the context of incorporation of migrants into the national labour market by Del Percio (2018a). An overarching diagnosis advanced by scholars in the field is that increasingly linguistic phenomena have been discovered as sources of value production and have been regimented in ways which show continuity to the *Taylorist* regimentation of manual labour (Boutet 2012; Cameron 2000; Duchêne 2011; Heller 2010a). Studies of neoliberalism and language (Martín Rojo & Del Percio 2019a) have pointed furthermore to a shift from material to communicative conceptions of service in the context of welfare (see for instance Del Percio 2016).

Language and labour

Del Percio (2021) segments critical scholarly work in sociolinguistics/linguistic anthropology on language and labour in three clusters, which he names (1) *dominated labour*, studies of gendered communicative patterns and workplace hierarchies (referencing Cameron 2000; Holmes 1995; Lakoff 1975; Tannen 1994), (2) *discriminated labour*, studies of the communicative reproduction of racialised differences and discrimination (under the paradigm of ‘intercultural communication’ as well as its later critics, Gumperz et al. 1979; Roberts et al. 1992; Sarangi 1994) and (3) *exploited labour*, studies of linguistic or communicative repertoires which function as resources of work (referring to Boutet 2012; Heller & Duchêne 2016). The three segments are not independent from one another, and in my own ethnographic account, they tend to be interconnected – see for instance, the dimensions of exploitation of the human vocal apparatus and speech in historically feminised workplaces of *les dames du téléphone* (‘telephone ladies’) and in off-shored call-centre work in (post-)colonial present-day times, all of which figure in the archive gathered by Boutet (2012) of the ‘language part of work’ (*la part langagière du travail*, a notion which draws on a Marxist tradition in French sociolinguistics, notably Cohen 1956).

Whereas initially, ethnographic research on linguistic repertoires as resources of labour or *language work* tended to focus on call centres as emblematic cases of exploited speakerhood, the perspective has in the meantime greatly broadened

its scope, comprising apart from further studies in the service sector, studies in the agricultural and the industrial sectors too; for instance (and the citing is necessarily selective), in globalised care work (e. g. Gonçalves & Schluter 2020; Lorente 2018), non-profit organisations (Codó & Garrido 2014; Del Percio 2018b), the building industry (Kraft 2020), private business (Barakos 2016), interpreting in different institutional contexts (Duchêne 2011; Muth 2018), language teaching (Highet & Del Percio 2021) and organic farming (Cavanaugh 2016). Duchêne (2011) and Heller & Duchêne (2016: 152–153) describe how even in such work settings where linguistic labour is part of everyday work practices and institutional agendas, it is not always recognised and valued in a way that workers profit from ‘their’ resources. As demonstrated in studies by a number of other researchers in the field of language and work, linguistic labour assumes a both central and marginal position in different work places (see Duchêne 2019): language work is not only a partly mechanised, partly artful performance, but it also crucially enables other people’s work, while often remaining invisible. This ambivalence in agency is also captured by a different concept, the post-colonial notion of the *linguistic* or *cultural broker* (de Jong 2015, 2016; Lewis & Mosse 2005; Szasz 2001). This concept enables a historicised critique of racialised difference and inequality, specifically in the field of linguistic or ‘cultural’ mediation, while maintaining a (however constrained) agency in view (for an analysis in the context of migrant ‘integration’, see for instance de Jong 2015, 2016). Moreover, it is the ambivalence in the concept of language work which has triggered a controversial and productive discussion on privilege and exploitation in range of high-profile language- and communication-related professions gathered in an edited volume by Thurlow (2019b), such as public relations (Jacobs 2019), voice-dubbing (Thurlow 2019a) etc. (including a critical commentary by Duchêne 2019 which was mentioned above).

In his overview of the field of language and labour, Del Percio (2021: 1023–1024) finally proposes for future research in the field¹⁶ to explore the boundaries of the concept of what counts as ‘work’. This brings – though not only – exploitation of unpaid work back to the conversation; and with it issues of gendered and

16 Moreover, as future directions, he mentions two more dimensions, which are the study of the ways in which subjects ‘navigate’ their futures, and a reflexive engagement with questions of research as activism or intervention in the field (Del Percio 2021: 1023–1024).

global inequalities which were first raised by feminist critics of Marxist thought (Beer 1984; Federici 2004), and which might include, apart from family divisions of language work (Ahamer 2013), other still marginal areas of study, such as of care work (Gonçalves & Schluter 2020; Lorente 2018) and volunteering (Allan 2019; Dlaske 2016; Garrido & Codó 2017; Schedel 2022). My thesis joins this conversation as it centres questions of how the workforce at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is differentiated in relation to metapragmatic notions of language and communication, where boundaries are being drawn between language work and non-work linguistic practice, and to which effects. The chapter to follow proposes a range of reflections on ethnographic fieldwork as epistemology and methodology employed in this study and as to the site as well as the development of the underlying research project in question.

3 Methodological considerations: Ethnography as an epistemology of contact

3.1 Methodological reflexivity and professional vision in ethnography

Ethnography refers both to an epistemological grounding and a methodological frame for doing empirical, qualitative research (Blommaert 2005b; Bourdieu 2004b; Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 8–9)¹. As an epistemology, it stands for a way of conceptualising ‘knowledge’ and its relationship to the world ‘out there’ (Heller 2008: 249–250; Phakiti & Paltridge 2015: 16, 18–19). How this relationship is conceptualised, of course, has consequences on how knowledge production can be approached methodologically – that is, how fieldwork techniques and analytical methods are organised and mobilised for knowledge production (Heller 2008: 249–250; Phakiti & Paltridge 2015: 16, 19–20).

An important premise which discerns ethnography – together with other non-rationalist, ‘subjectivist’ (Phakiti & Paltridge 2015: 18), ‘conjectural’ and ‘evidential’ paradigms in (Western) empiricism (Blommaert & Jie 2010: 13–14, referring to Ginzburg 1992 [1989]) – from rationalist, ‘objectivist’ approaches

1 In some narrower forms of usage, the term is taken to refer to a specific set of methods, most importantly to participant observation (for a differentiation between different understandings of ethnography see Street 2010: 202–205, building on Green & Bloome 2005: 183). Moreover, an ethnographic approach does not per se preclude the use of quantitative data and methods – see for instance Bourdieu’s critical remark on the opposition between quantitative and qualitative in Bourdieu (1999 [1993]: 608); as well as Bourdieu (2004b: 436) on his ethnographic work in Béarn where statistical as well visual data served the “scientific objectivation of the subject of objectivation” (Bourdieu 2004b: 437); or, for a recent example of sociolinguistics research, see, for example, Lorente (2018) who makes extensive use of survey data for her ethnography.

(Phakiti & Paltridge 2015: 18) is that it is understood as based on the subject's participation in and experience of the world (Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 9–10, 30–31; see also J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020: 158). Ethnography in particular is often described as a theory-generating methodology, in the sense that analytical procedures are organised to derive theories from the empirical (by *induction*, 'following the data', Blommaert & Jie 2010: 12) or to recursively re-adjust theoretical framings with respect to the empirical (by *abduction*, Agar 1996: 30–37; see also Reichertz 2013 on the original concept by C. S. Peirce)².

Another central building block of ethnographic approaches to empirical research is methodological reflexivity (see, for instance, Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 14–19; Pfadenhauer 2017: 13; Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 10; see also Section 2.4). This builds on the understanding that the subject of any form of knowledge production is always already positioned in the social world (Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 9–10, 30–31; see also J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020: 158). From such a perspective, thus, knowledge too is seen as *situated* (as also emphasised in feminist critique of science, see for instance Haraway 1988).³ In other words, this means that academic knowledge rests on constructions of order in the notorious 'messiness' of social life according to logics which are situated and perspectival, logics which are themselves historically constituted in academic discourse (cf. the historicising notions of *paradigms*, Kuhn 1996: 10–11; and *episteme*, Foucault 1966: 13–14). Put briefly, methodological reflexivity means to treat the researcher's subjectivity and the practices aimed at obtaining data themselves as objects of research (Devereux 2014 [1967]: XIX). This can mean to – reflexively – subject the researcher's positionality, perspective and affective stance, as well as the research instrument and research process to an analysis (see Bourdieu 2004a; Clifford 1986; Devereux 2014 [1967]; J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020). The underlying understanding is that research on social practice is a social practice in itself (Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 10). Bourdieu's (2004: 85–88) work on reflexivity emphasises furthermore the political-economic, institutional and dis-

2 These principles and techniques are shared with approaches to *Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss 1967, see Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 166–168).

3 In semiotic terms, this is not trivial, as though speech presupposes and entails (*indexes*) a speaking subject (Duranti 2006: 455), such speakerhood is analytically complex and laminated (see for instance Goffman 1979; Goodwin 2013; Irvine 1996), and not least, product of processes of erasure and exclusion (Clifford 1986: 6–7).

ciplinary conditions of knowledge production, hence he argues to subject the researcher's academic socialisation to a sociological self-analysis to contextualise (in Bourdieu's terms: to *objectivate*) their analytical gaze.

In this chapter, I want to contextualise the empirical research underlying this thesis in the *professional* practice of doing ethnography (to borrow from Agar 1996) with the double aim to lay out the epistemological premises and methodological framework for the thesis, and to carry out a reflexive analysis which situates my study of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. More precisely, in this chapter, I reflect on how, as an ethnographer, I have been processing *contact* (Slembrouck 2005: 628; Fabian 2001: 23–26) along the research process by means of what Goodwin (1994) calls *professional vision* (see also Blommaert 2004: 9–12). Thereby I turn the notion of 'the professional' – which I apply to the context studied, that is to the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* – reflexively on myself and the process of ethnographic knowledge production in order to, in Bourdieu's terms, "objectiviz[e] the subjective relation to the object" (Bourdieu 2003: 282). The professional as a lens allows me to reflexively address not only the phenomenon of contact in the research encounter, but also the conceptual axes along which I have been (consciously or unconsciously) processing the encounter – namely *distance* and *intimacy*, *scale* and *liminality* – in relation to authority, legitimacy and power in knowledge production. Apart from anthropological and sociolinguistic approaches, I also draw on a range of sociological work on ethnographic methodology because of its specific concern with ethnography as a professional practice.

In the remainder of the current section, I introduce the conceptual argument. The sections which follow guide through the different stages of my fieldwork with a special attention to the evolving relationship between me and other participants at the site: reflections, events and moments of contact that led to my engagement with the research site and topic (Section 3.2), the moments of initial contact or of 'entering the field', and the evolving field relations during my participation at the site (Section 3.3). In the section thereafter, I sketch the research problems and their evolvement along the research process (Section 3.4). I conclude with an overview of the ways the data was collected, organised and prepared for analysis (Section 3.5).

Professional vision

Slembrouck (2005) describes ethnography as “an epistemology of contact. This means that knowledge is seen as rooted in, and as progressively shaped in the course of, communicative contact with researched worlds sustained over a longer period of time” (Slembrouck 2005: 628; cf. also Fabian 2001: 23–26). This means that presence in and communicative exchange with the research site is a constitutive moment of ethnography (cf. Fabian 2001: 23). Consequentially, there is no ‘data’ which does not bear traces from the situation of contact in which it had been gathered (Slembrouck 2005: 628; see also Devereux 2014 [1967]: XIX, who makes this point with regards to psycho-analytical research). Ethnographic approaches differ from approaches to fieldwork where the researcher’s presence is seen as an impediment to obtaining empirical data (such as condensed in discussions on the ‘observer’s paradox’ in sociolinguistics, dating back to Labov 1972b), as they embrace the researcher’s presence as their critical instrument (cf. Hitzler & Eisewicht 2016: 127; see also De Fina & Perrino 2011).

Different strands of ethnography converge around the idea that the researcher qua experiencing subject is themselves their primary research instrument. Yet, this basic tenet has been spelt out methodologically in diverse ways. Contact⁴, as illustrated by the quote above, is at the heart of ethnographic professional practice. Paralleling Blommaert (2004: 9–12), I contend that the concept of *professional vision* by Goodwin (1994: 606) can help to grasp (and critically reflect) academic practices of constructing and producing knowledge⁵: Ethnographers have developed a range of concepts and notions to put order into experienced phenomena of contact (to *code* them, in Goodwin’s 1994: 608–609, terms). There are procedures of *highlighting* (Goodwin 1994: 609–611) certain aspects of these experiences (and obscuring others) and of producing *representations* (Goodwin 1994: 611–615) of these experiences (‘ethnographies’ as products of the process of doing ethnography, cf. Sanjek 2014: 59) – which are emblematic of the profession and as such authoritative constructions of reality. Ethnography is productive in

4 Also treated under the notion of *rapport* – see, e. g., Rampton (2016) for a critical discussion from an angle of sociolinguistics and Goebel (2019a) for a recent collection of critical chapters on the topic.

5 Indeed, Goodwin (1994: 607–608) himself applies the concept in a reflexive analysis to his own analytical gaze.

at least two ways – fabricating a representation of social life (and of other people) and, at the same time, fashioning its author as an ethnographer (for a critique see Spitzmüller 2019).

But this professional procedure is far from being free of contradictions and contention⁶. In the following, I cite a controversy described by Pratt (1986: 28–32) as an example of how contact, the processing of contact and its emblematic function for the profession of ethnography has been problematised. Pratt's essay is part of the seminal collection by Clifford & Marcus (1986) which had the aim of critically engaging with the production of ethnographic texts and the history of ethnographic writing. Concerned with genres of ethnographic writing, Pratt (1986) introduces her readers to the reception trajectory of then-novice anthropologist Florinda Donner's book *Shabono* (1982) on her experience of living with a Yanomana community in Venezuela. At first well-received and praised as an exceptional piece of work, it had soon been dismissed by the reviewers. Pratt (1986: 28–30) cites two review articles in particular – De Holmes (1983) and Picchi (1983) – which, while unanimously negative to the point of doubting its status as *social science* (De Holmes 1983: 667; Picchi 1983: 674), are somewhat contradictory in the focus of their criticism. Quoting evidence from Donner's book, De Holmes (1983: 665–666) unpicks the text as to demonstrate its resemblance in textual patterns, narrative trajectory and content to another work on the same topic (Valero 1971), factually accusing Donner of plagiarism (Pratt 1986: 28). Supported by an enquiry with local Venezuelan research institutions, she suggests that Donner probably had not even had first hand experience of the peoples' lives she described, but instead “rather expertly borrowed from other sources” (De Holmes 1983: 665). This, she further concludes, sheds doubt on the value of the book as *social science* – an epithet the book had received from Donner's teacher Carlos Castaneda: “For me, it is at once art, magic, and social science, and so skillfully balanced that I cannot assess which takes the lead” (as cited in De Holmes 1983: 665). The review by Picchi (1983) comes to a similar conclusion

6 That the notion of contact is a real issue in ethnographic professionalism also becomes apparent in Pfadenhauer (2017: 16) who cites a number of metaphors used in the literature for the liminal role of the ethnographer. One cannot help but notice that the problematising (and, in their presuppositions, potentially problematic) labels used for the ethnographer's in-between position – ‘stranger’ cited from Agar (1996), and even ‘schizophrenia’ from Honer (1993) – are accompanied by the modifier *professional*!

as De Holmes (1983), yet based on a different criticism: She assesses that Donner's rejection of systematic fieldwork, her emphasis on personal experience and the missing commitment to disciplinary values (both in ethics and epistemology) make its use for anthropologists problematic (Picchi 1983: 674–675).

While Pratt (1986: 31–33) is, first and foremost, concerned with what this incident can tell about the disciplinary regimentation of the genre of personal narrative in anthropology, we can also deduce the insight from this debate that the professionalisation of contact is all but unproblematic in the history of ethnography. It connects the following questions to the status of being a legitimate ethnographer: *What does count as legitimate form of contact? Which aspects and pieces of contact are relevant? How is contact to be processed?* Contact is seen as necessary, if not essential. If Donner had not been there, her book would be worthless for the discipline. But a focus on the experience – on contact alone – is not enough. There is a normative orientation which can be observed in this debate: In order to produce legitimate ethnographic knowledge – and project its author as legitimate ethnographer – contact needs to be processed according to professional procedures and represented in forms which refer in appropriate ways to the appropriate genres. Anthropological research, Picchi (1983) argues, needs to be committed “to the documentation of relationships between behavioral variables on a cross-cultural basis” (Picchi 1983: 674) and the documentation to be “ideally shared within the international scientific community” (Picchi 1983: 674). In other words – it is *abstraction* and *translation* of experience of contact which Picchi (1983) demands. Pratt (1986: 30) likens the treatment of Donner by her critics to a disciplining for what is considered – from both perspectives – a betrayal:

For if Florinda Donner did fabricate much of her story (as she may have), she has disgraced the profession by lying [...] If she did not fabricate her story, she scored one of the anthropological scoops of the century. For her experience, as she recounts it, is in many respects an ethnographer's dream. She is *invited* by the group to study their lifeways; instead of sessions in which she interviews them, it is they who sit down to teach her. [...] To realize this ethnographer's dream, and then to refuse to convert it into the currency of the discipline that made it all possible, this is indeed a monumental betrayal. (Pratt 1986: 31)

This translation, so central for the professional identity discourse, is, as we shall see below, often captured by the (nestled) spatial metaphors of *distancing* oneself from the *field*. In the following, I sketch different methodological approaches to phenomena of contact in ethnography as well as professional procedures ethnographers are expected to apply according to the order of professionalism they establish.

Distancing

A strand of ethnography which draws in very explicit manner on the spatial metaphor of distance in conceptualising ethnographic methodology is ‘lifeworld-analytic ethnography’ (*Lebensweltanalytische Ethnographie*, Hitzler & Eisewicht 2016). The aim of this phenomenologically based, sociological approach to ethnography is to *interpretively understand*, “*deutend zu verstehen*” (Hitzler & Eisewicht 2016: 11), the implicit subjective sense subjects ascribe to their actions via the researcher’s lived experience (Hitzler & Eisewicht 2016: 9–11). Methodologically speaking, the researcher is conceptualised as the primary research instrument and a liminal figure⁷ wandering between two contexts conceived as fundamentally different, the researched world and the academic world (see also Pfadenhauer 2017). In order to be able to reconstruct a participant’s view from the researcher’s lived experience, the researcher engages reflexively with their participation in the researched world. The approach advocates for a strict division between the two spheres and for the researcher to act accordingly:

Das heißt, zum einen sehen wir uns im Feld als existenziell involvierte, unsere existenzielle Involviertheit reflektierende und diese Involviertheit perspektivisch nutzende Forscher [sic]; zum anderen verstehen wir uns in der (einsamen) theoretischen Einstellung (also sozusagen am Schreibtisch) als pragmatisch distanzierte, rein kognitiv interessierte, werturteilsenthaltende Wissenschaftler [sic].

This means that, on the one hand, we see ourselves as researchers existentially involved in our [research] field, reflecting on our existential involvement, and making perspectival use of this involvement; on the other hand, we understand ourselves, in [our] (lonely) theoretical orientation (that is, at the desk), as pragmatically distanced

7 Pfadenhauer (2017) substantiates this notion in her phenomenological approach by making reference to *the stranger* in Schütz (1972).

researchers, interested purely on a cognitive level, abstinent from judgment. (my translation Hitzler & Eisewicht 2016: 127)

While these strict binary divisions between the research site and academe, practice and theory, existential involvement and pragmatical distance (which recall a Cartesian division between the bodily-affective and the rational, or aspirations to a 'bird's-eye view' on the phenomena studied) have been contested in ethnography (see, for instance, Jacobs & Slembrouck 2010) as well as elsewhere, this would probably miss the crucial point here, namely the *methodological appropriation of strangeness and familiarity* (Amann & Hirschauer 1997). Rather than serving an ontological claim, the division is understood to enable a technique (Pfadenhauer 2017: 1) which serves to achieve distance from the familiar and to question taken-for-granted logics.

Dabei [bzgl. dem Verständnis von Alienität und Alterität als bestimmende Themen der Ethnografie] liegt für die soziologische Ethnografie nicht erst seit der mit der Globalisierung einhergehenden "Generalisierung von Fremdheit" (HAHN 1994, S.162) auf der Hand, dass Fremdheit nicht mit Ferne, Vertrautheit nicht mit Nähe einhergeht. Die Erfahrung von Fremdheit als Grenzerfahrung ist eine Technik zur Annäherung an Andere bzw. deren praktische Vollzüge.

In this respect [concerning the understanding of alienness and alterity as determining topics of ethnography], it is obvious for sociological ethnography, [and this] not just since the "generalisation of strangeness" (Hahn 1994, p. 162) implicated in globalisation, that strangeness does not imply [spatial] distance and intimacy not proximity. The experience of strangeness as a boundary experience is a technique to approach Others viz. their practical achievements. (my translation Pfadenhauer 2017: 1)

This is done through 'translation' (*Übersetzung*, Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 28) of knowledge gained 'in the field' into academic discourse. Put in sociolinguistic terms, the practice of translation can be rendered as an ensemble of professional practices of entextualisation and recontextualisation (cf. Blommaert 2004: 12–15). According to Amann & Hirschauer (1997: 12–13), it serves a methodological estrangement which they put in the sociological tradition of Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel and liken it to the procedures employed in conversation

analysis: by manipulating the habitual distance between oneself and ‘mundane’ talk, i. e. by zooming in (cf. Nicolini 2009), one achieves, so the authors, a needed distance to processes which would otherwise go unnoticed. The everyday, the familiar, becomes a phenomenon to be studied in what they conceive of as a specifically sociological application of ethnography. The occurrence of so-called *rich points* – where “an ethnographer learns that his or her assumptions about how the world works, usually implicit and out of awareness, are inadequate to understand something that had happened [...] [a] distance between two worlds of experience” (Agar 1996: 31) – is therefore a methodologically organised practice, and ethnographers are encouraged to apply an estranging perspective on experience, to question how the everyday actually comes to work out ‘felicitously’, to look out for crises and discontinuities (cf. also Goebel 2019b) between their own and their informants experiences, and to contrast practices and beliefs in the field as well as scientific hypotheses and observations (Breidenstein et al. 2015: 121–123). The relationship between the two spheres is not thought of as unidirectional. As much as the sociological method is there to estrange the researcher from their experience ‘in the field’, as much it is the empirical to trouble and disrupt sociological concepts (Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 38). This relates to the logic of *abduction* which is, according to Agar (1996: 39–40), a fundamental characteristic of ethnographic research: instead of hypothesis testing (deduction) or deriving logics from the data (induction), this means recalibrating concepts against empirical data in a recursive and comparative way.

The tension between the strange and the familiar is not a ‘new’ methodological principle, but rooted in the historical development of ethnography in anthropology and its uptake in sociology (Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 10–13). Amann & Hirschauer (1997: 11) use the term *Leitdifferenz* (‘lead difference’) for its centrality in ethnographic research both as an epistemological premise and a methodological principle. Indeed, Keane (2003: 223) argues that this tension underlies the whole discipline of anthropology which, historically, has tended at times more towards an *epistemology of estrangement* and – in contemporary North American anthropology, so the author – more to an *epistemology of intimacy*. Amann & Hirschauer (1997) tend to emphasise more the importance of methodological estrangement which is consequential as they conceptualise the sociologist’s object of study as *their own culture*: Their cited chapter (an introduction to a collection) is entitled

Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur: Ein Programm ('The estrangement of one's own culture: a programme'). There are a number of immediate problems to this methodological framing; for instance the question of whether the object of study can ever be exactly "one's own culture" – the presupposed boundedness, the presupposed positionality of the researcher and the entailed relationship of belonging in the usage of the term 'culture' are three immediate problems of this understanding (cf. also Spitzmüller 2017). Rather than a descriptive statement of the research process, I take this as an abstracted principle (Pfadenhauer 2017: 1) and idealisation which has to be critically reflected in its analytical consequences.

Scaling contact

From a critical perspective, one may ask whether a greater distance to the research experience necessarily means an analytical asset; and what is meant by 'analytical distance' in the first place. These are questions which can be reflexively approached by the notion of *scale* (Carr & Lempert 2016: 1–4), i.e. by understanding them as pointing to ways of spatio-temporally organising the world from situated perspectives. What these questions in fact suggest is that researchers organise their experiences in terms of scalable distance from themselves in an effort to transform them into 'data' (cf. also the methodological discussion on 'scale' in 'macro-' and 'micro-'sociology, Knorr-Cetina 2014 [1981]). Such a *scaling* of experience does not result in a disinterested picture of some prediscursive reality, but instead is a transformative practice in itself (Carr & Lempert 2016: 3, 19). And as Pritzker & Perrino (2020: 368) show, such scaling of intimacy and distance – what they call *scalar intimacy* – is a powerful mechanism in subject-making practices. This, however, does not mean that one can (or even should) abstain from 'scaling experience'. Carr & Lempert (2016), who propose a methodologically reflexive usage of the concept of scale, argue that "[t]o attend to the *pragmatics of scale* means—most fundamentally—to take a critical distance from given scalar distinctions, whether our own or others', and focus instead on the social circumstances, dynamics, and consequences of scale-making as social practice and project" (Carr & Lempert 2016: 9). They further deduce that it is important to "keep careful track of the scalar dimensions embedded in our own habits of analysis" (Carr & Lempert 2016: 11). What is crucial thus is to

acknowledge that research brings its own *scalar projects* (Carr & Lempert 2016: 11–12), that is, its own scalar distinctions and agenda. In this sense, ‘taking a distance’ – as manipulation of pre-given scalarity (Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 12–13) – constitutes a (historically and institutionally situated) scalar project. And it is a hegemonic scalar project, as has been pointed out for instance by feminist (Abu-Lughod 1990) and Black decolonial (Isoke 2018) critics which challenge the distinction between Self and Other as a basis for ethnography. These critiques complexify the taken for granted scalar logics underlying the ethnographic traditions (see also Agar 1996: 4–5).

In the context of this thesis, I do not take this as a reason to ban strangeness and intimacy from the ethnographic methodological repertoire altogether. More so, since the ethnographic encounter is always already structured by scalar projects with their roots in (post-)colonial history and gendered inequalities⁸, and which may become re-articulated in scalar distinctions of strangeness and intimacy, I regard a reflexive practice of scaling research experience as a useful and critical tool. In other words, the recognition that scalarity matters in the practices studied, the research instruments and the research encounter, requires methodological reflexivity. A reflexive methodology based on strangeness and intimacy would not only require to acknowledge the production of scalar distinctions through analytical procedures in ethnography, but also to make active use of them – while keeping track of the social indexicalities of such scalar distinctions beyond the practice of analysis. This means to be aware of how analytical procedures as scalar projects potentially draw on and feed back into distinctions of Self and Other in society and to engage reflexively with this. It also means that the positions of ‘the intimate’ and ‘the strange’ cannot be assigned and fixed in advance, on a methodological level, as the positions of the researcher’s self and the researched Other.

Intimacy

Other methodological approaches within the ethnographic paradigm engage with the tension between strangeness and intimacy (in the sense of Keane 2003 above)

⁸ This is, principally, not denied by Amann & Hirschauer (1997) either who situate their methodological usage in the history of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

precisely by not upholding a strict methodological separation. *Autoethnography* (Ellis & Adams 2014) values the lived experience of the researcher not only as a source for obtaining data, but as its proper research object. Especially in the approach of *evocative autoethnography*, there is an emphasis on affectively engaging narrative as well as a distrust in distancing and generalising through theory. Under the label of *analytic autoethnography*⁹, however, we find approaches with an explicit interest in abstraction and theory-building (Anderson 2006). Antony (2015: 151), for instance, also appeals to the deployment of the above mentioned analytical distancing procedures.

While the split in more analytically oriented and evocative approaches seems to replicate the above-mentioned tension as an organising principle (and may methodologically incorporate it, see Antony 2015, following, again, Amann & Hirschauer 1997), autoethnography offers a different answer to the ‘problem’ of doing research on social phenomena one experiences in the first person. Instead of focusing on distancing strategies, the pull is towards intimacy, or rather, the intimacy of the researcher with their research object, the sharing of experience, is valued as such, in terms of ethics, political impetus and heuristics. Ellis & Adams (2014: 263) emphasise that autoethnography conceptualises research as a response to doubts, insecurities or problems, in fact as a *therapeutic* endeavour (socio-politically or psychologically understood). Typically, autoethnography makes extensive use of narrative, reflexive and other literary genres of writing in the pursuit of a politically conceived agenda of visibilisation and accessibility (Ellis & Adams 2014: 263–264): Katzmann (2015), for instance, advances autoethnographic writing as a technique to recover invisibilised knowledge in professional practice. On the one hand, arguments of this kind tend to reproduce reified notions of immediacy, authenticity and transparency, on the other hand, they offer the opportunity to make the analyst not just visible, but reflexively locatable in ethnographic writing. In the context of this thesis, I do not produce an ‘autoethnography proper’, but I draw on autoethnographic genres of writing as resources for reflexive analysis as they can give insight into affective and experiential dimensions of the ethnographic encounter (cf. Antony 2015; Humphreys 2005), while being aware that the stylisation of authorship and its mystifying

9 And under other labels, such as ‘carnal ethnography’ (Wacquant 2005), as noted by Antony (2015: 150).

potential remain a possible pitfall of such genres, which, however, actually have a longer history in ethnographic writing practices (cf. Pratt 1986: 38).

Liminality

Liminality (see Section 2.2) is another conceptual metaphor which can serve to critically engage with intimacy and distance in research on an epistemological and methodological level (see J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020). Under the notion of *liminal ethnography*, Jacobs & Slembrouck (2010) envisage a methodological programme that conceives of ethnography as a liminal practice. The spatial and temporal metaphor of the threshold suits the research process in many ways, allowing on the one hand to understand the researcher as a liminal figure crossing boundaries and moving between contexts (Amann & Hirschauer 1997; Pfadenhauer 2017), but on the other hand to question dichotomous notions organising social life as well as the research process (cf. J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020: 163–165). Liminality is thus a quality of ethnographic reflexivity:

Along the same lines, we suggest that the liminality of linguistic ethnography, [...] in part lies in the persistent elusiveness of the etic–emic distinction, of what is frontstage and what is backstage, text versus context, and linguistics versus ethnography that we have dealt with here. (Jacobs & Slembrouck 2010: 243)

This means that, while boundaries both in the observed practices and in the practice of observing are products of social construction processes with very much ‘real’ consequences (Heller 2008: 251–252), these boundaries (including those separating the researcher’s perspective from perspectives encountered ‘in the field’) are porous, shifting and partial. In this sense, tension between the intimate and the strange, even if assumed as a logic which structures phenomena of contact in ethnography, should not be reified in the analysis. What is intimate, and what is strange is not translatable one-to-one from experience to theory or the other way around (cf. also Pfadenhauer 2017: 22). Building on Amann & Hirschauer (1997: 12–13), *manipulation* of strangeness and intimacy, as well as perspective (rather than its objectivation) is key to ethnographic methodology which translates in the combination of a broad range of differently scaled data (cf. Nicolini 2009). Strangeness and intimacy are not qualities inherent to objects and

people, nor do they spatially and temporally structure the research process in an absolute manner. They are more a result of the researcher's movements through different moments of contact and of reflexive engagement with these moments of contact. In the remainder of the chapter, I trace phenomena of contact along the ethnographic trajectory of which this thesis is a result in a 'to-and-fro' (Bourdieu 2003: 289–292) between re-scaled intimacies and distances.

3.2 Watching from afar

Why and how did I come into contact with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*? My research focus on linguistic and professional selves can be contextualised in a number of scholarly conversations (as laid out in the previous chapter, see Chapter 2), but also in more biographically and affectively grounded questions which preceded systematic fieldwork at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. They are not only decisive for the trajectory taken in this research project and relevant for the methodological choices made, but they also offer an analytical outlook on the object of study (they are thus significant beyond the personal). The question of how I ended up engaging with the particular organisational site of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, with these particular people and their practices, exposes the ways in which I as a researcher was involved in the discursive co-construction of the research site. A partial answer to this question lies in a biographically shaped, both affective and intellectual trajectory which I want to briefly explore in the following. Narrating this trajectory serves not only to objectivise my position in relation to the object of knowledge production (sensu Bourdieu 2003: 282) but also to manipulate relations of intimacy and distance as I draw on different registers of academic writing (in this chapter and across the thesis). This trajectory shall not only be mere object of self-reflection – which might ultimately, as though important in ethical terms, threaten to reify the researcher's authority yet again (of course, the researcher is also not the primary object of interest in this study). More so, as proposed by autoethnographers, reflexive and experiential genres of writing are used as entry points to study the phenomena under focus, with the aim to make affective experience become an analytical resource (cf. Antony 2015; Humphreys 2005) through its entextualisation (cf. Ellingson & Sotirin 2020: 16).

No Refugee McMoment

In 2015, while I was finishing my master's degree, the arrival of refugees in Central Europe was at the centre of mediatised public attention. Though there should soon be a perceivable shift towards discourses of control, fear and outright hostility in the political climate (see Rheindorf & Wodak 2018), initially, a celebration of signs and acts of solidarity with the newly arrived – dubbed *Willkommenskultur* 'welcoming culture' – was underway. Probably not only in my experience, the mediatised images of emblematic places in Austria and Germany converged: images and stories, filled with different degrees of pathos, of people welcoming and assisting those arriving at Munich main station (for instance *Applaus für die Ankommenden* 2015; Langenau 2015) next to similar images and stories from the Viennese train stations, geographically closer to myself (for instance Bouchal 2015; Springer 2015). These places came to be represented as places of encounter – hence the name of *Train of Hope*, a civil society organisation which originated from the initiatives/activism at the Viennese main station (*Train of Hope* 2022; *Train of Hope* 2015). *Train of Hope* and other organisations used to share lists of products and forms of support needed on their social media presence, in an effort to channel civil contributions and participation from civil society. Indeed, besides the celebratory images, there were also critical voices which denounced naïve, misguided, chaotic and even disrespectful practices among the efforts to build supportive structures (see for instance Pauer 2015 for the newspaper *Die Zeit* in the German context)¹⁰.

An important part of my own contact with these developments was mediated by the writings of Stefanie Sargnagel who at that time became a popular social media persona. Daughter from a Viennese working-class family, feminist, former arts student and call centre agent, she became more and more recognised as a writer when her trenchant and nihilist facebook entries were published as books (starting with *Die Callcenter-Monologe*, 'the call centre monologues', Sargnagel 2013). In 2015, she used to document her trips to Hungary on social media, how she would pick up people by car on their flight to Austria. Not without self-irony, she commented on her newly-found role, her own and others' clumsiness in these

¹⁰ For an analysis of the organisation and management of civil society engagement in refugee support in 2015/2016 see Simsa et al. (2017: 331–332); for a more positive/celebratory perspective on volunteers' "naïvety" as a transformative potential in politics see Huke (2019).

encounters as well as day-to-day political events. There was what she called her *Refugee McMoments*, individualised, romanticised and commodifiable experiences and expectations of encountering and helping refugees: caricatures of the helper persona and sharp, diagnostic comments on pretensions and entitlement of helpers towards the newly arrived Other, as well as on hierarchies which set certain people engaged in refugee support and activism apart from others.

13. September 2015

Flashig am Schleppen ist ja neben dem Kennenlernen von Vertriebenen, auch um die ganze Situation besser zu begreifen, auch das Kennenlernen der Aktivistinnen. Es gibt Leute, die die Rolle der Organisation übernehmen und damit unsere Nerven sehr beruhigen, obwohl sie in Wirklichkeit genauso wenig Ahnung haben, was wir da gerade aufführen, aber sie tuns. Gestern zum Beispiel haben wir dieses Mädels aus der Slowakei kennengelernt. Sie hatte die andere Hälfte der syrischen Familie, die wir mitnahmen, dabei, und als sie beim Ankommen die Autotür öffnete, machte sie dieses Zungenrollgeräusch. Es spielte hysterische arabische Party-Musik und alle im Auto sangen laut und sie schrie: "WE ARE HAVING AN ARABIC PARTY!!" Von da an gab sie uns allen Befehle, sowohl den Syrern als auch uns. Sie wusste, was in den nächsten zehn Minuten zu tun war und wo wir am besten stehen sollten beim Warten. Sie redete laut und entschlossen auf eine angenehm beruhigende Art. Sie war so Mitte 20, hatte so eine Nerdbrille, sprach Arabisch und offenbar hundert andere Sprachen, trug eine Warnweste und telefonierte ununterbrochen laut, wenn sie uns nicht gerade sagte, was wir machen sollen. Währenddessen hatte sie die ganze Zeit einen zappelnden Chihuahua im Arm. Als wir, beeindruckt von ihrer Checker-Persönlichkeit, fragten, was sie eigentlich so macht, meinte sie, sie wär aus Norwegen und nur auf Austausch in Bratislava und wollte eigentlich immer schon zur Armee! Jetzt studiert sie halt Medizin, um zu MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières) zu gehen... Dann hob sie ihren Chihuahua von Boden auf und schrie: "WE ARE LEAVING IN TEN MINUTES! JALLA JALLA JALLA JALLA!"

September 13, 2015

Flashy about the smuggling, also to better understand the whole situation, is that not only you get to know the displaced people, but also the activists. There are people who take on the role of organising things, and thereby they very much calm our nerves. In reality, they do not have a clue either what we are doing here, but they just do it. Yesterday for example we met this girl from Slovakia. She accompanied

the other half of the Syrian family we were having with us, and when she opened the car door on our arrival she made this rolling sound with her tongue. They played hysterical Arabic party music and everyone in the car was singing aloud and she yelled: "WE ARE HAVING AN ARABIC PARTY!!" Then she started giving orders to everyone, both to the Syrians and to us. She knew what was supposed to be done in the next ten minutes and where we should place ourselves while waiting. She spoke aloud and resolutely in a pleurably reassuring way. She was like in her mid twenties, had these nerd glasses, spoke Arabic and apparently a hundred other languages. She was wearing a reflective vest and when she wasn't telling us what to do, she was constantly on the phone with her loud voice. During all this time, she had her fidgeting chihuahua in her arm. Impressed by her achiever personality we asked her what she was usually doing in life. She said she was from Norway, only on exchange in Bratislava and had always wanted to go to the army! Just now she is studying some medicine to go to MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières)... Then she grabbed her chihuahua from the ground and yelled: "WE ARE LEAVING IN TEN MINUTES! YALLA YALLA YALLA YALLA!" (my translation, Sargnagel 2016: 87–88)

With its layering and jumping in time and space and the superimposition of paradoxical affective display and effects (the vivid frenzy of the described character and its purported 'reassuring effects', for instance), the text produces a complexly manufactured figure of personhood (cf. Park 2021) that is positioned as essential for refugee support: the woman is energetic, 'naturally' ambitious, excentric, sociable, knowledgeable and talented. These characterological traits are not only in tension with one another, they are also constructed as the opposite of how the author usually narrates her own self: as low-energy, defeatist, self-ironic, critical etc.

I read her entries and the news while I was struggling to finish my MA thesis, having my exam, making sense of my situation as a graduate and also as an unemployed person. I had friends and colleagues who regularly participated in the activism that was happening at the train station. My own participation was rather limited back then, I went there once with mixed feelings of guilt and solemnity. In the end, it was a plain and simple experience that did not offer much to build up neither the pathos of being a helper nor the sophisticated critique I had engaged with from afar: I had simply put order into a bunch of donated clothes in one of the tents. I had had some contact with people

looking through the donations and with the organisers, but both were rather limited. There was nothing too much resembling the aura (Spitzmüller 2019) of the Refugee McMoment which for me were invested with a mixture of desire and repulsion. I tend to remember it as the execution of a simple task under the guidance of a higher organisational structure, not very important, replaceable, but still a contribution with a certain rewarding effect on myself. Yet still, I did not come back, I did not pursue this contact with what was happening at the station. I remember the moment when my friend who had taken me there upon my request – she had been there several times before and knew herself around – and I stood waiting by a barrier that separated the medical area from the rest. I remember having had the impression that *those people over there really knew* what they were doing and that their competence was legitimate. As someone who had been working as an untrained assistant in a social/paramedical profession for years besides my studies, I probably was sensitised for questions of expertise and professional status in the helping occupations.

During the time that followed, I was quite in discord with myself. Some part of me was probably looking for excuses why I could not do more. I heard people arguing that such feelings of guilt were unjustified because, so the rationale, there were many legitimate reasons for not being able to participate in refugee support (which, on a perhaps naïve note, had seemed to be imperative to me). But I remember that I met this reasoning with mixed feelings as well: On the one hand, I found it sensible, a reasonable commentary on what seemed an overly excited, hypocritical attachment to and circulation of the persona of the helper. On the other hand, though, I also felt a certain condescending undercurrent in the exoneration. There were of course the professionals doing their job, but then, I sensed there was also a (fractal) distinction being affirmed between the experienced and legitimate volunteers and those who were mourning their disengagement with the requirements of the time (where I was positioning myself).

A decisive encounter

All of that changed one evening when I talked to a friend who at that time used to work for the refugee support organisation of which the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* was part. It was spring 2016, I had just graduated and I felt determined to start

a doctoral project. I was in search for a topic which would allow me to study my then rather abstract interests in social and semiotic theory. I had remained distant to impulses and ideas to pursue my research interests in a study of refugee support and activism. The lack of what I considered a proper relationship with what was happening at the time made this option appear not very feasible nor ethically sound. However, this stance should shift as I talked to my friend, the social worker, that evening. I told her about my more or less abstract ideas and the search for a research topic, for a place and phenomenon to study. We also came to talk about my discomfort with my own positioning towards refugee support work and volunteering. Her reaction was not what I had anticipated as she encouraged me to study what was causing me discomfort, to invest precisely in that discomfort as a form of participation in refugee support. I certainly owe her the insight that my discomfort was not just a personal sentiment, but rather a symptom of phenomena which were of a certain significance for the field.

Indeed, what was at stake was a question of legitimacy in and access to refugee support work which had become an important (and somewhat desirable) emblem of a progressive, left political stance in my surrounding. Was there a line between activism and the search for 'Refugee McMoments' and other forms of white-saviourism, between more or less acceptable subject positions in refugee support work? If so, where? What was this doing to institutionalised refugee support work and to the different people working in this field? These questions resonate with discourses of professionalism which were circulating at the time, for instance in the areas of interpreting and German language teaching where researchers' and professionals' mixed feelings led into number of official statements from professional and academic networks and associations (see Section 3.4). Moreover, they resonate with debates on social work professionalism characteristic of the field (see Section 2.4).

Thus, while some of the quandaries described here may seem, at first glance, disconnected from the rest of the thesis, certainly naïve and perhaps even self-indulgent, they point beyond the personal. And it is important for the perspective adopted in this thesis, that I would then soon have moved on from the concerns with my own subjectivity to a different context, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. This move led me to investigate phenomena I was not as familiar with as these situated, perhaps self-centered insecurities. I discovered that the counselling centre

presented to my observer's gaze a number of faultlines and differences distinct from those I had expected – heterogeneous backgrounds in training and the role accorded to linguistic repertoires – and insights into the political and economic insecurities which characterise refugee support as a workplace. In this sense, the other evening at the train station, but even more so the conversation I had with my friend that night were the first ethnographic encounters which initiated a recursive process of familiarising and de-familiarising my gaze (Breidenstein et al. 2015: 121–123) on refugee support work. And while I had, at this point, decided not to study, primarily, the refugee Other, but workers (employed and volunteers) in refugee support work, I would soon realise that this neat split between positions and the connected scaling of intimacy and distance to the presumed positionalities was not tenable. Indeed, during my fieldwork I would encounter people who had come to Austria as refugees – of course as clients of the counselling centre, but also (and, given the focus of the study, perhaps more importantly) in positions I had not anticipated to the same degree, namely among the people working at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

My friend invited me to contact her manager who reportedly had previously voiced interest in research which would document 'what was happening in their counselling centre'. What could have proven an expectation difficult to manage, was at that time first and foremost a way in, a way to relate myself to the field, and to establish contact.

3.3 Navigating the counselling centre as an ethnographer

I met Sara, the head of the counselling centre a couple of weeks later. It had not been easy to get in touch. I had struggled formulating an email and I had been too insecure to just call her. Would my request be met with sympathy? Would I be taken seriously? Would I be deemed trustworthy? It had taken some time for my friend to ask her if I could contact her which did not contribute to my confidence either: I became very aware of the little time resources she would have for my concerns and I did not expect that my proposal would be met with interest. In my head, I put forward my own experience in the helping professions as to say, *I know you have more important things to do than spending your time talking*

to somebody who is interested in your work on some meta-level – and I am sympathetic with that. I was also aware of the potential threat the term ‘professionalism’ I was working with at that time might pose to a practitioner.

Negotiating access

We met at the beginning of April 2016 in the office which at that time was used by a number of counselling centres run by the refugee support branch of the NGO. Sara did not have much time telling me right away that the room where we sat would be needed half an hour later. We had a coffee and I explained my research interests to her – the enactment of professionalism and relationships between counsellors and volunteers – and what I intended to do in terms of fieldwork. By her own initiative, she gave me an overview over the everyday work done at the counselling centre and we talked about the work processes I would be invited to participate in. Although there were no explicit requests from her side, I noted down after the meeting that I felt I would have to provide more specific reasons/research interests to legitimise my participation as a way to appreciate the trust I was being given. In hindsight, I think that probably more than my concrete research interests, it was my political stance and personal sympathy which mattered to her.

At our second meeting, two weeks later, she asked me to sign the NGO’s confidentiality agreement (*Verpflichtungserklärung zum Datengeheimnis*). We talked about how to handle issues of data protection and I made sure to clarify that I was not interested in detailed discussions of client histories or ‘cases’. Later, I heard that there had been a conflict with the management in the case of a staff member who in their thesis wanted to draw on data from their work context. It was not until more than a year later that I managed to obtain a clear, written agreement with Sara’s superior on data usage in the context of my project. This was important to me because of an experience that had made me aware of the fact that my research activity was almost exclusively legitimised by oral agreements with Sara alone: once in her absence – I had been there for half a year – I unexpectedly ended up in conflict with her deputy over my access to certain documents. The conflict was quickly resolved, but it seemed reasonable to me to seek official approval from a higher level in the management. Sara and I had

concluded that it would be best to have approval by Kathi, her superior who had asked for clarifications on my activities anyways. Since she was always busy, it took a long time from the circulation of a first draft in July 2017 until we signed the joined declaration in November 2017.

Generally, I was struck by the willingness with which Sara granted me access as a participant observer. She said she would have to ask the staff members first, but already at our first meeting, she had suggested I could attend the work activities during counselling, at the reception desk, in the back office, and meetings between prospective tenants and landlords brokered by the counselling centre. In return, I offered to perform minor tasks in the office and I was invited by Sara to step in for the volunteer at the reception desk. Soon, she had communicated to the team that they could involve me on their own initiative. At a later stage, I was able to negotiate access to the staff meetings as well: I waited until our second meeting before I asked if I was allowed to attend. Back then, Sara was reluctant and I decided not to press further – as I learned another few weeks later, I had joined the counselling centre in quite a troubled situation of major restructuring. While Sara was keeping me updated about the changes that were looming, I did not fully understand the dynamics this was causing among the staff members. But one day towards mid May 2016, approximately one month after my first meeting with Sara, she surprised me with an invitation to the the next staff meeting: Sara and I were hanging around with Lena, one of the counsellors, in the backyard where the staff went to smoke cigarettes. Lena talked about the bad sentiment that had infused the staff meeting the day before. Then she asked me whether I did want to join the staff meeting one day. Sara intervened, answering on my behalf, that I should participate from the following week on – in the current week, she said, she would have preferred to have the meeting in the “intimacy of the nest”, given the critical situation.

There were, however, some types of work situations which remained ‘off-limits’ for me: One of them was supervision. I decided I would leave this space to the staff members alone who mostly treated these meetings as a sealed box, observing meticulously their confidentiality. I also had the impression that such a request would not have been acceptable and I wanted to show tact. A second one concerned interactions with clients. Although I was allowed to participate in encounters with clients (provided that they agreed to my presence), Sara had

made it clear that audio-recordings of these encounters were not possible. The same held for photographs displaying clients (which I had not asked for). All in all, while the regulations at the boundaries of the institution were strict, I personally enjoyed a lot of trust from Sara and the other staff members.

The counselling centre

For what follows, it is important for the reader to know about the internal organisation of the counselling centre in three different phases. When I started frequenting the counselling centre, there were two separate premises used: the back office in a building in an outer residential district of Vienna (which I call the *Mühlengasse*) and the counselling centre proper which was accommodated in a former bank by a trafficked, yet otherwise abandoned street in another peripheral part of the city (the *Seegasse*). At that time, the main activity consisted in keeping different lists of clients who were looking for private housing in Vienna and Lower Austria, in acquiring real estate owners as donors for their programme and ‘matching’ clients with their future landlords based on a number of criteria. This entailed supporting clients and donors with administrative paperwork and contracts, as well as conflict management and other issues which might arise in the process. Open consultations were held twice a week in the premises of the former bank. A rather dull place, empty apart from some unprepossessing furniture either left there by the bank or procured by NGO’s donation management. It had a wide room in its centre which formed the waiting area, a kitchen in the back, and two smaller rooms which were used for the consultations. All the other activities (administration, staff-meetings, some scheduled appointments with clients etc.) were carried out in the back office. The back office looked quite a bit nicer, but still rather plain with its white walls and donated furniture. The office was shared with other branches of the NGO, and another counselling centre by the same NGO was on the floor below. Sara had mentioned to me during our first meetings that she appreciated the counselling was carried out in a separate space since it allowed for *Abgrenzung* – ‘setting boundaries’.

In response to the decline of private housing opportunities available, the activities shifted away from the ‘matching’ to social counselling, communication of knowledge and legal advice in matters related to housing (see Chapter 4 which

analytically deals with the transformation process). The team was split into a part responsible for the region of Lower Austria and one for Vienna. Only team Vienna transitioned to the new activity frame, while team Lower Austria continued the matching activity commuting between Vienna and a town in Lower Austria. The changes meant that the waiting lists for Vienna were officially 'closed' – though lists for special housing programmes and an 'emergency list' were still retained to distribute the little number of apartments remaining in the organisation's data base (see Section 5.2). The bank premises were abandoned and a little later the back office moved to a different office space at the disposition of the NGO. This new office space had its own waiting room and a proper reception desk, a counter with a window onto the waiting room (unlike in the bank where they just had set up a table in the corner of the waiting area). In the time that followed it was shared with other project teams of the NGO.

After a period of parallel activities, team Lower Austria was dissolved by the end of 2016 and what was left of the project was incorporated in a different branch of the NGO in Lower Austria. In the meantime, team Vienna had established their new core activities – social and legal counselling and workshops on legal and practical issues related to housing. This development also led to a second legal counsellor being hired. Another innovation was the *Recherche-Eck* ('search corner'): As in a cybercafé, this was a room where, twice a week, clients could use computers/laptops provided by the NGO and search the internet for apartments, read the adds and contact real estate owners or brokers. They were assisted by volunteers which were supervised by one of the staff members who alternated in this task. I was one of the first volunteers working at the *Recherche-Eck* once a week for the final year of my fieldwork (October 2017 – September 2018).

The counselling centre consisted of: (1) Around ten generalist counsellors for questions of housing (numbers were fluctuating across the years). These were people with heterogeneous academic background, political scientists, social workers, sociologists, anthropologists etc. (2) Two legal counsellors which were trained jurists. (3) Two employed interpreters, one for Farsi, the other for Arabic (this was the circulating label, I understood that he was proficient in a number of other languages as well). They were on a minimal employment

contract (the so-called ‘geringfügige Beschäftigung’¹¹). (4) A large and fluctuating number of volunteer interpreters and – later – volunteers for the Recherche-Eck. The counselling centre relied on interpreters for a number of its activities, the core activity being individual counselling and workshops. (5) A volunteer at the reception desk in the bank, who was replaced by a civilian service person (*Zivildienstler*) in the new office. (6) Initially, Sara had also mentioned the real estate donors (*Wohnraumspender*innen*) or landlords (*Vermieter*innen*) in the category of volunteers.

Rapport or field relations

Rapport is a notion which points to the practical side of contact in ethnography: it designates the somewhat instrumental relational labour conducted to create intimacy through “temporary interactional suspension of stranger-hood and distance” (Rampton 2016: 3) with the goal of gaining access to the research context as a precondition for ethnographic fieldwork.¹² Based on a critique of the ideological assumptions underlying the scholarly discourse on rapport and its ethical implications, there have been calls to study fieldwork rapport as a sociolinguistic and interactional phenomenon (Goebel 2019b; Rampton 2016). Following the critique in Rampton (2016) who doubts the ethnographic specificity and analytic value of the notion, I will turn to a broader understanding of *field relations* (Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 96) as a way of reflexively engage with my positioning as a researcher in concrete relationships formed during the research process: “In fact rather than just focusing on rapport, I think it would often make more sense to think about the tensions and dilemmas of citizenship, collegiality, friendship, even kinship, that emerge before, during and after fieldwork” (Rampton 2016: 2). Conceiving of the relational labour subsumed under the notion of ‘rapport’ as a set of methods of scaling intimacy and distance, and the field relations mentioned by Rampton (2016) as indexes of scalar projects, I want to approach them in a reflexive manner in order to keep track of their presupposed logics and entailed effects in my analytical work.

11 Minimal employments in Austria are small part-time jobs exempt of taxes and non-wage labour costs.

12 Both Rampton (2016) and Goebel (2019b) refer to the proliferation of the notion in textbooks, guidelines or ‘how-to’ literature for students of ethnography.

Building and maintaining relationships is not always easy and coherent, but instead involves incongruences and difficulties to establish shared ground or *ruptures* (Goebel 2019b; see also, e. g., Choe 2020 for a reflexive engagement with the experience of *friendships* in the field; cf. J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020). Much like contact in general (see Section 3.1 above), establishing ‘good rapport’ specifically has been presumed to be a necessary condition for and an essential trait of ethnography (see Goebel 2019b: 1–4). Paralleling the critique in Goebel (2019b), in J. Hassemer & Flubacher (2020) we argue that instead precariousness of rapport and precarity in rapport – vulnerability, interdependency, entanglement – are not only inevitable conditions of ethnographic fieldwork, but also productive points of departure for the analysis. Thus, when I problematise field relations in what follows, I do so not only in order to epistemologically and ethically ‘authenticate’ my ethnography, but also because of their heuristic value with regards to the context of study.

My fieldwork was divided into two spheres contextualising relationships along institutionally pre-established boundaries: One of them was that of the employed staff members with whom I sat in the office, during counselling with clients, in the staff meetings and went for after work drinks. I had known them either from my first days of fieldwork or from their first days of work at the counselling centre. The other sphere was that of the volunteers and interpreters. Here the contact was less stable in the course of my research trajectory. In the first few months, when I attended the counselling on the former bank premises, I had a rather close exchange with some of them. Then, when I reduced my visits to the office while I had to wait for decisions concerning my funding, I attended almost exclusively staff meetings, for about one year starting from mid 2016. I figured this was a good way of being kept posted about developments at the counselling centre and maintaining contact. However, I noted that my direct contact with any other institutional actors had faded and happened almost exclusively mediated by the staff meeting, i. e. as entextualised versions of interactions from a highly specific and regulatory genre of practice (see Section 5.2). I was therefore glad when the introduction of the project *Recherche-Eck* allowed me recalibrate my position within the organisation and to establish contact with other volunteers and with more clients. Most staff members were very open towards me from the beginning, although a few of them were more reserved at first. Among the staff,

I had found a marginal position that oscillated slightly between a more intimate belonging and the status of a visitor.

Among the volunteers, I felt building a relationship was more challenging to me. Since the beginning, I had moved, engaged and interacted differently with the volunteers as compared to the sphere of the counsellors¹³. Usually – and here I need to ‘get more personal’ for a moment – when I enter a new context I know I will interact with closely, as a gay person I have made it a habit to *come out* rather early in the encounter, and as casually as possible (for instance, by mentioning my partner’s name). It lifts off a weight, I feel, which subjectively weighs up a certain discomfort that comes with it at the same time – it is done. Of course, both weight and discomfort have their source in a heteronormative order which I cannot escape, but I have found ways of dealing with it, over and over again (cf. Adams 2011: 86, 106). I cannot say it is a pleasure, but at least I do not feel unsafe about it anymore. While I had felt no risk in coming out gay to the counsellors, the situation with the volunteers and volunteer interpreters was very different. With the counsellors, I had even seen it as a strategical asset: given the political consensus which was, in my purview, decidedly leaning towards the left side of the political spectrum (or perhaps the label ‘progressive’ would be more suited to some), I could assume that it would result both a personal and a banal piece of information in the encounter. It would be something which could be taken up and thereby contribute to making rapport more intimate – but it needed not, it could be simply acknowledged, ignored, normalised as unnoteworthy piece of information.

Among the volunteers, however, I was very unsure about the potential reactions that might await me. *Are you married? Do you have a girlfriend? Do you live in a shared apartment?* These were the questions I was repeatedly asked right after we had barely exchanged our names at the *Recherche-Eck*. Fearing a negative impact on our relations, I usually did not correct their presumption of my heterosexuality (cf. L. Goodman 1996). I felt I had my reasons: There is of course a history to these questions in my own biography (I am surely not alone with this experience: the question of *do you have a girlfriend?* evokes unsettling memories). But there were also the stories I had heard from one of the volunteers who said

¹³ The following bit is based on thoughts previously developed in J. Hassemer & Flubacher (2020: 166–169).

they had experienced homophobia among the other volunteers. On top of this, I had been at a staff meeting where counsellors had discussed how to react to one of the volunteer interpreters as he had been laughing at a non-binary identifying client during counselling. This was treated as an incident of misconduct, it was thoroughly discussed at several staff meetings and Sara, the manager, had a disciplinary talk with him. He stayed, but it had been considered firing him.

These episodes had cautioned me and I struggled for quite some time to come up with a solution without ever coming to a satisfactory conclusion (cf. L. Goodman 1996: 51–53). Thoughts like the following haunted my mind: *I don't want to lie to them. But then I don't know if they'll continue to accept me. Building trust presupposes being sincere with one another. It requires recognition of one another. And if I am 'out' in every other more or less meaningful context of my life, doesn't it mean that I am withholding recognition from these people? Why am I treating them differently? Why do I anticipate their intolerance?* I was conscious how this resonated with racist, culturalist stereotypes about people – especially men – from the so-called *Middle East*. If it was not out of a lack of sympathy (which was definitely not the case), that meant I was actually ascribing my fellow volunteers a homophobic disposition. One evening in the pub around the corner – most of the counselling staff were there, some of the volunteers too – I talked to Svenja, a counsellor, about my dilemma. I was somehow, at least for that moment, very much relieved that she told me that I had not been wrong staying cautious and not being *too open* among the volunteers.

What is at stake here is, to use Butler's words, the vulnerability of the speaking subject to the address of the Other (Butler 1997a: 1, see also Shulman 2011). On the one hand, in these episodes, 'vulnerability' relates to my own embodied Self, being addressed and presenting myself as a gendered and sexualised body – by being ascribed heterosexuality and coming out gay alike. But on the other hand, these experiences show too how my perceived and experienced vulnerability is connected to an anticipation or ascription of a homophobic disposition to my fellow volunteers, one, which I am quite conscious, is connected to racialising and racist, gendered discourses on asylum seekers in Austria (Scheibelhofer 2016: 302–304). So coming out or not, the decision carried a potential threat of mis-recognition to me and to my participants. Moreover, potentially, this could have posed an existential threat to my project as well (cf. L. Goodman 1996: 51).

In either case, I perceived not coming out as an ethical problem I tried to solve, but I could not. This, of course, relies on a certain idea of research ethics and problematises gay desire – as opposed to heterosexual desire. Yet, the question cannot be neglected what a potential conflict which might have resulted from a coming-out among the volunteers could have entailed. In this vein, I want to shift the attention away from myself (and the potential of being vulnerable to homophobia) to the volunteers and their position in the institutions of asylum and refugee support. As the episode of the sanctioned homophobic incident shows, a coming-out ‘gone wrong’ could have had serious consequences on a person’s access to volunteer work, which is, given the value of volunteering in the asylum procedure (see Section 6.2)¹⁴, a non-negligible ethical problem.

But beyond an ethical question, these observations and reflections give an outlook on the question of how boundaries operate among the labourforce at the counselling centre: Why is a coming-out problematic in one context, when it is unproblematic in the other? There were connections to other observations I had made as a participant on site: namely that *being open* about one’s personal life, blending work and private life, was a sort of normative expectation among the counsellors (one I share, as can be seen in my own ethical stance towards my own coming-out which could be considered an all-too ‘private’ matter). This normative expectation, I learnt in a range of interviews with counsellors, was also related to certain dynamics of in- and exclusion within the team. Interestingly, it also appeared in some of my interviews with the volunteers: Jamal talked about *sharing* as an emblematic practice of the counsellors (see Section 5.4), and another volunteer had the feeling they were *gossiping* about him. These boundaries were reproduced in my selective coming out. As we shall see in the analysis of volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Section 6.2), these boundaries are connected to a racialised and gendered institutional order which is contingent upon the political regulation of access to the labour market and to the right to stay in Austria. This, ultimately points to the precarity of volunteer language work in refugee support work in Austria which is ascribed an insecure promise of a better future (see Section 6.2). In this sense, a reflexive and contextualised

¹⁴ Here, precariousness becomes precarity, namely in the sense that vulnerabilities strike subjects in unequal ways (cf. Butler 2009: 25; see more on the concept in Section 6.1).

view on fieldwork relations can point to ethnographic questions of larger scale as much as the analytical gaze cannot be separated from ethical reflection.

The troubled feelings I experienced in my relations with the volunteers do not mean that there was no meaningful and productive exchange – and in a way of de-centralising my own experience, there are other instances of materialisation of the same boundaries to be taken into account. A case in point are the relationships within each of the institutional spheres and the patterns in the emergence and practices of ‘workplace friendships’ (cf. Rumens 2017): Counsellors had their weekly staff meetings, supervision, etc. and they went out for drinks together once in a while. While these joint ‘private’ activities were principally open to the volunteers as well, only a few of them were regulars at these meetings. When I asked one of the interpreters after our interview if I would see him at the party the same evening he told that since he did not drink (i. e. alcohol), he did not see the point in participating. Some of the volunteers I interviewed pointed out to me that they viewed common ground among volunteers as primarily based on their shared experience of the Austrian asylum procedure rather than anything else (an experience which, moreover, I did *not* share). There were to my knowledge only a few close friendships between volunteers. Jamal, one of the interpreters, would give me a pointed analysis of this situation in an interview, namely that volunteers did not form a cohesive ‘group’, but in his view had rather singularised, individual relationships with the counselling centre (see Section 5.4). To sum up, the difficulties I experienced in building rapport had a contingent dimension and are therefore – framed in an analytically generative way – indicative of the political economic conditions underlying relationships in the institutional context in more general terms.

Another aspect of the emergent rapport with the various actors at the counselling centre is the modalities of my participation. Since the beginning I had shifted between a closer engagement as an observing participant and a more detached position, mainly observing things in the background (of course, this entextualisation of field relations contains a scaling of distance in established categories of ethnographic professional vision). In all of this, I tried to maintain my research agenda visible to the others. It seemed to me that this was met by a light curiosity by most of the counsellors and volunteers. Some of the counsellors, among them Sara, presented me to outsiders as ‘our researcher’, and confided

in me that they had a mix of curious and eerie feelings towards my activities. The clients I interacted with – both in the counselling situations I assisted and at the *Recherche-Eck* – seemed for the most part little concerned with my research activity. I cannot say for sure whether I was able to bring my agenda across – which was the reason why I finally decided to refrain from conducting formal interviews with clients at all.

Maybe out of respect for my agenda or because it was intransparent to most (although most counsellors shared my background in social sciences with me), I was only seldomly addressed as a linguist. While many of the staff members and some of the volunteers told me from time to time that they were keen to hear about my observations, it was only a small number of them who signaled explicit interest in my perspective of concrete affairs at hand¹⁵. Rather than my professional expertise as a researcher, it was my expertise as a senior volunteer and my linguistic repertoire, especially as a speaker of German and English (see Section 6.4) that was sought after during my time at the *Recherche-Eck*. As I had been present since the beginning of the project, and having frequented the staff meetings, I had a considerable head start of knowledge and was frequently portrayed by staff members and volunteers as the senior who was to introduce new volunteers to their tasks. The volunteers addressed me when they had doubts about what they were doing, and the staff members asked me from time to time to assess the current situation of the project, the usefulness of the services and the work of other volunteers. While I usually attempted to avoid the role of having a privileged judgement, there were a few instances where I made deliberate use of an expert role: For a certain period of time notions of '(il)literacy' circulated among the staff members when they reflexively self-assessed the services offered in the context the *Recherche-Eck*. The question was: *Who is actually able to benefit from the service, based on their literacy?* and then: *Who is worthy of the investment the service is supposed to make?* Thus, '(il)literacy' became a salient rationale for the regulation of access to the service. Becoming aware of the potential inequalities

15 I had planned a feedback session in form of a workshop with the staff which had to be cancelled on relatively short notice for reasons unrelated to the research process. A similar format was also planned for the volunteers. In the time that followed, I learned that on the one hand, there was a policy of integrating workshops of this kind into the official curriculum for in-house trainings, on the other hand funds had been dramatically cut at that time. Therefore, plans had to be put on hold indefinitely.

this may have (unintentionally) reproduced, I had the impression that I should contribute to the reflexive process by addressing the underlying ideologies of communication and complexifying the circulating notion of *literacy*.

Over time, I grew very close to the institution as a microcosm. This closeness was interrupted by a conscious choice: After a year of regular visits to the counselling centre I had the impression I was getting very used with everything that was happening there and that I was at risk of losing analytical clarity. Therefore I made contact with another major NGOs operating in refugee support in Vienna. The brief glance at a different yet parallel context allowed me to perceive the ideological projects of the two institutions more sharply as I was able to compare their hiring schemes and models of professionalism. In addition, I engaged in continuing contact with some of the people – counsellors and volunteers – who had left their work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. This too proved a resource for recalibrating my perspective.

In the next section, I narrow the storyline and turn to a more concise selection of arguments by describing the process of ethnographic abduction (Agar 1996: 39–40) and the questions and puzzles guiding this ethnography.

3.4 Research problems

When I wrote down the fieldnotes of my first encounter with Sara, I produced a rather condensed and technical piece of writing. There was only one observation I had noted down which did not directly concern the negotiation of access. Apparently, I did not find it very pertinent at the time because I put it in a footnote (!): In the room where we met and talked, there was a whiteboard with a few words in Arabic script on it. As Sara explained to me, one of the staff members would regularly give Arabic lessons to their colleagues. At that time, I had no specific topical focus on ‘language’ and I did not see the connections to questions of the professional and volunteering. The reason was probably that I imagined volunteers to be like those I met at the Viennese main station and read about the in the news: White Austrians, Germans, and perhaps Austrians with Middle Eastern heritage. Even when I learnt about the interpreters being in great part volunteers, I saw them more as interpreters than as volunteers at first. Initially, I

almost got the impression that the site would not allow me to study volunteering! I wondered whether the people who – brokered by the counselling centre – offered their real estate properties to refugees could be considered ‘volunteers’. But this changed soon in the following days when I participated in counselling and met the volunteer interpreters.

Foreshadowed problems

Ethnography does not usually operate with fixed and predefined research questions, but instead with a number of research *problems* or – in the terms of Malinowski (1978) – so-called *foreshadowed problems* (Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 20–28). These are sets of hypotheses and/or questions based on the researcher’s experience, reading, or research prior to fieldwork. Crucially, they will not remain stable over the research process, but adapted, amended, or even abandoned (Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 21–28). When I started the project, there was a rather wide gap between my abstract interest in social and semiotic theory (subjectivation and positioning, liminality and order) and my first ethnographic encounters. The engagement with the ‘object’ of my study – social work, refugee aid, volunteering – gradually led to concretise the theoretical framings (in the sense of an abductive process, cf. Agar 1996: 30–37). Hammersley & P. Atkinson (2007: 25–28) discern *topical* from *generic* research problems (in a parallel to the notions of *substantive* and *formal theories* in Grounded Theory, making reference to Glaser & Strauss 1967): While topical research problems are closer to the field, addressing e. g. practical and/or political issues in *emic* terms, the generic ones abstract from the research context and orient more intimately to scholarly (*etic*) concepts (Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 25). Once again, this is infused with a dichotomous notion of strangeness and familiarity – the research site on the one side, and academia on the other. In the context of my research, lines were often blurred. For instance, the notion of *Abgrenzung* (‘setting boundaries/distancing’) which is central to professional discourse in social work resonates with the scalar project of analytical distancing in ethnography I describe above. And indeed, ethnographic and social work practice do not form disconnected containers – for instance, Riemann (2009) proposes to use ethnographic techniques in social work training and practice.

Professionalism

The research problems which I noted at the beginning of my fieldwork were mostly inspired by sensibilising concepts of professionalism and expertise (Carr 2010; Goodwin 1994; Pfadenhauer 2003) and drew on multiple sources of knowledge: They consisted in problematising, i. e. applying a ‘defamiliarising gaze’ (sensu Breidenstein et al. 2015: 121–123) on (1) volunteering in refugee aid, (2) professionalism in social work, (3) the heterogeneous professional/ disciplinary backgrounds of staff members at the counselling centre, and (4) the institutional dealings with processes of change and transformation. I want to explain these initial research problems more in detail:

- (1) *Volunteering in refugee aid*: From early on, diverse actors such as professional associations and civil society groups had problematised the (lack of) professionalism of volunteers and untrained workers in refugee aid which were proliferating, e. g. in interpreting and language teaching, especially since the increase of asylum applications from 2015 on. The critique, however, had been circulating for a longer period of time: In 2012, the *Refugee Protest Camp Vienna* articulated their discontent with the quality and availability of critical interpreting services (see RefugeeProtestVienna 2012) and the *Netzwerk SprachenRechte* (‘network language rights’, see Flubacher & B. Busch 2022) held a discussion panel on the matter at the *Österreichische Linguistiktagung* (‘Austrian Linguistics Conference’) (ÖLT) in Vienna in December 2014 (Netzwerk SprachenRechte 2014). There was critical media coverage (see, for instance, the newspaper articles in *Die Presse*, Stuhlpfarrer 2016, and *Kurier*, Hodoschek 2018)¹⁶ and statements by professional associations, such as *UNIVERSITAS Austria*, association for translation and interpreting (UNIVERSITAS Austria 2015, 2016), and by civil society groups such as the aforementioned *Netzwerk SprachenRechte* who continued a series of critical statements on the topic (see Netzwerk SprachenRechte 2020). A parallel debate on language teaching could be observed, with statements by the *Österreichischer Verband für Deutsch als Fremdsprache/Zweitsprache*

¹⁶ Both are listed in a collection of press articles on the website of the *Österreichischer Verband der allgemein beeideten und gerichtlich zertifizierten Dolmetscher* (ÖVGD), an association of certified interpreters at Austrian courts (ÖVGD 2020).

(‘Austrian association of German as a foreign/second language’, ÖDaF, for instance Dengscherz et al. 2016; Kraml et al. 2015) for refugees. As measures for professionalisation of untrained interpreters which were – and are – a pervasive phenomenon in the Austrian context of asylum, a training curriculum for interpreters in asylum hearings was put in place at the Austrian adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*), the *Qualifizierungsmaßnahme für DolmetscherInnen im Asylverfahren* (‘qualificatory measure for interpreters in asylum procedures’; short QUADA, see Bergunde 2017). This course and a textbook were the result of a project – same acronym, different title, *Qualitätvolles Dolmetschen im Asylverfahren* (‘high-quality interpreting in asylum procedures’; QUADA as well) – funded by the *European Fund for Refugees* and the *Austrian ministry of domestic affairs* (BMI). Although the different actors represent diverse and partly conflicting interest groups, they agree in problematising professionalism in contexts of volunteering and/or untrained work. I remember that in discussions of research networks I attended, such as the *Netzwerk SprachenRechte* (‘network language rights’) and *Arbeitskreis Mehrsprachigkeit* (‘Working Group on Multilingualism’), participants carefully weighted their criticism of unskilled language-related work against a positive evaluation of activism, volunteer engagement and other bottom-up activities.

- (2) *Professionalism in social work*: There is a long lasting debate in the social sciences (and within social work studies) on professionalism in social work. A prominent strand of this discussion (at least in the German-speaking context) refers back to Oevermann (1996)¹⁷ who argues that social work cannot be professionalised by ways of standardisation. Referring to Oevermann (1996), Becker-Lenz & S. Müller (2009) argue that professionalism in social work consists precisely in enabling certainty in action when working in contexts which are not standardised or even standardisable. The picture of social work professionalism emerging from this discursive strand is that of an insecure terrain demanding constant self-reflection from the professionals on their own role. In this sense, the notion of professionalism does not denote a fixed and bounded container, but needs to be thought in terms of

17 For a more recent monograph see e.g. H. Müller (2016).

the interaction between an ideological field of categories yielding authority and the distribution/circulation of knowledge which both impinge on the professionals' agency.

- (3) *Heterogeneity of staff members' professional training/disciplinary background:* When I first came into contact with the organisation I noticed that there was an at least to me surprisingly high heterogeneity of the staff in terms of professional background and academic training in the relatively small team of approximately 10 people. As an outsider, I was struck by this heterogeneity and the complex juxtaposition of professional/academic affiliations (social scientists from a range of disciplines, a social worker, a jurisprudent, and an architect) with other competences emblematic of specialised roles within the team (specific language competences and the role of language broker or mediator) and labour relations (regular employment, volunteering, freelance). This observation led to the questions of how professionalism is reproduced, managed and, potentially, subject to pressures and transformation processes in this institutional context.
- (4) *Change and insecurity:* Due to the fact that many of the structures in refugee aid in Austria had been created hastily upon the increased arrival of displaced people in the years 2015 and 2016 – which is also true for the counselling centre – one could expect that these structures would be subjected to processes of change, depending on the fluctuating number of the target group and their changing needs as well as on political trends and decisions regarding the social welfare system and asylum. Expecting a high propensity to transformation, I directed my interest on explicit negotiations of institutional self-definitions or institutional reflexivity (see also Bulcaen 2016: 141–142), and on how actors dealt with institutional change. Not even a month into my fieldwork, I came to experience the fragility of the institutional set-up: When I arrived at the back office on May 4, 2016, for my fourth visit there, Sara asked me into her office, closed the door behind her and explained to me that the evening before, she had been negotiating until late at night for the continuation of the counselling centre. The result was a reduction of the personnel and an important restructuring of the project. She told me that after her deputy, I was the first person to learn

about this, and she warned me that she believed the mood among the staff was going to swing during the day. But the decisions reached far beyond that day: It was then that the team was split and later partly discontinued. Apart from such acute moments of institutional crisis, I noted that insecurity in everyday practice and dynamics of change were institutionalised a number of practices: in weekly, extensive staff meetings (two hours were no exception), so-called *Klausuren*, closed meetings once a year to discuss and jointly decide on the implementation of changes to the project, as well as monthly external supervision to monitor dynamics and conflicts among the staff. Thus, it was an impulse to take a look at the specific ‘solutions’ the institution had found to deal with threats to professional agency.

These initial research problems were subsequently differentiated and amended. Conceptually less pronounced in this overview is the political economic dimension of professionalism, which requires to ask in how far the professional is structured by inequalities, hierarchies and asymmetries, and to contextualise the circulation of knowledge as part of the circulation of resources and values in a wider sense. This dimension however became an important analytical lens in what followed. Another aspect is less pronounced in the above mentioned research problems, but became a central topical concern of this ethnography: ‘Language’ had only played a role as a theoretical backdrop and in form of theoretical assumptions underlying the ways I was to approach my data. When I started frequenting the counselling centre however, I soon became aware of ‘language’ as an object – in ways which I had not anticipated.

From the linguistic to the ethnographic and back

Above I have anchored my interest in the professional in my experience, but at the beginning of this project, there was also a rather abstract, theoretically formulated research interest drawing on positioning theory (Spitzmüller, Flubacher, et al. 2017): *How do subjects position themselves at the margins and interstitials of social/discursive order – i. e. where orders become contradictory, unreliable or unclear for the subject?*¹⁸ Positioning theory (Spitzmüller, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 2–7) allows to

¹⁸ This is how we formulated the research question for the exploratory project which was at the outset of this doctoral project: ‘*Kommunikative Professionalisierung*’ in der Flüchtlingshilfe. Eine

analyse social order as a product of interacting, speaking subjects, while at the same time understanding the speaking subject as a product of interactional discourse and the discursively reproduced social orders. Similar to Butler (1997a,b), the speaking subject can thus be conceptualised as fundamentally dependent in two ways: as dependent on social order which provides the subject with “an already circumscribed field of linguistic possibilities” (Butler 1997a: 129), and on others, as the subject’s acts of positioning are reactive to positions assigned by them previously in interaction (cf. the understanding of *address* in Butler 1997a: 30). But social order is not all encompassing (Laclau 1990): As a normative order, it produces its outside and margins with marginal and *abjected* subjectivities (Butler 1993: 3). And as argued especially in the context of a sociolinguistic of globalisation, normative orders coexist and enter in competition and hierarchies (Blommaert 2010: 37–39). Based on this theoretical work, an initial motivation for this study was to investigate positioning practices by subjects at the ‘interstitials’ of order with the goal to contribute to a semiotic model of social practice.

When I got access to the counselling centre and came into contact with discourses on refugee aid at the same time, I found *the professional* to be a heuristic entry point to study phenomena of order (see above). Pfadenhauer (2003: 115–117, 126, 207–208) conceptualises *professionalisation* from a sociology of knowledge perspective as the ‘institutionalised competence to display competence’ (*institutionalisierte Kompetenzdarstellungskompetenz*). Pfadenhauer (2003: 116) understands professionalism as a *mise-en-scène* by actors, that is, it highlights the dimensions of practical achievement and ascription of professionalism which draws on institutionalised emblems of personhood and competence (Pfadenhauer 2003: 126, 207–210; cf. also the notion of *enactment of expertise* in Carr 2010). Reformulated in terms of subjectivation and positioning: Professionalisation is the establishment, negotiation and challenge of meaning structures that serve as orientation, resource and constraint in everyday institutional practices, while orientation refers to the establishment of viable subject positions or the positioning vis-à-vis them, and resource and constraint are the two faces of the constitution

ethnographische Pilotstudie zu Bedarfen, Positionierungen und Praktiken in einem Wiener Projekt/ ‘Communicative Professionalization’ in the context of refugee aid. An ethnographic pilot study on requirements, positionings and practices in a Viennese organization, project lead: J. Spitzmüller/B. Busch for the Wiener Sprachgesellschaft, funded by the Vienna Chamber of Labour and the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna (see J. Hassemer 2017).

of agency (Butler 1997b). *Language* matters here in terms of semiotic practice as the question is about processes of meaning-making in the professional dimension of an institutional setting.

A specific concern, which derives from the Butlerian notion of the subject, are the subjects populating the 'margins' of normative orders, the not-quite fitting and/or abjected subjectivities (cf. Butler 2004b: 1–4). On a theoretical level the impulse was to explore phenomena of in-betweenness to order and how subjects position themselves in these interstitials of order. In terms of professionalisation¹⁹, the ambivalence of *volunteering* as well as of the proliferation of untrained workers in refugee aid were widely discussed at the time (see above). And in fact, the literature on social work professionalism locates a constitutive tension in the relationship between volunteering and social work, beyond the context of refugee aid (Nadai et al. 2005: 67–82).

This rather abstract sense of the concept of liminality was transformed when I came into contact with what was happening at the counselling centre. My first observations called into question if not the usefulness, then at least the sufficiency of the above concepts of semiotic practice and subjectivation. I found in-between positions, not so much among the volunteers at first (but I did so later – the problem was, I imagined volunteers as if not necessarily white Austrians, then at least people who had considerable biographical distance to being a refugee), but among the staff. And this is where language as a discursive object, names and classifications of languages and speakers, languages as resources came in. I noticed that there was a lot of talk about language. I became aware that language was a crucial resource for the work being done at the counselling centre (for comparable observations see also Codó & Garrido 2010) and a capital for certain workers, and not for all of them in the same way (see Chapter 6). A lot of work was put into managing the pool of interpreters and their work practices: the topic occupied an important portion of the weekly staff meetings. Generally, there was a recurrent problematisation of the linguistic repertoires of those staff members who spoke one of the clients' languages or *lingua francas*. In what followed, I

19 It seems that the liminal can be searched and found in all sorts of contexts and on every scale of the social: On a micro-level of a semiotic modelling of social practice this can mean to look at a concrete instance of signification as a liminal process of unfixing and fixing meaning (cf. also the remark by Nakassis 2012: 627 on the liminality of citational phenomena).

observed more closely their positioning in work meetings. Especially Yasmin, a counsellor who speaks Arabic as her first language, seemed to display an array of ambivalences in her positioning as a counsellor, often making reference to her linguistic repertoire. In the staff meetings she stood out with her lively and charismatic storytelling in constructed dialogue (Tannen 1986), stylising clients, and inclination to teasing her colleagues. In these narrations, she often portrayed emotionally and professionally challenging encounters with clients. While she usually packaged her experiences in self-ironic and tragicomical narratives, Sami, another Arabic-speaking counsellor was more explicit about the discontent with which he sometimes experienced his role as a mediator – calling his competence in Arabic a *Fluch* ('curse'; as mentioned in Chapter 1; see also J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020).

An anthropological concept which captures the ambivalent position of mediating roles is that of the *cultural broker* (see Lindquist 2015). In her work on female migrant NGO workers in Austria, de Jong (2015, 2016) explicitly draws on a critical, postcolonial usage of the concept which highlights the ambivalence in the implication with hegemonic power relations which constrains the specific agency coming with the ascribed mediating function: She shows how their position serves to reinforce normative discourses of 'integration' (de Jong 2016: 52) by virtue of their exemplary status as 'well-integrated' facilitators who assume a 'bridging' function between migrants and the 'host'-society. Thereby, they allow an incorporation of the racialised and gendered Other into the normative order (de Jong 2016: 47–48) without effectively dissolving the boundaries between 'migrants' and 'Austrians' (de Jong 2016: 53–57).

When I tried to assemble the different brokering roles I had encountered at the site, I found it difficult to fit them all under one notion: some were paid workers, others were volunteers, some apparently successful, others struggling with their role. In the context of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, there is not *the* prototypical broker, but a range of possible profiles, trajectories, and experiences. Boundaries are blurred not only between interpreter and counsellor, but also between interpreter and client and counsellor and client (for more details see Chapter 6).

Here, the concept of *linguistic labour* (Boutet 2001; Duchêne 2011; Heller & Duchêne 2016) – and related concepts such as the historical figure of the *language*

worker (Boutet 2001, 2012), processes of *language speculations* (*spéculations langagières*; Duchêne & Daveluy 2015) and *language investment* (Duchêne 2016; Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018, in response to Darvin & Norton 2015; Norton Peirce 1995, drawing on Bourdieu 1998c) – provides a productive lens onto the the manyfold brokering roles as it analytically grasps the whole range of phenomena, while also accounting for specificities and differences. These concepts are instrumental in describing the ways language or linguistic practice is valorised as a resource in social life, the subject positions associated with socio-historical market conditions and the logics subjects orient to in their language-related and/or -mediated practices. As an analytical lens, the concept of linguistic labour thus allows to describe the differentiation of a multiplicity of interstitial, ‘liminal’ positions in the institutional and professional order (as compared to a simplifying triplet of counsellor, interpreter and client). Instead of looking at potentially infinite deviant cases from idealised roles such as the counsellor, the interpreter and/or the volunteer, linguistic labour provides a common frame of analysis which highlights the symbolic and economic interrelationships between the different positions.

The concept of the cultural – or linguistic – broker is still useful as it throws light on ambivalent power relations and the specific conditions for agency in these mediating roles. But what the theoretical frame of linguistic labour adds is a political-economic angle (Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017; see Section 2.5) on the language aspect of the broker role (as for instance in Kraft 2020). In the context of this study, this means e. g. to attend to (1) how categories of actors are differentiated at the counselling centre, and which positions are accessible to whom; (2) how this differentiation is connected to the circulation of resources, i. e. in how far it is implicated in giving or denying access to symbolic and economic capital (*sensu* Bourdieu 1986); (3) how subjects, and in particular the different types of brokers, ‘navigate’ these circumstances. It also means to understand the counselling centre as part of the institutionalised regimentation of migration and citizenship in Austria (see also Hess & Karakayalı 2010; de Jong 2016).

While looking at my data through the lens of linguistic labour, the professional (as a figure, as a value-orientation) re-appeared over and over again, in accounts gathered in interviews, in regulations fixed in institutional documents and in the practices I was able to participate in: for instance, when the manipulation

of communication becomes the focus of professionalising work processes (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), when language is discursively framed as a resource and a ‘vulnerable point’ in the enaction of professional personae and when specific linguistic repertoires enable and constrain a range of professional positions individuals are able to assume and access in the institutional division of (linguistic) labour (see Chapter 6). This suggests an understanding of professionalism not merely as an interactive achievement of professional positions. It means to take into account how subjectivities are institutionally regimented, how they are differentially valorised and where their valorisation occurs – the so-called *centres of value production* (Silverstein 2013) or *markets* (Heller 2010b; Heller & Duchêne 2016; Kelly-Holmes 2016, drawing on Bourdieu 1986). Therefore in this study, I understand the ‘professional’ in semiotic and political-economic terms, and more precisely in the entanglement of linguistic labour and social work professionalism in institutionally organised refugee support work.

3.5 Collecting and organising data

Data collection took place over an arch of two and a half years, between April 2016 and September 2018. As described above, the field relations and modes of participation evolved over time (see Section 3.3). In short, there was a phase of exploring the field (roughly, April 2016 – mid 2016), an intermediate phase of maintaining contact (mid 2016 – September 2017), a phase of active participation as a volunteer (October 2017 – September 2018) and one of focused data collection (January 2018 – February 2018 for the staff meetings, January 2018 – August 2018 for the interviews). In the remainder of the chapter, I give a brief overview of the types of data collected along the research process, the procedure of assembling and organising the data, and finally the procedure which led to the analytical cases presented in the empirical chapters in Part II of the thesis.

Description of data collected

Doing ethnographic fieldwork, one is confronted with the complexity of social life (Blommaert & Jie 2010: 24–26). Therefore, the process of data collection cannot be planned in every detail in advance but remains open, explorative and,

in a way, opportunistic (Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 30). This is because concrete opportunities to gather interesting ‘new’ data emerge only with the learning process (Blommaert & Jie 2010: 26) along the way or on invitation by the people one engages with.

Fieldwork has to start from the assumption that what is observed will be chaotic. Also, we need to understand that *a priori*, we never know the boundaries of events. We never know exactly in advance what we will need to include in our observations and what not. (emphasis in the original Blommaert & Jie 2010: 26)

This explorative approach to data collection (cf. also Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 9) comes with a large array of different types of data being collected. For this project, the pertinence of particular ‘pieces’ of data was evaluated at a later stage when sighting and cataloguing the data. In total over 400 tokens were collected (given that the boundaries of the corresponding phenomena themselves deserve problematisation, quantification of these ‘pieces’ of data remains somewhat awkward). The data was organised with help of the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA (VERBI Software 2021). The purpose of this choice was to have a repository which would allow for (1) assembling all the data gathered, (2) grouping it according to flexible criteria in an effectively open number of (potentially overlapping) sets, (3) annotating pieces of data and (4) searching lexical items within the corpus. Moreover, the function of connecting documents by hyperlinks proved very helpful in facilitating the reading process (see below). An inventory of the data is listed in Table 3.1 on the following page, grouped by genre. A description of the institutional context from which they derive is added as well as the number of tokens gathered.

As illustrated by the inventory in Table 3.1 on the next page, the data collected includes different types of data of textual, audio, visual, and combined modalities. In the following, I want to briefly elaborate on three types of data which are central to the analytical work undertaken of this thesis. These are fieldnotes, audio-recordings of workplace interactions and of interview interactions. Other types of data were mostly gathered in function of the former (for instance, a sketch or a language portrait at the occasion of an interview). They include, apart from the mentioned language portraits and sketches, photographs, institutional

documents and communication (such as e-mails or leaflets), as well as fragments of media discourse.

Table 3.1: Inventory of data collected between April 2016 and September 2018 in and around the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, grouped by genre, context and number of tokens added where sensible.

Data type	Context/description	Tokens
Fieldnotes:		
Observational notes	Staff meetings	58
	Counselling	5
	<i>Recherche-Eck</i>	26
	Afterwork drinks/parties	5
	Complementing audio-recordings other NGO	17
Analytical notes		13
Audio-recordings/interactional data:		
Workplace interactions	Staff meetings	8
	Other meetings	2
Oral accounts	Interviews with	
	...counsellors	10
	...volunteers	5
	...employed interpreter	1
	...civilian service person	2
Visual data:		
Language portraits	Interviews	5
Sketches	Interviews	2
Photographs	'Office landscape'	85
Institutional documents:		
Minutes	Work meetings	151
Guidelines	Office work, counselling, staff meetings	7
Information material	<i>Recherche-Eck</i>	2
	Workshops (slides/handouts)	4

Institutional forms	Office work, counselling, staff meetings	5
Official communication	from the NGO	10
	from surrounding institutions (BFA, FSW etc.)	39
Communication:		
Mail/ chat	Contact with staff members, third parties	27
Media products:		
Print/ online media coverage	in Austrian (and some German) media on the NGO and pertinent political developments	40

Observation and fieldnotes

Participant observation was my primary mode of contact with the people and practices at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. As mentioned earlier, I participated in different (interactional and institutional) roles – for instance, as an acknowledged bystander in counselling situations, a ‘marginal’ participant in the office and in staff meetings, and as an active agent (volunteer) at the *Recherche-Eck*. If possible, I produced quick jottings (cf. Pritzker & Perrino 2022: 143) in a little notebook which I would later work into textually richer descriptions, narrative and reflective accounts on my computer after returning to my desk. In the document header, I added some basic meta-data – date, time frame and place of observation, as well as date of fieldnote writing. I would write one single fieldnote organised in sections when I observed several different events on a single day (for instance, the staff meeting in the morning, the *Recherche-Eck* in the afternoon and a training workshop in the evening). I also used these occasions to sketch first analytical ideas as well as thoughts on how to proceed further with my fieldwork (whom to interview, what to ask, what to observe). Most of the time, I attached these analytical reflections to my observational notes (separated by a paragraph). Some of the fieldnotes are analytical notes without additional observational material (n=13; this was the case when I wanted to note down

ideas without having observational notes to write). Each fieldnote was saved in a separate file on my computer.

In the bulk of my fieldnotes (n=58), I gathered observations from the weekly staff meetings in which I participated in regularly between mid May 2016 and the beginning of March 2018²⁰. Another large part contains observations from my work at the *Recherche-Eck* (n=26) where I was working between the beginning of October 2017 and mid September 2018, as well as observations accompanying audio-recordings (n=17). A smaller number (n=5) of fieldnotes contains observations from counselling situations – which were not the primary focus of my investigation, also out of ethical considerations (see Section 3.3), yet at the same time very rich sets of data – as well as informal afterwork gatherings (n=5). A last category is constituted by notes from my brief contact with another NGO in Vienna (n=2).

Audio-recorded workplace interactions

In total I captured 10 work-meetings at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* in audio-recordings (an overview with detailed meta-data is given in Table 3.2 on the facing page). The earliest were (1) a semi-formal work-meeting on Arabic terminology for counselling between only two other staff members during the exploratory phase and (2) a long planned meeting on the ‘limits of counselling’, that is on the definition of the boundaries of service.

From quite early on in my fieldwork, I had agreed with the management that I would record a series of staff-meetings. However, for organisational reasons, I was able put this plan into practice only in January and February 2018. Beforehand, I had announced my intention to the staff and offered to contact me in case they had doubts or objections. Furthermore I had asked the manager to discuss the matter in my absence with her team in order to minimise a potential threshold for refusal connected to my immediate presence. Finally, I recorded a series of 8 staff-meetings (weekly between January 09 and February 27, 2018;

20 Some of these notes are more idiosyncratic minutes than observational notes: as I had grown ‘too’ accustomed to the practice, my fieldnotes tended to reproduce the metrical patterning of the event – a sequence of agenda items – in the textual form. I was, after a pilot-phase in early summer 2016, mostly participating in order to maintain contact while I was seeking funding for my project. Therefore, the perhaps low density in ‘new’ observational material was less problematic (and apart from that, is a repository for tracing recurring patterns).

the overall length ranging between 1h11m07s and 2h56m11s, average 2h13m46s) after which I ended regular fieldwork. I was present at all but one audio-recorded session and took additional notes. At one occasion (January 16, 2018), I was not able to participate and asked one of the staff members to record the meeting for me in order not to produce a gap in the traceable development of topics and discussions across the two months. In addition to the audio-recording and my fieldnotes, I was able to obtain the minutes of the corresponding staff-meetings (n=8; out of a total of n=151 documents containing minutes from different work meetings, mostly staff meetings, which I have been given access to).

Table 3.2: Overview of audio-recorded work-meetings with meta-data. Number of participants includes the researcher (an asterisk* marks my absence). If the recording consists of two separate files (for instance, when switched off during a break), the number is marked by double asterisk** and indicates the total sum.

no.	date	description	overall length
1	2016-07-15	meeting on Arabic counselling terminology (3 participants)	1h25m40s
2	2017-10-23	meeting on the 'limits to counselling' (8 participants)	1h17m16s
3	2018-01-09	staff meeting (9 participants)	2h08m41s
4	2018-01-16	staff meeting (6* participants)	2h32m05s**
5	2018-01-23	staff meeting (8 participants)	2h56m11s**
6	2018-01-30	staff meeting (7 participants)	1h21m07s
7	2018-02-06	staff meeting (9 participants)	1h11m07s
8	2018-02-13	staff meeting (9 participants)	2h42m17s**
9	2018-02-20	staff meeting (8 participants)	2h24m40s**
10	2018-02-27	staff meeting (9 participants)	2h34m00s**

At the beginning of each staff-meeting I was going to record, I handed out consent forms to everyone present and announced the moment I would turn on the recorder. Then I collected the consent forms from everyone present and handed out photocopies of the previous week's consent forms.²¹

²¹ I was mocked for my insistence on this procedure – many staff members voiced the opinion

Audio-recorded interview interactions

I conducted semi-structured interviews (Misoch 2015: 65) at several stages of my fieldwork (see the overview in Table 3.3 on the next page). Generally these interviews were conceptualised as dialogical events of co-constructed meaning-making (cf. Blommaert & Jie 2010: 42–44; see also Deppermann 2013a; Talmy 2011) based on a series of open-ended questions and narrative impulses I used to prepare beforehand with the aim of eliciting narrative and evaluative sequences as well as informational content. Question items were dynamically modified in the progression of my fieldwork, according to my own knowledge of the site and the particular interviewee as well as current contextual relevancies (of the site and/or political developments). However, a number of topics remained fairly consistent. These included the interviewees' working life trajectories, their work tasks and responsibilities, 'unwritten rules' and their work place socialisation, perceived team relations as well as perceived dynamics of change in the workplace.

During the first time, I added an additional phase to the interviews where I used to ask the participant to draw a language portrait: this technique from language biographical research (B. Busch 2017a)²² is used to elicit reflective, biographical narrative and affective positionings. To this end, the interviewee is asked to visualise their linguistic repertoire using differently coloured crayons for different languages / ways of speaking, filling in a pre-fabricated bodily silhouette²³ (or drawing their own from scratch; see B. Busch 2017a: 54). In the context of this ethnographic project, the intention was to obtain data which would allow me to trace linkages between narrated language biographies and languaged selves in the work context, as well as positionings (evaluation and affect) towards linguistic resources and repertoires (the *body-image*, cf. B. Busch 2021b, building on Schilder 1935). However, I had difficulties with the acceptance of this method, especially among the counsellors. This was one (but not the only) reason why I successively abandoned the method.

that everyone had been sufficiently informed – this made it difficult at times to maintain the right timing. Despite this, I continued to adhere to the procedure described so far for practical and ethical reasons (structure of consent forms, flexibility with new participants).

22 The portrait was initially used as a pedagogical tool for raising *language awareness* (Krumm & Jenkins 2001; see B. Busch 2021a: 41).

23 The silhouette used in my project is freely available on heteroglossia.net: <https://www.heteroglossia.net/Sprachportraet.123.0.html> (last checked: 2022-11-09).

Table 3.3: Interviews conducted with meta-data (where the recording is fragmented and/or split, the number is marked by an asterisk* and indicates the sum of all separate recordings).

no.	date	pseudonym & function	portrait	overall length
1	2016-10-10	Yasmin, counsellor	✓	0h53m39s
2	2016-11-11	John, [then former] volunteer interpreter	✓	1h37m02s
3	2016-12-12	Till, counsellor	✓	0h47m28s
4	2018-01-09	Sara, manager/ counsellor	–	2h16m18s
5	2018-01-24	Bernhard, legal counsellor	–	1h29m39s
6	2018-02-01	Kourosh, volunteer interpreter	✓	1h33m09s
7	2018-02-01	Sebastian, legal counsellor	–	2h45m46s
8	2018-02-07	Helena, counsellor	–	2h56m29s
9	2018-02-09	Till, counsellor	–	1h42m13s*
10	2018-02-11	Yamin, [then former] civilian service person	–	2h02h58s
11	2018-02-22	Karoline, counsellor	–	2h15m12s
12	2018-02-28	Alena, counsellor	–	1h36m09s*
13	2018-04-04	Jamal, volunteer interpreter	–	1h58m21s
14	2018-05-07	Jaleh, volunteer interpreter	✓	1h2539s
15	2018-05-09	Markus, civilian service person	–	1h40m12s
16	2018-05-11	Mona, [then former] counsellor	–	0h55m07s
17	2018-07-03	Besim, volunteer interpreter	–	1h43m11s
18	2018-08-20	Puneh, employed interpreter	–	2h19m12s

Another reason for ceasing to ask interviewees to draw language portraits was a shift in the function of my interviews. The major part of interviews with staff members was conducted in parallel to the audio-recording of the staff-meetings. This allowed me, in addition to my recurring questions, to directly refer to topics and dynamics I had observed at the staff meetings. To this end, I made some limited use of replaying bits of the recordings of the staff meeting (inspired by Rampton 1995: 22–23): I would play a short, selected bit from the recording of the recent staff meeting (a few turns) and use this as an impulse for the conversation with the interviewee. A detailed overview of the interviews with date, name, institutional function and length of the recording is given in Table 3.3 on the preceding page (where the interview involved a language portrait, this is further specified).

Before each interview, I handed my interview partner a consent form (which I made available in German and English). I would give them time to read the form and ask their questions. In certain cases, when I was not sure about the interviewee's reading proficiency in German/English (as with some of the volunteer interpreters) or when they signaled comprehension difficulties to me, I would offer to go through and explain the text bit by bit. When no more questions or doubts were being raised, I would ask participants to sign the form and return it to me (I would then return them a copy).

A two-staged reading process

The data production and analysis happened in a recursive, dialogical and abductive process in which I followed the data, recursively framing it through topical and generic research problems (cf. Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007: 25–28 see Section 3.4). A topical research problem would concern, for instance, the meaning of *setting boundaries* as used by several actors in the field. A generic one could be the question of how actors interactively position themselves at the interstitials of institutionalised categories of actors (such as 'interpreter' and 'counsellor'). As laid out above (see Section 3.1), the research process can be conceptualised to play out in a field of tension between strangeness and familiarity. Methodologically appropriating this 'lead difference' (Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 11) and applying

it to both ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ outlooks on the observed phenomena²⁴, the aim is to achieve both a defamiliarising gaze on the data and an irritation to theoretical concepts (sensu Amann & Hirschauer 1997: 38). The scheme in Figure 3.1 illustrates the analytical procedure – the overall organisation of the analytical process (on the left of the scheme), the specific steps taken, set in relation to the lead difference of strangeness and familiarity, and the concrete analytical products, micro-analyses and case studies (in the middle).

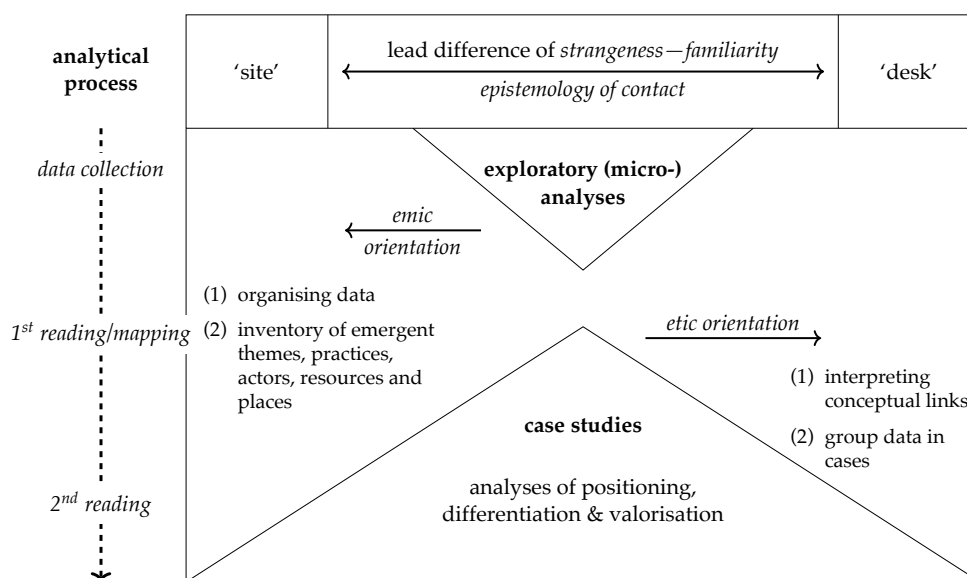


Figure 3.1: Organisation of a staged reading process in the context of my project, based on Breidenstein et al. (2015: 109–176), and contextualised in the above methodological reflections (especially Amann & Hirschauer 1997; Slembrouck 2005; see Section 3.1).

Already in parallel with the process of data collection, exploratory analyses (micro-analyses of interactional data, small-scale cases) were carried out. In these first small-scale analytical cases, I took up aspects which had become salient in my ongoing engagement with the field. I focused on several dimensions of in-betweenness emerging from the data, among them liminal positions (1) in the

²⁴ By this, I do not mean that emic and etic perspectives can be fully separated (cf. Jacobs & Slembrouck 2010: 243). As outlined across this chapter, I understand fieldwork per se as a dialogical process. I speak of *emic/etic orientations* to indicate a directionality to defamiliarising techniques (which apply in either ‘direction’).

professional and institutional order (e.g. in the institutionalisation of language work, processes of inclusion/exclusion), (2) in the economic dimension (i. e. paid and unpaid linguistic labour), and (3) in reflective and affective practice as key aspects in the negotiation and affirmation of institutional / professional boundaries.

With the data collection completed, I engaged in a two-staged reading process of the gathered materials (cf. Breidenstein et al. 2015: 125–126): A first reading in chronological order served to obtain both a broadening and a deepening of the analytic scope. The intended ‘push’ of this reading was to yield emergent, ‘emic’ categories and themes through an open coding process in MAXQDA. The precise steps were the following: (1) assignment of open *codes* to text sequences; (2) *linking* fieldnotes to other pieces of data with hyperlinks wherever there is a reference (for instance, when an institutional document is mentioned in the fieldnotes) or when references to an object, place or event converge (for instance, minutes and fieldnotes of a particular staff meeting); (3) writing of short memos attached to the pieces of data with to-dos and questions arising during the reading; (4) assignment of each piece of data to a range of ‘sets’²⁵ defined by place (for instance, *Seegasse* or *Beckergasse*) and event type (for instance, *Recherche-Eck* and *counselling*). This allowed me to organise the data gathered and produce an inventory of themes, practices, actors, resources and places (cf. Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 105–111; see Figure 3.1 on the preceding page in the left half).

In parallel to this first reading I produced several tentative maps and webs (on paper and with sticky notes) of the data from a conceptual perspective – for instance, mapping types of phenomena, practices, specific events, or categories emergent from my reading of the data to topical concepts like professionalism, affect, linguistic repertoires etc. as well as to more generic concepts such as positioning, figure of personhood etc. which I saw as candidate entry points for analysis. This step served me to provide a defamiliarising, ‘etic’ outlook on the categories and themes formed in the reading process.

The first reading and the mapping was followed by a second, more selective

25 A set in MAXQDA is a collection of data pieces outside the folder structure where data is first organised – a piece of data can be assigned to multiple sets, but it can be stored only in one folder. The folders were organised by data type and further subdivided chronologically.

reading process which followed analytical interconnections established in the material during the first reading and through the mapping procedure, thus ‘breaking the chronological order’ of the gathered materials (Breidenstein et al. 2015: 126; see also Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 111–113). From these interconnected data, I assembled *cases* (in a broad sense of the term) which were particularly dense in terms of material attestation and conceptual linkages (for instance, the textual trajectory of the phrase *we have no apartments*). The cases, in part, were built on the earlier exploratory analyses as to systematically extend and reanalyse them. Potential cases were assembled by creating further sets in MAXQDA and adding all pertinent pieces of data found in the second reading phase.

The cases assembled – (1) the (above mentioned) textual trajectory of the phrase *we have no apartments* as a case study of boundary-making (see Chapter 4), (2) an aggregation of cases relating to reflective practices as a study of situated notions of reflexivity (see Chapter 5), and (3) a number of cases around the phenomenon of linguistic labour (see Chapter 6) – were then separately used as a basis for further micro-analyses of positioning practices, processes of differentiation and their material and bodily-affective effects.

Part II

Ethnographic case studies

4 Reproduction of institutional order: (Meta-)communicative labour

4.1 Trans-situational meaning

*We have no apartments.*¹ During my fieldwork at the counselling centre I heard and read this phrase over and over again, in different variants and translations, throughout different contexts and in different participation frameworks. In this chapter, the reiterated usage of this phrase shall serve as a case study of two interrelated phenomena: a process of institutional transformation (contingent upon processes of change of wider political and societal scale) and boundary-making practices as well as their discursive regimentation in the context of the transformation process. A specific focus lies on the ways in which counsellors (and, partly, other institutional agents such as the volunteers) position themselves in the boundary-making practices both towards the client Other and the ongoing changes in the organisation and its environment.

In spring 2016 when I started my fieldwork, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* was in midst of a shift from offering material support to communicative services. As mentioned above (in the *Introduction* in Chapter 1), in 2014, the counselling centre had started out as project with the purpose to bundle and manage accommodation offers from private real estate owners to asylum seekers. It had functioned as a broker, a point of contact and gatekeeper for two parties: it communicated the possibility for asylum seekers to live in a private home outside the state-sponsored accommodations (the so-called ‘camps’; see Chapter 1) to the asylum seekers themselves and to the wider public, acquiring both ‘clients’ and ‘donors’ for its project. Based on a set of criteria (such as location, condition and cost), the

¹ This chapter is the extended version of an article which has appeared in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (J. Hassemer 2021).

staff decided whether or not to include accommodation offers in their portfolio, selected clients from a waiting list, ‘matched’ them to the offers and watched over the legality of contractual relationships. For a brief period, the organisation performed an active humanitarian intervention in a relatively unconstrained space where the state infrastructures had failed in the course of 2015.

In the context of a changing public and political discourse on migration and asylum in Austria (Meinhart et al. 2018; Rheindorf & Wodak 2018), the initial euphoria in which private real estate owners had offered their vacant property to asylum seekers in 2014/2015 soon shrank. At the same time, federal and national policies regulating the possibility for asylum seekers to live in private accommodation became ever more constraining (culminating in the *Fremdenrecht-sänderungsgesetz 2017* ‘amendment to the alien law 2017’, Bundesministerium für Inneres 2017). Under threat of being closed down, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* shifted its purpose from the provision of material resources (access to housing) to that of communicative services – assistance with house-hunting, rent contracts, disputes with landlords and neighbours, application for housing-related welfare benefits etc. In addition, the volunteers’ project *Recherche-Eck* (‘search corner’) was set up.

Yet, after the reorientation from brokering for apartments to counselling on housing matters, the demand for private accommodation did not simply cease to exist and clients continued to ask to be allocated an apartment. Indeed, smaller numbers of housing offers continued to be acquired by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and were used for a restricted category of *emergency cases*. For the counsellors, this exacerbated the ethical quandaries already entailed in their previous role as brokers – having to decide who gets an apartment and who does not – and a perceived lack of agency towards the precarious living conditions of their clients. I often observed how counsellors tried to remedy this situation by orienting to their clients’ affective needs, trying to *give them hope* despite their situation or to let them vent their anger. Apart from such individual efforts, a communicative apparatus was put in place to regulate and cover up the continuing brokering activities. This apparatus was considered necessary in order to partially maintain the original agenda of giving access to private housing on a much smaller scale. It consisted in standardising and scripting the counselling practices through a *Beratungsleitfaden* (‘counselling guidelines’), regulating affect in counsellor–client relationships by

formalising *Beziehungsregeln* ('relationship rules'), emphasising the concept of *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries [towards the client]'), and instituting a regime of frontstage communication in which the phrase *we have no apartments* was an emblematic element (cf. Codó 2008: 69–148, for similar observations in a government agency in Spain).

The phrase *we have no apartments* was part of a constant communicative and metacommunicative boundary-work between institutional agents and clients. Although most of the clients probably had no direct insight into the quantity of housing available and the precise logics of distribution, as we shall see, at least a certain proportion of the clients knew that the phrase was not 'literally true'. Despite this apparent mismatch with the knowledge circulating in the periphery of the counselling centre and despite substantive challenging by some of the clients, the phrase remained a constant in communicative exchanges between clients, counsellors and volunteers. As some clients tried to tease out more precise information about the logics of access to housing opportunities commanded by the counselling centre, there was a concerted effort by the counsellors to keep this line of communication in place, advising the volunteers to adhere to it as well. This boundary-work, I argue, is thus both *communicative* and *meta-communicative*: "speakers not only act" – for instance, by uttering the words *we have no apartments* – "but [they] also act on their (speech) acts by working to establish how their verbal performances are to be interpreted" (Carr 2011: 159) by commenting on, negotiating and regimenting speech in its communicative form and practice – in short, by *communicating on communication*. Thus, not only do counsellors and volunteers deploy their communicative repertoires as resources of labour (Boutet 2008; Duchêne 2011; Heller 2010a; see Chapter 6), but they also uphold said communication regime across frontstage encounters by working on their communication (cf. Carr 2011). I argue that such (meta-)communicative work is ambivalent in terms of agency for the counsellors and volunteers at the counselling centre: while it opens up a certain leeway of action both on an individual (to navigate the situation, to 'do one's job') and an institutional level of scale (to continue the operation under changing conditions), it also comes with a reproduction of those discourses which drive the process of refashioning the counselling centre – for instance, discourses of responsabilisation which have also been described in the context of neoliberal transformations of welfare (cf.

for instance Lessenich 2008; Martín Rojo & Del Percio 2019a). As we shall see, the reproduction of these discourses threatens to undermine institutional agents' activist conceptions of their work, driving a process of institutionalisation with ambivalent, both enabling and constraining effects on the counsellors' agency in reiterative practice (sensu Butler 1997a). Conceptually, I propose to capture this ambivalence in agency by the notion of the *post-sovereign subject* (Butler 1997a: 139) which is both constrained and enabled by discursive order.

In this chapter, I set out to understand the meaning institutional agents produce as they repeat variants of this phrase again and again and to delineate the communicative and metacommunicative labour that this constitutes for institutional agents. This will lead me to ask about the function it acquires in the reproduction of institutional order and professional positions or agency in this process of reiteration. In order to do so, I draw on a range of analytical notions which have been developed to conceptualise trans-situational meaning – the emergence of social order, or the typification of practices, objects and subjectivities (cf. Wortham & Reyes 2020). From a methodological point of view, Wortham & Reyes (2020) propose a multi-staged analysis which aims at delineating the emergence of *cross-event context* (Wortham & Reyes 2020: 22–26, 68–69) by analytically tracing what they call 'pathways' between singular discursive events. Pathways are explicit or implicit linkages between events that reiterate a configuration of indexicals, be it by quotation or by mere parallelism (Wortham & Reyes 2020: 68).

But before moving to an analysis, I will explore more in depth the notions of reiteration, scale and (meta-)communicative labour. I do so in order to develop an analytical frame which allows me to arrive from an analysis of the emergence of meaning to an account of the emergence of agency in the observed practice. After this conceptual introduction, the ensuing sections will explore the way in which the phrase *we have no apartments* became a recurring token in the communication between counsellors, interpreters and clients at the counselling centre (Section 4.2), the function the phrase acquired in maintaining professional agency and the institutional order (Section 4.3) and critical re-interpretations of the phrase (Section 4.4). To conclude, I pull the threads of analysis together, discussing the constraints and the potential for agency of (meta-)communicative labour in the institutional order of the counselling centre (Section 4.5).

Reiteration

By *reiteration* I intend a generic, semiotic term for repetition referring to anything on a continuum from explicit uptake ('citation') to regularities across time construed ex-post (cf. Bauman 2004: 5, Nakassis 2012: 627). It may involve all sorts of linguistic phenomena, a sequence of signs (like the phrase *we have no apartments*) or a semiotic form (e.g. a genre, J. E. Goodman et al. 2014: 450). While 'citationality' has been described as characterised by more or less explicit metapragmatic framing – "the construal and uptake of some act as a citation" (Nakassis 2012: 627) – reiteration can be understood as a broader category of intertextual relationships (see also Spitzmüller & Warnke 2011: 188–189). However, the distinction is not as clear-cut because explicitness and implicitness of metapragmatic signalling form a continuum (Verschueren 2004). In any case, to speak of reiteration presupposes interpretive work, be it localisable in the observed praxes themselves, leaving "indexical traces", or in some form of ex-post metapragmatic framing or commentary (cf. Nakassis 2012: 627).

In the following, I refer to two different disciplinary traditions of the concept which have little interconnection so far: In post-structuralist approaches in (language) philosophy, the concept has a stable presence, though under various names: it appears, for instance, in the notions of *commentary* (Foucault 1971: 26–28), *intertextuality* (Kristeva 1974), *citationality* and *iterability* (Derrida 1972), *resignification* (Butler 1997a, 1999). This list is definitely not exhaustive and it is not the purpose here to trace the history and interconnections of the conceptual assemblage in post-structuralist philosophy. But if I limit myself in the following to the conceptual work of Judith Butler, one has to bear in mind that her thought does not stand in an intellectual void, but is based on (among other) a densely interconnected network of scholars working in the 1970s in France. In Linguistic anthropology, the concept is most emblematically represented by the notions of *entextualisation*, *de-* and *recontextualisation* (Bauman 2004; Bauman & Briggs 1990; Briggs & Bauman 1992; Urban 1996) as well as that of the *speech chain* and *enregisterment* (Agha 2007).

The main difference between the two approaches is that post-structuralist concepts of reiteration carry the legacy of structuralist, Saussurean semiotics with its two-partite sign model, while the linguistic anthropological discussion is

based on a tri- (or nine-) partite, Peircean sign model (cf. Gal & Irvine 2019: 94, 96). These divergent underlying models of semiosis have consequences on how identity and difference are thought to emerge in meaning making across events as suggested by Nakassis (2012).

Reiteration as citationality

Butler (1997a) analyses reiteration as relations of citationality (following Derrida 1972, cf. the similar concept of the *commentary* in Foucault 1971), thereby conflating distinctions between (explicit) citation and other (more implicit) forms of repetition. Her assumption is that the social is constituted by reiterative – ‘citational’ – practice. She argues that any utterance or act draws on signs that have been used before – it cannot but ‘cite’ them. These are sedimented in authoritative models or norms which are re-instantiated in the same process of ‘citation’ (see for instance Butler 1993: XXI–XXIV). A naturalisation of such authoritative models as normality requires the citational relationship to be erased (Butler 1993: XXI–XXII; Butler 1997a: 49–51). Thus, singular sign usages (re-)produce ‘norms’ through repetition. The norm weighs back onto the sign usage which is then understood as its instantiation, but it never fully *is* the norm it instantiates (Butler 2004b: 40–56). A sign usage is made intelligible through the workings of norms, as they “impos[e] a grid of legibility on the social and defin[e] the parameters of what will and will not appear within the domain of the social” (Butler 2004b: 42). The potential for agency lies in subversive recontextualisation (resignification) with its potential to shift the normative (Butler 1997a: 157). For my analysis in this chapter, I mobilise the post-structuralist notion of reiteration to shed light on agency in emergent trans-situational meaning. As a *post-sovereign subject* (Butler 1997a: 139), the speaking subject is both enabled and constrained by normative and discursive processes which establish it as the (more or less) sovereign author of an utterance.

In a critique, Nakassis (2012: 635) suggests that Butler’s notion of citationality is based on the assumption that type–token relations are fundamental for the emergence of meaning: the ‘norm’ is a ‘type’ (or a higher order ideological construct), and its instantiations in practice are ‘tokens’. *Identity* and *difference* in social life are then analytically derived from type–token relations, as embodied

approximations of tokens to (and deviations from) the normative types. Based on a Peircean, reflexive model of semiosis, Nakassis (2012) argues that in Butler's and Derrida's approach, there is a danger of essentialising identity and difference, namely of understanding identity and difference as essential qualities of symbolic acts (which of course contradicts their agenda). Therefore, he argues for retaining the differentiation between citation and mere repetition and insisting on the reflexive character of semiosis: "[W]hile type–token relations might undergird all symbolic activity (including performatives), not all such symbolic acts reflexively diagram that fact" (Nakassis 2012: 635). Where Butler's model of semiosis-as-instantiation assumes only one dimension in the interpretation of signs – sameness and difference – the Peircean model assumed by Nakassis multiplies the dimensions through the notion of the *interpretant* as a mediating sign. An interpretant is the assumed model of the relationship between a sign and its object which, apart from one of similarity (iconicity), can also be one of contiguity / cooccurrence (indexicality) and 'convention' (symbolism) (Gal & Irvine 2019: 96–102). In this view, Butler's notion of reiteration-as-citatoriality reduces the social to relations of iconicity between tokens and types – tokens iconically reproducing a type (or failing to do so). Nakassis (2012: 635) hence argues that empirical work on contextual and reflexive dynamics in sign relations is needed for an understanding of citational practice.

Entextualisation, de- and recontextualisation

With their conceptualisation of reiteration as *entextualisation*, *de-* and *recontextualisation*, Bauman & Briggs (1990) direct the attention to a more precise analysis of the contextual dynamics in discursive chains. Entextualisation means "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73). This process is one of objectification: Transformed into an 'object', a stretch of discourse becomes available for decontextualisation – to be taken out of its former context – and recontextualisation – to be put into another context which means it is available for all sorts of metapragmatic commentary (Bauman 2004: 4). In this view, a citation is merely a very specific form of recontextualisation.

The concepts of entextualisation, de- and recontextualisation allow us to study the emergence of meaning across events in ethnographic data. In order to do so, Wortham & Reyes (2020) propose to study not only pivotal and ‘typical’ events (which are emblematic of a recurring pattern), but most importantly, the ways in which events are linked and create a trans-situational context (Wortham & Reyes 2020: 22–26, 68–69). This means to trace which indexical meanings are stabilised across events as they reoccur in different, subsequent contexts, linked by overt metapragmatic commentary or parallel patterning (the *poetic structure*, Wortham & Reyes 2020: 64, following Silverstein 1993; Wortham & Reyes 2020: 68–69). They propose to look at how certain indexicals become selected – entextualised – within events and *enregistered* as recontextualisation happens in a more or less rigid patterning – a pathway.

In the analysis of reiterative practice below, I draw primarily on this metapragmatic framework, while, however, retaining a focus on agency as an emergent phenomenon. In this sense, I understand such recontextualising sign usage not only as entailing a process of objectification, but also one of *subjectivation*: namely in the sense that the usage of signs *metaleptically*² produces the speaking subject as its agent (Butler 1997a: 50; cf. Duranti 2006: 455 for a similar observation from a linguistic-anthropological perspective).

Scaling

Now what is it that the reiteration of the phrase *we have no apartments* produces (or reproduces)? Which subject positions? How does a counsellor’s agency relate to institutional effectiveness and to societal power dynamics? These are questions about the implicatedness of the subject in discourse and in societal power-relations. But, crucially for the analysis to follow, they are also questions of *scale*. When we talk about ‘singular events’ and ‘meaning across events’ or ‘discourse’, or about ‘actors’, ‘interactions’, ‘institutions’ / ‘organisations’ and ‘social order’, we put things into a ‘vertical’ order (Blommaert 2007) which relies

2 Butler (1997a: 49–50) uses the term *metalepsis*, a rhetorical trope (cf. also Butler 1997b: 4) – where the preceding element is metonymically expressed through the following or vice-versa (for the more complex history of the term see Burkhardt 2012) – to theorise the relationship between the subject and practice, in the sense that practice conceived as action comes to presuppose its subjects as their original source while, in a post-structuralist analysis, the subject becomes a subject only through engaging in practice in the first place.

on comparisons: ‘discourse’ is understood to be more extended in time and space than a ‘singular event’. ‘Social order’ is understood to be more encompassing than, for instance, ‘an institution’ and ‘an institution’ more than what we term ‘an interaction’. When we do this kind of classificatory and comparative work, we engage in *scale-making* (Carr & Lempert 2016).

Although things can be made big though [sic] analogy, scale-making always also entails drawing distinctions, between the bigness of a whale’s rib and the smallness of a marble, for instance. As an inherently relational and comparative endeavor, scaling may thus connect and even conflate what is geographically, geopolitically, temporally, or morally “near” while simultaneously distinguishing that nearness from that which is “far.” Similarly, scaled hierarchies are the effects of efforts to sort, group, and categorize many things, people, and qualities in terms of relative degrees of elevation or centrality. Think, for example, of the way one entity or domain seems to encompass another, as with maps that subordinate localities within higher order administrative units, or of the way nation-states are commonly thought to hover “above” communities. (Carr & Lempert 2016: 3)

The analytical gaze on meaning-making I have adopted in the previous sections is organised in such a scalar manner³. It presupposes a social order conceivable through the differing and hence comparable and measurable extensions in time and space of its components: a singular event is understood as relatively *shorter* than e. g. a transformation process (which can be analytically decomposed into sequences of events) and individual biographies are of a *smaller* extension than political processes or historical developments in a society. These relationships are not invariable features of the phenomena themselves, but the result of interpretive operations of scale-making and thus transport (and, potentially, erase) a perspective onto them (cf. Carr & Lempert 2016).

Scalar distinctions are ubiquitously involved in the ways actors (co-)construct their lifeworlds and operate therein. When we look at, for instance, interactional data, we can observe how interactants co-construct and make use of such scalar distinctions in meaning-making, e.g. by rephrasing a locally, momentary statement tied to specific person in more general terms (Blommaert 2007: 4–

3 Spitzmüller & Warnke (2011: 22–25) note that the entire discipline of linguistics is traditionally organised in a scalar manner, from ‘smallest’ to the most extended units of analysis.

7). Blommaert (2007) describes such conversational moves as *scale-jumps* (following Uitermark 2002), patterns in interaction where scales are mobilised and made socially consequential by the interactants. Blommaert (2007: 4) argues that scale is a useful conceptual metaphor for the vertical (stratified, hierarchical, power-invested) organisation of social processes and contexts as it complements 'horizontal' concepts (Blommaert mentions 'distribution', 'spread', 'community', and 'culture' as examples). Carr & Lempert (2016: 7), however, caution us to take into account that scalarity is not a matter-of-fact, essential quality of things and processes, but a construction in itself. As with other analytical concepts – for instance the speech chains above – we need to attend both to the ways they emerge as constructions and to the ways they are appropriated by social actors. That is, how do actors (re-)organise their lifeworlds in terms of comparable sizes, duration, extension, distance, abstractedness etc. along the speech chain? And how do they make use of, relate to and deal with such organising principles?

In my analysis of events along the recontextualisation chain, I will thus look into how subjects position themselves and thereby embody and/or renegotiate social/cultural models of scale (cf. Pritzker & Perrino 2020: 368). An important conceptual tool to do so is fractal recursion, i. e. a comparative procedure whereby a model or axis of differentiation is re-applied on another scalar level (Pritzker & Perrino 2020: 367, building on Gal & Irvine 2019: 127; Gal 2016a; Irvine & Gal 2000): It allows to understand the diffusion and transformation of social/cultural models in the course of their reiterative recontextualisation, and not least, their embodiment by speakers (Pritzker & Perrino 2020: 368–369).

(Meta-)communicative labour

I have already alluded to the observation that the reiteration of the phrase *we have no apartments* involves the communicative erasure of crucial parts of information by the institutional agents (see Codó 2008 for similar observations). As Gal & Irvine (2019: 107) suggest, the process of erasure involves "ideological work". Similarly, Nakassis (2012: 627) uses the term "metacommunicative work" and Bauman (2004: 2) "discursive work" to describe what people do in reiterative practice. Carr & Lempert (2016) repeatedly mention the "(semiotic) labor" accomplished in processes of scale-making. De- and recontextualising this regularity

across the literature on reiteration, I want to take the ‘work’ (or *labour*) aspect of these processes seriously by redirecting the attention not just to the efforts which are being put by NGO staff into doing reiteration along the discursive chain, but also to the ways in which this reiteration has effects on labour in the context of the counselling centre.

Counsellors and interpreters alike engage in *(meta-)communicative labour* – this is part and parcel of the reproduction of the institution, though it is not necessarily understood as ‘work’. I use this term freely borrowing from two sources: The notions of *parole-d’œuvre* (‘wordforce’, Duchêne 2011) and of *metalinguistic labour* (Carr 2011). Thereby, I channel the analysis towards this somehow neglected aspect of reiterative practice, because this is where the agency of the post-sovereign subject will become apparent and analytically graspable – namely in the ways subject mobilise (and are mobilised by) the constraints and resources of the reiterative chain.

With the notion of *parole-d’œuvre*, Duchêne (2011: 84) draws attention to the ideological continuity between the regimentation of manual labour in the secondary (industrial) and communicative labour in the tertiary (service) sector, drawing on the work of, among others, (Boutet 2008) and (Heller 2003, 2010a). With a critical view on the economic valorisation of languages and communicative practices, the central question is who is able to profit from engaging in communicative work and under which conditions (Duchêne 2011: 82). The concept thus directs the attention to dimensions of symbolic and economic inequality implied in what I describe here as *(meta-)communicative labour* (e. g. concerning the distribution of risks, workloads and returns). By *metalinguistic labour*, Carr (2011) refers to the effort therapists in a drug addiction programme put into shaping the talk of their clients according to the dominant language ideology of inner reference. Such “distillation” of the clients’ language has the double effect of leading to conformity with a nationalised (“American”, Carr 2011: 126) language ideology and of “filter[ing] away clients’ institutional critiques and other social commentary” (Carr 2011: 126). The metapragmatic attention and the implication with institutional integrity is what relates this concept to what I call *(meta-)communicative labour* for the purpose of my analyses (cf. the concept of *institutional work* by Lawrence et al. 2009). *(Meta-)communicative labour* does not only entail

communication, but also the communicative manipulation of communication as part of the work processes.

4.2 Between brokering and counselling

In May 2016, the counselling centre moved its operation to new premises located in an outer residential district of Vienna. I will do as the counsellors and refer to it by the name of the street where it is located – let us call it *Beckergasse*. The ‘new’ office space had a waiting room right beneath its entrance, a reception desk with a window onto the waiting area, a number of shared offices, counselling rooms, kitchen, bathrooms separated for staff (inside) and clients (outside by the entrance) and a meeting room. The premises were shared with another project unit of the same NGO. Before that, the counselling centre had used two separate premises in different parts of Vienna, one as a back office (the *Mühlengasse*) and the other as a counselling space (the *Seestraße*). The latter was installed on the rather dilapidated premises of a former bank branch. A common feature of the three was the donated furniture. For the rest, both the ‘new’ office and the former back office contrasted with the dark and dull place the bank premises were. The relocation coincided with an important change of in the services provided at the counselling centre – quoting from the minutes of a staff meeting from that period: “CAMBIA MODUS OPERANDI” (May 10, 2016; see Example 4.1).

Example 4.1: Extract from the minutes of the staff meeting on May 10, 2016 (my English translation on the side).

Ab Juni wird es Flyer geben für die Seestr. wegen Schluss und überhaupt. CAMBIA MODUS OPERANDI. Keine Wohnungsvermittlung mehr in der Beckergasse.

From June on, there will be flyers for Seestr[aße] because of the end and everything. CAMBIA MODUS OPERANDI [Italian and Latin: ‘mode of operation changes’]. No more brokering for apartments in Beckergasse.

What this short note from the minutes (Example 4.1) renders in condensed form, constitutes an important change in work processes: a re-orientation from brokering apartments to mostly counselling on housing-related issues. A few days later, following this entextualisation of the change process, an information signboard was displayed outside Seestraße in four language versions – German, English, Arabic and Dari/Farsi⁴ using the (emic) classificatory language labels habitually employed in institutional metalinguistic discourse (see Figure 4.1 on the following page).

The announcement can be analysed as an act of recontextualisation of ‘backstage’ (Goffman 1990 [1959], see also Sarangi & Roberts 1999b) discourse on the ‘frontstage’ of the institution, involving communicative labour by several actors, staff members and translators. As far as I can reconstruct from the minutes of the preceding staff meetings, the text was adapted from an earlier announcement which I am no longer able to retrieve nor reconstruct. Moreover, the denotational text of the announcement echoes the earlier practice in counselling, i. e. prior to the institutional reorientation, where the counsellors would explain to the clients that the housing opportunities were *donated* by third parties (and not owned by the NGO), emphasising the scarcity of available housing in Vienna. It is thus likely that this is not the ‘original’ version of the phrase, but one that has been put in the very defining context of the closing of the premises in Seestraße.

The entextualisation conveys a certain perspective (Gal & Irvine 2019: 88) on the relationship between the availability of resources (housing offers) and the communicated decision to discontinue the service (brokering) as well as to refashion the service (“consulting, support and guidance”, see Figure 4.1 on the next page). The relationship is constructed as contingent and contiguous. Though separable as a text, a range of text-level phenomena are coherent with the observation that the announcement is rather specific in its contextualisation.

4 When talking about language as a resource for interpreting and translation tasks, the language categories of ‘Dari’ and ‘Farsi’ are not distinguished by those staff members who, for instance, commission a translation from a volunteer or employed interpreter/translator. This is different for the person executing the task. To my informant, a speaker of an Iranian variety, the text in Figure 4.1 on the next page is recognisable as “Dari” due to the choice of register-specific terms. Furthermore, according to her, it contains an important number of grammatical “oddities” and misspellings. However, there is neither the space nor have I sufficient and appropriate data to spell out the language ideological implications of these observations.

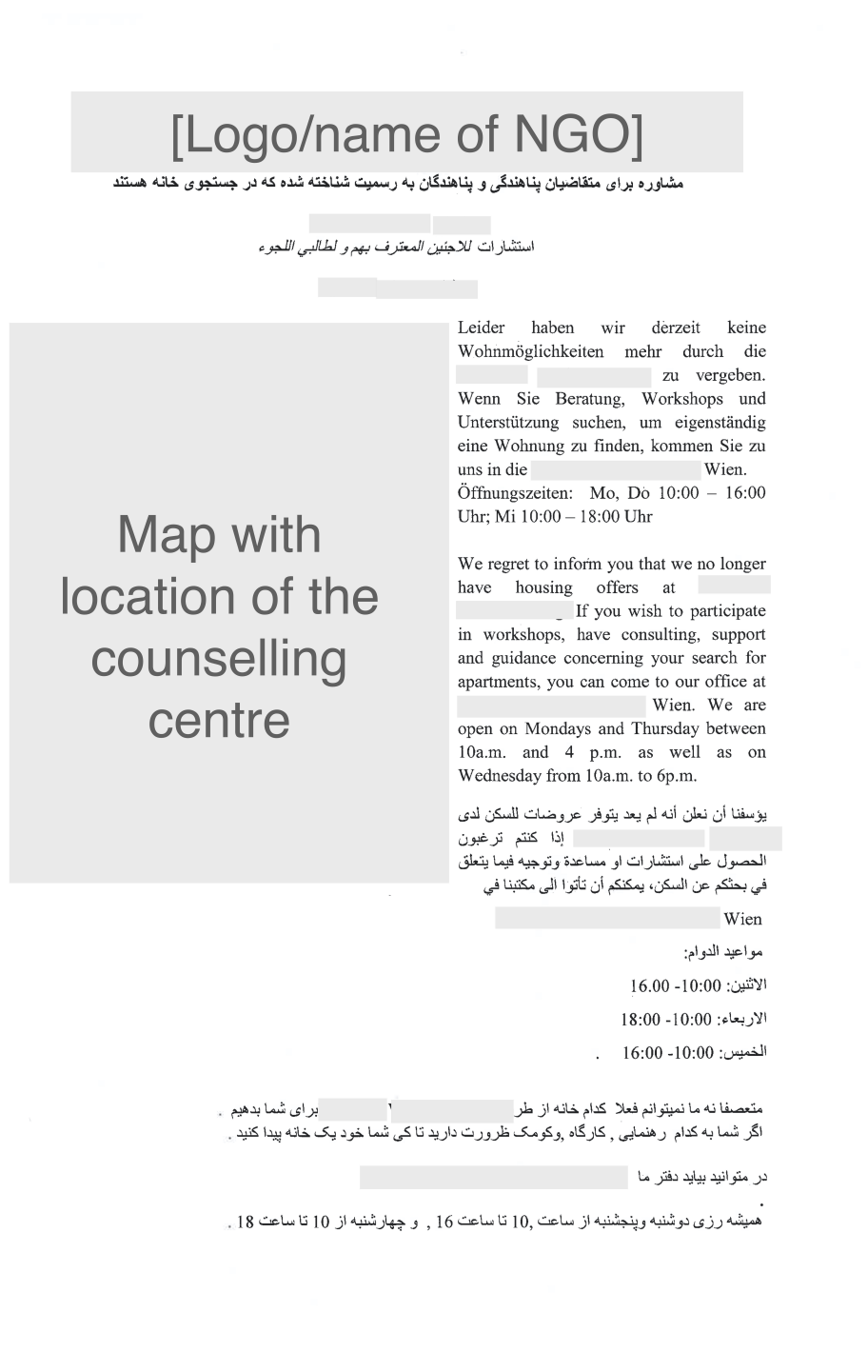


Figure 4.1: Quadrilingual (German, English, Arabic, Farsi) note displayed outside the bank premises upon their closing (collected 2016-06-20). Sensitive information is hidden.

For example, the contextual boundedness of the text artefact is detectable in the presence of so-called *shifters* (Silverstein 1976) – e. g., temporal deictics in the German, English and Dari/Farsi version such as *derzeit* ('currently'), *no longer* and فعلاً ('currently') etc. – which have their construable referents in a specific interactional moment in time and space (Agha 2007: 38), namely on the glass pane of the former bank branch in the early summer of 2016. Moreover, the embedding clauses in the English and Arabic versions (*we regret to inform you ...* and يُؤسفنا أن نعلن أنه [‘we regret to announce that’]) entextualise a specific interactional scene by employing person deictics (*we, you, ن-/-ن* [1st person plural affixes]) which entextualise a participation framework, *verba dicendi* ('verbs of speaking', *to inform*, اُعلن [‘to announce’]) which entextualise a scene of utterance (Agha 2007: 20) and *verba sentiendi* ('verbs of feeling', *to regret* and اُسف [‘to regret’]) which entextualise an affective stance connected to the utterance. The announcement thus carries traces of its interactional context with itself even when taken out of its context (and put into a new one, such as this chapter where it is framed as a piece of data).

The counselling centre ‘officially’ moved from brokering to counselling proper – at least this is how it was communicated to clients, other NGOs and partners. Yet at the same time, the staff continued to file apartments in their data repository which had previously been used to manage the ‘donated’ housing. Though the numbers had dwindled enormously, the acquisition of new housing opportunities in fact remained part of the continuous activities at the counselling centre. After the transformation in mid-2016, these were now reserved for so-called ‘emergency cases’. While regular brokering activities were discontinued, the institution carried on to allocate apartments to clients. The *waiting list* was closed and replaced by an *emergency list*. While almost everybody, including the clients, knew about this practice, a strict policy was put in place not to mention the continuing existence of housing opportunities at their disposition. This led to a (fractal) ‘split’ between what was sayable ‘backstage’ and ‘frontstage’, (re-)producing the fuzzy, yet consequential boundaries between the inside and the outside of the institution, ‘emergency’ and ‘non-emergency’ cases, etc. Such boundaries do not necessarily fit the complexity and affordances of institutional life: First, it happens frequently that volunteer interpreters – for instance, when searching for an apartment – become clients of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* which destabilises

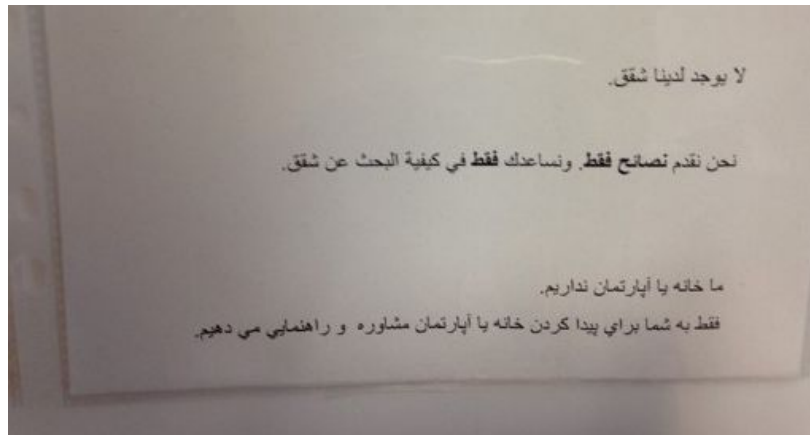


Figure 4.2: Bilingual signboard ('Arabic', 'Dari/Farsi') in the waiting area (picture taken on November 08, 2016, translation with vertical dashes indicating the line breaks, emphasis in the original:) 'Arabic': 'We have no apartments. | We can only offer advice. And we only help you with how to search.' 'Dari/Farsi': 'We do not offer houses or apartments. | We only advise and guide you to find a house or apartments.'

the neat distinction between 'frontstage' and 'backstage'. Second, there are many views among the staff of what is to be counted as an 'emergency case'. This introduces almost unsolvable questions about rationales and morals of distribution. And third, the voices of former clients who were lucky enough to be allocated an emergency apartment, which circulate among clients in and beyond the walls of the counselling centre call into question the whole regime of sayability. This means, that the reiterative practice observed is not just about exerting control over the circulation of knowledge, but more so over *the ways of speaking about that knowledge* which is based on an erasure of those aspects of institutional life which would complicate the clearly drawn boundaries, as when saying: *We have no apartments, but a small number for specific cases we consider emergencies ...*

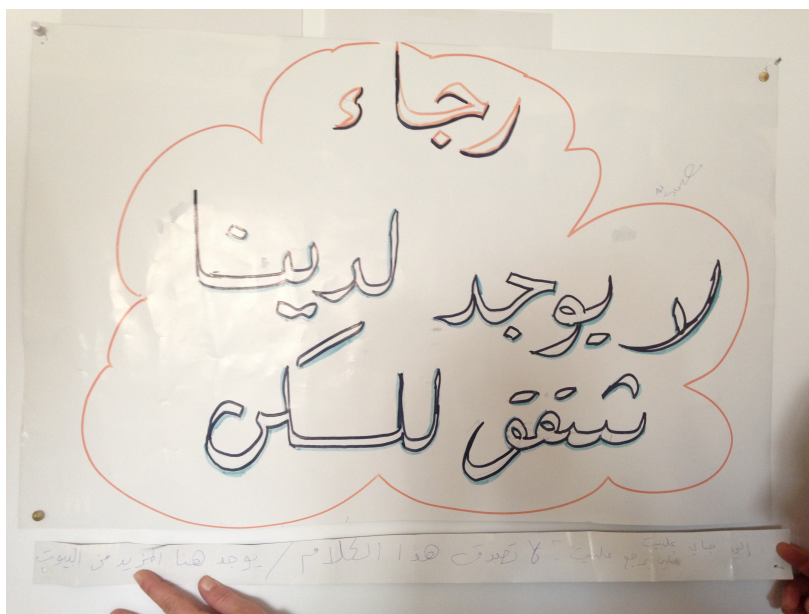


Figure 4.3: Monolingual ('Arabic') signboard in the waiting area (picture taken on November 29, 2016, my translation): 'A request [or: please] / we do not have / apartments.'

A stabilised message

While the information sheet displayed outside the bank premises at *Seegasse* was contextualised in a circumscribed moment of time and space of which it was co-constitutive – the moment of institutional change – it became subject to further processes of entextualisation and recontextualisation in what followed. Entextualisation entails acts of selection, re-arrangement or similar which respond to situated perspectives and aims / interests (see Urban 1996). In this case, it brought about a significant reduction of deictic anchoring which allowed a recontextualisation in diverse 'newly arising' circumstances, as a solution to different, yet related institutional problems. In what follows, I will consider different instances of recontextualisation of the phrase.

In the waiting room of the new premises at *Beckergasse*, we encounter some

of the denotational text from the announcement (Figure 4.1 on page 120) again. Consider the Arabic and Farsi bilingual (Figure 4.2 on page 122) and Arabic monolingual signboards (Figure 4.3 on the preceding page and Figure 4.4 on the next page): They do not only exhibit a reduction of linguistic/code variants (German and English are missing in the signboard in Figure 4.2 on page 122, German, English and Dari/Farsi in Figure 4.3 on the previous page, as compared to Figure 4.1 on page 120), the denotational text also got rid of the time deixis and “interactional anchoring” (Agha 2007: 41). Now, it simply states [...] لا يوجد لدينا [...] in the Arabic and [...] ما خانه يا اپارتمان نداريم [...] in the Dari/Farsi version (‘We have no apartments. [...]’ and ‘We have neither houses nor apartments. [...]’)⁵. These are traces of the decontextualisation which allowed the text to become stabilised as a permanent message to clients in the waiting area.

The signboard in Figure 4.3 on the previous page – where only the Arabic version of the message is left – gives an interpretive hint as to why such a message was made permanent. Below the signboard, there is a paper strip with a response (uptake) by a visitor (or probably more than one) to the counselling centre. It was cut away – on the photograph it is being held beneath the signboard where it was placed before. The signboard and the uptake below can be transliterated as follows (with my translation on the side):

01	رجاء	<i>Please [A request]</i>
02	لا يوجد لدينا	<i>we do not have</i>
03	شقق للسكن	<i>apartments</i>
04	إني جاي علييت	<i>I come home</i>
05	خلي يرجع علييت!	<i>let him return home!</i>
06	لا تصدق هذا الكلام /	<i>do not believe this [these words]/</i>
07	يوجد هنا المزيد من البيوت	<i>there are plenty of apartments here</i>

The first two lines of the commentary seem to be written by a (or two) different person(s) than the last two: as a response to an expression of discontent or even desperation (Lines 04–05) follows the invitation not to give credit to the ‘official’ message above, stating that the counselling centre *does* have apartments (lines

5 I would like to thank my dear colleagues Mandana Piroozfar and Nora Al-Awami who helped me to translate and analyse the data in Dari/Farsi and Arabic.



Figure 4.4: 'Arabic') signboard in the waiting area by the reception, a more recent version of the above, copied by the civilian service person. Picture taken on April 24, 2018.

06–07). The uptake of the ‘official truth’ shows that this is not just about information being ‘spilled’, about knowledge being exclusive. This short exchange documents: the knowledge that there *are* apartments, that brokering continues at least somehow, does circulate among clients. And institutional agents are aware of it: I heard counsellors and volunteer interpreters describe the clients’ uptake of the reiterated phrase in the following manner: “They don’t believe us”, “they think we have apartments”, “they think if they just come here often enough, they’ll get one” etc. In spite of the counsellors’ awareness that many clients are *already* aware of the mismatch between the ‘official truth’ and actual practice, the message *we have no apartments* is upheld. The photograph (Figure 4.3 on page 123) documents the institutional procedure of dealing with contestation to this line of communication, namely by erasure, here in the form of literally cutting away the unwanted stretch of discourse.

Spreading the word

This way of dealing with contestation speaks of a concern with the way the services of the counselling centre are rationalised by actors ‘outside’ of its organisational boundaries, first and foremost by the clients. I witnessed several times that counsellors and interpreters, confirming each others’ perceptions, would share the observation that truths about the counselling centre they held problematic were circulating among the clients.

But the type of erasure in discourse which we have seen above comes not only into play when communicating with clients, but also with other organisational bodies. In Vienna, there are a number of institutions run by NGOs and grass-roots initiatives who offer specialised counselling services and material resources for different target groups (age groups, legal status etc.) and in different thematic areas (housing, education, legal advice in the asylum procedure). Therefore, it happens regularly that clients are redirected from one counselling centre to the other. Especially in the early phase of the restructuring of services at Beckergasse, these other institutions were proactively informed of the changes: *no apartments, only counselling*. Later, clients continued to arrive, sent from other NGOs, claiming they had been told that the counselling centre distributed housing. This led to the assumption that other organisations were involved in spreading the word (be

it out of ignorance or negligence of the restructuration, or for strategic reasons) which was met by investigative efforts: lists of clients were filed specifying the organisation that had sent them and a further information email was sent out to organisations which were seen as potential sources of rumour (minutes of staff meetings in November 22/29, 2016; fieldnotes of November 22, 2016). Securing the institutional agenda thus requires (meta-)communicative labour from the staff at the boundaries of the counselling centre.

Selecting linguistic versions

There is an issue to the pathway in the recontextualisation chain described above which I have not yet sufficiently addressed in the above analysis. Namely, in the instances analysed, the processes of entextualisation entail not only a reduction and erasure of aspects of discursive reality (*no apartments*) and that of recontextualisation a reduction of contextual specificity (reducing deictic anchoring) – we can also observe a reduction of the linguistic variants in which the message was made available. As the text travelled to the ‘frontstage’ – becoming an announcement on the former bank premises – it was translated into *English*, *Arabic* and *Dari/Farsi*. German and English were dropped as the message became a stabilised signboard in the waiting area – for the big handwritten signboard, only Arabic remained. Certain linguistic versions had not been considered to begin with – Somali and Russian for instance. This situation can be read as the expression of a situated *language regime*, a bundle of legal regulations, language ideologies and market forces regimenting language choices (Coulmas 2005: 7, and B. Busch 2021a: 135–136) at the counselling centre. I often witnessed that such language choices followed both strategic and ad-hoc logics, calculating costs and benefits of certain translations (so-called *spéculations langagières* ‘linguistic speculations’, see Duchêne & Daveluy 2015). Such calculations were often guided by assumptions about the share of speakers of a certain language among the clients and about language competences and literacy of the respective client populations.

On a different occasion, I had the opportunity to observe such a selection taking place over the course of two staff meetings (November 22 and 29, 2016). At the first of the two encounters, a selection of languages for the concerned announcement to be translated in was discussed. Arabic and Farsi were taken

for granted without any actual discussion, but concerning Russian and Somali, there were diverging views among the staff. Some argued that Russian-speaking clients generally understand German quite well, and speakers of Somali, likewise, often know Arabic. However, the generalisability of the latter observation was contested and one of the legal counsellors, Alexandra – who had just acquired a free-lance Somali translator for the counselling centre – went on to push for a translation in Somali. These initial arguments are based on ideas of cost and benefit, value and accessibility of languages as resources and products of work. It was Yasmin, an Arabic-speaking counsellor who then argued that if there was a Somali version, there had to be one in Russian as well, introducing an argument based on the idea of languages representing client populations as their speakers. This intervention however was not taken up: As one can read in the minutes of the meeting, the civilian service person was commissioned to organise translations into ‘Arabic’ and ‘Persian’, Alexandra to contact the new translator for a translation into Somali. At the next meeting, a week later, the civilian service person briefly explained that he had talked “to a few people” and had come to the conclusion that Somali was not needed. This decision finds no mention in the minutes of that day’s meeting.

The language hierarchies are clear in this example, with Arabic and German being accorded an important role as *lingua francas* alongside English. In the course of such hierarchisation and selection, the complexity in which the population of addressees is imagined is being reduced. Questions of representation – i. e. who, as a result of the selected codes, is represented and who is not – are addressed, but they are not consequential. The decision in itself is not accorded too much attention – while some of the counsellors do invest in certain agendas and logics (like Alexandra and Yasmin), the final decision is almost quietly taken by a rather peripheral member of the team, the civilian service person.

This does not mean that the representational aspect, the quality of the codes selected to index the addressees of the coded message, is inconsequential. But it would be too easy to deduce a languaged image of the typical client from this and posit such an enregistered, languaged person-type as the rationale for the selections made. The reduction of complexity in the client population is only one side of the coin: The observed selection of linguistic variants not only says something about the ways addressees of the signboards are imagined, but also

about their context of production: Who wrote this? Which linguistic resources were available? This leads us from questions of metacommunication to questions of linguistic repertoires and their availability and use as resources – or from (meta-)communicative labour to *linguistic* labour in a more restricted sense. These questions will be dealt with in detail at a later point (in Chapter 6), but we see that questions of linguistic labour cannot be decoupled from questions of (meta-)communicative labour: A significant part of the institutionally produced texts – not only in a quantitative sense – is translated or otherwise reproduced in other linguistic codes and registers. The counsellors' (meta-)communicative work – or their work in general – depends on such linguistic labour. Linguistic labour clearly necessitates linguistic resources of a different quality than (meta-)communicative labour; here the availability of specific languaged types of workers and calculations of cost and benefit of the more rare resources they carry become salient issues. While Arabic, the language gaining 'centre stage' in the cited examples, has always been covered by at least one employed staff member in the history of the counselling centre, for Dari/Farsi there had never been a stable source with a comparably low threshold: At first there was a paid interpreter who did the translations, but later, doubts about his competences emerged. Similar doubts were in place concerning the volunteers. The former paid interpreter's successor lacked the literacy skills for written translations. For Somali, there was a constant lack of linguistic labourforce altogether.

Thus, the reduction in linguistic variants in the course of recontextualisation chain is not simply a question of visibility or representation of speaker groups, but the result of emergent logics based on calculations of costs and benefits of linguistic resources.

4.3 Professional agency and (meta-)communicative labour

As we have seen above, the phrase *we have no apartments* returns as part of a continuous effort to shape the representation of the counselling centre among the clients. In this section, I want to look at the reiteration of the phrase and of the perduring erasure it (re-)produces in relation to the counsellors' agency. Why do they keep reiterating the phrase? Which are the ascribed (and desired) effects

along the reiterative chain? Consider the discussion which took place at the staff meeting on October 04, 2016 (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2: At a staff meeting. Extract from fieldnotes, October 04, 2016.

Yasmin, one of the counsellors, raises a point: She says in the latest counselling sessions she had conducted, she had increasingly been confronted with the rumour that the counselling centre was back to brokering apartments. “es kommen leute, die sagen, es gibt wohnungen” (‘People are coming, saying there are apartments’), “ich musste mich nur rechtfertigen” (‘I had to justify myself all the time’) to which Sara, head of staff, concurs: “ich hab auch nur gestritten” (‘Me too, I had to argue all the time’). Yasmin concedes that clients simply might be lying, but then Sara and Yasmin ask their colleagues where the rumour might originate from. Till, another counsellor, narrates in constructed dialogue that for strategical reasons, he had proposed unplaceable offers (apartments in small villages far-off) to “whining” clients, adding they would not accept them anyways which was indeed what happened. Sara responds that this would still get around and incite hopes and claims. They then talk about the old (closed) waiting list which is still being used for incoming offers, but which is, Till says, not up-to-date anymore. Cover-up strategies are discussed, to be used in case there was an apartment to be given to a client: (1) Brokering activities/meetings between clients and donors can be held elsewhere; e. g. they might be processed by the team Lower Austria (another project of the same NGO). (2) Make the clients believe it was an offer they had found by themselves, orchestrating a ring-back from the donor/landlord. Yasmin tells the others of a case where she had successfully employed this strategy. In conclusion, Till emphasises that none of his strategic offers had let to a contract, but he promises not to continue this practice.

The conversation starts with a complaint raised by Yasmin (and joined by Sara) about rumours regarding the brokering activities at the counselling centre. The team is invited to investigate where the supposed rumours come from. Till concedes that there might be a connection to his practice of confronting clients with the lack of acceptable apartments in their data repository. He is asked by Sara to stop the practice. This decision shows that erasure is strategic in communication

with clients: It is preferred to other, alternative strategies of dealing with the lack of resources such as Till's confrontational approach. Elaborate strategies are thought through which shall help to cover up the continuing brokering activities. Moreover, it becomes clear that *there is* an intention in the first place to continue brokering for clients. The cover-up strategies are seen as necessary to be able to reconcile the brokering with the rest of the institutional agenda. Reiterating the phrase *we have no apartments* is part of these strategies. It is (meta-)communicative labour in the sense that counsellors need to manipulate and monitor their communication according to a regime of sayability and they do so by communicating the same 'truth' over and over again.

Institutionalisation

The vignette of a staff meeting above illustrates the emergence of an institutional response to the situation. The counselling guidelines which were produced since the restructuration of the service (see Example 4.3) give us the opportunity to see how (meta-)communicative labour was institutionalised in the following period. Designed in summer 2016, they were revised and amplified in early 2018 (more about this below).

In some formal aspects (e.g. chronological order), the script in both its versions is an iconic model of an (idealised) encounter with clients. It responds to (actual or anticipated) problems arising from such encounters. Apart from general principles to be followed by the counsellors, the both versions of the script also specify a number of issues to be covered, among them to work on the clients' *Erwartungshaltung* – their 'expectations' or, for that matter, their 'orientation based on their expectations'. This amounts to an institutional self-presentation with the purpose of framing or delimiting the encounter in a specific way. As part of this framing, the script specifies that the inexistence of housing offers should be clearly stated at the beginning of a consultation.

Example 4.3: Extract from the counselling guidelines as of June 2016 (time of its creation) and February 2018 (author's English translation on the side).

- **Erwartungshaltung:** Was bieten wir an, was können wir tun? Was nicht?
- **Expectations:** *What do we offer, what can we do? What not?*

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| - dezidiert offenlegen, dass es | - <i>to be decidedly disclose that there</i> |
| keine Wohnungen über uns gibt | <i>are no apartments from us</i> |
| - mögliche Angebote : [...] | - <i>possible offers</i> : [...] |

The underlying claim that there are no housing offers is entextualised as a truthful statement in the script. This means that the erasure remains in place even when the phrase *we have no apartments* returns (and continues to be transformed) 'backstage'. Of course, one can assume that all counsellors know that information is omitted here – even many clients would. In this sense, it is no surprise. But in the context of the script, it is less a question of knowledge per se, but of the way communication is institutionally regimented. The fact that no differentiation between types of clients and circumstances is added shows the centrality accorded to this erasure in the institutional regimentation of communication – and more so, since it is apparently not considered problematic to repeat to the clients that there are no housing offers, even if one is to present them an emergency apartment at the next encounter.

Scales of the institutional

This script was designed in summer 2016 – in the context of the restructuration – to standardise and control the counselling interactions. It underwent a major revision in early 2018 in response both to needs expressed by the staff and more global decisions from the management. In a multi-staged process, with task groups from the staff, discussions in the plenary of staff-meetings and the meeting of the management (heads of staff of various units of the same NGO). Among the staff, there had been an ongoing discussion under the label of *Beratungsgrenzen* ('limits to the counselling practice') about how to delimit the services offered and how to deal with diverging views and approaches to the matter. This discussion was continued in the context of the revision process, but it did not leave as salient traces in the revised document, although the new document became more specific in the description of tasks and resources. More so did the exigencies of the management – the legal bounds were more clearly defined: confidentiality and data protection, legal duties of care and the bureaucratic steps to be executed

throughout counselling. One aspect which was added in the revised version is a phrase introducing the institution, its mission and (the limits to) the scope of its competencies as an NGO. This addition expands the paragraph quoted above (Example 4.3, which remained unaltered in the 2018 version) in that it directs the focus to an institutional auto-definition.

Put before the revised original script of the counselling encounter, and after a row of paragraphs on *Beziehungsregeln*, *Grundsätze* and *Vorbereitungsphase* ('relationship rules', 'basic principles' and 'preparatory phase'), the guidelines specify a number of issues to be covered in a first encounter with clients: *Erstgespräche standardisiert für jede Beratungsstelle* ('First counselling standardised for all counselling centres')⁶. These are subdivided into the tasks to be carried out at the reception counter and *im Gespräch* 'during the conversation' (that is, with the counsellor during counselling). The second part – *im Gespräch* 'during the conversation' – is presented in Example 4.4 (on the following page).

Besides ethical and legal preoccupations with confidentiality and transparency, the piece transports an engagement with the discursive representation of the organisation among the clients. The text after the second bullet point (Example 4.4) points to the relationship with the city government as funding body and the implications of this relationship – establishing its institutional 'identity' as a *human rights organisation* and excluding the ascription of (para-)state powers by disavowing decision-making competences. This part works on a more general level, but it is organised in parallel pattern to the older part on clients' expectations cited above (Example 4.3), yet on a 'higher' scale: disavowing access to resources and defining the services on offer. Whether this is the result of 'up-scaling' or convergence cannot be deduced from the data, but the parallel patterning is striking as it shows how (meta-)communicative work is regimented on different levels of scale. The introduction of this paragraph as a phrase to be *recited* was contested as "artificial" by some of the counsellors (for instance, when a draft of the guidelines were being discussed during the staff meeting of January 16, 2018), but the views expressed in it were not.

⁶ Note that the section title of this part of the script is projected to a 'higher' level of the institutional scale than the single counselling centre, emphasising an imagery of institutional belonging and hierarchy.

Example 4.4: Extract from the counselling guidelines as of February 2018 (author's English translation on the side).

Im Gespräch

- Vorstellung, Name auch von den Dolmetscher*innen, Tätigkeit, Funktion
- Kurz die <name of NGO> und deren Auftrag erklären. Die <name of NGO> ist eine Menschenrechtsorganisation. Wir als Beratungsstelle Wohnen haben einen Auftrag der Stadt Wien bekommen zu beraten, wir haben aber keinen Einfluss auf die Stadt. Wir entscheiden nichts und können nur versuchen bei Problemen zu helfen und zu informieren. Die Gespräche sind vertraulich, aber alles, was wir dokumentieren ist für andere <name of NGO>-Einrichtungen einsehbar. Wenn Sie nicht damit einverstanden sind, können wir die Beratungsinhalte auch sperren für andere Stellen.
- Wenn wir gerade die räumlichen Möglichkeiten haben können/sollen wir anbieten ein Gespräch unter vier Augen in einem separaten Raum zu führen.

During the conversation

- *introduction, name also of the interpreters, occupation, function*
- *Explain briefly the <name of the NGO> and its mission. The <name of the NGO> is a human rights organisation. We as the Beratungsstelle Wohnen are commissioned by the city of Vienna to give counselling, but we do not yield influence on the city. We do not decide anything and we can only try to help with problems and give information. The conversations are confidential, but everything we document is accessible to all other branches of the <name of the NGO>. If you do not agree with that, we can also block the contents of counselling for other branches.*
- *If space is available, we may/must offer the possibility to have a one-to-one conversation in a separate room.*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nach eigener Einschätzung Visitenkarte hergeben mit ungefährender Erreichbarkeit. Falls wir bestimmten Klient*innen nicht unsere persönlichen Kontakte geben möchten, können wir auch allgemeine Beratungsstelle Wohnen Wien Visitenkarten austeilen. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Based on one's own judgement, hand out business card with approximate times of availability. In case we do not want to hand out personal contact details to specific clients, we can also hand out a general business card of the Beratungsstelle Wohnen Wien.</i> |
|---|---|

(Meta-)communicative labour as reproductive labour

Working on clients' 'expectations', effectively redirecting them from material resources (housing) to communicative services (counselling), is a way of keeping the counselling centre alive in a situation where resources have become scarce. Indeed, in May 2016, before the restructuration, closing down the counselling centre had been on the table. As I learnt from Sara, the head of staff (May 04, 2016), the reorientation of services advocated for and negotiated by her with the administration of the NGO had ensured its continuation.

But apart from this historical backdrop which casts the reiteration of the phrase as a continuous attempt to 'shape the client' according to a changing logic of service, there is another effect: the phrase ensures that decisions on the continuing distribution of resources are made 'backstage', hidden from the clients' view. The strict denial of the availability of housing precludes any question about mechanisms and logics of distribution. It effectively reduces accountability for decisions on who is to receive an apartment. Moreover, it prevents to a certain degree that clients may adapt to the mechanisms of distribution in place, plead their cases and make sure they meet the criteria employed in the decision-making processes on emergency cases. At least superficially, this stands in contradiction to what Sara, the head of staff, told me in an interview (on January 09, 2018) about the moral boundaries of service: she said she was convinced that clients had every right "to take advantage" of them – but this too was framed in a communicative

sense, in terms of venting their anger about their situation. As the observations above show, (meta-)communicative labour is institutionally reproductive labour (Menz 1991: 33–35, following Schülein 1987; see also Heller 2007; and Lawrence et al. 2009): it helps to reproduce, i.e. maintain, the institutional order (see Chapter 6 for a more in-depth discussion of reproductive labour as an analytical notion).

Professional selves under pressure

As I have witnessed myself and been told repeatedly, the truth of *we have no apartments* is recurrently challenged by clients during counselling. In these cases, not only the institutionally sanctioned order of things is at stake – for the counsellor this means also having to find a viable position in this somewhat contradictory situation.

Scalar logics, as argued by Blommaert (2007: 9–10), are an effective interactional tool (and instrument of power) for institutional agents in the interactional co-construction of meaning. As the analysis of the guidelines above show, the significance of scalar logics goes beyond an interactional dimension, structuring the institutional meta-communicative discourse on interactions with clients. As we will see below, they also play a part in the construction of professional positions.

As we shall see in the following excerpt from a conversation I had with two counsellors, Yasmin and Sami (see Example 4.5), such challenges involve not only an institutional dimension, but may drag in the dimension of the biographical subject as well by producing intimacy through interactional scaling (Pritzker & Perrino 2020). The phrase *we have no apartments* returns here in the context of a work meeting on Arabic terminology between Sami and Yasmin I had the chance to assist. As a response to a question from my part – whether Arabic-speaking clients would accommodate their ways of speaking to them as counsellors – Yasmin and Sami characterise (and caricature) for me their encounters as Arabic-speakers with Arabic-speaking clients. Right away, Yasmin and Sami establish in co-construction an important difference between their experiences which they rationalise with reference to the differential identifiability as ‘Arabs’: For the clients, Arabic is easily identifiable as Yasmin’s mothertongue and she looks

like ‘an Arab’ – she *is* an Arab. Sami’s linguistic repertoire is reportedly not as transparent for his clients and, so they both agree, he does not look like an Arab – he is perceived as “an Austrian who somehow learnt Arabic for pleasure”. In the following, Yasmin illustrates how she experiences her encounters with Arabic-speaking clients (see J. Hassemer 2018 for a detailed analysis of the encounter).

Example 4.5: At a work meeting on Arabic terminology, extract from a conversation between Yasmin, Sami and Jonas (July 15, 2016).

- | | | | |
|-----|---------|---|---|
| 001 | Yasmin: | ja (-) und (- -) äh (.) ja und das
is: (-) eben weil ich eine von
denen bin,= | <i>well (-) and (- -) er (-) well and
this is (-) precisely because I
am one of them</i> |
| 002 | | =dann ich: | <i>then I</i> |
| 003 | | (-) sie haben nur: (.) zwei (- -)
äh: (- -) sachen hier in
österreich (.) sachen oder
menschen [oder: ja?] | <i>(-) they got only (.) two (- -)
er: (- -) things here in Austria
(.) things or people or well</i> |
| 004 | Sami: | [mhm;] | <i>mhm</i> |
| 005 | Yasmin: | gott, | <i>God</i> |
| 006 | | (-) und yasmin. | <i>(-) and Yasmin</i> |
| 007 | Sami: | (hui.) | <i>(wow)</i> |
| 008 | Jonas: | ((laughs)) | <i>((laughs))</i> |
| 009 | Yasmin: | und da bin ich wirklich dann
bin ich wirklich so eine (.)
enge gasse dann <<chuckling>
irgendwie [in ecke
gedrängt-]> | <i>and there then I am really
<<chuckling> somehow forced
in such a (.) narrow corner
[street]></i> |
| 010 | Jonas: | [((laughs
laughs))] | <i>((laughs))</i> |
| 011 | | aber wie gehst du damit um; | <i>and how do you deal with that</i> |
| 012 | | (- - -) | <i>(- - -)</i> |
| 013 | Yasmin: | äh: (-) nein=ich sag zu ihnen
von mir aus:: allah, | <i>er: (-) no I tell them I am fine
with Allah</i> |
| 014 | | aber bitte ich: bin nur eine
arme angestellte. | <i>but please I am only a poor
employee</i> |

015	Sami:	[((laughs aloud))]	<i>((laughs aloud))</i>
016	Jonas:	[((laughs aloud))]	<i>((laughs aloud))</i>
017		((laughs))	<i>((laughs))</i>
018	Yasmin:	((laughs))	<i>((laughs))</i>
019	Sami:	((laughs more quietly))	<i>((laughs more quietly))</i>
020	Yasmin:	schau ma mal (.) was ich machen kann;	<i>let's see what I can do</i>
021		((all three laugh))	<i>((laughs more quietly))</i>
022		((chuckles)) und die sag(t);	<i>((chuckles)) and (they/she)</i> <i>say(s)</i>
023		wirklich;=<<steadily falling tone> nein nein nein nein nein;>	<i>really <<steadily falling tone></i> <i>no no no no no></i>
024	Jonas:	((chuckles))	<i>((chuckles))</i>
025	Yasmin:	wie;=	<i>how</i>
026		=nein=ohne dich wird nicht [funktionieren.=ja?]	<i>no it won't work out without</i> <i>you=will it</i>
027	Jonas:	[((chuckles))]	<i>((chuckles))</i>
028	Yasmin:	nu:r: ich hab dich ich hab nur dich hier.	<i>only I have you I have only</i> <i>you here</i>
029	Jonas:	((chuckles)) ja;	<i>((chuckles)) yes</i>
030	Yasmin:	(so: uih.)	<i>(so wow)</i>
031		und das ist natürlich un angenehm weil (- - -) äh (-) kommt diese BITTere tatsache also dass weil	<i>and this is of course un</i> <i>pleasant because (- - -) er (-)</i> <i>comes this bitter fact well that</i> <i>because</i>
032	Sami:	mhm;	<i>mhm</i>
033	Yasmin:	sie wollen auch (.) sowieso nicht wahrn (.)nehmen dass wir keine wohnungen mehr für sie haben,	<i>they also (.) don't want to</i> <i>realise <perceive> that we</i> <i>don't have apartments for</i> <i>them anymore</i>
034		und da kommt diese bittere tatsache die HAben aber keine wohnung.	<i>and there comes this bitter fact</i> <i>they really don't have an</i> <i>apartment</i>

035	(- - -)	(- - -)
036	u:nd da wird dann	<i>a:nd there it becomes</i>
037	weil ich muss es gleich sagen damit es wirklich:	<i>because I have to say it immediately so it is really:</i>
038 Jonas:	mhm	<i>mhm</i>
039 Yasmin:	es is: (-) aus.=	<i>it is (-) over</i>
040	=also ich ich: ich kann wirklich nicht (mehr tun:;)	<i>that is I I I really cannot (do more)</i>
041	ich kann nicht deine tante sein;	<i>I cannot be your aunt</i>
042	oder: nach gott kommen-	<i>or: come <second> after God</i>
043	ich::	<i>I:</i>
044 Jonas:	((chuckles quietly))	<i>((chuckles quietly))</i>
045 Yasmin:	kann nur beraten. ((chuckles))	<i>I can only give advice</i>
046	eventuell einen anruf für dich machen oder so aber	<i>maybe do a call for you or something but</i>
047 Sami:	mh:m;	<i>mhm</i>
048 Jonas:	ja.	<i>yah</i>
049 Yasmin	ja;	<i>yah</i>
050	(-)	<i>(-)</i>
051	<<fast> und da kommt dann NACHher,=	<i><<fast> and there <it> comes then later</i>
052	=wenn ich mit ihnen> RE:de,=	<i>when I talk with them></i>
053	=sagt-	<i>says</i>
054	ah (-) du bist ein palästinenserin.	<i>ah you are a palestinian</i>
055	(- - -)	(- - -)
056	weil sie erkennen meinen akzent,	<i>because they recognise my accent</i>
057 Jonas:	mhm,	<i>mhm</i>
058	(3,01s)	<i>(3,01s)</i>
059 Yasmin:	<<fast> und da geht s dann los.>	<i><<fast> and that's where it starts then></i>

060	ne?	<i>right</i>
061	(-)	(-)
062	<<fast> ich bin auch eigentlich ein palästinenser;=verstehst du?>	<<fast> I am actually also a palestinian do you understand>
063	(- - -)	(- - -)
064 Jonas:	[okee?]	<i>okay</i>
065 Yasmin	[und damit] sie mir noch mehr mir ein schlech[tes gewissen] [einja]gen;=ja?	<i>and so they make me feel even more guilty right</i>
066 Sami:	[na klar.]	<i>of course</i>
067 Jonas:	[ja.]	<i>yah</i>
068 Jonas:	ja.	<i>yah</i>
069	(- -)	(- -)
070 Yasmin	und dann sag ich-	<i>and then I say</i>
071	(-)	(-)
072	tja;	<i>well</i>
073	(- -)	(- -)
074 Jonas:	((chuckles))	((chuckles))
075 Yasmin	d ((laughs))	(th) ((laughs))
076	wir sind alle im selben boot;	<i>we are all in the same boat</i>
077 Sami:	genau; ((laughs))	<i>exactly ((laughs))</i>
078	genau;	<i>exactly</i>
079	(xxx)	(xxx)
080 Yasmin	((chuckles))	((chuckles))

Yasmin presents a (typified) encounter with an Arabic client to the other participants in the conversation, Jonas and Sami (as well as another counsellor working in the same room). She does so in four narrative sequences (Example 4.5, Lines 002–028, 031–46, 51–62 and 70–76) framed by evaluations in epistemic (Lines 001 and 031) and affective stances (Lines 009, 031 and 065). On the level of the narration (*positioning level 1*, sensu Bamberg 1997) she constructs an encounter in which she is addressed in a way opposite to the persona constructed e. g. by the

counselling guidelines: on the one hand, the typified client persona foregrounds her personal, biographical self as Yasmin, the Palestinian, at the expense of her institutional role. On the other hand, in terms of her agency, she is being almost equated to God by the client persona, with her agency thus going way beyond institutional powers. Commenting on the narrated event, she contrasts these purported God-like powers with the “bitter fact” (Line 031–034) that institutional resources are limited. This, in conjunction with the stylistic exaggeration (“God”) constructs a client persona which is intrusive and delusional – systematically claiming intimacy and over-estimating her powers. The narrative is organised in a back and forth of arguments over the scope of her powers between herself and the client persona. While she ends in a sort of cynicist aporia – “we are all in the same boat” (Line 076) – there is a pattern in the resistance to the ascribed role and the excessive powers and intimacy which come with it: She aligns with the institutional role of a counsellor (Lines 014 and 045–046). Her character in the narrated event deploys the institutional order to upscale her subjectivity from an individual biographical subject to an institutional agent – at the same time as the character of the client is described as moving closer and closer to her, ‘zooming in’ (Pritzker & Perrino 2020: 367) in geographical scaling as they interpellate her first as (fellow) “Arab” and then as “Palestinian”.

This narrative move of hers runs parallel to the one we can observe in the counselling guidelines above, scaling power and intimacy in institutional terms. Power is scaled along institutional hierarchies and can thus be disavowed by the claim to a lower level in that hierarchy – not the city of Vienna, but a human rights organisation, not a paradoxically (or oxymoronic?) God-like Yasmin but “just a poor employee” (Line 014). At the same time, institutional roles and their definition allow to ‘upscale’ subjectivities from individual persons to impersonal institutional roles – the “relationship rules” in the counselling guidelines do just that: they discern the institutional encounter from other, more intimate encounters. In the same logic, Yasmin connects greater intimacy with greater claims to her solidarity. Scaling her narrated self to an institutional level allows her to ‘zoom out’ of this intimacy by ‘jumping scale’ (cf. Uitermark 2002).

The scalar logic provided by the institutional order is oriented to as a resource for gaining control over intimacy and distance in the rapport with clients – a salient component of the discourse on professionalism at the counselling centre.

Emblematic of this discourse is the notion of *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries'). As we shall see, Yasmin and Sami as language workers are under heightened scrutiny from their colleagues with regards to their abilities to set boundaries in the ways expected from them (see Section 6.3; cf. J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020). In this light, we can understand Yasmin's narration as performative display of her professional self, responding with her narrated self to interpellations from clients and the institution.

A fractally recurring differentiation

Apart from one-to-one counselling situations and workshops, an important space of institutional encounter with clients is the *Recherche-Eck* (Example 4.6). The *Recherche-Eck* was established as a possibility for the clients to receive assistance in the actual process of searching for an apartment. In the transformation process from brokering to counselling, this structure fills a void left by the discontinuation of the brokering activities, as it institutionalises access to the desired resource in an alternative form: The *Recherche-Eck* offers a resource potentially useful to some clients as they get access to a computer as well as the opportunity to learn to navigate the usual Austrian online real estate platforms and to apply abstract information on housing contracts etc. received in prior counselling to the 'real world' of rent advertisements. At least that is the theory. In many cases, as noted by the counsellors themselves on some occasions in their staff meetings, the *Recherche-Eck* risked to become the preferred solution for a residual category, clients who just do not find an apartment by themselves, but do not (yet) qualify as 'emergency cases'. Questions of literacy further complicate the issue. In January 2018, a discussion about the *Recherche-Eck* developed out of a discontent articulated by several staff members and the manager with how it was being managed (with a longer sequence at the staff meeting on January 23, 2018). The result of this discussion was a narrowing down of the defined goals and purposes of the project (and consequentially, its target group), namely primarily for the individual client to *learn* how to search for apartments on the internet rather than to search in the strict sense. In this context reflexes of the reiterative chain reappear as in the following interaction I observed and participated in at the *Recherche-Eck* (see Example 4.6).

Example 4.6: At the *Recherche-Eck*. Extract from fieldnotes, June 12, 2018.

As I am working with a client at the *Recherche-Eck*, I overhear an interaction between Helena (the counsellor in charge of the *Recherche-Eck* that day), Ismaaciil (a volunteer) and a client in front of a computer. Soon Helena starts to question the use of the client's participation in the activities at the *Recherche-Eck*: She explains to her that she has to take part in the search process, because this is what they offer at the *Recherche-Eck*, assistance in the search for housing, not doing the search for her. If that was not what she wanted, the *Recherche-Eck* would not be the right place for her. At the end of this triadic interaction in which Ismaaciil mostly acted as an interpreter, the client stays and Ismaaciil starts to work with her one-to-one. Afterwards, Helena and Ismaaciil talk about his work with the client. He tells her that the client repeatedly asked him how she could get an apartment. That acquaintances of hers had been given an apartment from the counselling centre. That she did not believe that there were no apartments. That she said she did not find any sense in searching. That she was not familiar with computers and emails. That apparently, clients were treated unequally at the counselling centre because some were obviously given apartments and others not. Helena asks Ismaaciil if it was exhausting for him and he concurs. Helena tells him that it was a recurring observation that such questions arise almost only when counselling is conducted in the clients' 'mother tongue'. She asks me – I had been participating as a bystander – if I had experienced a similar situation before. I reply to her that indeed I did, yet not to this degree and intensity. Ismaaciil adds that some people would prefer to work with a volunteer who is a native speaker of German. Helena tells him he should go on break, but then she adds that she is sorry, there is another Somali-speaking client waiting outside. She proposes to Ismaaciil that he and I would work together, so he could 'just' be the interpreter in the encounter. She asks for my consent as well. I agree but I also ask Ismaaciil whether he feels this would exonerate him, if this was what he wanted to do. He agrees.

The ideological dimension of the communicative labour employed in shaping the client appears in an acuminated form at the *Recherche-Eck*. The scene described above shows how not only the message *we have no apartments* has become

recontextualisable, but also the entire differential scheme organising services at the counselling centre: Consider Helena's intervention at the beginning of the encounter, how she differentiates what ought to be part of the service at the *Recherche-Eck* and what ought not. As in the restructuring of the counselling centre as a whole, it is not access to material resources, but communicative ones, which is on offer. Helena employs a scheme differentiating the services offered at the counselling centre (counselling) from 'illegitimate' expectations (being offered an apartment) for the *Recherche-Eck*: assistance / guidance in the search for an apartment vs. having someone searching for them. In this scheme the context of the *Recherche-Eck* maps iconically on the overarching context of the counselling centre – the axis of differentiation is "fractally reiterated" (Gal & Irvine 2019: 127). The differentiation is linked to two distinct client personae: the self-responsible client (legitimate) and the "NGO-dependent" client (illegitimate). The differentiation between these two personae is made as well relevant when discussing who will receive an emergency apartment. Being regarded as someone who "relies on NGOs", i. e. who does not take initiative when they could, can mean that one is not regarded as a deserving client. The case reported above (see Example 4.6) thus exemplifies how (meta-)communicative labour at the counselling centre is ideological labour: It follows parallel patterns to the discursive (re-)production of responsibilised subjectivities in a neoliberalised welfare state (see also Lessenich 2008). However, it is important to note that these decision-making processes are not at all uncontroversial among the staff. And while Helena in this example seems to emphasise the dimension of will or choice over needs, decision-making 'backstage' is more nuanced in that a dimension of capability is considered as well.

In addition, the example above shows how communicative labour is unequally distributed among institutional actors. As we have seen in Yasmin's narrative and as I have argued elsewhere (J. Hassemer 2018; J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020), 'languaged' workers (sensu Barakos 2016; Dlaske et al. 2016) – counsellors and volunteers whose linguistic repertoires are used as a resource by the institution – are especially susceptible to unequal distributions of workload among staff at the counselling centre (see also Heller & Duchêne 2016: 152–153). Moreover, their linguistic repertoires are often regarded by their colleagues as vulnerable points in their professional selves (see Section 6.3; cf. J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020).

The scene from the *Recherche-Eck* above shows how this observation (unequal distribution of workload and imputed vulnerability) is as well valid for the kind of communicative labour described above.

4.4 Resignifying institutional order

In January 2018, at the occasion of major turning point for the counselling centre – the new government composed of the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) and the right-wing populist Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) had just entered into office and the preceding government had dramatically restricted the possibilities to hold a private residence for asylum seekers –, I conducted an interview with Sara, the head of staff. We talked about the implications of the recent political changes on hiring and staff development when I asked her whether she thought that there was a “different type of people” working in her team now compared to a few years ago. She told me she had observed that the “ideological fighting spirit” was not as present anymore among the staff. With “self-exploitation” being endemic in refugee aid, this decline of an ideological driving force worsened the effects of exhaustion among the staff. She also said that in her view, the idea of advocacy was being supplanted by questions of “mandate” and legality. She characterised the ‘new’ type of worker as someone who was more conscious of the representational function of their institutional role than the former.

Interestingly, other than individual orientations by single counsellors, one can observe a parallel shift towards a higher degree of institutionalisation of work practices and relationships in the counselling guidelines (see Example 4.4): With the addition of a paragraph on the institutional ‘identity’ as a human rights organisation in its revised form, the script effectively standardises the ways in which counsellors ought to represent their institution. While Sara locates the change on an individual level, the look at the script as a co-product of staff and management interests complexifies this picture. As emphasised above, the script can neither be considered the product of a bottom-up process, a condensed version of deliberative discussions, nor a top-down regulation, but the result of a multi-staged process which moved across institutional hierarchy levels. On the other hand, locating the shift towards more standardised, ‘safe’ work practices

in individual staff members 'mentalities' allows her to position herself in the interview as a progressive manager of the team. Being at the forefront of a political conception of refugee support work emerges as an important aspect of her professional self – not only as she presents it to me in the interview encounter: In fact, as I observed, her decision-making was often formulated in political terms. This is to say that displaying a stance of advocacy is not merely a question of self-fashioning in a specific interview situation, but it clearly constitutes a positive professional value in the moral economy (*sensu* Fassin 2009) of the counselling centre.

But, in the end, it is not so much my purpose here to trace where the supposed change originates from, but more which kinds of workers' subjectivities, professional selves, are produced by it and which are excluded. In fact, it cannot simply be concluded that the work at the counselling centre had become de-politicised – several staff members mentioned adhering to the cause of refugees' rights and a generally leftwing political stance as pre-conditions for fitting in at the workplace. However, many of them saw the team as heterogeneous in this respect. Depending on – or in performance of – their own positioning, they divided the team into radicals vs. realists or activist/ political and apolitical workers (cf. de Jong & Ataç 2017: 30). Consistent among most of the staff members I interviewed – irrespective of their own positioning – was the idea that a politicised stance was hegemonic at the counselling centre. Yet, the divisions were not as neat and homogenous as this might suggest. In the following sections, I will explore two exemplary critical positionings towards the institutionalised ways of dealing with the scarcity of housing as a resource. This will point to tensions between moral, professional and institutional orders beyond the self-referential 'factions' above.

"Poverty management"

Till aligned definitely with the activist type of worker in our interview (on February 09, 2018). He is one of the few social workers by training among the staff and in the interview of which a transcribed stretch is presented below he contrasts two approaches to social work using scholarly terminology: *individual case work* vs. *political work aimed at social change* (which he associates with a Marxist critique

of social work). He thus projects the observed difference in the work practices to yet another level on a scale of abstraction, entextualising it in analytical terms and recontextualising it scholarly discourse. This jump in scale allows him to ground a critique not only of the political developments in Austria but also towards institutional procedures and the structures he is part of.

At the time of our interview, as he told me then, he felt detached from the job. Having returned from a long study leave, he felt that circumstances, team dynamics and work tasks had changed at the counselling centre. Out of Sara's generalised perception that he had to catch up, he was not being charged with independent tasks. As a consequence, he told me, he had decided to be less invested into his work, doing just *Lohnarbeit* ('wage labour'), i. e. not more than what was asked from him. He shared many critical observations with me, positioning himself not only as a marginal person, but also as a representative of a former generation, as someone who is in the position to analyse, evaluate and draw conclusions. In the following example, we talk about the change process and he indirectly addresses the process of restructuration of services.

Example 4.7: Extract from an interview with Till, a counsellor (February 9, 2018).

- | | | | |
|-----|--------|--|--|
| 001 | Jonas: | und wie hat sich so die
AR↑beit von der
beratungsstelle WOHNen so
verändert in der zeit dann? | <i>and how has the work of the
Beratungsstelle Wohnen
changed over time then</i> |
| 002 | | seit den anfängen? | <i>since the beginning</i> |
| 003 | Till: | ja=jetz isses halt wieder
klassische
armutsverwaltung;= | <i>yeah now it is classic poverty
management all over again</i> |
| 004 | | (=also) | <i>(that is)</i> |
| 005 | | (- - -) | <i>(- - -)</i> |
| 006 | Jonas: | jetzt | <i>now</i> |
| 007 | Till: | [<<chuckling> klingt hart>] | <i><<chuckling> sounds tough></i> |
| 008 | Jonas: | [ja.=ja.] | <i>yes yes</i> |
| 009 | Till: | aber: isset ja im: in
wirklichkeit so. | <i>but that's how it is in the: in
reality</i> |

010	des is jetzt ne klassische anlaufstelle,	<i>now it is a classic contact point</i>
011	für diejenigen die offensichtlich nich in der lage sind,	<i>for those who are obviously not in a position</i>
012	(- -) mh: (-) oder nicht (-) ja=die nich in der lage sind aus welchen gründen auch immer-	<i>(- -) erm: (-) or not (-) yah who are not in a position for whichever reasons</i>
013	ähm selber aufm wohnmarkt ne wohnung zu finden,	<i>erm to find an apartment on the housing market by themselves</i>
014	ähm (-) für die halt ne anlaufstelle zu ham die für sie zuständig is.=	<i>erm (-) to have a point of contact for these ones which is appropriate for them</i>
015	=des is halt quasi det system von der armutsverwaltung.	<i>this is more or less the system of poverty management</i>
016 Jonas:	mhm.	<i>mhm</i>
017 Till:	und des is halt dit was die beratungsstelle wohnen jetzt auch is.=	<i>and that's what the Beratungsstelle Wohnen is nowadays</i>
018	=die beratungsstelle wohnen is ne anlaufstelle-	<i>the Beratungsstelle Wohnen is a point of contact</i>
019	die ähm (-) teil eines wohlfahrtssystems is.	<i>which erm (-) is part of a welfare system</i>
020	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
021	dit macht sie nich besser oder nich schlechter,=	<i>which does not make it better nor worse</i>
022	=aber:	<i>but</i>
023	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
024	is halt so.	<i>that's how it is</i>
025	(- - -)	<i>(- - -)</i>
026 Jonas:	und des war sie vorher nicht.	<i>and that's not what it was before</i>

027	(-)	(-)
028	Till: nö.	<i>nope</i>
029	(-) vorher war det ne selbstinitiierte möglichkeit wat neuet (.) zu probieren,	<i>(-) before it was a self-initiated possibility to try out something new</i>
030	ähm (-) mit dem entsprechenden gestaltungsspielraum,	<i>erm (-) with the corresponding room for manoeuvre</i>
031	(-) und sicherlich ooch beDINGT irgendwie durch diesen erFOLG der damit verbunden war,	<i>(-) and certainly also somehow due to this success which came with it</i>
032	(- -) ähm (- -) mh weiß nich;=	<i>(- -) erm (- -) mh I don't know</i>
033	=wie sagt man dazu so schön-	<i>how do they say</i>
034	(- -) ähm (-) ne stelle: wo leute: die bock hatten: ähm da mitzumachen;	<i>(- -) erm (-) a place where people who were up to participate in this</i>
035	(-) sowohl intern als auch nach außen hin aufbruchstimmung verbreiten.	<i>(-) propagate a spirit of progress both internally and towards the outside</i>

Responding to my question, Till labels the activities at the present-day counselling centre “klassische Armutsverwaltung” (‘classic poverty management’, Line 003, Example 4.7), implying that this had not always been the case. When I come back to this differentiation (Line 026), he elaborates on the contrast: At its inception, the project was a more flexible, grass-root initiative with an orientation towards social change (“Aufbruchstimmung”, ‘spirit of progress’). This reproduces the axis of differentiation (Gal & Irvine 2019) established earlier in the interview encounter: On the one side of the spectrum is individual case work (“poverty management” being the relevant example) by which social workers stabilise the capitalist state. On the other side is a critical social work practice which aims at social and political transformation. This axis of differentiation is mapped onto typified forms of practice and corresponding personae in the

co-constructed narrative: System-inherent work where the figure of the social worker is part of a structure they can only reproduce, lacking an agency of their own, and system-changing work where the figure of the social worker is a driving force for societal change. This reflexive analysis matches the one brought forward by Sara who contrasted the staff's orientations towards either questions of (system-inherent) legality or of (radical) advocacy. However, while their analysis of the shift in time is consistent, the respective scale on which they locate the differentiation differs: Sara locates it between individuals among the team, while Till contrasts the institution of the counselling centre as a whole with versions of itself at different stages in time.

As suggested at the opening of this section, the counsellors concurred that a political stance based on advocacy was regarded as highly valued at the counselling centre. It was regarded as fundamental for professional legitimacy to the point that some of my interlocutors who did not identify with this order of values told me they were reluctant to talk openly about their political views among some of their colleagues. Other imageries of professionalism thus co-existed with the idea of advocacy – 'mandate' (as authorised representation), for instance. Yet the fact that this differentiation can be fractally re-applied across different scales and from different perspectives shows how pervasive it is as an organising principle for professionalism in the microcosm of the counselling centre. Professional order is in this case co-dependent with *moral order* (cf. Heller 2007; or *moral economy* when talking about the values attached to these moral positionings, cf. Fassin 2009).

Selves and others

We have seen in Till's critique that he contextualised the restructuration of services at the counselling centre in the reproduction of unequal access to resources in the capitalist nation-state. A similar critique, yet again differently scaled, underlies the interpretation of the signboard described earlier which emerged from a conversation I had with Mona, a former volunteer interpreter for Arabic and then employed counsellor. We met for this interview a while after she had quit her job at the counselling centre. Sitting in a restaurant outside for dinner, we talked at length about experiences of difference, her experience as a person of colour

and migrant in Austria, her professional career and her anti-racist and feminist activism. While she did not want to talk about her experience at her, then, former workplace, she agreed to comment on the photography of the monolingual Arabic signboard (see Figure 4.3 on page 123). An extract of the transcribed interview is given in Example 4.8.

Example 4.8: Extract from an interview with Mona, then former counsellor and (before that) volunteer interpreter (May 11, 2018).

001	Jonas:	((chuckles))	
002		ähm: (-)	<i>erm:</i>
003		darf ich dir trotzdem DAS nochmal zeigen hier?	<i>may I show you THIS one again though</i>
004	Mona:	ja?	<i>yes</i>
005	Jonas:	das: find ich einfach irgendwie sehr intressant;	<i>I just find this somehow very interesting</i>
006		(3.5 s)	<i>(ca. 4s)</i>
007	Mona:	m:hm?	<i>mhm</i>
008	Jonas:	was ähm: (- -) was macht das mit dir;	<i>what erm: (- -) what does that do with you</i>
009		(- -)	<i>(- - -)</i>
010	Mona:	ja=enttäuschung;	<i>well=disappointment</i>
011	Jonas:	ja,	<i>yah</i>
012	Mona:	ja.	<i>yah</i>
013		(- - -) ja=ich komme mit hoffnung,	<i>(- - -) well I arrive with hope</i>
014		(- -) und ich glaube das is (-) äh äh bei: (- - -) einigen beratungstellen,	<i>(- - -) and I think this is (- - -) in: some of the counselling centres <probably means: consultations></i>
015		wo ich das gefühl habe,	<i>where I had the feeling</i>
016		ich (.) KONNte nicht weiterhelfen.	<i>I could not help</i>
017	Jonas:	[mhm-]	<i>mhm</i>

- 018 Mona: (-) [weil:] weil das is auch *because this is also anchored*
mit dem sys↓tem (-) verankert; *with the system*
- 019 Jonas: ja. *yah*
- 020 Mona: mit diese strukturen hier ; *with these structures*
- 021 es ist nicht einfach,= *it is not easy*
- 022 =zum beispiel eine wohnung *for example to find an*
(.) äh h° zu finden, *apartment*
- 023 vor allem wenn: auf der *especially when from the other*
anderen seite f: fragt dich, *side a: asks you*
- 024 wer sind diese: wer si (-) wer *who are these: e who a (-) who*
diese (-) solche (-) solche leute. *these (-) such (-) such people*
- 025 (- -) oder wer sind diese *(- -) or who are these people=*
leute.=
- 026 =und dann sagst du; *=and then you say*
- 027 ja=die ist eine familie aus *well=this is a family from*
somalia. *Somalia*
- 028 und die sagen;= *and they say=*
- 029 =ah: SOLche; *=ah: such ones*
- 030 Jonas: mhm; *mhm*
- 031 Mona: und diese mit diese: niedrige *and this with this low er (.)*
äh (.) erni erniedrigte (-) äh *humi humiliating (-) er use of*
verwendung der sprache, *language*
- 032 das zeigt das reflektiert sich *that shows that reflects also*
auch (-) welche bilder diese *which kind of images these*
menschen im kopf haben; *people have in their heads*
- 033 und das kommt WIEder auch *and this also comes again (.)*
(.) von die (-) *from the (-) eurocentric (.)*
eurozentristischen (.) *perspective vis-à-vis Africa for*
blickwinkel gegenüber afrika *example*
zum beispiel;=
- 034 =es ist wird als ein: (-) als *=it is is as a: (-) as Africa:*
afrika: ((chuckles)) ein ein: ein *((chuckles)) was a a: a village*
dorf wäre;

035	Jonas:	mhm,	<i>mhm</i>
036	Mona:	und nicht die:	<i>and not the:</i>
037	Jonas:	ja;	<i>yah</i>
038	Mona:	zweite größte kontinent	<i>second largest continent</i>
039	Jonas:	ja	<i>yah</i>
040	Mona:	in in: in diese erde. =	<i>on on: on this earth</i>
041		=ja ?	<i>yah</i>
042		(- -) es is das is schon enttäuschung=	<i>(- - -) it is of course a disappointment</i>
043		=ja=aber ä:hm (.) hätte ich mir gewünscht (-) wenn zum beispiel dazu noch geschrieben;	<i>well=but mh: I would have wished (-) if for example <they had> written also</i>
044		ja: (-) es gibt keine (-) keine wohnungen;	<i>yah: (-) there are no (-) no apartments</i>
045		(- -) aber wir können (-) TROTZdem helfen.	<i>(- -) but we can (-) still help</i>
046	Jonas:	ja.	<i>yah</i>
047	Mona:	obwohl auch das wort helfen mag ich nicht.	<i>although I don't like the word to help either</i>
048	Jonas:	mhm;	<i>mhm</i>
049	Mona:	weil helfe:n es ist genauso wie der begriff integration.	<i>because to help is the same as the term integration</i>
050	Jonas:	ja.	<i>yah</i>
051	Mona:	helfen (-) das ist mit machtverhältnis,	<i>to help (-) that is with a relationship of power</i>
052		(- -) du HILFst mir;=	<i>(- -) you help me</i>
053		=weil du du du bist mächtig;	<i>because you you you are powerful</i>
054		du bist du hast alles;	<i>you have everything</i>
055	Jonas:	ja.	<i>yah</i>
056	Mona:	ich hab nichts;	<i>I have nothing</i>
057		und das ist auch gibt (-) ein gefühl (-) dass du: (-) niedrig bist.	<i>and this is also gives (-) a feeling (-) that you: are low bist.</i>

- 058 Jonas: mhm- *mhm*
- 059 Mona: und und auch (- -) fordert (- -) *and also (- -) challenges (- -)*
dich auch heraus, *you also*
- 060 (- - -) dich auch hinaus so wie (- - -) *you also there where I*
wo ich steh, *stand*
- 061 mit mir hier zu stehen. *to stand here with me*
- 062 Jonas: ja; *yah*
- 063 Mona: und das is (-) zeigt schon auf *and this is (-) points already to*
diese diese: klassismusfaktor. *this factor of classism*
- 064 Jonas: mhm- *mhm*
- 065 Mona: und äh (-) daher isses das *and er (-) therefore it is this*
066 manchmal isses auch auf *sometimes in Arabic it is also*
arabisch
- 067 (- -) kommt darauf an wer das (- -) *depends on who wrote this*
verfasst hat;
- 068 Jonas: ja; *yah*
- 069 Mona: weil (.) arabisch wie gesagt ist *because (.) Arabic as I said is a*
blumige sprache;= *flowery language=*
- 070 =ich kann das (-) anders (.) *=I can write this (-) differently*
anders zum beispiel schreiben; *(.) differently for example*
- 071 Jonas: mhm? *mhm*
- 072 Mona: hätt ich anders geschrieben. *I would have written this*
differently
- 073 Jonas: ((clicks his tongue)) *((clicks his tongue))*
- 074 magst du mir SAGen wie du_s *do you want to tell me how*
anders geschrieben hättest; *you would have written it*
differently

In this stretch from our conversation (Example 4.8), I show her a printed version of the photograph with the monolingual Arabic signboard stating the notorious *we have no apartments*⁷. At first, I do not ask her a precise question, but merely

⁷ My explicit request for her consent at this point echoes her earlier reluctance to talk about her former workplace.

state my interest (Line 005). A moment passes in silence. Then Mona responds with a “m:hm?” (Line 007) which I treat in the following turn as a request for me to specify my intentions. I ask her about her emotional response to what is on the photograph I have just handed to her, thus making relevant an affective stance as an answer (Line 008). She complies with the interactional relevance and names an affective stance: *Enttäuschung* ‘disappointment’. Thereafter, she elaborates on this stance in a number of narrative sequences. The reference is not entirely clear, but in the first sequence it seems that the ‘I’ in the narrated event refers to the intended addressee of the signboard, a client whose hopes are cut short by the negative message on the signboard (Line 013). Yet this perspective is not further pursued in what follows: In the following narrative sequences (Lines 014–016 and 021–029), she changes footing, the ‘I’ refers to herself as a counsellor. In the second narrative sequence she narrates that she has felt unable to help in a number of counselling encounters with clients (Lines 014–016). Then she offers an analysis for her experienced lack of agency, locating the inability to help her clients in “the system” and “the structures” at the deictic centre “here” in Austria (Lines 018–020). The following narrative sequence comes as an illustrative example of this analysis (Lines 021–029): The short narrated event is that of a counsellor contacting a real estate broker or owner (“the other side”, Line 023, note the spatial arrangement of the characters!) for an apartment for a family from Somalia. As the geographical origin of the family becomes known (Line 027), “the other side” categorises them right away in a manner that Mona evaluates as derogatory (Line 031). In the metapragmatic framing of the narrated event, the derogatory conduct of the real estate owner/broker is rendered as emblematic (scaled up) of attitudes towards migrants in Austria (Line 032) and of “eurocentric perspectives vis-à-vis Africa” (Line 033) in general. With this narrating event, she locates her lack of agency as a counsellor in structurally anchored attitudes and inequalities in post-colonial Europe weighing on the clients’ access to apartments (Lines 031–041).

Coming back to her affective stance towards the message displayed on the signboard (Lines 042–043) – disappointment – she formulates a first alternative version of the text (Lines 044–045). In this alternative version she adds an element to the message – *es gibt keine (-) keine wohnungen; (- -) aber wir können (-) TROTZdem helfen*. (‘there are no (-) no apartments (- -) but we can (-) still [or: despite that]

help'). Besides the post-colonial critique which she explicitly elaborates in scalar moves (from an interactive exchange, to a stance of her narrated opponent, to a generalised eurocentric mentality in Austria), her positioning has an affective layer. The affective indexical qualities of *Enttäuschung* ('disappointment'), *Hoffnung* ('hope') and *helfen* ('to help') are regrouped in a field of indexicalities (Jaffe 2016: 95) related to the construction of the client–counsellor relationship. This is where she recontextualises the message on the signboard.

In the following, she formulates a critique of her own reformulation, of the usage of the verb *helfen* ('to help', Lines 047–063). Finally, she connects this critique to the author of the text on the signboard, thereby moving back to a scalar level of the individual (Lines 065–072). I ask her again for her preferred version of the message (Line 074) which she finally writes down on a sheet of paper (Figure 4.5 on the facing page).

The result is consequential as to her critical engagement with the denotational text before: As if to counter the problematic notion of 'helping', she adds another line/ stanza emphasising the clients' own will. The text can be transliterated as follows (with my translation on the side):

01	عذراً	<i>Pardon [An apology]</i>
02	لا يوجد لدينا شقق سكنيه	<i>we do not have apartments</i>
03	ولكن يمكننا مساعدتك للحصول	<i>but we can help you finding</i>
	على	
04	ما ترغب!!	<i>what you want!!</i>

The newly proposed formulation does not break with its predecessor in a fundamental way – it is based on the reproduction of the signboard text in form and propositional content. Apart from the addition of an expansion (lines 03–04), there are two more modifications with respect to the message on the signboard which served as its model: (1) the address (line 01) has changed from رجاء ('please' or verbatim 'a request') to the more deferent عذراً ('Pardon' or 'an apology') and (2) instead of شقق للسكن (verbatim 'apartments for accommodation'), she uses شقق سكنيه (verbatim 'accommodation-apartments') both of which I have rendered here with the English term 'apartments'. I leave the latter aside as a more or less negligible variant. The other two modifications introduce three 'new' elements:

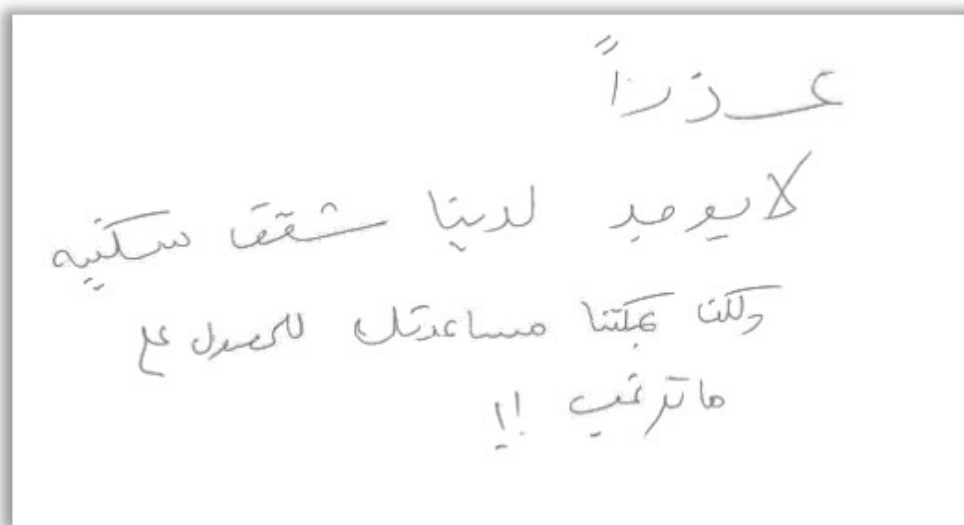


Figure 4.5: Alternative version of the signboard (لا يوجد لدينا شقق للسكن 'We have no apartments'), proposed to me by Mona during an interview on May 11, 2018.

(1) a positive definition of the service offered (which had been present in some of the earlier variants in the recontextualisation chain, see Figure 4.2 on page 122), (2) the client's will and (3) an element of deference towards the client's will. These are consequential reconfigurations of the reiterated text with regards to the way she constructed her political stance earlier, her concerns with power asymmetries and affective experience.

By moving across multiple scalar levels in the framing of the narrated events, she achieves a critique that is both affectively grounded and political. Taking up my impulse to express an affective stance, she readily projects this onto a client, herself, and society of post-colonial Europe as a whole. It is insightful to compare hers and Till's critical positionings: At first sight, looking at her reformulation of the text on the signboard, it may seem less fundamental, as if it was a question of using the right words, of (meta-)communicative labour – while Till positions himself as a critic of the role of the counselling centre in its substance. But looking at the embedding of Mona's alternative version in our

co-constructed process of meaning-making reveals that she indeed adds another context, the post-colonial world in which she happens to be a counsellor. This makes another axis of differentiation relevant for her political stance than that of her colleagues cited above. It serves also to position herself, much like the differentiations introduced by Sara and Till served them to position themselves in the interview encounter: namely as someone who is more intimate with her clients and who refuses to set boundaries (so she explained to me).

Professional self and institutional order

In the sections above I have engaged with a selection of counsellors' stances towards the work at the counselling centre by which they position themselves as critics – Sara as a progressive manager, Till as a willful element with subversive anticapitalist ambitions and Mona with a post-colonial antiracist agenda. Constitutive for Till's and Mona's stances is that, at the moment of the interview, their agendas are not going to be realised at the counselling centre. They are already discarded in Till's (at least temporary) disengagement and Mona's exit from her job there. While they engage in fundamental critiques of institutional practices, the concern raised by Sara is located on an individual level of scale. It makes the moral self, and not moral and institutional order, the object of attention and the building block of professionalism. Order is co-constructed in the interview with Sara as contingent and without alternatives – while in the interview with Till and Mona, the prevailing order is contrasted with alternative ones.

We shall see in the following chapter that the individualisation of ethical questioning and decision-making, that is the down-scaling of moral order to a moral self is a more wide-spread phenomenon at the counselling centre which allows for competing agendas to coexist. It institutionalises a tension between representing the client and controlling resources that appears to be constitutive of the institutional order⁸. As such, institutional order needs relatively independent moral selves as professional selves in order to sustain itself. This is coherent with scholarly discussions on social work professionalism which often focus on the social workers' reflective engagement with their own work practice and

⁸ This situation parallels the idea diffused and criticised in social work literature of the so-called *double mandate* (Böhnisch & Lösch 1973; Staub-Bernasconi 2013) where social work is regarded as caught between the agenda of helping and of controlling the client.

selves (e. g. Becker-Lenz, Busse, et al. 2013; Fook 2015; C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006; Hargreaves 2004; Martyn & M. Atkinson 2000; Miehl & Moffatt 2000; Riemann 2004, 2009).

4.5 Discussion: (Meta-)communicative labour, institutional order and agency

We have no apartments. This chapter started with the question why the staff at the counselling centre keep repeating this description of an institutional reality which almost all participants – staff, interpreters and clients – know does not match what it purports to describe. In order to understand how the function of such a reiterative practice emerges in the institutional context, how it is negotiated and which effects this produces, I followed the recontextualisation of the phrase along the discursive chain. As the phrase becomes part of a perpetuated institutional script in a process of entextualisation, de- and recontextualisation, it establishes a regime of sayability for ‘frontstage’ communication. As we have seen in the reported discussions from staff meetings and in the counselling guidelines, this is the result of strategic choices and of (meta-)communicative labour: metacommunicative as it consists in the reflexive regimentation of speech, and communicative as it is carried out in constant communicative praxis, resting on the communicative labourforce (or *wordforce*, Duchêne 2011) of each worker (counsellors as well as volunteers). (Meta-)communicative labour as an analytical lens makes the scalar dynamics (Blommaert 2007) of institutional meaning- and boundary-making visible, i. e. how such meaning- and boundary-making is established, negotiated and navigated in situated encounters (‘upscaling’, sensu Blommaert 2007). This, in turn, shows how the work of meaning- and boundary-making becomes the onus of the individual worker, ‘downscaling’ the neoliberal governance of welfare by percolating into institutional practices and workers’ subjectivities.

As to its effects and functions, the situation exemplifies the ‘bind’ of agency of a post-sovereign subject (see also Lorente 2018: 105): While the reiterated erasure constitutes a sort of ‘black box’ secluded from external scrutiny which promises to allow for some sort of professional autonomy in decision-making, it comes

with all sorts of practical problems deriving from the mismatch between what is said openly and what is said and done under cover. While covering-up allows to carry on the counselling centre's foundational agenda of redistribution on a smaller scale, this comes at the price of 'buying into' and enforcing an agenda of self-responsibilisation on the major part of the clients.

(Meta-)communicative labour makes sense above all with reference to an institutional order: as reproductive, ideological labour it sustains the institution. As we have seen in the conversation with Yasmin, it can help to sustain professional agency within the institutional order – which of course presupposes that one 'buys into' its logics. There are examples of staff members who did not fully buy into these logics of boundary-making (think of Till's subversive communication strategy that was halted by Sara and his colleagues or of Mona's embracing of intimacy with the clients' situation). However, this oppositional stance coincides with their disengagement with resp. their exit from the institutional moral economy (*sensu* Fassin 2009) where a double agenda – responsabilising clients and distributing resources – has to be maintained.

Despite the opposition to government policies aiming at fractioning refugees into hierarchies of deservingness (Ataç 2019; see also Holzberg et al. 2018) and institute a logic of individual investment and merit (Hametner & Rodax 2017; Lehner 2017), the institutional actors are forced into the same logic by their implication in processes of the distribution of resources (housing as well as services). This has not only effects on the emergence and reproduction of the figure of the (un)deserving client, but also on that of the professional. The logics derived from the role as distributor of resources effectively enters into conflict with self-professed institutional morals such as advocacy for the clients (cf. de Jong & Ataç 2017, referring to MacKenzie et al. 2012). Social work professionalism is therefore under pressure from constitutive contradictions inherent in the political-economic conditions of the institution. As de Jong & Ataç (2017) show, political independence from the state is an important feature of distinction for small players among the refugee support organisations in Austria by which they distinguish themselves from the 'big' NGOs. As one could see in the cases presented in this chapter, it is also a point of reference for workers (e. g. Sara and Till, above) at the counselling centre which depends on one of these 'big players'. The phrase

we have no apartments promises to 'domesticate' these contradictory conditions, to institutionalise them, which implies their reproduction.

To conclude, the analyses show how situated practices are consequential for the emergence of trans-situational meaning, yet how the emergent meaning reconnects to wider orders of social life and weighs back onto the actors' agency in situated practices. The observations specifically emphasise the institutional dimension in the (re-)production of social order (Heller 2007) and the double-edged agency of the post-sovereign subject.

5 Professionalism and moral order: Reflective workers

5.1 Reflexivity and reflective practice

Since the beginning of my fieldwork at the counselling centre in April 2016, I had admired Sara. She was an example of what I initially wanted to understand by investigating professionalism: How could she be the way she was? Always secure, calm, serious, yet at the same time self-critical? After one of the first counselling sessions conducted by her which I had assisted, I noted down the following characteristics I perceived as ‘professional’ in her demeanor when interacting with clients: *a neat control in her display of empathy, a systematic yet at the same time flexible way of working through the various aspects to be covered, a clear orientation towards her clients, partial control over the process of interpreting and a controlled shift between a reserved and a more compassionate posture towards a client in crisis* (Fieldnotes, April 27, 2016). I was particularly struck by these observations because some days later she told me that she experienced counselling as an exceptional moment of stress.

Sara’s confession constituted a *rich point* (sensu Agar 1996: 30–33) as it made clear that her ways were not simply the reflex of ‘a strong personality’, but actually a social (co-)product which required quite some reflexive and communicative work of managing affect (cf. Cameron 2000; Hochschild 1983) from her part. Reflexivity is key here on different levels: it describes the reflexive self-monitoring as Sara controls the communicative display of her affects, it describes an embodied, recognisable *type*, a self-reflexive professional and – as we shall see – it can be related to institutionalised practices which cultivate certain ways of doing and being reflexive, weekly staff meetings, monthly supervision and the annual *Klausur* (‘closed meeting’).

These institutionalised practices of reflexivity are to different degrees implicated in the institutional reproduction of the counselling centre. For instance, at the staff-meeting, recurrent topics are *Beratungsgrenzen* ('limits to the counselling practice'), the counselling guidelines in which they are supposed to materialise, and *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries'). As signs, they point to different ideological and material objects, but they are all implicated in the labour of coming to terms with the contingencies of everyday work practices. That is, they serve the reproduction of order in the institution (see also Holmes & Marra 2004). This labour – of which the (meta-)communicative labour discussed in the preceding chapter is a part – is both *reflexive* and *reflective*: it draws on reflexivity as a general property of semiosis (semiotic reflexivity, see Section 2.4) and it does so by employing a register (Agha 2007) of practices of reflection (cf. C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006: 164–168) – effectively entextualising and enregistering reflexivity as a type of practice (cf. Del Percio 2022). Thus, in this chapter, I look into forms of reflexivity as they are practised, institutionalised, embodied and professionally valorised.

Observing Sara when she disambiguated complex situations, such as moral dilemmata in the allocation of resources, made decisions or spoke about the political dimension of her work was not one, but a series of *rich points* for me. Not in the sense that it was a completely unprecedented, unintelligible experience (sensu Agar 1996: 30–33), but still more of a real puzzle to my understanding than a methodologically controlled, *organised surprise* (Breidenstein et al. 2015: 121–123): From my acquired professional habitus as a doctoral student, scholar and linguist, I was more used to relativise and avoid conclusive, unequivocal answers. My research project in itself exemplifies this very well in its alignment with an ethnographic emphasis on complexity and ambivalence. How is it possible to both acknowledge, appreciate, even advocate ambivalence and reflection *and* at the same time produce a disambiguated picture of reality, make decisions and display a clear political stance, represent an institution? These are precisely the problems faced by institutionalised refugee support work as elaborated in the previous chapter: Having to tend to both the substantial goals of advocacy and/or support *and* institutional reproduction or even the continuing existence of the institution (cf. MacKenzie et al. 2012), the moral order is inevitably complex. Reflection and professionalism are contiguous in this observation if we

understand professionalism as an *institutionalised competence to perform competence* (*institutionalisierte Kompetenzdarstellungskompetenz*, Pfadenhauer 2003): it is a register, a bundle of performable linguistic and non-linguistic signs (Agha 2007: 80) in which Sara enacted her expertise (Carr 2010).

Now it might seem sensible to give a functional explanation to the omnipresence of practices of reflection and the reflective performance I observed in Sara's ways of working. Having identified an institutional problem, here the tension between substantial goals and institutional reproduction, reflection and reflective display can be understood as *institutional work* (Lawrence et al. 2009) required from such actors which, consequently, creates an affordance for, and value of, a specific type of worker – the *reflective practitioner* (Schön 1983). Understanding (critical self-)reflection as the road to professionalism is the underlying logic of a whole range of social work literature – scholarly and 'how-to' publications – on professionalism and professionalisation in social work (Becker-Lenz & S. Müller 2009; Ebert 2008; Ebert & Klüger 2015; Martyn & M. Atkinson 2000; Riemann 2009; Samson 2015; Staub-Bernasconi 2013; Tov et al. 2016; Yip 2006). The often cited 'double mandate' – i. e. loyalty to both the state and the clientele with a double agenda of care and control (Böhnisch & Lösch 1973) – explains this problematic only insufficiently (see also Eppenstein 2010; Lutz 2011). Instead, as discussed in the previous chapter, complex, scalar, and shifting moralities are in place – neither *the* state nor *the* worker are monolithic, not to forget about the societal distribution of wealth and market forces. Therefore, I will rather approach the specific political-economic conditions of the institution as bundle of *ethical affordances* to actors which they may (or may not) take up in different ways in their day-to-day practices and self-presentation (see Keane 2015: 30–32).

Indeed, the forms of reflexive affective and communicative labour cannot be described without contextualising them in their specific historical, political-economic conditions: What does it mean to be a counsellor in refugee support, in Austria, after the so-called 'refugee-crisis' of 2015? The counselling centre at hand – like many other refugee-support organisations in Austria – and the people working there find themselves under various sources of pressure: These institutions are mandated and subcontracted by public state-entities. In Vienna, the corresponding public institution is the *Fonds Soziales Wien* ('Vienna Social Fund'), an endowment fund or charity commissioned funded by the City of

Vienna¹ which regulates the funding of all sorts of social projects (support for the elderly, people with dis/abilities, the homeless, refugees and debtors, see Fonds Soziales Wien 2020). Due to the way in which funding is organised by the funding body within its specific legal architecture, funding has to be renegotiated in cycles. Therefore, projects such as the counselling centre at hand depend on the fluctuating conditions provided by Austrian federal and national social policies. At the same time, the respective organisations (not to speak of the individual workers) – such as the NGO which runs the counselling centre – have their own ideological histories. The consequences of such processes of institutionalisation may lead to the above mentioned dilemma between service-provision and social activism as described by de Jong & Ataç (2017).

The genre of the staff meeting can be understood as a form of communicative labour – much like the (meta-)communicative labour I elaborated on in the previous chapter – in which the counsellors reflexively engage with their own actions and with themselves as moral ‘owners’ of their actions and as representatives of the NGO. From an ethnographic perspective, however, I approach the – indeed ubiquitous – phenomenon of doing reflection and being reflexive/reflective not as epiphenomenal of structural problems, but as phenomena in their own right (see also C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006). And as argued by Bulcaen (2016: 146–147), there are good reasons to doubt the inherently problem-solving properties of reflexive communication. This means that the following analyses concentrate on the institutionalised forms or genres in which such reflection – and the performance of being a reflective worker – happens, more specifically on the staff meeting as the most prominent and ordinary institutionalised genre. I am not so much concerned with delineating how the genre of the staff meeting is interpretively constructed – for instance, in terms of genre indexes or cues which make a stretch of discourse recognisable in their belonging to a certain genre (Spitzmüller 2013a: 247–249; Molodychenko & Spitzmüller 2021) – as I focus on a specific institutionalised genre in context. More central to my concern in this chapter are its situated conditions and effects – the way it (re-)produces configurations of things and people in a professional order. As Angouri & Marra (2010: 615–616) argue, the genre of the ‘work meeting’ is a pervasive phenomenon

1 Based on the *Wiener Landes-Stiftungs- und Fondsgesetz* (Wiener Landtag 1988).

in all kinds of professional settings. Thus, even though *reflection* can be said to be emblematic of social work, the genre of the work meeting is not specific for this professional context. Moreover, communicative genres are not necessarily fixed in their functions, but have unclear boundaries, can be mixed, blended and appropriated (Mäntynen & Shore 2014). Hence, the question what the genre of the staff meeting *does* has to be treated as an open question.

Aggregate states of reflexivity

Up to this point, I have not settled for a clear distinction between the terms 'reflexivity', 'reflective' (as in 'reflective practitioner') and 'reflection'. As laid out in Section 2.4, there is a complex field of notions and debates which relate to the label and conceptual understandings of it. On a very basic level, I understand *reflexivity* as a *Gestalt* of something (or somebody) bending back onto itself (Archer 2010; Zienkowski 2017). I understand the other terms, then, as more specific instances of reflexivity. As a pair, *reflexivity* and *reflection* have been used to make evaluative claims to forms of reflexivity (and thereby to assume a position in scholarly discourse). For instance, Archer (2010: 2), though she admits that the boundaries between the terms are fluid, differentiates between reflection as a process directed at some object – reflecting/thinking on something: *subject-object* – and reflexivity as a similar process which 'bends back' onto the subject, involving the self: *subject-object-subject*. With regards to ethnographic writing, Fabian (1983: 90) proposes "to introduce a convention which distinguishes between *reflexion* qua subjective activity carried out by and revealing, the ethnographer, and *reflection*, as a sort of objective reflex (like the image in a mirror) which hides the observer by axiomatically eliminating subjectivity". What marks the difference for both of them, is the presence of the subject, not only as an actor, but also as the target or object of the described processes. They both more or less explicitly favour one over the other. This is where Lynch (2000: 42) grounds his central criticism of concepts of reflexivity from an ethnomethodological perspective: Most of them come in pairs of preferred and dispreferred notions, the 'reflexive' and the 'unreflexive'. As a counter-model, he offers the ethnomethodological notion of reflexivity as an 'ordinary' principle governing social life, following Garfinkel (1967). However – and this is not denied by Lynch (2000: 47) either –

the ways in which reflexivity is appropriated in practice may have specific effects. A simple opposition of the 'ordinary' and the 'specific' is, for the purpose of my analysis, not very pertinent, as neither is an a priori fixation of value based on agentivity. Instead, my objective is to look into how reflexivity emerges as a property of practices and people and becomes ascribed specific values. Rather than discarding certain notions of reflexivity (see Section 2.4), I thus want to make an attempt to integrate them in a conceptual frame. As a premise, thus, I will treat them no more as different *notions* of reflexivity, but as different (degrees of) social materialisation or institutionalisation of the *Gestalt* of 'bending back', or, in terms of Hirschauer (2014: 187), as different *aggregate states* ('Aggregatzustände') or *degrees of social hardness* ('soziale Härtegrade').

More specifically in this chapter, I ask how reflexivity becomes a recognisable feature of practice, a practice itself or a social 'thing' that is connected to particular images of people or figures of personhood (Park 2021), referring to the concept of enregisterment (Agha 2007; cf. Del Percio 2022). With a focus on embodiment, and more specifically based on the notion of the *body image* (B. Busch 2021b; Schilder 1935), I then trace how the professional order is inscribed in the subject. Taking this further, with a view on dynamics of inequality, in- and exclusion in a political-economic sense (Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017), I ask how these different phenomena are connected to the unequal distribution of and access to material and symbolic resources. Enregisterment, embodiment and inequality form the three interlocking perspectives I assume on phenomena of reflexivity. They serve to understand reflexivity as both an ordering principle and as the result of order in discourse, in subjectivity and in the distribution/circulation of resources. Before I present this analysis in the form of three case studies, I want to briefly expand once more on the notions of *ethics* and *morality* which serve as further analytical categories in this chapter.

Ethics and morality

The counsellors at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* are in many ways similar to the *street-level bureaucrats* in the US public administration as described by Lipsky (2010 [1980]): due to their role as service providers, their humanitarian ambitions and also the clashing interests and ideologies of the NGO and nation/welfare

state, counsellors at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* are caught in a web of ethical dilemmas (cf. also Ticktin 2011).

Ethics and reflexivity are closely interrelated concepts: Much like it is the case with reflexivity, the scope of the concept of ethics oscillates between notions which emphasise the 'ordinary', or spontaneous, pre-conscious and implicit decisions and explicit, self-conscious, discursive negotiation and judgment. From a metapragmatic perspective, however, the opposition between the explicit and the implicit (and the connected epithets of the 'ordinary' and the specific) is rather problematic, given the gradual nature of metapragmatic explicitness (cf. Verschueren 2004: 56–57). Much like with reflexivity and reflection, the paired notion of *ethics* and *morality* has been used in various ways to delineate positions in the field (e.g. Keane 2015; Mattingly & Throop 2018). A discussion around the notion of *ordinary ethics* (Das 2007; Lambek 2010, see Mattingly & Throop 2018) parallels the idea of mundane reflexivity as put forward by Lynch (2000) with reference to the ethnomethodological tradition. Keane (2015: 24–25) argues that ethics do not necessarily involve active *reflection*, citing counter-examples of ethical 'gut reactions', thereby distinguishing his approach from others who posit explicit reflection as a defining property of ethics. In coherence with the ethnomethodological usage of the concept of moral order, one could not only argue to capture such seemingly immediate, implicit and unquestioned judgments by the term of morality, but also that the notion of reflexivity as used by ethnomethodologists in principle supports the idea by Keane (2015) that reflexivity per se does not make the difference as reflexivity itself can be a quite ordinary, unconscious aspect of practice. In the following, I will not draw a neat distinction between the two terms, but use the term *moral* to emphasise the more ordinary aspects of unquestioned values and *ethical* when they become a matter of dilemmata, scrutiny, contention, discussion etc. in practices of *ethical questioning*². Keane (2015) uses the notion of *ethical affordances* to stress that multiple aspects of experience can be taken up as relevant to ethics and ethical questioning about the morally / ethically good and just: "*Ethical affordance* refers to the opportunities

2 Special thanks goes to Tessa Bonduelle who introduced me to *ethical questioning* as a lens and to the ethics-strand of anthropological thought. Thanks also to both Sabine Lehner and Tessa Bonduelle with whom I shared long discussions, data sessions and a workshop on ethical questioning.

that any experiences might offer as people evaluate themselves, other persons, and their circumstances” (Keane 2015: 31). Ethical affordances are thus also affordances for (meta-)communicative labour and professional agency in the tension between re-negotiation and reproduction of norms and values (cf. Mattingly & Throop 2018: 479).

As with reflexivity, there is a political-economic dimension to ethics as argued by Fassin (2009) who uses the term of *économie morale* (‘moral economy’): not only do such processes of ethical questioning potentially concern the production, circulation, distribution and consumption of symbolic and material resources, but the values of the morally/ethically good may themselves become objects of such production, circulation and distribution (Fassin 2009: 1257). And there is a subjective, embodied dimension of *moral experience* (Zigon & Throop 2014) and subjectivation, “the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consumed” (Mahmood 2005: 23). Of specific interest to the analyses below is the evaluative dimension of subjecthood that has both a reflexive and an ethical dimension. To describe this convergence of reflexivity and the ethical in subjectivation, I understand the relevant subject position as an *ethical subject of the reflective worker*. The three perspectives on ethics – as an enregistered practice, an embodied phenomenon and as entangled with political-economic processes of valuation and unequal distribution – parallel the three perspectives on reflexivity I adopt in my analyses below. While reflexivity describes a formal phenomenon, deeply infused (or ascribed) with ethical meanings, ethics describes socially meaningful values which become apparent in the phenomena of reflexivity explored in this chapter.

Outline of the remaining chapter

The first step (Section 5.2) to engage with reflexivity as a valued quality of practice and personhood is an analysis based on the concept of *enregisterment* (Agha 2007). Enregisterment is a linguistic-anthropological model of processes of typification – historical processes in which certain qualities of speech and demeanor become recognisable ways (*types*) of speaking or acting, connected to recognisable ‘types’ of speakers or actors (see also Lorente 2018). The concept which was developed in order to describe sociolinguistic change, the emergence, selection and spread

of recognisable, socially meaningful types of language variants and speakers, describes – at least this is what I argue – exactly what is happening with reflexivity: a selection of reflexive signs come to index recognisable and socially meaningful types of practices and actors. The section thus sheds light on how reflexivity can be found in different ‘aggregate states’. In a second step (see Section 5.3), I look into how the described register, the symbolic and economic structure is embodied (sensu B. Busch 2020) by individual subjects and what this means in terms of agency. I understand the embodiment of reflexivity as a site where subjects position their semiotic repertoires in relation to recognised forms of speaking and acting reflexively (registers of reflexivity). Following B. Busch (2021b), I argue that such a positioning contains evaluative understandings of one’s being in the world – a *body image* (Schilder 1935) of oneself as an ethical subject. With a focus on inequality and dynamics of in- and exclusion (see Section 5.4), I further explore the social meaningfulness of reflexivity by looking into how specific institutionalised practices of reflexivity are made accessible (or not) to institutional agents. I devote specific attention to projects of including the otherwise excluded volunteer workers into these practices, looking into the various agendas informing and forming these attempts. In a final section (Section 5.5), I argue for a multi-level analysis of phenomena of reflexivity on the basis of the preceding analyses.

5.2 Practices of reflexivity

Reflexivity is not only a contested and disputed theoretical concept, but it is also a perceivable quality of empirical phenomena (or *quale* in Peircean terminology, cf. Harkness 2021). How does reflexivity become legible as such? How does it become not merely an abstract, analytical form, but a perceivable feature which identifies categories of practices and actors like the emblematic qualities I observed in Sara’s demeanour? Or even a perceivable object or a practice in itself, such as reflecting on one’s work practice? How does it acquire ‘moral flavor’ (Gal 2013)? In this section, I work through a discussion which unfolded across a number of staff meetings in February and March 2018 as a case study of the emergence of reflexivity as a valued quality in work practices at the *Beratungsstelle*

Wohnen, the concomitant negotiation of legitimate ethical subjectivity and practice. More concretely, in this case study, I look into negotiations around the so-called *emergency list* and about how it was supposed to be kept. As we shall see, the orientation to a reflexive model of practice in the trajectory of this discussion comes with consequences on how ethical questioning is scaled in relation to the subject.

Borrowing from Del Percio (2022), I understand enregistered forms of the quality of reflexivity in practice as *registers of reflexivity*³. The term ‘register’ points to a range of linguistic-anthropological and sociolinguistic work into ideological histories of how certain qualities of phenomena of various kinds and scope – material objects, communicative forms of practice, languages, language varieties or ways of speaking – give rise to moral categorisations and valorisations (among others Agha 2007; Cameron 2000; Carr 2011, 2013; Gal 2013, 2017). Enregisterment is a concept which describes historical processes of typification, i. e. processes in which specific qualities of talk and demeanour become recognisable types of talk and demeanour (Agha 2007: 147). Specifically drawing on work in the domain of language, affect and labour (Cameron 2000; Carr 2011; Flubacher 2020b; Hochschild 1983; Lorente 2018; McElhinny 2010; Tebaldi forthcoming[a],[b]), Del Percio (2022: 44) describes registers of reflexivity as historically constituted phenomena and as devices for governing labourforce by affective self-regulation. Like the ‘emotional literacy’ programmes in UK schools analysed by Cameron (2000: 139), Del Percio (2022) looks into how specific ways of speaking reflexively are being taught to unemployed persons in training programmes in the UK. This involves the projection of legitimate ways of speaking reflexively – which means the register comes with a specific value attached.

The promotion of such registers, their installation in public institutions and state-sponsored programmes, can be regarded as a sort of reproductive labour (Del Percio 2022: 45) – with training institutions working on the reproduction of labourforce suitable for the market according to capitalist ideology. What sets these cases apart from the one at hand – in the context of counselling centre

3 Del Percio (2022) uses the term *reflexive registers*, but I prefer *registers of reflexivity* since the notion of register conceptualises them as fundamentally reflexive phenomena (Agha 2007: 167–171). What sets the phenomenon under scrutiny aside is that reflexivity – i. e. specific reflexive qualities of talk and other demeanour – is enregistered becoming a recognisable quality indexing a register and attached personae.

– is that we are not dealing with an institution whose specific purpose is the reproduction of the register, but rather processes of institutional agents' regulation and self-regulation within the same organisation (as a sort of institutional work, cf. Lawrence et al. 2009). The case study presented here thus play out on a comparably 'smaller' level of scale, namely across a pathway of communicative events within the counselling centre in 2017 and 2018 (zooming into the specifics of events in February 2018).

Registers come with personae (or *figures of personhood*, Park 2021) attached to them (cf. Agha 2007; Carr 2010; Highet & Del Percio 2021; Lorente 2018; Reyes 2017; Spitzmüller 2013b; Thielemann 2020b; Urciuoli 2008) – differently valued projections of speakers against which individual performance can be 'read' and evaluated (Agha 2007: 195–203). In this sense, registers are not only "cultural model[s] of behavior" (Agha 2007: 147), but cultural models of personhood as well. And as such they do not only allow individuals to *enact* a legible and valued position (Carr 2010: 20), but they form institutionalised and commoditised models to which individuals need to subject themselves. Discourses on *communication skills* are a case in point (Cameron 2000; Urciuoli 2008): the valuation of certain ways of speaking comes with the valuation of certain embodied qualities – "a cluster of mutually enregistered usages (Silverstein 2003) that are referentially successful to the extent that users share, or buy into, specific presuppositions about workers and labor: who workers should be, how they should work, and how they should be evaluated" (Urciuoli 2008: 212–213). The nexus between registers and projections of workers' subjectivities will be the focus of the following analyses. Before moving to the emergency list, I want to give a broader description of the institutionalised practice of the staff meeting in the organisational context.

Practices of reflexivity at the counselling centre

Every Tuesday morning at nine o'clock – ten o'clock on days of the monthly supervision after work – the employed counsellors, the civilian service person and I gathered for the staff meeting. Or not quite at nine: Usually, and not only on Tuesdays, between nine and half past nine, a crowd of always more or less the same people would gather downstairs, in front of the building's entrance. Here –

some equipped with a coffee from the kitchen upstairs – they would smoke a few cigarettes and have a chat. The crowd would start forming spontaneously, with numbers, composition and interactional formations fluctuating, until the gathering was usually terminated by Sara, the head of staff, when she decided it was time to start the official part. In this informal meeting before the meeting, talk revolved around such diverse topics as the latest political news, gossip, holidays, one's own and others' personal lives, sources of happiness and affliction, as well as work-related issues. Sometimes, difficult cases or troublesome work experiences were discussed – Sara called this “the daily supervision at the coffee machine” once in an interview (January 09, 2018) – and questions to be discussed at the staff meeting anticipated or just alluded to. For the official part, staff members would move upstairs and gather in the small meeting room, almost entirely filled by a large conference table. Those who had not been downstairs with the others because they had been working at their desks or because they were late would then join and the staff meeting would begin.

The staff meeting is only the most salient example of several forms of institutionalised reflexivity / reflective practice – that is, self-referential talk, about one's own work practice and the institutional context (Bulcaen 2016) – I encountered at the counselling centre. Institutional reflexivity is metricalised (Silverstein 2014) by an institutionalised, regular pattern on defined levels of time scale: a yearly *Klausur* (‘closed meeting’), a monthly supervision and a weekly staff meeting. On top of this, there are occasional meetings located on other levels of hierarchical scale: the heads-of-staff meetings between the heads of the various refugee support projects run by the NGO, meetings by the *Vienna Social Fund* with all projects funded in Vienna, meetings on the level of the shared office space etc. And then, there are informal meetings, ‘at the coffee machine’, the crowd smoking downstairs, having lunch together in the office, afterwork meetings at the pub around the corner etc. More than once in our interviews, counsellors emphasised the symbolic value and impact of these informal encounters in terms of socialisation and information exchange. This was not exclusively regarded positively – some said that too much talking was done in informal circles in a way that tended to exclude others. There appears to be a fine line between reflective practice and *gossip* as soon as one leaves the institutionalised structures. Yet the staff meeting as an institutionalised encounter too is not valued to the same

degree by everyone: some staff members told me in our interviews that it was not of as much value to their work. Not sharing enough information, however, was met with discontent among the staff and led, at least in one case, to conflict which had to be resolved in supervision.

The staff meeting which is my central concern in this chapter is emblematic of the way reflexivity has become an institutionalised, enregistered practice: It is thought of as inclusive (though it is not), as keeping collaboration alive (though this goal is not shared by everybody), a safe space allowing for self-critique, and as having a low degree of formality (though it requires learning its specific genres and fitting in into the subtleties of apparently flat hierarchies) with room for irony, joking and laughter. This is not to say that humorous talk does not serve work-related purposes – as a means of positioning oneself, releasing tensions and/or coping with stress –, it sure does, in similar ways as suggested by studies on phenomena of humour and irony in social work and other professional fields (Kwon et al. 2020; Moran & Hughes 2006; Richards 2010; Rowe & Regehr 2010; Thielemann 2020a).

Staff-meetings in particular follow a rather rigid organising principle or, in other words, they operate in a poetically structured, metricalised manner (cf. Silverstein 2014: 491). An institutionalised practice of entextualisation and recontextualisation (Bauman & Briggs 1990) is followed: One of the staff members – always more or less the same people – volunteers to take the minutes. They read out the minutes from the last meeting which are then reminded, reconsidered, discussed, updated or deleted point by point, depending on whether they act as simple and rather stable admonitions to the staff (of the form *please enter XYZ correctly*) or constitute evolving and/or contentious topics. The order in which topics are discussed consequently is rather stable and I could only rarely observe departures from this script. Hence, certain topics have a stable presence. For instance, between 2016 and 2018, almost every meeting started with the point *DolmetscherInnen/Dolmetscher*innen für Beratungsstelle Wohnen* ('interpreters for the Beratungsstelle Wohnen') being both an index of and a means of reproducing the prominence of the topic of volunteering and language work for the counsellors (see Chapter 6). After going through the points discussed at the former meeting, *neue Punkte* ('new points') are gathered and finally, the work schedule of the week to come is organised (allocation of counselling slots etc.). This means,

in terms of metricalisation, the encounter is divided into three parts: (1) *previous points*, (2) *new points*, and (3) *organisation of the counselling shifts for the next week*.

New points are 'owned' by staff members: They are gathered in a ritualised form where staff members take turns to announce the items they will set on the agenda. As a sort of convention, one gives only a short label to a point without going into detail. Sometimes, however, short discussions or exchanges develop, and I often observed that especially neophytes would immediately start to expand on their point which was usually stopped by one of the senior members. To an outsider, this could probably seem strangely secretive – a quality which is outright celebrated by staff members in certain cases, especially when the point can be considered somehow extraordinary (e. g. announcing a particular success story, or institutional changes, the exit of a staff member, reprehension by the head of staff, but even more so personal news): one invents a somewhat cryptic label, performs an impenetrable expression, or perhaps exchanges conspiratorial glances with one another.

The strongly metricalised or ritualised character of the practice is important because it does not only confer order onto the practice of the staff meeting itself, but it also has consequences on other connected encounters and practices, for instance by cementing the continuous presence of certain topics on the agenda. Crucially, the staff meeting is also an important occasion for decision making and establishing *professional vision* (Goodwin 1994): For instance, it is the primary occasion on which cases are discussed and interpretations of such cases receive authoritative entextualisation (cf. Lillis 2017; Maybin 2017; Park & Bucholtz 2009). The staff meeting is productive: Discussions and decisions made here are entextualised in the minutes which – via the organising principle of the meetings described above – are central to the reproduction of the practice over time. Such decisions made have consequences on conduct in the following days, on interactions with clients, external stakeholders, co-workers and the ways both workload and resources are distributed and circulated. That said, the staff meeting is also a moment where professional socialisation takes place: not only does the head of staff organise the learning process for new staff members with the rest of the team at this occasion, but it is also an occasion where ways of doing things – that is, professional vision (Goodwin 1994) – is learnt by the new member: how to talk about a case, how to reason on the allocation of resources, how to

work with the interpreters. Thus, the staff meeting in many respects functions to stabilise not only the institutional, but also the professional and moral order, by providing temporary discursive closure and fixing meaning (cf. Laclau 1990), drawing and redrawing the unstable boundaries of what is imagined as ‘good’ professional work practice. It does so by virtue of its reflexivity which functions as a motor of reproduction through self-referentiality (cf. Zienkowski 2017: 5). This self-referentiality is institutionalised in the staff-meeting on several levels of scale: the institutional level, as the staff meeting institutionalises institutional self-reference (or *topicalisations of institutional context*, s. Bulcaen 2016); the event, as its structure is self-referential; the work practice, as the work done at the staff meeting consists in the communicative processing of (mostly) communicative work; the worker’s self, as counsellors negotiate their positioning as counsellors. As such, the staff meeting is an *institutionalised practice of institutional reflexivity*.

An ethical affordance: the *emergency list*

An object of self-reflexive discussions in the context of the staff meetings was the so-called *Notfallliste* – the ‘emergency list’. This discussion – more precisely a discussion on whether and how the list was supposed to be kept and used – will serve as a detailed case study on enregistered practices of reflexivity and the construction of ethical subjectivities and professionalism. The ethical aspect can be situated in a problem of wider scope within the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*: it is part of the ongoing negotiations on how to deal with the distribution of scarce housing resources.

In the short history of the counselling centre, a number of lists with clients’ names on them had been kept by the staff. They had served several different purposes which evolved with the changes from brokering to counselling as described in Section 4.2. This transformation process meant that the list which had dominated everyday work procedures in the beginning of the counselling centre fell out of use: the *waiting list* where candidates for donated apartments were gathered. Other lists followed, such as the *end-of-contract list* which was meant to keep track of clients who had been brokered for housing under a special legal framework which allowed for temporary, short-term contracts⁴. While

4 The so-called *Bittleihe* or *Precarium* is a form of contract based on ABGB 20/01 § 974 which

someone had commented on the restructuration of services from brokering to counselling with *NIE WIEDER LISTEN!* ('no more lists!') on a poster produced at the closed meeting in 2016 where the restructuration had been discussed, this tongue-in-cheek comment would not fulfill itself. After closing the waiting list and the end-of-contract list, other lists were soon opened: besides the rather peripheral *START list*⁵, this was the *Familien für UDB* ('families for UDB [the data bank for incoming housing offers]') list which was later renamed *Notfallliste* ('emergency list'). Opened in April 2017, the list was quite generally meant for families who were seen as a potential fit for the still incoming housing offers, with the option to include so-called *Härtefälle* ('hardship cases') as well – at least this is how it was formulated in the minutes of a staff meeting on April 4, 2017 (see Example 5.1)⁶.

enables a real estate owner to allow the usage of their property for free or for the service charges at maximum, while being exempt of certain restrictions which apply to regular rent contracts, e.g. on the duration of the contract. This form was largely used by the NGO to formalise the relationships between real estate donors and clients of the NGO. As Till critically remarked in my second interview with him (February 9, 2018), this led to a situation where large numbers of clients had been guided into rather precarious housing conditions by the NGO – as the result of an agenda which was meant to do quite the opposite, namely freeing the asylum seekers in the large state-sponsored camps from their untenable dwelling conditions by involving civil society. Being well-aware of this, the counselling centre kept track of the duration of the precarious contracts brokered and when housing offers came in, priority was given to those on the *end-of-contract list* (minutes of the staff meeting on March 9, 2016). With the discontinuation of the large-scale brokering activities, this list briefly gained importance with heightened efforts to fulfill the felt, assumed responsibilities before it was dissolved in course of the restructuration.

5 Pseudonym for a small-scale housing programme for a specific target group offered by the same NGO as the counselling centre, but not managed by the counselling centre.

6 This procedure was subjected to the regime of sayability described in Chapter 4: as a sidenote, one can read in the minutes *Klient*innen nicht informieren, dass sie auf eine Liste kommen* ('don't inform the clients that they are being set on the list', see Example 5.1).

Example 5.1: Excerpt from the minutes of the staff meeting on April 04, 2017 (my English translation on the side).

- Liste: wir sollten Liste mit Familien verwenden, auf die wir dann zurückgreifen können, wenn wir kurzfristig eine Wohnung angeboten bekommen (Kategorien – keine Details: Name, Anzahl der Familienmitglieder, wie dringend). Muss nicht jede Familie auf die Liste kommen. Yasmin hat diese Liste Bereits [*sic*] erstellt “Familien für UDB” ([removed: path to the document on the server, JH]) – aber trotzdem: Klient*innen nicht informieren, dass sie auf eine Liste kommen. Härtefälle können auch mitaufgenommen werden (zb [*sic*] Fall siehe unten)
- *List: we should use a list with families which we can resort to when we are offered an apartment on short note (categories – no details: name, number of family members, how urgent). Not every family needs to be put on the list. Yasmin has already created the list ‘families for UDB’ ([removed: path to the document on the server, JH]) – but still: do not inform the clients that they are being put on a list. Hardship cases can also be included (e.g. see the case below)*

From July 2017 on, the label *Notfallliste* (‘emergency list’) appears in the minutes. These early mentions mostly contain instructions on how the list was supposed to be kept – reminders to check the list in case an apartment had been donated, to remove names of clients who had found or received apartments, to make liabilities transparent by adding one’s initials when setting a client’s name on the list etc. – and short notes from within case discussions affirming that the client concerned was to be put on the list. Apart from one early case in July 2017, the question of *prioritising* clients did not find reflexes in the minutes before the beginning of 2018 since when I also had started audio-recording the meetings (see Table 5.1 on the following page). Then, it became a controversial topic in a number of subsequent staff meetings.

Table 5.1: Contexts in which the emergency list was mentioned in the minutes of the staff meetings between April 2017 and March 2018.

date	context of mention	audio-recording
4 April 2017	initiating the list, instructions on its usage	–
20 June 2017	case review	–
27 June 2017	case review	–
18 July 2017	case reviews (of which one case for prioritisation)	–
22 Aug 2017	reminder to check the list	–
12 Dec 2017	reminder to check the list and to put clients' names on the list	–
19 Dec 2017	reminder to check the list, to put clients' names on the list, to update the list	–
2 Jan 2018	reminder to check the list, to put clients' names on the list, to update the list; instructions on usage	–
9 Jan 2018	reminder to put clients' names on the list; instructions on usage	available
23 Jan 2018	case review	available
30 Jan 2018	case review	available
6 Feb 2018	case review; discussion on prioritisation	available
13 Feb 2018	case review; discussion on prioritisation	available
20 Feb 2018	discussion on prioritisation	available
27 Feb 2018	case reviews; discussion on prioritisation	available
6 March 2018	case reviews	–
13 March 2018	case review; discussion on prioritisation	–
20 March 2018	case review	–

The first staff meeting where the topic of prioritising clients was raised was on February 6, 2018. It all started when Yasmin voiced her dismay with Karoline

who had ‘moved up’ a client on the list. The exchange which followed led to an evaluative scrutiny of the practices and morals of how the emergency list was being kept and executed. In other words, the emergency list had become an ethical affordance (Keane 2015) to the staff. When reading the transcribed interaction (see Example 5.3), it becomes apparent that this ethical affordance had been around for some time before it was entextualised as a problem of institutional scale at the staff meeting. For instance, Sara refers to a conversation – as a reply to Yasmin’s concerns (Example 5.3, Line 042) – which must have happened the day before where a couple of staff members had discussed the case. And, a week later, at the staff meeting on February 13, Karoline would explain to her colleagues that she had been experiencing the handling of the emergency list as a dilemma: *mit dem häng i zur zeit grad exTREM. | [...] | zwischendrin woar i scho viel sicherer:, | und hob gwusst das tu i | oba: jetzt grad | ich hab keine: ahnung.* (‘I am exTREMElY stuck with this at the moment | [...] | for some time I had already been much more secure | and I knew this is what I do | but: now | I have no: idea’; see Example 5.5, Lines 011–018).

Up to February 6 when the topic was first raised at the staff meeting, instructions on how to handle (and prioritise) the cases on the list had been vague – *[m]uss nicht jede Familie auf die Liste kommen.* ‘not every family has to be put on the list’ it says in the minutes from April 4, 2017, where the list was first mentioned (see Example 5.1). According to the minutes, Yasmin had set up the list on the internal server of the counselling centre with three categories: *name*, *number of family members* and *how urgent* – a description of the level of urgency. Since it had been opened, clients had been set on the list by individual staff members whenever they retained this step adequate. From time to time, such cases were discussed in the staff meetings and hence, some decisions for the emergency list were shared among the staff, but there was no formalised procedure of approval. On January 2, 2018, a month before the discussion on prioritisation started, the minutes report a formalisation of responsibilities (see Example 5.2). An instruction for the usage of the list allows staff members to decide autonomously whom they set on the list and, at the same time, it requires them to add their own initials to the entry. In other words, not only was the role of individual judgement reaffirmed, but also personal liabilities for decision-making were now systematically formalised.

Example 5.2: Excerpt from the minutes of the staff meeting on January 02, 2018 (my English translation on the side).

In die Notfallsliste [sic] schreibt	<i>Everyone enters the candidates into</i>
jeder die Kandidat*innen	<i>the emergency list independently,</i>
selbstständig rein und gibt auch	<i>and also adds their initials for the</i>
seine Initialien [sic] zwecks	<i>purpose of consultation;</i>
Rücksprache ein;	

This may be explanatory of the widespread insecurities which followed – while before individual liability was rather low, from this moment on the individual counsellor’s decision on who was being set on the list (and who not) was rendered more visible, fixing the counsellor’s individual accountability. Consequently, the list metamorphosed from being an ethical ‘valve’ to an ethical affordance: simply appeasing one’s conscience by putting every other client on the list – which is what some of the counsellors, by their own admission, did – was not possible anymore given that decisions would have been open to scrutiny. There had been, however, a shared assumption about the logic of the list, namely that its linear order entextualised a chronological order which in turn implied the precedence of those on top of the list. In the discussion on the prioritisation of clients, this principle was questioned.

The discussion responding to the emergency list as ethical affordance is interesting for the issue of reflexivity and reflective practice because it can be understood as an emblematic situation calling for a reflective practitioner as pictured by Schön (1983): It is fraught with moral dilemmata, an insecure ground, and the logics of everyday work routines, the assumed logics of the list, are at issue. To the extent that the staff members participating in the conversation thematise and evaluate their own and their colleagues’ practice, one can say that they *reflect* on their work practice. But as argued by Bulcaen (2016), there is little validity in deducing a specific effectivity from the reflexive form of the observed practice. In a similar vein, linguists like C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi (2006) have preferred to study the ordinary reflexivity of interactive encounters in social work-related contexts. The question is, from this perspective, not so much whether the case

at hand can be considered (proper) *reflective practice* or not, but rather what is achieved through the reflexive linguistic phenomena in interaction (C. Hall, Slem-brouck & Sarangi 2006: 10, 167). What this approach is able to demonstrate is that a reflexivity as formal property of the observed practices *per se* does not automatically mean that these practices result in a self-critique of the actors involved. It shows that what counts is what actors *do* with reflexivity or how the reflexivity of linguistic practice is appropriated in linguistic practice. It does not, however, account for the observation that actors also orient to reflexivity as an discursive or ideological object – this dimension is confined to a debate among ideology-brokers or decision-makers in debates and processes of professionalisation (see the debate of reflexivity and (social work) professionalism in Section 2.4). The actual relevance for this debate in everyday work *practice* is not taken into consideration.

Discussing the emergency list

As mentioned above, the question of prioritising clients – or in the words of the staff members ‘moving up’ (*vorreihen*) – was first addressed as a general concern at the staff meeting on February 6. Nine people were present at the encounter of which a transcribed excerpt is given below: Bernhard (a legal counsellor, he is keeping the minutes), Sebastian (another legal counsellor), Helena and Karoline (counsellors), Till (a counsellor who has just rejoined the team after a longer absence), Markus (the civilian service person), Sara (the head of staff), Yasmin (her deputy) and myself.

Example 5.3: Transcribed interaction from a staff meeting (February 6, 2018).

001	Bernhard:	zur notfallliste,	<i>to the emergency list</i>
002		(-)	(-)
003	Yasmin:	°hh zur notfallliste=	<i>°hh to the emergency list=</i>
004	Yasmin:	=weil gestern: (-) äh:m (- - -)	<i>=because yesterday (-) erm (- -</i>
		karoline	<i>-) Karoline</i>
005	Helena:	<<smiley voice> °hh>	<i><<smiley voice> °hh></i>

	Yasmin:	(-) hat eine familie,	<i>(-) has a family</i>
006		un:d (.) es ist halt;	<i>and (.) the thing is</i>
007		<<faster> (wir haben) eine liste?	<i><<faster> (we have) a list</i>
008		ICH (.) ich sag nur meine meinung,	<i>I (.) I am just saying my opinion</i>
009		ich find das ist wirklich->	<i>I find this is really></i>
010		ich: find das persönlich es ist FAIR so,	<i>I find it personally it is fair like that</i>
011		dass wirklich der REIhe nach.	<i>that really in order</i>
012		(-) ja?	<i>(-) right</i>
013		und wenn jetzt eine neue familie kommt;=	<i>and if there is now a new family coming=</i>
014		=und wir finden diese familie ↑auch↑ a:rm,	<i>=and we find that this family is also poor</i>
015		wirklich (.) NICHT (-) vorrücken (.) und (-) eintragen ganz oben auf der liste;=	<i>really (.) DON'T (-) move <them> up (.) and (-) enter <their names> on top of the list=</i>
016		=das wäre wirklich (.) finde ich (-) unfair gegenüber (-) die andere familie	<i>=that would be really (.) I find (-) unfair towards (-) the other family</i>
017	?:	((sniffs))	<i>((sniffs))</i>
018	Helena?:	hh°	<i>hh°</i>
019	Yasmin:	auch wenn sie seit (.) zwei jahre bei uns waren;	<i>even if they have been with us for (.) two years</i>
020		find ich auch-	<i>I find it too</i>
021		(-) weil	<i>(-) because</i>
022		(- -) weil sie: (-) in zweitausendsiebzehn bei uns war (.) einmal.	<i>(- -) because she: (-) was at ours in two thousand seventeen (.) once</i>
023		ja?	<i>okay</i>
024		und jetzt:t (.) nach drei vier monate ist sie akti:v;	<i>and now: (.) after three four months she is acti:ve</i>

025	oder er ist akti:v;	<i>or he is acti:ve</i>
026	(-) uns zu besuchen;	<i>(-) to visit us</i>
027	ICH (-) mein persönliche meinung-	<i>I (-) my personal opinion</i>
028	find ich nicht (-) dass es (-) äh: dringend ist.	<i>I don't find it (-) that it (-) is er: urgent</i>
029	weil die anderen ist auch dringend.	<i>because the other one is urgent as well</i>
030	ich finde es ist wirklich der reihe NACH,	<i>I find it is really IN sequence</i>
031	heute (.) habe ich eine familie,=	<i>today (.) I have a family=</i>
032	=trage ich wirklich auch	<i>=I also really enter <them into the list></i>
033	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
034	wenn ist (.) nummer dreißig,=	<i>if it is (.) number thirty=</i>
035	=dann BLEIBT auch nummer dreißig.=	<i>=then it STAYS number thirty too=</i>
036	=und wird NICHT nummer eins und ganz oben auf der liste.	<i>=and it WON'T become number one and on top of the list</i>
037 Helena:	°h	<i>h°</i>
038 Sara:	genau.	<i>exactly</i>
039 Helena:	<<smiley voice> ä:hähä>	<i><<smiley voice> u:huhu></i>
040 Sara:	genau.	<i>exactly</i>
041 Helena:	[I:CH hatt das]	<i>I: had this</i>
042 Sara:	[und da ham wir dann] auch drüber gerede:t-	<i>we talked about this then as well:</i>
043	äh:m weil ich bin schon der meinung:-	<i>er:m because I surely am of the opinion:</i>
044	nur weil wir: (-) manchmal (.) äh: (-) nicht dran denken;	<i>only because we: (-) sometimes (.) er: (-) don't think about it</i>
045 Helena:	voll;	<i>absolutely</i>

046	Sara:	und nicht eintragen=	<i>and we don't enter them <into the list></i>
047		=ist das auch (.) UNfair den klientinnen und klienten gegenüber-	<i>it is also (.) unfair towards the clients <FEM.> and clients <MASC.></i>
048	Helena:	°h	<i>h°</i>
049	Sara:	und die frau fisayo: is jetzt (.) seit (-) eineinhalb jahren bei un:s,	<i>and Ms Fisayo: is now (.) with us since (-) one and a half year:s</i>
050		und nur weil wir nie dran gedacht haben -	<i>and just because we had never thought about it</i>
051		beziehungsweise weil es diese liste erst später gab,	<i>or because this list existed only later</i>
052		is es schon auch irgendwie: (-) komisch wenn wir sie dann nicht (- -) auch vorreihen.	<i>it is kind of (-) odd if we don't (- -) move her up then too</i>
053	Helena:	°h [ICH hab]	<i>°h I have</i>
054	Sara:	[DE:Shalb] ham wir uns nicht	<i>THEREfore we didn't</i>
055		tschuldigung.	<i>sorry</i>
056		willst du mal?	<i>do you want to</i>
057	Helena:	ich hab auch wen vorgereiht;=	<i>I also moved someone up=</i>
058		=muss ich ehrlich sagen.	<i>=I have to say honestly</i>
059		(-) [genau aus demselben grund.]	<i>(-) exactly for the same reason</i>
060	Sara:	genau und [deshalb haben wir aber dann] auch äh: irgendwie: nicht wirklich einen grünen (.) ZWEI:G gefunden,	<i>exactly and therefore we also didn't er: somehow: really find a way ahead then <verbatim: we didn't find a green branch></i>
061		so: dass wir alle glücklich sind,	<i>so that all of us would be happy</i>
062		((laughs))	<i>((laughs))</i>

063	u::nd (-) ich glaub ANders kann man_s nicht lösen außer das dann im team zu besprechen;	<i>a::nd (-) I believe one cannot find a DIFFerent solution than to talk about this in the team</i>
064	(-) ob man vorreicht (.) oder nicht;	<i>(-) if one moves <someone> up (.) or not</i>
065 ?:	h° °hhh	<i>h° °hhh</i>
066 Helena:	ich hab	<i>I have</i>
067	<<fast> ja;=das können wir dann nochmal	<i><<fast> well=another time we can</i>
068	eine somalische	<i>a Somali</i>
069	ich hab jetzt grad ihren namen vergessen=	<i>I forgot her name now=</i>
070	=aber ich hab gesehen dass die> seit:	<i>=but I saw that she was> sinc:e</i>
071	(- -) die war das erste mal beim sami,	<i>(- -) she was for the first time with Sami</i>
072	im: (.) eh zweitausendsiebzehn-	<i>in: (.) as you said two thousand seventeen</i>
073	ich glaub:	<i>I think:</i>
074	septem↑ber oder so,	<i>September or so</i>
075	und sie war seitdem wirklich (-) SEHR sehr sehr sehr sehr oft da;	<i>and she has been here since then really (-) VErY very very very often</i>
076	sie ist nicht nur jetzt aktiv;=	<i>she is active not just now=</i>
077	=sondern sie war die ganze zeit aktiv,	<i>=she was active all the time</i>
078	(-) und: (-) d: (-) und dann: hat halt ham wir halt auch vergessen=	<i>(-) and: (.) th: (-) and then: well we also forgot=</i>
079	=oder da wurde die notfallliste noch nicht so geführt wie sie jetzt geführt wird=	<i>=or the emergency list wasn't kept the way it is being kept now=</i>

080	=und ich denk mir-	=and I think
081	(- -) das is UNfair.	(- -) this is UNfair
082	Sara: und dann genau so situationen-=	and then exactly that kind of situation=
083	=ich: hab eine beratung-	=I have a consultation
084	äh: (-) DEfinitiv FALL: für die notfallliste-	er: (-) DEfinitely a CASE for the emergency list
085	aber upps ich geh auf urlaub- =	but ousps I go on holiday= =
086	=drei wochen später komm ich drauf-=	=three weeks later I notice= =
087	=upps (-) hab ich vergessen: draufzuschreiben-	=ousps I forgot: to write <them> down
088	(- -) (und) (.) eigentlich mein fehler:-	(- -) (and) (.) actually my fau:lt
089	Bern- hard: mhm-	mhm
090	Helena: [find ich auch.]	I agree
091	Sara: [deshalb also]	hence
092	be	be
093	aber (- -) auf jeden fall auf die notfallliste mal schreiben,	but (- -) in any case write <them> on the emergency list
094	und dann kann man noch IMMer im team besprechen ob man vorrückt oder nicht.	and then one can ALways talk among the team if one moves <them> up or not
095	(- -) aber ich find wenn_s UNSer FEHLer ist-	(- -) but I find if it's OUR FAULT
096	dass wir_s nicht draufgeschrieben haben,	that we didn't write it down
097	einfach weil wir_s verGESsen haben,	simply because we forGOT it
098	(3.8s)	(3.8s)
099	Helena: ja,=	yes=

100	=find ich ehrlich gesagt auch.	=I honestly think so too
101	(also)	(well)

The excerpt (Example 5.3) starts with Bernhard announcing the next point on the agenda “zur notfallliste” (‘to the emergency list’, Line 001). It is a *new point*, set on the agenda by Yasmin after a short negotiation over its relevance. Karoline had countered that the issue had already been settled, but Yasmin had responded that for her, it was not. The agenda item is thus ‘owned’ by Yasmin. And indeed, after a short pause following Bernhard’s introduction of the point, she takes her turn (Line 003). Referring to the interaction she had with Karoline the day before, she problematises what she views as a problematic practice, given the established ways of using the emergency list (Lines 003–036): the practice of moving clients’ names to the top of the list. She contrasts this practice with the presupposed *chronological* logic of the list: First come, first served. Helena accompanies Yasmin’s account with commenting paraverbal activities (marked breathing in and out, partly with smiley voice, Lines 005, 018, 039). Sara first concurs with Yasmin’s account (Line 038) and Helena claims the floor (Line 041), but Sara keeps it (Line 042). She refers to a conversation on the same issue with unspecified participants (Line 042) and formulates an evaluation of the situation divergent from Yasmin’s which questions impartiality of the chronological principle as entextualised by the list, invoking potential shortcomings on behalf of the staff in keeping the list (Lines 042–054)⁷. Helena endorses Sara’s evaluation and claims the floor once again (Line 53) which is handed over to her by Sara (Line 055–056). Helena supports Sara’s logic referring to her own actions (Line 057–059). Sara then jumps scale to a more abstract level, generalising the need to discuss decisions of the sort in the future (Lines 060–064). Coming back to a more concrete level of scale, Helena exemplifies the previously established critique of a textually conceived chronology with a specific case where a client’s name did not end up on the list despite her regular attendance of the counselling centre for several months (Lines 66–79) which

⁷ The scenario mentioned by Sara – a counsellor ‘forgetting’ to add a client to the list – became entextualised in the counselling guidelines as they were reworked in early 2018 in form of a reminder.

she evaluates as “unfair” (Line 080–81). Sara picks out and elaborates another aspect of Helena’s account which she had established in her earlier turn (Lines 044–052), namely the susceptibility to error of the chronology entextualised in the list and the staff’s responsibility in this respect (Lines 082–088, 095–097). Helena concurs (Lines 099–100). In the following, I look into how this stretch of discourse can be analysed through the lense of enregisterment of reflexivity, as a reflexively constituted discursive encounter, as an instance of enregistered quality of practice.

Reflexivity and indexical order

From a metapragmatic perspective, the encounter can be decomposed in its reflexive components which make up its different structural dimensions (denotational text, interactional text, speech chains, cf. Agha 2007) in order to explain its semiotic organisation. Many of likewise analytical observations do not tell much about the specifics of this encounter – the phenomena are of systemic value (‘ordinary’ in ethnomethodological diction). Because my goal is to ultimately look into situated notions of reflexivity (specifically as practices of reflection) in the encounter, further indexical meaning attached to these phenomena are at stake – in other words “n+1st order indexicality” (Silverstein 2003: 194). In the following, I have picked examples of ‘semiotic’ reflexivity which can serve as an analytical entry point to the encounter as an instance of practices of reflection: (1) (first) person deixis, (2) *hedging*, (3) explicitly metapragmatic verbs, (4) reported speech (events).

(1) First person deixis includes the *ich* (‘I’) and *wir* (‘we’) by which Yasmin, Sara and Helena refer to themselves (their ‘position’) and some kind of collective actor (or ‘position’, to be analysed more in detail below). (2) The phenomenon known as *hedging* (cf. Kaltenböck et al. 2010; Kärkkäinen 2003; Mortensen 2012) whereby actors reflexively calibrate the epistemic claims of their utterances, “position[ing] themselves not only *vis-à-vis* the propositional content they put forward, but also *vis-à-vis* their interlocutors and the wider social context” (Mortensen 2012: 229). (3) Explicitly metapragmatic verb phrases – such as, for instance, *ich sag nur meine meinung* (‘I am just saying my opinion’, Line 008, Example 5.3), *ich find* (‘I find’, Lines 009; 010) and *ich bin schon der meinung* (‘I surely am of the opinion’, Line

043) – whereby speakers reflexively position themselves towards their own (or other's) utterances and/or stances (cf. Verschueren 2004). The same holds for (4) reported speech and reported speech events, as in the case where Sara refers to an exchange on the question at hand which had happened at an earlier occasion and in a different participation framework (Lines 042; 060–061). All these forms allow interactive parties to take stances in interaction in different dimensions, for instance, *epistemic stances* (with regards to certainty of knowledge; Ochs 1996: 410), *affective stances* – conveying a dimension of “mood, attitude, feeling, and disposition, as well as degrees of emotional intensity” (Ochs 1996: 410) towards the stance object (sensu Du Bois 2007: 147–149) – or *deontic stance*, that is authority (cf. Stevanovic & Peräkylä 2014: 190–191).

These are only examples out of a complex reflexive architecture that makes up the encounter. Person deixis, hedging, explicitly metapragmatic verbs, reported speech neither form an exhaustive list of reflexivity in language use (and neither of linguistic manifestations of stance), nor do they specifically characterise *reflective practice*. They are quintessentially ‘ordinary’ phenomena to be found everywhere in communicative practice. But the selection here of course is not arbitrary as they form building blocks of the construction of practices of reflection and the performance of (self-)reflexive selves. The question is whether and how they are grouped and recognised as ‘reflexive’ in a given context – that is, whether they are construable as ‘reflexive’ on an n+1st level of indexical order (apart from the analytical construal through linguistic terminology above).

Moving the analytical focus to a level of practical achievement, there are two concurring positionings co-constructed in the encounter which regard the moral evaluation of the same object, the practice of moving-up. The activity as a whole and its components have a reflexive form: staff members make their own processes of decision-making a topic of their talk, on an individual – *ich* (‘I’) – and an institutional level of scale – *wir* (‘we’). Yasmin and Sara explicitly direct the attention on the logics underlying such decision-making, thereby recontextualising the contentious object – the practice of moving-up – in two divergent ways. In doing so, potential blind spots entailed by the practice of moving-up are not simply exposed, they are constructed: Yasmin raises the point that moving-up means favouring one client over the other – she argues to scale up: others are ‘poor’ too (by which she probably means: *deserving*; Lines 014, Example 5.3), thus moving

one client up in the list means to disregard the big picture. Sara questions the inherent objectivity provided by the chronological order of the list and argues to consider the potential individual shortcomings of the staff who – so she suggests – may sometimes fail to keep the list or, in other words, to make the list a proper entextualisation of the chronological principle. Moving-up comes as a corrective function for the list. Both arguments or stances give the praxis a form of ‘bending back’, making it an instance of what can be described as *professional* or *critical reflexivity* (in the sense of the notions introduced in Section 2.4). The encounter at hand is thus describable as reflexive on a higher level of indexicality (“n+1st order”, Silverstein 2003: 194): it does not only work reflexively in a systemic sense (through the reflexive devices offered by language, see above), but its reflexive quality is construable as such (presupposing reflexivity on an nth order which does not need to coincide with the one presupposed by the reflexive linguistic phenomena mentioned above).

The moral and reflexive ‘us’

Crucially, the two positionings share another common ground: they are built on an alignment with a moral-professional figure of personhood (cf. Park 2021), a *wir* (‘we’) as presupposed unit of (and unity in) practice, morality and legitimacy. Each of the reflexive acts of self-positioning – the *ichs* (‘I’) in the usage of Yasmin (Lines 009; 010; 016; 020; 027; 028; 030; 031–032, Example 5.3), Sara (Lines 043; 63; 83–88; 95) and Helena – are connected to this ‘us’ with at least three dimensions: a moral us (the good position), a professional us (the correct, legitimate position) and an institutional us (a representative position). The ways in which us (the team), them (the clients), I (the speaker) and you (the others co-present at the meeting) are aligned differ. While Yasmin differentiates primarily between fair and unfair practice by referring to the chronological principle of the list, Sara adds another layer to the axis of differentiation, contrasting unreflexive and self-reflexive practice – effectively entextualising reflexivity as a *qualisign* (Gal 2013; Harkness 2021), that is, not only a perceivable quality, but one that is taken to be sign in a meaningful contrast.

Yasmin, Sara and Helena support their positioning with short embedded

narratives. In a first stanza⁸ of her narrative (Lines 004–007, Example 5.3), Yasmin introduces a narrated event anchored in time (*gestern* ‘yesterday’) and with it Karoline – who is also present in the narrating event – and a family (clients) as characters of the narrated event. Much context is presupposed and omitted here (probably known to at least a part of the staff members present), but as becomes clearer later in the progression of the narrated episode (Lines 013–016), Karoline had decided to move the family further up on the list. Karoline’s doings are held against the existence of the emergency list: *un:d (.) es ist halt; (wir haben) eine liste?* (‘and (.) the thing is | (we have) a list’, Lines 006–007). Yasmin suggests that Karoline’s doings stand in contrast to the list – note the rising contour on the last segment (*liste?* ‘list’), the deontic force of the object! A second stanza (Lines 008–012) starts with a disclaimer or hedging. In contrast to the preceding deontic stance, the hedging functions to tone down the authority claim. In the following, she introduces an axis of differentiation on an abstract scale of moral order: *fair* (Line 010) vs. *unfair* (explicitly introduced later, Line 016).

A schematic visualisation (Figure 5.1 on the next page) shall make this more clear. The scheme is based on the model developed by Wortham & Reyes (2020) to visualise alignments across the narrative architecture of interactions – narrated events and narrating events or, in terms of Bamberg (1997: 336–337) 1st and 2nd level positioning. For the purpose of these analyses, I added Bamberg’s 3rd level to the scheme – cultural models with which interacting subjects align or disalign (‘dominant discourses or master narratives’, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008: 385; see also Deppermann 2015: 374–375) and I integrated the concept of axes of differentiation (Gal & Irvine 2019: 118), that is the logic according to which similarities and differences are organised by the speaker. Relations of differentiation are visualised along the horizontal axis – the vertical axis visualises relations of scale (the higher the more abstract). This means that alignment is represented by proximity on the horizontal axis – an alignment of a participant of the staff meeting (the narrating event, positioning level 2) with a storyworld character (in the narrated event, positioning level 1) and a position within the moral order (positioning level 3) is thus iconically rendered by their placement on the same height on the horizontal axis, i. e. one under the other along a vertical axis. Where

8 The term *stanza* refers to a unit of rhythmic organisation in ethnopoetic analysis (cf. Blommaert 2005b, 2006; Hymes 1996; Kataoka 2012).

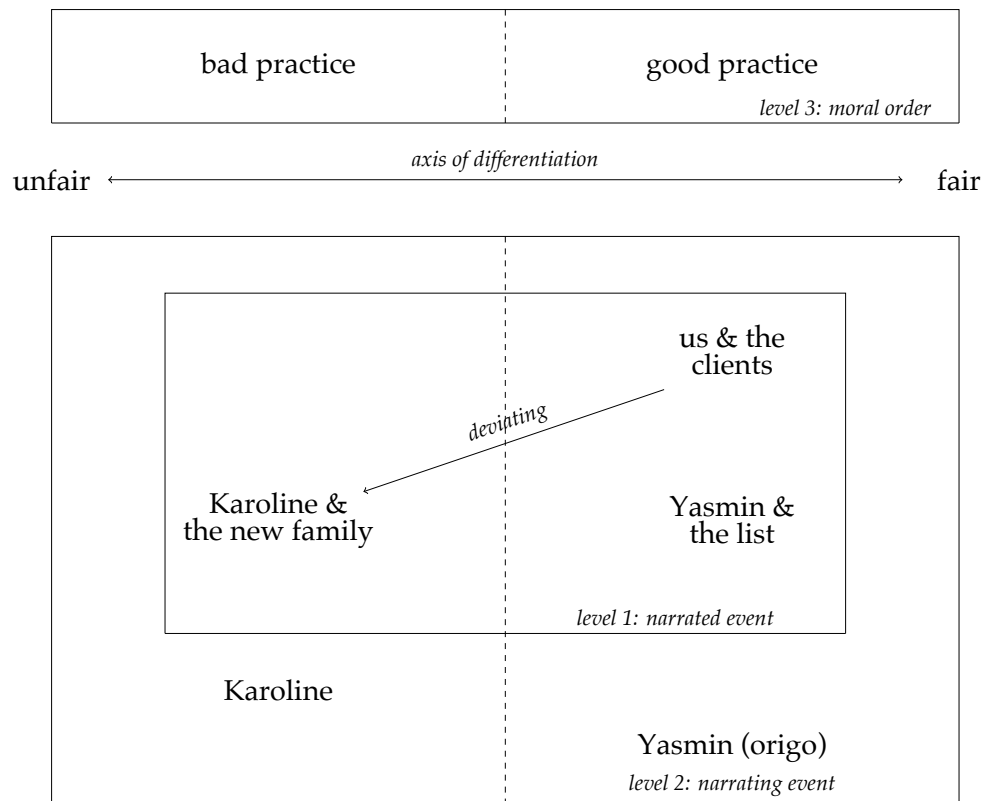


Figure 5.1: Yasmin's positioning (Lines 004–036). The horizontal axis corresponds to axes of differentiation, the vertical one to levels of scale. The scheme draws on the system developed by Wortham & Reyes (2020).

the model is intended to depict an individual positioning rather than an order emergent from the interaction as a whole, the speaker is marked as the *origo* of the model⁹.

Yasmin's positioning depends on a differentiation between the qualities *fair* and *unfair*: as abstract qualities she explicitly aligns elements from the narrated event with positions provided by the moral order – which I have labeled with *good practice* vs. *bad practice*. Note that Yasmin does not differentiate types of

⁹ Of course one has to account for the phenomenon that authorship is often layered and may be split in different participant roles (Goffman 1979; Irvine 1996). The scheme is not intended to reify the *origo* as spatial location of authorship.

clients along the established axis – in her account deservingness is no inherent value of a client¹⁰, but is established by the list as an instrument of order (*der reihe nach* ‘in sequence’, Lines 011; 030). On an interactional level, Yasmin emphasises her *origo* through repeated reflexive forms. Notably, the stanza *ICH (-) mein persönliche meinung- find ich nicht (-) dass es (-) äh: dringend ist. weil die anderen ist auch dringend. ich finde es ist wirklich der reihe NACH*, (‘I (-) my personal opinion | I don’t find it (-) that it (-) is er: urgent | because the other one is urgent as well | I find it is really IN sequence’, Lines 027–030) comes as a variation of the earlier *ICH (.) ich sag nur meine meinung, ich find das ist wirklich- ich: find das persönlich es ist FAIR so, dass wirklich der REIhe nach. (-) ja?* (‘I (.) I am just saying my opinion | I find this is really | I find it personally it is fair like that | that really in sequence | (-) right’, Lines 008–012): both start with prosodically emphasised first person deixis and hedging, a laminated deontic, affective and epistemic stance (*ich find* ‘I find’, Lines 009 and 010; *find ich nicht* ‘I don’t find’, Line 028) effectuating her moral positioning. Her own position is placed in disalignment with – in opposition to – that of her colleague Karoline. The positions within the narrated event are all paired with a second object (see Figure 5.1 on the facing page): Yasmin’s position is aligned to the supposedly established logic of the emergency list. Moreover, it is aligned with an institutional, professional and moral ‘us’ which is, in turn, aligned with ‘the clients’ as a collective category. The result is unequivocal alignment of categories of actors, things and logics across several levels of narrative scale (narrating event, narrated event both individual and collective) with her own position. The position ascribed to Karoline (and the new family) then comes as a deviation from the shared moral ground: deviating from the principle of the list and thereby deviating from the shared position (‘us’).

There is an important moral subtext to this positioning which will gain importance later when the clients’ deservingness come into focus of the discussion: Who is deserving – or rather, who is more deserving than the others? In the logic of Yasmin’s positioning, ‘the new family’ is not *as* deserving as others due to

10 However, it seems that her positioning indirectly alludes to and disaligns with the concept of the *active client* discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4). The concept gained centre-stage in the discussion on prioritisation and deservingness which developed thereafter and which will not be the focus of these analyses.

their position on the list – not by their own virtue, as they are only excluded from the collective deservingness generally accorded to ‘clients’ to the extent that Karoline did not respect the moral mechanism. In Yasmin’s positioning, it is the logic of the list alone which establishes a moral hierarchy among clients. But before the problematic of deservingness would take root in the discussion (which goes beyond the scope of this analysis), Sara, the head of staff, proposes an alternative mapping of positionings within the moral order. This different mapping of the moral order will introduce the question of deservingness as an unintended consequence. And it will introduce the figure of the *reflective worker*.

Following Yasmin, it seems that Helena tries to claim the floor – breathing in (Line 037, Example 5.3) – but the floor is then successfully claimed by Sara (Lines 041–042). Sara starts by aligning with Yasmin (Lines 38–40). Then, she rephrases what Yasmin just said before (by anaphoric deixis *da* [...] *drüber* ‘about this’, Line 042) as the topic of a conversation she had with an unspecified number of other colleagues (an exclusive *wir* ‘we’, Line 041). On a micro-level, it is already this tiny rhetoric move into reported speech, this recontextualisation of Yasmin’s stance into a conversation, which destabilises the rather stable logic according to which Yasmin has mapped the moral ground. The next move is more explicit: in what follows, she introduces an epistemic/deontic stance marked as such by the modal particle *schon* (cf. e. g. Meibauer 1994: 171) as standing in contrast to Yasmin’s. Then she performs a positioning along the axis differentiating *fair* from *unfair*, inscribing her position in the moral order previously established by Yasmin, but re-interpreting it at the same time (a mapping of her positioning is given in Figure 5.2 on page 198). In a narrated event, she introduces a moral (institutional, professional) ‘us’ which fails to qualify as ‘fair’ (Lines 044–047). On top of the moral impartiality of the list – which is not fundamentally denied by Sara – this scenario introduces the potential failure of the individual (Lines 044–047): it happens that counsellors forget to set someone on the list which counteracts the working of the list as moral instrument and ethical valve which would exonerate the counsellor from ethically questioning the order of prioritisation. With the narrative event which follows (Lines 049–052), she gives a concrete example – Ms Fisayo, a client, who according to Sara’s account had been in urgent need of finding an apartment since before the list was even created. On the basis of the example, not only does she place the praxis of ‘moving-up’ as a remedy –

she describes the eventuality that one would *not* make use of this remedy as *komisch* ('odd', Line 052), as deviating from the morally good (taking a deontic stance). Then, as Sara sets out to formulate a conclusion, Helena attempts once more to claim the floor (Line 053–54). Sara hands over to Helena (Lines 055–056) and Helena discloses her support of Sara's position in sort of confession (Lines 057–059). Sara reclaims the floor and continues with her conclusion (Line 060). This conclusion works in two steps: she refers back to the previous discussion on the question of prioritisation and affirms that no general solution was found (Lines 060–062) and then she reformulates this as an evaluation on the level of an abstract moral order (Lines 063–064). The 'only solution' – that is the morally good and the professionally viable – is to talk about the decision in the team, to reflect on the decision-making process.

This gives a rather dynamic positioning range on the map of moral order which has been interactively co-constructed (see Figure 5.2 on the following page): a second differentiation – *reflexive* vs. *un-reflexive* – is introduced and paralleled with the already established contrast *fair* vs. *unfair*. In this construal of the moral order, the morality of individual positions is no longer determined by the degree of adherence to a pre-established rule (the chronological order of the list). Instead, they emerge from the reflexive work of examining the context and grounds of decision making underlying the list. The question is whether one simply puts the established chronological order of the list into practice or recalibrates this order against an examination of one's own (or the organisation's) practice of keeping the list. This is further entextualised in the way Sara positions the collective 'us' to which she aligns in midst of the moral spectrum, namely in an ambivalent position where individual decisions matter, at the centre of the axis, with situation-specific conduct rather than decontextualised rules determining the position.

This means that (1) reflexivity becomes moralised in the sense that being reflexive discerns good practice from malpractice (a contrast of $n + 1^{\text{st}}$ indexical values presupposing the existence of 'reflexive' and 'unreflexive' forms of practice in an n^{th} indexical order), and (2) the morality of professional practice becomes individualised, as morality is being located in the counsellors' (inter)actions rather than in an abstract principle. Responsibility is scaled down from an impersonal, bureaucratic decision to a personified individual one: We have seen how – over

time – the individual liabilities of counsellors became inscribed in the list. Discussing the prioritisation of individual cases which will become entextualised as good practice in the staff minutes of this meeting set the institutional ‘us’ as object of moral evaluation. But the premise of such discussion is that potential individual shortcomings are examined as well, thus the downscaling does not stop at the level of the team.

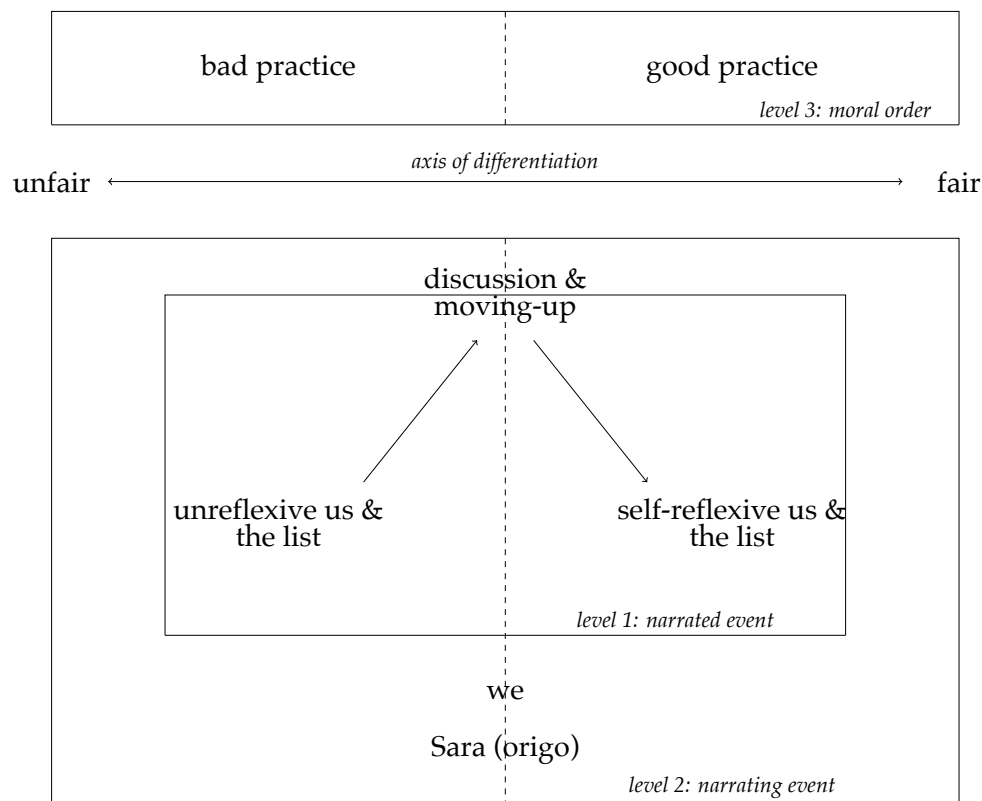


Figure 5.2: Sara's positioning (Lines 038–064).

The question of deservingness receives a reformulation in Sara's positioning too: the decision – and the act (!) – of putting someone's name onto the list receives new attention which prepares – not necessarily intentionally – the ground for scrutinising deservingness.

An object of discourse

The discussion on prioritisation analysed above is taking place both in the narrating and the narrated events, that is the reflexive ethical questioning at the staff meeting involves the reflexive calibration towards narrated instances of reflexive ethical questioning. In other words: reflexivity becomes an object of discourse and of – moral and professional – evaluation. This involves the comparison between different models of ethical reasoning with a reflective (that is, reflexively understood as reflexive) model being accorded moral preference by Sara – and institutional/professional preference in her capacity as a manager.

The focus on the micro-level of the stances might suggest that the figure of the reflective worker was introduced by Sara in this very staff meeting. This is of course not the case. It is a logic which is already part of the context in which the exchange took place. In this sense it is more accurate to say that the institutionalised forms of reflective practice and discourses of reflexivity as a valued quality of practice and personhood allowed Sara to take them up in her positioning.

Downscaling ethical questioning: ethical subjects

The model of the reflective worker has considerable effect on the agency of counsellors in everyday work practices: it can lead to a downscaling of ethical questioning. We have seen that in the way the reflexive character of ethical questioning is given prominence by Sara, reflexivity becomes moralised and individualised. Now this could be read as a local phenomenon or an individual ephemeral act of positioning at this specific staff meeting on February 6, 2018 – especially given that it arises as an oppositional stance towards Yasmin's construal of the moral order (Figure 5.1 on page 194). However, the way the other staff members negotiate the question of responsibility at the following staff meeting (one week later on February 13, 2018) suggests that this model of individualised moral accountability is already present among the staff and has reached institutionalised status.

At this meeting, Sara, the head of staff, is not present. As usual, the minutes of the preceding week are read out point by point by Helena who is keeping the minutes. After Helena has read out the paragraph summarising the discussion

on the *emergency list*, Yasmin first displays a somewhat playful indignation over the way her position had been represented in the minutes (Example 5.4): that she does not agree with the practice of prioritising certain clients *auch wenn sie arm sind* ('even if they poor'). In order to understand her indignation we need to bear in mind that a crucial part of her previous argument was that being *arm* ('poor') does not constitute a relevant criterium of distinction since it applies to each and every client indistinctly. This part (her epistemic and deontic stance) is omitted in the entextualised version of her position, leaving only her unwillingness to accept the practice of prioritisation entextualised as an affective stance of indifference towards the clients' situation.

Example 5.4: Excerpt from the discussion of the emergency list at the following meeting, staff meeting (February 13, 2018).

001	Helena:	notfallliste.=	<i>emergency list=</i>
002		=soll man klientinnen selber	<i>=should one be allowed to</i>
		vorrücken dürfen;	<i>move up clients by oneself</i>
003		yasmin meint nein,	<i>Yasmin says no</i>
004		auch wenn sie arm sind.	<i>even if they are poor</i>
005		((the group breaks out into	
		laughter and continues	
		throughout the sequence))	
006	He-	(das steht so)	<i>(it is written like that)</i>
	lena(?):		
007	Yasmin:	<<shouting> DU hast das ge	<<shouting> YOU did
008		du hast das geschrieben.>	<i>you wrote this></i>
009	Helena:	nein=du hast das geschrieben.	<i>no you wrote this</i>
010		du hast es geschrieben.	<i>you wrote it</i>
011	Bern-	nein=ich hab_s geschrieben	<i>no=I wrote it last time</i>
	hard:	letztes mal;	
012	Yasmin:	<<shouting> du hast es	<<shouting> you wrote it>
		geschrieben;>	
013		((everyone is laughing aloud))	
014		<<shouting> ach bernhard;>	<<shouting> oh Bernhard>

There is a certain playfulness in Yasmin's enactment of indignation – the shouting, the accusing – and in the reactions from her colleagues laughing – who will continue to tease her throughout the discussion with tropes on her entextualised position. However playful this sequence might seem, Yasmin struggles in the following to re-affirm her epistemic/deontic stance taken at the previous meeting (she is, however, backed by Alena) and a discussion develops in which the previous week's arguments are revisited. At the end, everyone, including Yasmin, seems to agree that candidates for prioritisation need to be discussed among the staff.

Following this discussion, a question by Till – an experienced staff member who has just returned from a one-year sabbatical – prompts a more detailed co-constructed explanation of the ways the various lists are being kept. What follows can be regarded as discourse of professional socialisation (reproductive institutional work, cf. Menz 1991) in which the logics underlying the keeping of the two lists, the *emergency list* and the *START list* are reconstructed collectively. Important for what comes then – and of which an excerpt is presented below for a more detailed analysis – is the interactively established understanding that the emergency list “is never full”. In contrast to other lists kept for specific housing programmes (such as the previously mentioned *START list*), there is no (self-imposed nor contingent) limit to the number of possible entries to the excel sheet, so the generally accepted view. Then Till asks for the criteria defining the category of *emergency cases* – this is where the transcribed sequence (Example 5.5) starts.

Example 5.5: Excerpt from the discussion of the emergency list at the following meeting, staff meeting (February 13, 2018).

001	Till:	ab wann is AKtuell jemand n notfall?	<i>from what point on is someone an emergency CURRently</i>
002	Sebastian:	°h	°h
003		<< across 004–006> hhh°>	<<across 004–006> hhh°>
004	Alena:	das: [(.) is] nicht [definiert;]	<i>this: (.) is not defined</i>

005	Karoline:	[das is:]	<i>this is:</i>
006	Helena:	[das ist] DEIN ermessen.	<i>this is at YOUR discretion</i>
007	Alena:	ja:-	<i>ye:s</i>
008	Till:	o:kee.	<i>o:kay</i>
009	Alena:	subjekti:v;	<i>subjecti:ve</i>
010	Yasmin:	(ja.)	<i>yes</i>
011	Karoline:	mit dem häng i zur zeit grad exTREM.	<i>I am exTREMely stuck with this at the moment</i>
012	Alena:	das is auch IMMER wieder	<i>this is also again and again</i>
013	Karoline:	do hob i	<i>there I have</i>
014		zwischen drin woar i scho viel sicherer,;	<i>for some time I had already been much more secure</i>
015		[und hob gwusst das tu i	<i>and I knew this is what I do</i>
016		oba:] jetzt grod	<i>but: now</i>
017	Alena:	[ja ja ja aber das geht immer so;]	<i>yah yah yah but it goes always like that</i>
018	Karoline:	ich hab kei[ne: ahnung.]	<i>I have no: idea</i>
019	Alena:	[ich hab auch eine] zeit lang am tag drei familien <<laughing> draufgsetzt?>	<i>I <<laughing> added> three families a day for some time too</i>
020	Karoline:	((chuckles))	<i>((chuckles))</i>
021	Alena:	((laughs))	<i>((laughs))</i>
022		[(ja ja:=da hm::?) ((laughs))]	<i>yah yah:=there hm:: ((laughs))</i>
023	Helena:	[ich mach das jetzt grade (.) eigentlich;]	<i>this is actually what I am doing at the moment</i>
024	Karoline:	((laughs))	<i>((laughs))</i>
025	Sebastian:	((laughs))	<i>((laughs))</i>
026	Alena:	ja=aber wenn es notfälle sind?	<i>yah=but if they are emergencies</i>
027	Karoline:	[im prinzip is jeder a notfall; ((chuckles))]	<i>in principle everyone is an emergency ((chuckles))</i>

028	Helena:	naja [aber ich denk mir halt auf der notfall] liste: (-) ist eh nicht voll,=	<i>well but I think on the emergency list: (-) is not full anyways=</i>
029		=un:d	<i>=an:d</i>
030	Karoline:	()	()
031	Sebastian:	((chuckles softly))	((chuckles softly))
032	Helena:	((chuckles, breaking into laughter))	((chuckles, breaking into laughter))
033		<<laughing> ()>	<<laughing> ()>
034	Karoline:	die konn aber a ned voll WERDn wie du so schön gesagt hast;	<i>but it cannot beCOME full as you nicely said</i>
035	Helena:	eben;	<i>quite so</i>
036		deswegen;	<i>hence</i>
037	Sebastian:	<<smiley voice> is deine frage beantwortet.>	<i><<smiley voice> has your question been answered></i>
038		((AL, KA, SE laugh out loud))	((AL, KA, SE laugh out loud))
039	Till:	()	()
040	Alena:	ai:jai:jai:.	<i>oh dea:r</i>
041		(ca. 3s)	(ca. 3s)
042	Alena:	[wieviel hamma]	<i>how many do we have</i>
043	?:	[(mhm)]	<i>(uhum)</i>
044	Helena:	[ich fänd_s] [voll] schwierig sich festzusetzen auf regeln was notfälle sind irgendwie;	<i>I'd find it absolutely difficult <also meaning: problematic> to settle for rules on what is an emergency somehow</i>
045	Alena:	nein;=das möchte ich eigentlich [garnicht anfangen die] diskussion.=	<i>no=actually I don't want to even start this discussion</i>
046	Helena:	[ja.=also das is:]	<i>yah=well this is</i>
047	Alena:	=wer is ärmer;	<i>who is more poor</i>
048	Helena:	voll.	<i>absolutely</i>
049	Yasmin:	((chuckles))	((chuckles))

050	((many laughing))	(<i>many laughing</i>)
051 Alena:	yasmin willst du beginnen?	<i>Yasmin do you want to start</i>
052 Yasmin:	<<smiley voice> ja?>	<< <i>smiley voice</i> > <i>yes</i> >
053 Alena:	((laughs))	((<i>laughs</i>))
054	na:=das: mach_ma nicht;	<i>nah:=we won't do tha:t</i>
055	(- -)	(- -)
056	das macht die neue regierung schon für uns?	<i>the new government is already doing this on our behalf</i>
057 Jonas:	((chuckles))	((<i>chuckles</i>))
058 Helena:	ge:nau.	<i>e:xactly</i>

Before I move on to analyse the scaling of reflexivity and ethical questioning, I want to pay attention to the way the staff members present enact and resignify a specific genre of professional socialisation talk (usually called *Einschulung* 'instruction' or 'training' in emic terms) and how they position themselves in this enactment. With Till's return to work, Sara had insisted he would have to be treated very much like a neophyte to the job given the changes that had occurred during his absence and that he had only marginally been working for the team Vienna, but for the team Lower Austria which was not involved in the process of restructuration of services. This involved accompanying work processes and being instructed by his colleagues. A frustrating experience as he explained to me in our interview (February 9, 2018), had he considered himself an expert in his field before he left for the sabbatical. In the context of the interaction at hand, Till seems to accept or even assume the position of a trainee by presupposing that the answer to his question – *ab wann is AKtuell jemand n notfall?* ('from what point on is someone an emergency CURRently', Line 001, Example 5.5) – is a precise object of knowledge shared by the other members. The way he poses his question rests further on the presupposition that the criteria for someone qualifying as an emergency case lead to a scalable order with a specific threshold (*ab wann*, 'from what point on', Line 001) and that this threshold may vary over time (*AKtuell* 'CURRently', Line 001). Especially this latter aspect, the temporal situatedness of the criteria, also allow him to showcase his seniority – counterweighting his positioning as a neophyte – not only by indexing his position's perspective which

stretches further back in time than most of his colleagues who joined the team in his absence, but also by virtue of the birds-eye perspective he allows himself to assume over this contentious issue. Seen from this angle, his question appears more provocative than docile as one might expect from a neophyte. The sequence is thus hybrid in terms of genre or professional role (Sarangi 2011), blending elements of professional socialisation or training – where the routine-bases of professional practice are to be learnt – and of reflective practice – where they are to be scrutinised. And the reactions from his colleagues – affirmative statements (Lines 004–009), expressions of doubt (Lines 011–018), comparison and reflective discussion of reported individual working ‘solutions’ to the issue (Lines 019–028), a more abstracted reflection on the viability and morality of having general rules (Lines 044–045), accompanied by instances of nervous laughter and sarcastic joking – confirm this interpretation. At a certain point – after Karoline re-affirms Helena’s earlier statement that the emergency list is never full (Line 034) and the conversation has thus returned to an earlier point – Sebastian asks Till amidst the laughter whether his question has been answered (Line 037) provoking more laughter, irony and banter. It seems that with his question Till rather stirred the pot of insecurities than that he obtained a recipe: what is happening?

As a response to Till’s question (Example 5.5, Line 001), Alena, Karoline and Helena co-construct an affirmative answer which entextualises the said as factual. This answer is made up of three instances: (1) it – a threshold/criteria for emergency cases – is ‘not defined’ (Line 004), (2) it is at the individual counsellor’s – ‘YOUR’ – discretion (Line 006), and (3) it is ‘subjective’ (Line 009). The second comes as a rapid reformulation of the first, the third with a certain delay only after Till has already ratified the reply (*o:kee* ‘o:kay’, Line 008). There is a quick movement across scalar dimensions and scale levels between these three instances of entextualised moral agency: while the first – *nicht definiert* ‘not defined’ – offers a definition *ex negativo* by excluding the existence of an accord on an institutional scale-level, the second – *DEIN ermesssen* ‘at YOUR discretion’ (Line 006) – does not only reconstruct the scale from its ‘other end’, it also performs this scale jump in a direct address to Till. In other words, it reformulates the absence of a rule on a de-personalised, institutional level of scale as an interpellation to a moral subject – among other fellow moral subjects, as we shall see. The third step *subjektiv* ‘subjective’ (Line 009) marks a change in footing, recontextualising the scalar

positions of the institutionalised and the individualised in a differential and evaluative logic of subjectivism vs. objectivism. This logic where subjectivism is the dispreferred notion is – again – not a local construction, but rather a widely established bureaucratic virtue (cf. Lipsky 2010 [1980]: 108–116 on bias in the work of street-level bureaucrats). In a number of interviews, I have encountered the conviction that objectivism was to be considered a more or less attainable goal while subjectivism was an – albeit real – problem to be dealt with¹¹. Therefore, the attribution of the quality of subjectivity constitutes not only a jump on a scale of abstraction, but also forms an evaluation which is subsequently endorsed by Yasmin who concurs (Line 010) and by Karoline who takes up the scaled moral subjectivity and its evaluation in a brief narrated event (Lines 011–018). Karoline’s narration conveys insight into the affective, experiential dimension of subjectivation taking place: As she thematises her own professional socialisation into a moral subject, she contrasts her present experience of insecurity in ethical judgement with a previous, chronotopical moment in time where she had been more secure. The two contrasting chronotopes in her narrative render an embodied, individual-scale version of the increasing problematisation on an institutional level of scale observable in the minutes of the staff meetings, namely of how the staff is supposed to deal with emergency cases. Again, the uptake by her colleagues is telling: first by Alena (Lines 017–19), then by Helena (Line 023). Alena endorses Karoline’s account and raises it to a shared condition (Line 012) and generalisable fact (Line 017) – in a move which could be described as epistemic upscaling. Then she adds a short narrative sequence which she parallels to Karoline’s narration – *ich hab auch eine zeit lang am tag drei familien draufgesetzt* ‘I added three families a day for some time too’. She bursts into laughter at the end

11 Recapitulating the discussion on prioritising clients on the list in their interviews with me, Helena (February 7, 2018) and Karoline (February 23, 2018) described the situation in strikingly similar terms: as an indissoluble dilemma where the desired impartiality, objectivity and rationality in decision-making were impossible to achieve and only to be approximated, where every logic applied would lead to a new problematic and hence their goal could only be to approximate objective decision-making. Their accounts are marked both by the striving for a de-personalised, bureaucratic rationality on the one hand and an awareness for the partiality of any judgement or even of the criteria themselves on the other (which is not surprising given that independently of any rationale of distribution, the resource to be distributed will always be short, cf. Lipsky 2010 [1980]: 87–116). That is, they picture the de-personalised ethical norm as out of reach, an object of contention that is hence fragmented and leaves them individuals as the site of tension.

of her confessional tale which is responded by laughter from her colleagues. A confession of which she does not need acquittal since she has already framed it as an example for a generalisable and shared condition of their work – *ja ja ja aber das geht immer so* ‘yah yah yah but it goes always like that’ (Line 017) – and as humorous double-voicing. And so it is met by laughter from some of her colleagues. Still enacting the genre of the confessional tale, Helena declares that she practices at present what Alena confessed of her past self (Line 023). The ensuing turns then form a concerted effort to rationalise and legitimise this practice evoking the certainties that have been repeated before: all clients are emergency cases (Lines 026–27) and the list is never full (Lines 028 and 034–036). This collective effort reinstates the emergency list as an ethical valve: it allows the individual counsellor *not* to take certain decisions.

Then, Sebastian sheepishly asks Till whether his question has been answered and the laughter that follows manifests that the argument is not moving towards a conclusion. Alena comments this with a laconic *ai:jai:jai:* (roughly: ‘oh dear:’) which is followed by a short yet perceivable silence (Lines 040–041, Example 5.5). Alena then begins to formulate a different question *wieviel hamma* (‘how many do we have’) while Helena takes up again Till’s initial question regarding criteria or *regeln* (‘rules’) that define the category of emergency (Line 042–45). She breaks with the preceding, more jocular sequence and states that she would find it *schwierig* (‘difficult’ or even ‘problematic’) to define and fixate criteria as *rules*. Thereby she takes up the previous turns and entextualises them in the evaluative form of a multi-layered (affective, epistemic, deontic) stance which also fills the relevance opened up by Till’s question.

On Helena’s rather serious reasoning, Alena concurs, and reformulates her stance in a sarcastic enactment of the situation of moral decision making: *wer is ärmer* (‘who is more poor’) (Example 5.5, Line 047). This, in turn, is recognised by Yasmin as a reoccurrence of the words that she earlier contended were put into her mouth when the minutes were read out by Helena (see Example 5.4): she chuckles softly (Example 5.5, Line 049). Her chuckle is taken up with laughter by the others and Alena formulates an ironic question to Yasmin – *yasmin willst du beginnen?* (‘Yasmin do you want to start’) – who complies with the play with a smiley *ja* (‘yes’, Lines 050–52). Formulating a collective position, a moral ‘us’, Alena contrasts the approach taken at the counselling centre with state policy:

na:=das: mach_ma nicht; das macht die neue regierung schon für uns? ('nah:=we won't do that | the new government is already doing this on our behalf', Lines 054–56). As a participant in the meeting, I acknowledge the pun with a chuckle and Helena concurs with her (Lines 057–058). What does this mean? In a context where legal, political and public discourse were producing and reinforcing hierarchies of deservingness between different categories of refugees and migrants (Ataç 2019; Hametner & Rodax 2017, cf. also Holzberg et al. 2018), Sara had often insisted on the fact that she intended for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* not to institute or reproduce such distinctions, especially not along the lines of legal status (asylum seeker, recognised refugee, subsidiary protection, humanitarian right to stay etc.). She insisted on this also in explicit distinction towards other refugee support projects and organisations. As a positive moral distinction, this stance was shared among the staff. But here, entextualised in a sort of sarcastic humour, it has yet a further effect: the acceptance that the moral dilemma (everyone qualifies as 'poor', but there are just not enough resources for everyone) is unsolvable, is reformulated as a positive distinction from government policy – which effectively allows to brush the previously raised problem – coming up with shared criteria for the category of 'emergency' – aside. What remains is the individual leeway – and responsibility – of ethical judgement.

Paradoxically, it seems that the individualisation of moral responsibilities, the downscaling of ethical questioning, comes hand in hand with the reflexive regimentation of individual moral responsibility and the problematisation of the individual's capacity for appropriate ethical judgement. The list entextualises moral responsibility as attributed to individual counsellors' names. The function of what I called the 'ethical valve' is thereby restrained. It bars the possibility of de-individualising the ethical aporia of not being able to offer direct remedy to a client's distress by passing it on to the impartial, mechanistic logic of the list. This is because doubts are raised about the counsellors' individual reliability when it comes to granting access to a place on the list in a way that reflects the supposedly impartial principle of chronological order. Decision-making, then, it is decided, ultimately shall be discussed at the staff meeting. While this allows for renewed upscaling of ethical questioning, it also comes as a scrutiny of the individual ethical subject who will have to plead their case for prioritising a certain client. The unease that speaks from the sarcastic framing of

the 'subjectivity' of criteria determining emergency cases which we see in the previous examples corresponds to the dilemma that both Karoline and Helena discussed with me in our respective interviews: the impossibility of achieving 'objectivity' and the flaws of 'subjectivity' (see Footnote 11).

This tension is not confined to the management of the emergency list. In a discussion on the *Beratungsgrenzen* ('limits to counselling', that is the definition of which ought and ought not be offered) which took place earlier, in October 2017, two models were competing: one – advocated for by Sami – favoured a standardisation of counselling practices and services offered, the other one – advocated for by Svenja and Yasmin – insisted on individual leeway and personal investments in terms of time and labourforce. The result of this discussion was that minimal standards were set, and additional engagement for the clients was explicitly relegated to a matter of individual choice – with the imperative to make sure that such individually assumed responsibilities had no consequences for the other colleagues. In short: individualised responsibilities – which for a portion of the team were regarded as morally imperative – needed to stay individual responsibilities and should not be collectivised.

The processes of scaling moral responsibility described in this section are concomitant with the emergence of a situated model of reflexivity which one could call *reflective work* (as a model of practice) and the figure of the *reflective worker* (as a model of personhood). The reflective worker does not simply refer to a type of work/er, but more so to a mechanism of subjectivation in professional practice. The process of upscaling and downscaling ethical questioning, decision-making and agency produces ethical subjects in an institutional apparatus made of list, scripts, and staff meetings. Subjectivation is a process of subordination or subjection to discourse, but at the same time of gaining intelligibility through its reproduction (Butler 1997b). Such performative production of subject positions always involves a "gap between redundancy and repetition" (Butler 1997a: 129) – and there is space for different ways of *embodying* the reflective worker. In the next section, I want to further explore this space of agency that lies in the embodiment of reflexivity.

5.3 Repertoires of reflexivity

At the beginning of the chapter, I describe my first impressions of Sara, the head of staff. I describe how I recognised a certain professional habitus or style (Becker-Lenz & S. Müller 2009; Kong 2014) in her embodied work practices – in her speech, the management of affects, her way of relating to the other. Sara was not the only one who, to my perception, displayed said attributes – calmness, self-assuredness, attentiveness towards others – they were shared by many of the staff members I met at the counselling centre and in other refugee support and social work contexts. On the other hand, it was by far not the only professional embodied register or style (Solly 2015: 1–20). The below portraits illustrate how there was a variety of such professional styles – indexing different positions within the counselling centre and with varying degrees of legitimacy in its moral order. In the selection of ethnographic narratives, I laid specific attention on how these different staff members embody and perform the ethical subject of *the reflective worker*. My goal here is not to map out a typology of professional styles, nor a topography of registers of reflexivity, but rather to look into the affective work that goes into professional embodiment and display, into being a reflective worker and into how this allows to produce a space for agency within moral order.

An embodiment perspective

To reiterate the precept of this analysis: I want to understand reflexivity as a perceivable, embodied quality (or *quale* in Peircean terminology, cf. Harkness 2021) which may be, under certain circumstances, understood as a sign (a *qualisign* in Peircean terminology, cf. Harkness 2021). That is, a quality that can be attributed to individuals, practices and objects, acquiring social meanings in processes of enregisterment. As such it is embodied by subjects. I understand embodiment (Bucholtz & K. Hall 2016; B. Busch 2020), in line with the work of B. Busch (2017b, 2020) on the speaking subject, as an aspect of the process of subjectivation. Whereas the previous section with its focus on enregistered models of practice and personhood provides a perspective on the establishment, negotiation and sedimentation of meaning in discourse, the notion of embodiment

offers a window onto that space of agency which Butler (1997a: 129) describes as the “gap between redundancy and repetition”. How does one become a part of that discursive process as a speaking subject, with one’s body, one’s affects and lived experience? How is discursive order re-signified on the level of the bodily subject? Where does that space for agency lie? In this section, I thus apply a subject-oriented embodiment perspective to the issue of reflexivity as a *quale/qualisign*. This also means to ask what a notion of *embodied reflexivity* could entail.

Coming from a perspective of health professional education and disability studies, and drawing on the work of sociologist Sandywell (1996), Katzmman (2015) uses the term *embodied reflexivity* to denote “a form of reflexivity that is felt within the body” (Katzmann 2015: 157) (cf. also Pagis 2009). Crucially, she sees this as a conceptual “access to the unique knowledges of individual practitioners, developed through embodied professional experience” (Katzmann 2015: 157), as “a salient concept with respect to making tacit or invisible embodied knowledges more visible” (Katzmann 2015: 157). For Katzmman (2015), embodied reflexivity is about embodied knowledge that is reflexive and can methodologically accessed through the reflective practice of writing or storytelling (Katzmann 2015: 158). This method’s purpose is to make invisibilised knowledges visible and expose hierarchies of knowledge in the medical field. Here, reflexivity figures in a layered logic: as a *quality* of practice and as a *method*, both of Katzmman the personal attendant to a person with dis/abilities, and of Katzmman (2015) the writer. While the same layering is also present in my analysis, it is not so much my concern to uncover or give credit to invisibilised and perhaps less legitimate forms of knowledge. In line with the analyses of enregistered practices and the inequality-dimension to be addressed in the section to follow (Section 5.4), the below analysis focuses on the way embodied reflexive knowledge acquires social value, on the way subjects embody evaluations of reflexive knowledge – that is they attribute meaning to it (making it a *qualisign*), and the consequences of these processes in institutional life. Whereas in the previous analyses, I focused on evaluations in interactions, this subchapter focuses on the speaking subjects’ semiotic repertoire (sensu B. Busch 2021b). To grasp the evaluative dimension of stance which speakers take towards their semiotic repertoires, B. Busch (2021b)

proposes to use the concept of *body image*, elaborating on the work of psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Schilder (1935).

In the work of B. Busch (2016, 2017b, 2021b) on the notion of *semiotic (linguistic or communicative) repertoires*, the repertoire is not thought of as toolbox of resources at the disposal of a sovereign individual, but rather as a social phenomenon, formed by language ideological discourse and with an affective dimension, both of which go beyond the individual subject's control. Three aspects are of central concern to the following analyses: (1) In her more recent work, B. Busch (2021b: 190–191) has sought to more clearly distinguish a subject-centered approach to the repertoire which takes as its object lived experiences sedimented in speakers' bodily subjectivities, from 'spatial' conceptions of repertoires that emphasise their constitution in interactional time or in processes of enregisterment. (2) Crucially to this approach, the subject's repertoire is not to be misunderstood as that which the individual speaker *possesses* and *contributes* to an interaction, but the way speakers position themselves in relationship to the others and the social world. As theorised by B. Busch (2021b: 200), drawing on Schilder (1935): inasmuch as repertoires are a product of biographical trajectories, they crucially involve a *body image* – “self-conceptions of one's being in the world”. The dimension of body image concerns the way speakers take stances towards their communicative repertoires, stances which result from affective entanglements with language ideological discourse. (3) In terms of data, this means to go beyond the description of how subjects deploy their repertoires in situated interaction and how repertoires are construed in language ideological discourse, but also look at repertoires as “bodily stored experiences” (B. Busch 2021b: 194). However, given the overall concern with institutional order, I resort less to biographical work as proposed by B. Busch (2016, 2017b, 2021b), but more so to vignettes (cf. B. Busch 2022), experiential data derived from the ethnographic encounter and entextualised in my writing (Ellingson & Sotirin 2020).

Sara and Till

At the time of my fieldwork, Sara was the head of staff at the counselling centre. Sara is a woman of approximately my age (then in her late twenties or early thirties), has a sporty appearance and this emblematic determined face when

she addresses a serious topic. As I explained at the outset of this chapter, I had a certain admiration towards her controlled, measured and determined way of dealing with insecurity, moral ambivalence and emotional distress. For these qualities of hers she was held in high esteem by her team. As such, she functioned as a moral anchor for the staff and her presence was structuring with regards to the interaction order and decision-making – as the sequences analysed above illustrate (Section 5.2).

Another person that fascinated me right from the start was Till. If Sara displayed a neat, calm, and controlled professionalism, Till somehow did the opposite. I would say he was in certain ways performing a sort of *unprofessionalism*: his clothing always somewhere between sloppy and flamboyant, his speech blending Berlin and Eastern Austrian varieties in way peculiar to him, his openly expressed dislike for Monday mornings, his ironic attitude towards colleagues, clients and – especially – external stakeholders. I say he was *performing* – but I'd have never doubted that he took his job very seriously, although there often was a sort of role-distance (Goffman 1972: 88–98) in his doings. In my conversations with him, he always gave great importance to his training as a social worker which distinguished him from most of his other colleagues. He took pride in the knowledge he had accumulated on the job and which he had systematically documented not only for his colleagues, on the internal server of the NGO, but also for a wider public, at conferences and in publications. He was invested in learning Arabic – after a sabbatical studying at an Arabic language school abroad, he decorated the wall behind his desk with lists of job-related vocabulary. Working in refugee support was more than just a job for him I sensed, it was part of his self-conception as a professional and as a political activist. He had been with the counselling centre for a long time and decried the lost days where the counselling centre had performed – in his view which was shared by Sara – much more of a political intervention than it did at the time of my ethnographic fieldwork (see Section 4.4).

Shadowing work processes in the back office in the early days of my fieldwork (fieldnotes, May 04, 2016), I once overheard Till talking to some clients' landlord on the telephone. He took on a casual posture – by which I mean *he sprawled all over the chair*. He spoke more markedly in his Berlin variety – it felt like he was over-emphasising it – interspersing his speech with some stylised phrases in

what to me indexed an Eastern Austrian variety ('Lower Austrian'). In a sarcastic tone he replied to the woman *Sie sagen, sie hat ein Kind bekommen? Wie heißt denn der Junge? Muhammad?*¹² *Ach das ist ja ein schöner Name!* 'You say she had a baby? What's the boy called? Muhammad? Oh this is such a beautiful name!' In that very moment, it was difficult for me to tell whether this was meant to evoke sympathy and alignment with the lady on the other end of the phone, or actually a thinly covered exaggeration and mockery of her way of speaking about that family, a stylisation and distancing of some sort. Probably it was both in one. Afterwards, he explained to me that it was her who talked like that: from the beginning she had said that the family was *very nice* – but she had also commented on the number of their children, evoking an all-too-common animal metaphor (which I do not want to reiterate in my writing). Rather than aligning with her, Till was walking a fine line between communicative accommodation and subversion, blending semiotic resources carrying indexical traces of his life trajectory as a speaking subject – heteroglossic voices, accents, personae, discourses – in this quite risqué endeavour.

Reflexive embodiments of reflexivity

Working with external stakeholders such as private real estate owners and real estate agencies, sometimes meant to encounter practices, ideas and attitudes that were questionable from the counsellors' perspectives: pretensions of housework in exchange for accommodation, agendas of cultural assimilation, or more or less 'benign' comments which revealed their roots in racial stereotypes. The staff repeatedly discussed and agreed on 'red lines' for collaboration with such external stakeholders, but a certain level of alienating talk was generally accepted when it was not deemed to be directly impacting the clients' wellbeing. After all, these people were providing material resources which the NGO would not be

12 The way I noted this stretch of talk in my fieldnotes indicates that I had noticed – albeit in passing – yet another instance of 'crossing' between codes (cf. Rampton 1995: 280) to my perception: I noted down *Mohammad*, that is, neither the usual transliteration in German, *Mohammed*, nor in the transliteration of Classical Arabic I had encountered in my Arabic language courses at university (*Muhammad*). Unfortunately, a more precise phonetic characterisation is lost in transliteration; that is, whether there was a specific articulation of the vowels or placement of stress, whether he articulated the geminate [m:] or the pharyngeal fricative [ħ] – all possible dimensions to contrast a 'German' with an emblematically 'Arabic' phonetic rendering (which is what my fieldnotes seem to suggest was happening).

able to source otherwise – posing a challenge for the reflective social worker. As Sara put it in our interview (January 09, 2018): one can define clear limits, but in practice, things are more complicated. Of course she said, they did not want to give their *support* to racist, discriminating practices, but sometimes the need to acquire housing for the clients was stronger than [the adversity of] having to go through a horrible conversation with a real estate owner. How does one deal with this ethically when one is both aware that one's work may potentially allow for or even reproduce practices that discriminate against one's clients *and* aware of one's material dependence on tolerating these practices to a certain degree?

Till and Sara are two important personalities in the team – she the head of staff, a persevering and skillful negotiator who had at least once prevented the counselling centre from being stripped of funding and closed down, and he who had been there almost since day one of the counselling centre. They exhibit two very different ways of embodying professionalism and expertise. Sara, the controlled, responsible, moderately compassionate professional, Till a sort of trickster, crossing conventional lines, switching in a heteroglossic play of impersonations and elusive acts of positioning. But both reflexively embody reflexivity – they are embodied reflective workers in the sense that they selectively mobilise portions of their communicative repertoires for their work practice. This selective mobilisation of the self – and not some external knowledge –, of one's own communicative repertoire, of the biographically accumulated dispositions of the communicating bodily subject, form a first aspect of what I want to understand by embodied reflexivity. The notion of the semiotic repertoire as understood by B. Busch (2021b: 191) issues a caveat not to consider such a mobilisation as purely intentional acts or sovereign choices from a “toolbox” of communicative resources. In the words of Sandywell (1996), writing about what he terms *corporeal* or *incarnate reflexivity* in a way that parallels Busch's discussion of the body image, we can think of embodied reflexivity “as the body's positional embeddedness within its local forms of world-incarnation and social practices—in the sense that human beings can adopt a conscious orientation, attitude, or reflective *stance* toward the structures of their sociohistorical worlds, the definition of their fields of interest, and political involvements” (Sandywell 1996: 282). This means that reflexivity as *qualé* embodied or instantiated in the semiotic repertoire – or *repertoire of reflexivity* – is not just a pragmatic competence acquired in socialisation, a sort

of idiosyncratic dimension of professional knowledge. But precisely because it is embodied, it is deeply socially formed and constrained. Let us consider this aspect further.

Yasmin

Yasmin had been there right from the start when the counselling centre was founded. She then became the deputy head of staff after Sami (prior to her in this position) had left. Yasmin grew up in the Middle East, came to Austria as a young woman and did her studies there. In our conversations about her work as well as in the context of the weekly staff meetings, she often used to swing back and forth between identification and Otherness when talking about the clients and her relationship with them (see also Section 4.3). She was a prolific narrator of anecdotes and with her colleague Sami, she often used to make jokes, tropes on stereotypical personae of Arabic speakers in general or from certain geographical regions.

What struck me a lot about her was her sarcasm and her humour in general which always seemed paired with a deep sense of responsibility and affection. Early on in my fieldwork (May 04, 2016), I accompanied Yasmin to a consultation with a young couple and their baby. They had come to fill in the application form for minimum income, the Austrian social benefit scheme to which they were now eligible since they had recently been granted asylum status. Yasmin explained to me that they had had a bad day the day before: they had been at the registry office (the *Standesamt*) in order to obtain a replacement birth certificate for their child since the original was lost, but they had been yelled at because they had failed to bring their own interpreter. This was written in capital letters on the handwritten note which they had received from the clerk and which furthermore listed all the documents necessary for the process. At another branch of the NGO where they had been before, they had not been offered help with the application form. This was the reason, she later explained to me, that she stepped in, even if it was not part of the services offered by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

Her way of interacting with the couple was playful and teasing: repeatedly, she seemed to ignore the husband, directing questions and explanations at the woman, asking the husband to fetch a stapler from the other desk or to hold

their documents in his hands. He seemed to accept this treatment with a grin. Yasmin explained to me: *er hat das Sagen, aber sie hat den Durchblick* ('he has the say [is in charge], but she has the savvy'). Later, during a break, she would tell me that she had known the family for a while and that she had been badgering the husband for quite some time to take more responsibility for his family. But, she told me, at least one of them had to be strong in such difficult circumstances and to take charge of things (this was sort of her credo which she repeated in different circumstances). She left no doubt that in her view the one capable of doing so was, in that case, the woman.

In a way, in this scene, she is not afraid to transgress boundaries of a 'professional' relationship, her care for the couple is imposing, almost patronising, and the responsibilities she assumes go well beyond the defined limits of service offered at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* – which could be understood both as an inefficient use of her working hours and as a form of self-exploitation¹³. Her somehow idiosyncratic agenda nevertheless fits with broadly shared morals as to orient to the clients' needs, and institutional goals as to actively involve women, a goal that was later enshrined in the counselling guidelines: *Umsichtig agieren: Ist Frau dabei? Wenn nicht, fragen wo sie ist und bitten, dass sie gemeinsam nochmal kommen* ('Act circumspectly: Is the wife present? If not, ask where she is and ask that they come back again once more together'; counselling guidelines, version June 2016).

Taking a stance towards embodied reflexivity

It seems that Yasmin's anecdotes and joking are at least in part a way of positioning herself in the in-betweenness she experienced, taking shifting and contradictory stances towards her work practice, her communicative repertoire and language ideological discourses (see the analysis in Section 4.3). Her case is an example of embodied reflexivity, not just embodied forms of reflexive knowledge, but *stances* towards certain forms of reflexive knowledge that populate the spatial communicative repertoire of the counselling centre. Her stance is of course inseparable from her positionality and it is structuring with respect to

¹³ Indeed both arguments, inefficiency and self-exploitation, were repeatedly discussed under the label of *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries').

the way she can mobilise her communicative repertoire: emphasising what she felt was a linguistic and cultural connection to her clients while at the same time being a prolific teller of caricatured, stereotype-laden anecdotes of her clients. As an embodied resignification of the figure of the reflective worker, she has considerable leeway – similar to Till's, despite the stark contrast they form to, for instance, Sara's more rationalising and controlled embodiment. Positionality is consequential; after all, some of her jokes could have been judged as inappropriate (or even racist) stereotyping if they had not been uttered by her specifically. But positionality does not work in a static way either – Till as a white male had similar, trickster-like leeway. This leads me to conclude that it is stance in connection with positionality which is consequential: Yasmin's and Till's ways of speaking and doing were understood as tropes on their own positioning. They represent a range of different, embodied stances, different ways of positioning the professional self with respect to the client Other and of being a 'good' counsellor.

Stance is the second more specific aspect of embodied reflexivity illustrated by the above vignettes. Yasmin takes affective and deontic stances towards reflexive, communicative repertoires, similarly did Sara and Till above – Till's commentary on the landlord's stylised voice, Sara's commentaries on affective control. Their stances draw on discourses and ideologies which affect their positionalities in a racialised and gendered social order differently (cf. B. Busch 2021b) and, perhaps more importantly, they also have different social consequences and effects: As we see in Sara, controlling one's affects is accorded a positive professional value. Till breaks with the appropriate register, but he does it in a way that allows him to make this breaching a resource. Yasmin was allowed a sort of freedom – and here I can only speculate whether it was because of her seniority, the authority she had due to her commitment and high workload or her trickster-like abilities of muddling through and cross boundaries, similar to Till. Probably all at once. Embodied reflexivity then is, as noted by Sandywell (1996: 281), not so much transparent self-consciousness or self-reflection, but a historically, materially and ideologically situated phenomenon.

Lastly, I want to further look into constructions of refugee support work as bounded field which constitutes a specific set of legitimate practices and figures of personhood. I will do so with a more autoethnographic look at how I co-constructed a legitimate position at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* with Helena,

another staff member. This approach does not only serve to bring in the ethnographer's self and to perform a reflexive analysis, but also to thematise institutional boundaries of legitimate 'fitting-in' in a way that does not expose my interlocutors in the field.

Helena and Jonas

I fought hard to win Helena's trust. Reading through my fieldnotes I cannot overlook how many paragraphs I wrote about this. I remember thinking: *what does she think about me and my work?* I learnt that she was a trained sociologist, but she told me that she did not identify with the label and with research in general. She had worked as a statistician after her studies. *Does she think of research as being a not so legitimate form of practice in the context of refugee support, inferior to the practitioner's work?*, I sometimes wondered. She asked me about my research questions, my methods etc. *Does she think that as a linguist, I am not a legitimate researcher of social phenomena? Does she frown at my selection and my usage of research methods? Or is it her insecurity of being watched at work? How can I positively influence her perception of me and my work?*

Eventually, I invited her to the linguistics department for an interview, we sat together and talked for a long time (February 07, 2018). I asked her towards the end of the recorded part of our conversation, if there was something important I had not asked her about. Referring back to a question I had asked her earlier – namely what were, according to her, the unwritten rules of the NGO –, she said that perhaps naïvely, she had initially assumed that working in refugee support would entail a 'political' (activist) motivation and a general interest in the living conditions and political rights of asylum seekers. The specifics of the job were secondary, the wish to do something helpful the central motivation and essential in order to be able to deal with the difficulties of the job. *Naïvely* she said, and then, that she had come to understand that this was not the case. She added that perhaps it did not necessarily *have* to be that way either: one can do a good job without being deeply committed to the political dimension of one's work. But she did not seem to be entirely convinced of this latter statement, claiming *if I am interested in housing I could work as well at a real estate agency*.

Legitimacy

Later, we continued to talk and I told her that the former head of staff, now leading a different branch of the same NGO, had told me she admired Sara for accepting me as a researcher to be shadowing the work practices in her team so closely. Helena asked me why that would be admirable. I explained to her – why would *I* have to explain reservations about my presence at the counselling centre to *her*, well, there we go – I explained to her that although I had been introduced by a friend who worked in Sara's team at that time, Sara did not know me at all prior to my fieldwork. Considering that in an organisational context, not everything would always be running smoothly and be done properly, I said, there was a danger in *letting someone in*. Helena then agreed that it is *cool that Sara supports my work* and she added that she had noticed that I have a positive stance towards their work at the counselling centre. I concurred and told her that I endorsed the work done at the counselling centre, trying to make sure not to claim it as my field of expertise. Then a clear judgement by her: she would find it rather problematic if I was there to study how interpreting from Arabic to German was being carried out – even if this was probably an interesting object of study, she'd say that there are different places where you could study such a thing, for example in places where books are being translated. I remember I concurred with mixed feelings. I felt validated, legitimised, but also doubted, judged. Her evaluation of my agenda and the range of legitimate (research) practices she thereby defined was fairly similar to the ethical limits and demands I had formulated for myself many times before this conversation. But here, being a reflexive researcher was not an academic game anymore, but a clear request based on values within the moral order of my research site. What Helena and I co-constructed in our conversation is the outer boundary of the moral order which subjects at the counselling centre were to position themselves in. The question hovering in the background was: who is legitimated to work in refugee support? This question extended also to my research activity. And, we were both fine, we had quickly assured ourselves. Helena, I want to be clear, is not *the* gatekeeper here, but she articulated a position that is, to a certain degree, shared among the staff.

What does this say? At least from Helena's perspective there is a question of

legitimacy to professionalism in refugee support. It is more than just work – that is, tasks to be done. It requires subjectivation, the assumption of the position of an ethical subject which I term the reflective worker. Why an *ethical* subject? The reflective worker is, as a subject position, of course, reflexive. In order to be, the individual responds to moral interpellations and thereby acquires a position, becomes a subject of moral order. But it is also reflective as it is recognisable in the embodiment of valued ways of talking and acting reflexively – being reflective – and engaging in reflective practice. By reflexively submitting to this moral order of valued reflexivity, it becomes an ethical subject. It consists not just in a legitimate position within moral order, but a legitimate stance in the reflection on moral order (a reflexive evaluation of reflexivity as a valued quality).

My fieldnotes and interviews attest a number of cases where such a ‘fitting-in’ was at stake for members of the staff and volunteers. That is, there were other cases where ways of being an embodied reflexive worker were problematised, became a source of negotiation and/or conflict, and a target for institutional sanctioning. Among these cases – which I cannot disclose for ethical reasons – were questions of ethical and political stance, but also of submission to regimes of communicative sociability (*sharing*, see also Example 5.6) and techniques (*setting boundaries* towards the client Other, but also with regard to the workload). In all these cases, there were dynamics of inner differentiation and group-formation, but open negotiation, conflict and sanctions occurred only when institutional agency was perceived to be threatened. This was the case, for instance, when (1) a staff member’s or volunteer’s labourforce was understood to be under risk of emotional distress and/or exhaustion, (2) the functioning of the work processes was feared to suffering a breakdown (for instance for a lack of ‘proper’ circulation of knowledge), and, as a consequence, (3) the service towards the client was deemed at risk. The embodiment of the ethical subject of the reflective worker is contained within institutionally sanctioned boundaries. The staff meeting, and specifically the reflective genre of the case discussion (where counsellors would talk through difficulties they had with the ‘cases’ of certain clients) could then become a moment of normalisation and sanctioning. Telling – apart from the instances of negotiation and sanctioning – are the cases where boundaries can be transgressed in the embodiment of reflexivity. Till and Yasmin were doing this all the time which gave them a certain leeway in the way they related to the clients,

colleagues and their work in general. Yasmin's stance towards her clients was tolerated and even appreciated by her colleagues, she was only gently reminded by her colleagues to take over less work. In Till's case, it was similar, his ways were only sanctioned when negative effects on institutional order was expected (as in the case of him deviating from the regime of front-stage communication around the resource of housing, see Example 4.2).

Repertoires of reflexivity

What does this say about reflexivity? Above, I have been following Del Percio (2022) who from a historical perspective, speaks of the formation of reflexive registers or registers of reflexivity – ways of speaking reflexively that have become recognisable and linked to social personae, as well as attributed specific social values – in order to write about enregistered practices of reflexivity. In this section, my aim was develop an embodied perspective on reflexivity. Based on a subject-centred notion of the semiotic repertoire (B. Busch 2021b), one might speak about *repertoires of reflexivity*, as the biographically shaped, affect-laden ways of speaking reflexively that the speaking subject may or may not draw upon from a position in an ideologically ordered space and at a specific historical moment in time. This 'drawing upon (or not)' is mediated by the body image: an (affective and deontic) stance towards embodied communicative resources and enregistered personae (B. Busch 2021b). What is crucial here is that the communicative repertoire in the sense of B. Busch (2021b) not only functions as a resource, but also as a site of constraint, of exclusion and Otherness. And this is valid for reflexivity as well: the communicative gesture of reflexivity, the subject communicatively bending back onto itself is not *per se* a liberating act of growth, but an enabling and constraining moment of subordination to discursive orders that grant social legibility and existence (cf. Butler 1997b: 3) and shape communicative repertoires and the positioning of subjects "in the context of an already circumscribed field of linguistic possibilities" (Butler 1997a: 129).

For social work professionalism, this means that the notion of embodied reflexivity proposed by Katzmann (2015) needs to be reconsidered. What emerges from these observations is not just that some knowledges are invisible and can (or even should!) be recovered from embodied reflexivity (and via embodied

reflexivity as a method), as she suggests. In the light of the above observations, it seems preferable to think about embodied reflexivity as a site where certain knowledges are invisibilised as much as others are made visible. In other words, it is a site of the discursive procedure of subjectivation. Reflexivity can work as a disciplining power and as an exclusionary one – as co-constructed by Helena and me in our conversation after the interview. Thereby, it is productive in inscribing moral order into subjectivities: how to be a good counsellor? What the embodied perspective shows is that ways of being a good counsellor depend not only on the reflexive quality of one's thinking, acting or speaking, but also on whether this is understood to be the proper, legitimate way of thinking, acting or speaking reflexively. This, in turn, requires from the individual counsellor to be able to mobilise the relevant and appropriate parts of their communicative repertoire of reflexivity.

Moreover, these observations are connected to what has been described as *emotion-management* (Callahan & McCollum 2002; Hochschild 1983) – here in the usage of Callahan & McCollum (2002: 222) as an over-arching term “to describe the general control of emotions” on the workplace, independently of how it relates to the work/labour process. The above portraits and vignettes illustrate how communicative work/labour is connected to the management of affect (cf. Cameron 2000; McElhinny 2010): One case in point is Sara whose commentary, that counselling constituted an exceptional moment of stress, denaturalise her affective display – not the effortless symptom of her ‘personality’, but the product of work and self-control. A contrasting case is Yasmin's whose affective labour took a more idiosyncratic form, the joking, the sarcasm. Others who did not manage to perform a self-controlled register in the way expected from them were subjected to more substantial scrutiny and disciplining (see also Section 6.3 and Section 6.4). The embodiment perspective highlights that the manipulation of affect and communication go hand in hand (Cameron 2000).

There is another aspect, as the vignettes depict stances taken towards such reflexive repertoires in morally unstable, liminal contexts: how to deal with the stress of counselling? How with a real estate owner who commands a precious resource – and a register that does not fit the spatial repertoire of the counselling centre? How to deal with not fitting in? Such stances reveal how different subjects can derive agency to different degrees from such unstable ground: strong,

embodied control in Sara, the trickster types Till and Yasmin, while others are sanctioned or disciplined. The cases of Till, Yasmin, Helena and myself show how the gap in embodied resignification can be stretched, but as I also mentioned there are institutionally sanctioned limits. Looking at embodied reflexivity through the notions of semiotic repertoire and body image means to go beyond a celebration of reflexivity, looking at how this abstract quality of personhood and practice is embodied, evaluated and how it has social consequences. With the next section, I want to *jump scale* and look into how social constraints and enablement play out on an institutional level – understanding the staff meeting as an instance of institutional reflexivity to which agents of the organisation are given unequal access.

5.4 Inequality in reflexivity

I had heard about Jamal a long time before I would have finally met him in person. He was a much-cherished volunteer interpreter at the counselling centre, experienced, friendly, engaged, multilingual (*Pashto, Dari, Hindi, German, English, some Arabic*, he told me, describing his linguistic repertoire). He was a young man who had fled from Afghanistan where he had worked as a teacher, and as an interpreter for the British and US forces. During the time I had known him he had not yet been granted asylum in Austria and he was busy making plans to open up a business which would allow him to be self-employed and gain a permit to stay, so his hopes and calculations. Of youthful appearance with his jeans, hoody and visored hat, a warm, kind, yet also somewhat sombre face. As I came to understand during an interview with him (on April 04, 2018), he was also a very precise, self-reflective observer of the staff, their work, and of his position as a volunteer and asylum seeker at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (more about this in Chapter 6). One of the questions I asked him during this interview was how he would characterise the type of people working for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. At first he struggled to find an answer, working on a positive characterisation of the counsellors as professional problem-solvers, then pausing. I waited a while and then told him, with a wink of an eye, that he did not have to say only positive things. Insisting that he meant what he said but had

difficulties going into details, he then explained to me that – as mentioned earlier – the counsellors specifically could be characterised by a pervasive practice they engaged in and which he called *sharing* (see Example 5.6).

Example 5.6: Transcribed extract from the interview with Jamal, volunteer interpreter (April 04, 2018).

- | | | | |
|-----|--------|---|---|
| 057 | Jamal: | ja (-) äh ein important thing
that äh (-) they (.) they they (-)
mh (-) besonders über den (.)
den äh beraterinnen und
berater (-) die sind sehr (-)
ähm (-) they share (- -) even (-)
ähm (-) a very small things (-)
between äh themselves | <i>yes (-) er one important thing
that er (-) they (.) they they (-)
erm (-) especially about the (.)
the er counsellors.FEM and
counsellors.MASC (-) they are
very (-) erm (-) they share (- -)
even (-) erm (-) a very small
things (-) between er
themselves</i> |
| | | [...] | |
| 167 | | but inside the dolmetschers
inside the translators we don't
have that thing | <i>but inside the interpreters
inside the translators we don't
have that thing</i> |
| 168 | Jonas: | mhm | <i>mhm</i> |
| 169 | Jamal: | to share all the things what we
saw what we experienced
what are (-) äh small things | <i>to share all the things what we
saw what we experienced what
are (-) er small things</i> |
| 170 | | we don't share | <i>we don't share</i> |
| 171 | Jonas: | mhm | <i>mhm</i> |
| 172 | Jamal: | yah | <i>yah</i> |
| 173 | | we are not one group | <i>we are not one group</i> |

This, so he went on, sets them apart from the interpreters – as a consequence, the counsellors form a group, the interpreters do not. He supported this analysis in the visual mode with a spontaneous sketch of the relationships between

interpreters and counsellors (first with his finger on the table, then, upon my suggestion, with a pen on a sheet of paper, s. Figure 5.3 on the facing page).

Often, he told me, information, even if insignificant to his judgement, circulates reliably among the staffs – for example, that he was ill on a certain day. On the other hand, he explained in contrast, this circulation does not include him and the other (volunteer) interpreters. He gave me two more examples: Firstly, he said that the *Recherche-Eck*, an important innovation in the organisation of volunteer work, came to his knowledge only when it was already operating. With a regular occasion for exchange of ideas with the counsellors, he told me, interpreters might have *cooperated* and *shared their ideas* with counsellors in the process. Secondly, he reminded me of an incident with an aggressive client which had happened when we were both on site, and how, during the incident, he was left ignorant of what was happening. Back, then in my fieldnotes, I had noted down how everyone was tense, our door to the *Recherche-Eck* was closed, the waiting was area evacuated, and how I had been receiving changing instructions from Sara and Helena on how to proceed with the client I was assisting at that moment. I had admired the concerted emergency mode adopted by the team, but I had also been feeling pretty useless. In the interview, Jamal told me that he believed this was an issue of trust, but also of who was a relevant part of the team and who was not.

In terms embodied reflexivity there is certainly a divergence between Jamal's conceptualisation of himself as a sociable, cooperative, engaged, even ambitious volunteer, and a reality where he finds himself in the periphery of the institutional order. The sketch he produced while explaining his views (see Figure 5.3 on the next page) is an iconic representation of this: every interpreter a single dot outside the margins of the team with single lines leading into the centre, representing, so he said, single relationships between individual interpreters and counsellors, but no groupness. A circle, the staff, a group. Inside the circle, multiple circling lines drawn to spatially locate what he called *information* – the knowledge resource counsellors use to go about their business of 'problem-solving'. The positioning of himself as a valuable worker which he put forward, for instance, by reference to the installation of the *Recherche-Eck*, is curtailed by this lack of access to knowledge.

But beyond issues of recognition, one's work being understood as 'part-of',

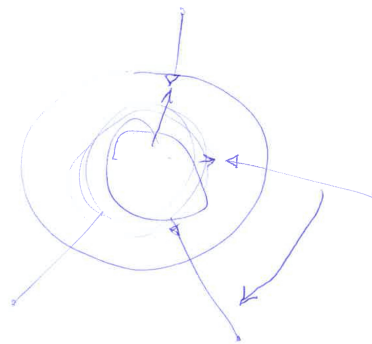


Figure 5.3: Sketch drawn by Jamal during our interviewing, while describing relationships and the flow of information at the counselling centre (April 04, 2018).

one's views and ideas valued as a contribution, what is at stake here is the access to a crucial infrastructure. An infrastructure that allows the *sharing* to take place while the value of *sharing* is reproduced by those taking in the practice themselves. I am not sure to which extent Jamal was aware of the regular staff meetings. Yet he observed, carefully inferred, and not without some bewilderment speculated about the practices and purposes of what he called *sharing*, and he seemed to know very well that what he called *sharing* was systematic.

In this section, I want to look into reflexivity as a materialised practice to which there is unequal access for different institutional members. The focus lies on the staff meeting as an infrastructure where reflexivity is shared as a resource (as much as are other resources, such as all sorts of information, and where, as we have seen above, other resources are being distributed, such as emergency apartments) with the effect of integrating the team (the inner circle in Jamal's sketch). From this infrastructure, interpreters and other volunteers are excluded. Alternative infrastructures – *interpreters' or volunteers' meetings* – have been set up, but compared with the firmly institutionalised, regular staff meeting, they remained irregular, sparse events rather than institutionalised infrastructures for practices of reflexivity. In the following, I want to understand, not so much the ideological projects investing reflexivity as a quality of practice and personhood, but more so the materialising conditions and effects of these projects. How are the observed forms of reflective practice, the ethical questioning, and the connected subjectivities of the reflective worker implicated with the reproduction of the institutional order and of the underlying unequal labour relations?

An unequally distributed resource

The previous sections have outlined how we can conceive of reflexivity as an enregistered quality of personhood and practice, how reflexivity is institutionalised in specific forms of practice and how subjects embody this quality as ethical subjects. This does not mean that the subjects and practices at hand are, on all levels of scale, reflective in a critical or professional sense (for which some authors prefer the term 'reflexive'). Therefore, the staff meeting, as an institutionalised form of reflexivity, can be termed an (*institutionalised*) *practice of reflexivity*, in discernment from the notion of *reflective practice* in the teleological sense of Schön

(1983)¹⁴ on the one hand, and from the tautological *reflexive practice* on the other – since in metapragmatic terms, practice *per se* involves reflexivity (Silverstein 2003; Spitzmüller, Flubacher, et al. 2017). By the usage of the term (institutionalised) practice of reflexivity, I want to point to the way the staff meeting materialises an institutional reflexivity (Bulcaen 2016), that is, where the institution – subjects and practices – turns back onto itself. It is an event where knowledge is produced, circulated and entextualised, by way of an institutionalised practice of reflexive, communicative processing ('talking about') of institutional practices and agents themselves.

And this is where reflexivity becomes connected to resources or even a resource in itself. The resource which is focused upon by Jamal in the extract analysed above is what he calls *information*, that is, all sorts of (reflexive) knowledge that can be useful, either for carrying out work tasks, or positioning oneself as a valuable worker. To this understanding, it is less relevant, whether reflexivity takes the form of positively valued, methodical reflexivity as promoted in the professional literature, for instance, by Schön (1983) and his suitors, or as a pattern of government and control as argued by critics of the model (among others Fejes 2011). In both ways, the staff meeting as institutionalised reflexivity can be productive, of knowledge and of subjectivities (as discussed in the previous sections). It does not even mean that those taking part in the staff meeting conceive of it as a resource – in the interviews I conducted with counsellors they did so to varying degrees. While the 'use-value' that can be derived from the staff meeting – in terms of mutual support, care and *psycho-hygiene* – was contested by some, Jamal's observation points to an asymmetry in knowledge and knowledge production which is more structural than the respective evaluative stances towards instantiations of the *quale* of reflexivity, as it hinges on the participation in institutionalised reflexivity.

In many respects, the staff-meeting fits the notion of *social capital* as originally used by Bourdieu (1986: 286–287): reflexivity materialises in institutionalised reflective practice as an "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to

14 I understand *reflective practice* thus as a special case of *practices of reflexivity*, but not vice-versa.

membership in a group" (Bourdieu 1986: 286). The staff meeting is a firmly institutionalised structure with clear boundaries within the institutional order, based on contractually sanctioned work relationships. But, the symbolic and material resources that accrue from membership or rather participation in the staff meeting are not directly translatable in capital value outside the organisational site of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (cf. Bourdieu 2010 [1984]: 107). Positioning oneself as a valuable worker and carrying out work tasks allow the subject first and foremost to obtain value within the institutional order. Moreover, the value of such knowledge is very much dependent on the position within internal divisions of labour (counselling vs. interpreting) and differentiated labour relationships (paid vs. unpaid work) – but not vice-versa, in the sense that Jamal's opportunities to invest hypothetically gained knowledge at the staff meeting to position himself is still constrained by his position as an unpaid volunteer interpreter and taking part in the staff meeting does not make, for instance, me (or the civil service person) a paid worker. But it connects asymmetries in labour relationships that exist between the paid work of the counsellor and the unpaid work of the volunteer interpreter with asymmetries in social and symbolic capital. Unequal access to the staff meeting constitutes unequal access to a specific form of institutionalised practices reflexivity and to the resources it harbours. This section is concerned with processes of unequal access, dynamics of in- and exclusion. These processes, in turn, are entangled with processes of professional and institutional ordering, namely the ways the part of the institutional agents not included in the staff meeting is managed by those who are.

Labour relations

Institutionalised practices of reflexivity at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* are a matter of what one might call the 'core-team' (recall Jamal's sketch, Figure 5.3 on page 227), that is, the regularly employed counsellors with full- or part-time contracts. Furthermore, the civil service person – in terms of weekly working hours a full-time worker – was a regular participant, as was I after having negotiated access for my research. The overlapping groups of interpreters and volunteers working at the counselling centre – that is, volunteer interpreters and volunteers

at the *Recherche-Eck*¹⁵ – did not take part in the staff meeting, nor other institutionalised forms of reflexivity of the core team, such as monthly supervision, the annual *Klausur* ('closed meeting') or other meetings of organisational units of the NGO. Alternative structures, such as meetings among the interpreters or supervision, have a complicated history of (attempts at) institutionalisation which will be dealt with below. This asymmetry in participation has, at least partly, to do with the amount of working hours and the labour relations which differ greatly between counsellors and interpreters – with counsellors always employed at least part-time, interpreters mostly working as volunteers with two exceptions who held an 8–12 hours contract. For paid staff, the staff meeting (and, in the same way, supervision and *Klausur*) took always place during working hours. This means that, in the case of the two employed interpreters, participation in the staff meeting which regularly took up to more than two hours would have eaten up a considerable share of their each around 10 working hours per week.¹⁶ For the volunteers, it would have meant more unpaid work. But the number of working hours is not the only way in which labour relations matter, namely when considering workplace-internal hierarchies and dependencies: the staff at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is organised in a way that conceives of the intersecting sets of interpreters and volunteers as groups or – taking Jamal's representation serious – as people *to be managed* by the core team. The conception of the linguistic labourforce at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is subject to more detailed descriptions in the chapter to follow (Chapter 6), hence a few words on the specifics of the staff meeting in particular as an institutional practice of managing people shall suffice here.

A coherent feature of staff meetings over the months of my observation between 2016 and 2018 is that the formal part of these rather ritualised encounters (that is, the part where the minutes set in) – with a few exceptions – regularly started with the point *Dolmetscher*innen* ('interpreters') or – as entextualised in the minutes – *Dolmetscher*innen für Beratungsstelle Wohnen / DolmetscherInnen für Beratungsstelle Wohnen* ('interpreters for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*', with a variation only in

15 Earlier, before the reorientation of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* from brokering to counselling services described in Section 4.2, real estate property owners who had loaned (*precarium*) or rented apartments to clients of the NGO were considered 'volunteers' too.

16 It is, to my experience, no exception in the social sector that those employed for a minimum of hours per week do not take part in regular staff meetings.

the way gender inclusivity is marked, see Figure 5.4 on the next page as an example). When the *Recherche-Eck* started at the beginning of October 2017, matters related to its organisation were initially treated under a separate point which had been added below, at the end of the document, as a *new point*¹⁷, but questions regarding the volunteers more and more incorporated into the point *interpreters* to which the label *FW-Recherche-Eck* (*sic*, [Freiwillige-Recherche-Eck] ‘volunteers-*Recherche-Eck*’, since Oct. 24, 2017, see Figure 5.5 on page 234) was added. Later (as of Nov. 14, see Figure 5.6 on page 235) the separate, more organisational point *Recherche-Eck* was moved up just below the one regarding interpreters and *Recherche-Eck* volunteers.

All in all, it can be said that the interpreters and volunteers occupy a prominent spot as a topic in the ritualised, strongly metricalised structure of the staff meeting. The precise practices which find their entextualisations in this phase of the meeting as well as the specific section of the minutes vary greatly, including, among others, the following:

- *Managing the quality of interpreting/volunteer work*, here, for instance in the form of rather unspecific (moral) evaluation [*Cali*]: [...] *war da, alles gut* (‘[Cali]: [...] was here, all good’, Figure 5.4 on the facing page and Figure 5.5 on page 234) or the more specific [*Alena*] *hat schon mit ihm gearbeitet und es hat sehr gut funktioniert!* (‘[Alena] already worked with him and it did go very well!’ Figure 5.6 on page 235).
- *Managing fluctuation of people*, for instance, *Falls es jemanden in der Beratung gibt: Daten aufnehmen* (Name, Telefonnummer, Sprache und an [*Yasmin*] und [*Alena*] schicken) (‘In case there is someone in counselling: record contact details (name, telephone number, language and send to [*Yasmin*] and [*Alena*])’, Figure 5.4 on the next page and Figure 5.5 on page 234)¹⁸, adding *Brauchen arabisch dolmetscher [sic]!* (‘[we] need Arabic-interpreters’ Figure 5.6 on page 235) a few weeks later in an edit.

17 So-called *new points* were gathered once all points established at the previous meeting had been talked through, then they were addressed subsequently and, at the next meeting either eliminated or incorporated into the more or less stable list of points (see Section 5.2 above).

18 The contextual background of this assignment lies in the common practice of recruiting volunteers directly from the pool of clients and their networks, such as accompanying friends or family who serve as ad-hoc interpreters during counselling.

TEAM Wien PROTOKOLL am 17.10. 2017

[Helena], [Yamin], [Alena], [Svenja], [Yasmin], Jonas, [Bernhard], [Sara], [Bast]

➤ Dolmetscher*innen für Wohnberatung

Falls es jemanden in der Beratung gibt: Daten aufnehmen (Name, Telefonnummer, Sprache und an [Yasmin] und [Alena] schicken).

[Cali]- Somalie, war da, alles gut hat nichts dolmetscht aber nächste Woche kann zu uns kommen. (Beratung)

Dolm. liste; ein Blatt eingefügt für Such-Café.

Bitte weiter suchen

➤ Workshops Wohnungssuche

[Helena] schickt noch einmalemail raus

➤ Wohnungen

Figure 5.4: Head and first points on the minutes of the staff meetings of October 17, 2017. Names were replaced by pseudonyms in the original document, marked by [square brackets], as are ellipses ([...]).

TEAM Wien PROTOKOLL
am 24.10. 2017

[Yamin], [Alena], [Svenja], [Yasmin], Jonas, [Bernhard], [Bast]

➤ **Dolmetscher*innen für Wohnberatung / FW-Suchcafe**

Falls es jemanden in der Beratung gibt: Daten aufnehmen (Name, Telefonnummer, Sprache und an [Yasmin] und [Alena] schicken).

[Rabia]: war 2x da, kam aber nie zum Zug, wird aber trotzdem wieder kommen

[Cali]: Somali, war da, alles gut, hat nichts dolmetscht aber nächste Woche kann zu uns kommen. (Beratung)

Dolm. Liste: ein Blatt eingefügt für Such-Café.

Zurzeit sind die Dolmetscher*innen/[Yasmin] und Suchcafe-FW/[Alena] getrennt.

[Anis] will eigentlich öfter kommen, deshalb besprechen wir, dass wir es heute einmal versuchen werden mit Beratung.

Bitte weiter suchen!

➤ **Workshops Wohnungssuche**

[Helena] schickt noch einmal email raus – hat sie gemacht.

[Yasmin] ruft [Jamal] an, ob er am 3.11. Zeit hat.

6.11. arabisch – [Hakob]? [Svenja] kann den WS halten, ist im Kalender schon eingetragen.

➤ **Wohnungen**

Figure 5.5: Head and first points on the minutes of the staff meeting of October 24, 2017. Names were replaced by pseudonyms in the original document, marked by [square brackets], as are ellipses ([...]).

TEAM Wien PROTOKOLL

am 14.11. 2017

[Yamin], [Yasmin], Jonas, [Bernhard], [Alena], [Bast]

➤ Dolmetscher*innen für Wohnberatung / FW-Suchcafe

Falls es jemanden in der Beratung gibt: Daten aufnehmen (Name, Telefonnummer, Sprache und an [Yasmin] und [Alena] schicken). Brauchen arabisch dolmetscher!

[Cali] (Somali): hat einen Job, ist nur noch für den Notfall. Dafür gibt es [AXMAD] (Somali), [Alena] hat schon mit ihm gearbeitet und es hat sehr gut funktioniert!

[Zayneb] – werden wir nochmal probieren, Suchcafé kommt eher nicht in Frage, da sie selbst gerade sucht. [Yasmin] wird sich bei ihr melden.

[Anis]: es gibt gute Rückmeldungen, wir wollen ihn verstärkt einbauen, gerade im Hinblick auf das gerade bestehende Arabisch-Dolmetsch-Defizit Dienstags und Mittwochs.

Wir wollen einen Vernetzungstag für alle unsere Dolmetscher*innen andenken, wo sie sich mit uns gemütlich zusammensetzen und wir uns mit ihnen austauschen.

Bitte weiter suchen!

➤ Suchcafe

[Alena] bringt ein, dass ein Austauschtreffen mit allen ehrenamtlichen Mitarbeiter*innen des Suchcafé auch sinnvoll wäre.

Alle sollen sich melden für die Suchcafe und nicht nur [Alena]. – werden ab jetzt Radldienst machen also immer abwechselnd. Radldienst besprechen wir im Team am 21.11.!

Bis zum nächsten Teambesprechung. Überlegen wie wer Suchcafe macht, abwechseln, Stundenweise?

Eine motivierte Freundin ([Elisabeth]) von Hanna wird auch ins Suchcafe kommen; vielleicht kommt sie Donnerstag.

Eine weitere Frage bezüglich des Suchcafé ist, inwieweit wir dafür bei anderen Einrichtungen Werbung machen wollen. [...]

➤ Workshops Wohnungssuche

Figure 5.6: Head and first points on the minutes of the staff meetings of November 14, 2017. Names were replaced by pseudonyms in the original document, marked by [square brackets], as are ellipses ([...]).

- *Managing schedules and allocation of the volunteers'/interpreters' labourforce*, as in [Anis]: [...] *wir wollen ihn verstärkt einbauen, gerade im Hinblick auf das gerade bestehende Arabisch-Dolmetsch-Defizit Dienstags [sic] und Mittwochs [sic]* ('[Anis]: [...] we want to increasingly integrate him, especially in view of the current deficit of Arabic interpreting on Tuesdays and Wednesdays', Figure 5.6 on the preceding page). Sometimes, the minutes record the availability of a given volunteer/interpreter is available: *kommt jetzt immer Mittwoch von 9 bis 11 Uhr. Wenn wann anders, können wir sie anrufen* ('comes from now on every Wednesday from 9 to 11 o'clock. For any other time we can call her', minutes of November 07, 2017) or *er kann immer nachmittags* ('he is always available in the afternoon', minutes of October 04, 2016).
- *Managing the (mutual) liabilities of the labour relationship*, as in [Cali]: *meldet sich leider nicht mehr*. ('[Cali]: unfortunately is not getting back to us anymore', minutes of November 07, 2017), *wird wahrscheinlich nicht mehr kommen. Er hatte Hoffnung auf eine Anstellung bei uns. SMS sollte an ihn aber jedenfalls geschickt werden, dass er immer willkommen ist* ('probably will not come back. He had hopes to gain employment with us. An SMS should be sent to him in any case that he is always welcome', minutes of January 02, 2018), or *Ist im [name]spital und freut sich über Besuch* ('Is in the [name] hospital and is looking forward to visitors', May 10, 2016).
- *Managing tasks and responsibilities in the management of volunteers/interpreters among the counsellors themselves*, for instance, *Zurzeit sind die Dolmetscher*innen/[Yasmin] und Suchcafe-FW[sic]/[Alena] getrennt* ('Currently interpreters/[Yasmin] and Recherche-Eck-volunteers/[Alena] are [managed] separately', Figure 5.5 on page 234).

The picture emerging from this is that of a rather instable set of individuals, congruent with Jamal's representation of the interpreters' place at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, and of a resource to be administered. Of course, similar and other issues – allocating tasks or slots for counselling, managing leaves of absence, participation in trainings, individual wellbeing etc. – happen to be addressed with regards to the participating staff as well, but this generally happens in their presence. In this sense, interpreters and volunteers do not take part in the reflexive regimen-

tation of the institution, its people and its resources. The staff meeting therefore is a rather exclusive encounter of what I called above the 'core team', a stable institutionalised practice from which the unstable environment – including the fluctuating volunteer labourforce – is managed, rather than incorporated. This observation holds also for reflexivity on the individual level of scale: without their participation in the staff meeting, interpreters/volunteers lack the possibility to, for example, discuss work experiences or have a say in the co-construction of the moral and professional quality of their work.

A case in point is the treatment of an incident which occurred at the end of 2017 and which was treated by the employed staff as an instance of misconduct on the side of the interpreter. As reported during a staff meeting, said volunteer interpreter had been interpreting during a counselling session when he started laughing at the client who had disclosed their non-heterosexual relationship. The team talked about the incident, but there was no immediate conversation between the staff member who conducted the counselling session and the volunteer interpreter. The staff knew that the volunteer interpreter would have left anyway because he had found a job outside the NGO. But he came back when he was laid off soon after and it was at that occasion that Sara issued a caution to him for the incident which was then already a few weeks old. Later, I heard that he had complained that the staff had been talking behind his back instead of addressing this directly. The incident shows the limits of the institutionalised reflexive apparatus in dealing with the instability of the interpreter's labourforce and moral (self-)regulation, as there is a disjuncture between what is raised and discussed at the staff meeting and its consequences for the concerned volunteers/interpreters.

All in all, there is no regular, institutionalised occasion fostering or allowing for a reflexive understanding of the volunteers'/interpreters' position and work practices – this is relegated to other participation formats, such as either top-down regulations and rules (for instance, in the *Grundsätze für dolmetschgestützte Beratung* 'Principles for interpreter-supported counselling', a document of slightly more than three pages, handed out to all counsellors and interpreters working at the NGO, and their reiteration in institutional discourse), more or less informal, one-to-one conversations between individual counsellors and interpreters (as

suggested by Jamal in his drawing, see Figure 5.3 on page 227) or alternative encounters and formats which were developed to ‘fill in’ for the perceived lack.

Interpreters’ and volunteers’ meetings

In the course of my fieldwork, I came across a number of such alternative formats of institutional reflexivity geared towards the volunteer interpreters. What they have in common are their histories of comparably unstable institutionalisation – taking place irregularly or in long intervals and in dependency on the initiative of specific staff members of the NGO (i. e. not only from the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*) – and an ambivalence of agendas invested in them, combining projects of empowerment with agendas of controlling or enhancing work quality. For instance, there were initiatives from the staff and the management of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* to extend the offer of supervision to interpreters / volunteers, and the internal academy of the NGO offered training courses (among them thematic courses on volunteer work and interpreting) which were free of charge for those who had signed a volunteer agreement. But most akin to the staff meeting as a genre of practice were initiatives from employed staff members to institute a regular meeting for the interpreters – during the time of my fieldwork, between April 2016 and February 2018, I recorded four such meetings in my gathered material: (1) one in November 2016 (named *Dolmetscher*innentreffen*, ‘interpreters’ meeting’, a joint initiative for interpreters of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and of the *Mobile Beratung Soziales* (‘Mobile Social Counselling’), a second project of the NGO), (2) one in February 2017 (*Dolmetschtreffen*, ‘interpreting meeting’, again for interpreters of *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and *Mobile Social Counselling*), (3) one in January 2018 (*Freiwilligentreffen*, ‘volunteers’ meeting’, an initiative by two staff members of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* for all volunteers at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*) and (4) one in February 2018 (*Dolmetschvernetzungstreffen*, ‘interpreting networking meeting’, an initiative by the *Women’s Counselling* for all interpreters and ‘native-language’ counsellors (*muttersprachliche* [‘mothertonguely’] *Berater*innen*) working for the NGO). The incoherent naming pattern, the varying organisational sources of the respective initiatives as well as the scope in terms of target participants point both to the perceived necessity of instituting such a meeting (be it the employed staff members’ or the volunteers’ perceptions) and to the instability of such attempts

at institutionalisation. In the following, I want to focus on one occasion, the first *Dolmetscher*innentreffen* in November 2016¹⁹, especially the process of its preparation and post-processing which is documented both in my fieldnotes of the preceding and subsequent staff meetings I attended as well as by the minutes of the respective meetings.

In September 2016, planning started for said interpreters' meeting. According to the first records in the minutes of staff meetings, the initiative was initially Karl's, a counsellor of the Mobile Social Counselling project which, at that time, shared the office space in *Beckergasse* with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. The minutes document that Anna got in touch with Karl which resulted in a collaboration of the two in the preparation of the *interpreters' meeting* which I was able to follow mediated by Anna's accounts of the process at the staff meetings.

Requests and proposals

During the staff meeting of October 12, 2016, Anna reported on the progress of their preparations and explained: *we want it to be a platform, and as such, it should not give them [the interpreters] the impression that – once again – we want something from them, that we want to 'tap into their know-how' [ihr know-how anzapfen]*. Yet still, there she goes on to enumerate some issues that should be passed on to the interpreters on behalf of the staff, expectations regarding their work as well as appreciation for it. There is also the idea to show the participants a video for input. The meeting should be framed in a rather informal way, she affirms, and it should leave room for the interpreters to shape the meeting themselves. There will be no minute keeping and Anna and Karl will be the only staff members present, with the goal of – so she says – making it look less like an institutional 'thing' (in her words, an *[name of the NGO]-Ding* '[name of the NGO]-thing'). But Anna further adds that she will write a report on the meeting anyway, on the basis of which can be decided whether a more substantial input is needed the next time.

19 I cannot exclude that similar meetings have happened before my ethnographic engagement or in its early stages when I had only limited access to internal processes. A brief remark in the minutes of mid April, just when I started my visits there, signals that Sara was organising a group supervision for the interpreters.

Example 5.7: Excerpt from the minutes of the staff meeting on October 12, 2016, planning the interpreters' meeting.

➤ **Dolmetscher*innen-Treffen**

Anna & Karl

Inputs:

Sami: Dolm. wissen lassen, dass sie bitte **nicht beraten**, sondern dolmetschen sollen.

Till: fragen, was für Dolm. komfortabler ist, die **Ich- oder Er-Perspektive** einzunehmen? → das thematisieren. Dolm. sollen sich Gedanken dazu machen, das diskutieren und dazu äußern wie sie es am liebsten hätten.

Yasmin: Wir können ihnen die Möglichkeit der Ich-Perspektive ja auch anbieten/empfehlen, weil viele sicher nicht mal an diese Möglichkeit denken, weil sie keine prof.

Dolm.-Ausbildung haben.

Yasmin: **Abgrenzung!** Bitte nicht nach den Beratungen mit den Klient*innen noch Gespräche führen, sich anquatschen lassen u. dann eine Art Beratung eigenständig anfangen.

Till: **Bedarf nach Einschulungen** od. ähnlicher Vorbereitungs-Ausbildung? Wenn ja, versuchen wir das seitens der [name of the NGO] zu organisieren.

➤ **Interpreters' meeting**

Anna & Karl

Input

*Sami: let the interp[reTERS] know that they should **not give advice**, but only interpret please.*

*Till: ask what is more comfortable for interp[reTERS], to assume the **I- or he-perspective**? → make this a topic. Interp[reTERS] shall think about this, discuss it and state how they would prefer this.*

Yasmin: We can also offer/recommend them the possibility of the I-perspective because many probably do not even think about this possibility because they do not have a prof[essional] interp[reTERS'] training.

*Yasmin: **Setting boundaries!** Please no conversations with clients after counselling, letting oneself be chatted up and starting a sort of counselling on their own.*

*Till: **Need for tuition** or similar preparatory training? If so, we try to organise this on behalf of the [name of the NGO].*

Some staff members throw in issues they would like to be included in the input given to the interpreters. Sami says the message should be conveyed that they should *nur dolmetschen, nicht beraten*, ‘only interpret, not give advice’. Till says it would be sensible to thematise the *Rollenthema* (‘roles-topic’) and he explains: the interpreters should talk about what is more workable and agreeable for them – to interpret in the *ich-Perspektive oder der dritten Person* (‘I-perspective or the third person’). Yasmin jumps in – this, she says, is the difference between *richtigem* (‘proper’) and *nicht-richtigem Dolmetschen* (‘improper interpreting’), and many of them have no proper training. Mona interjects that she is studying interpreting at university now and that she has recently learnt that *ich* (‘I’) is the proper perspective in *wissenschaftlichem Dolmetschen* (‘scholarly interpreting’). Yasmin adds that *Abgrenzung* is an important point – ‘setting boundaries’ towards clients – in the sense that interpreters should not be available for a chat with clients after counselling and start a sort of counselling on their own. Till says it is important to find out whether there is a desire for more *Einschulung und Fortbildung* (‘training for newcomers and on the job’) – this, he says, is common for *Dolmetscher*innen auf Honorarnote* (‘freelance interpreters’)²⁰ anyways, but he retains it to be possible to organise the funding for all the others (i. e. the volunteers) or to ‘force’ – *forcieren* – funding being granted from the NGO for this purpose.

The proposals and requests from the team also find their way into the minutes of that day (see Example 5.7) under the label *inputs* – a collection of ideas for a planning that happens elsewhere (between Anna and Karl). The proposed ‘inputs’ are listed after staff member’s names, entextualising the scene of utterance in a collapse of participant roles – as *animators* who physically uttered, *authors* who came up with the respective proposals and requests, and *principles* who thereby positioned themselves (sensu Goffman 1979: 16–17)). The effect of this discursive procedure is that the preliminary, perhaps even controversial character of these requests and proposals is affirmed in the minutes as they are entextualised as

20 Apart from the fact that the NGO works only marginally with freelance interpreters, it seems at least questionable that the NGO would fund their training. I am not sure whether this is a mistake in my fieldnotes, whether Till used the wrong term, really meaning the employed interpreters, or whether he was pointing to the idea that a professional paid interpreter on the free market would usually participate in trainings (irrespective of who is paying for it, probably the interpreters themselves).

different 'positions' taken by discrete members of the team. Thereby, different and partly contradictory agendas become personified: an agenda of control and enforcement of professional divisions of tasks by Sami, which blends in with a pedagogical agenda in Yasmin ('setting boundaries') besides the more educational agenda of conveying knowledge, and an agenda of autonomous decision-making and empowerment in Till's proposals.

Languages

At a staff meeting a few weeks later, on November 08, Anna reports once more on the progress of the planning, announcing the set date, November 22 (see Example 5.8). She tells us that she had been thinking about how they should handle the issue of language choice at the meeting, given that not necessarily, there will be a language shared by everyone. This is not a negligible issue: at least at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, interpreters did not only differ in their competences in 'source languages' – such as *Pashto*, *Dari*, *Farsi*, *Arabic* entextualised in the minutes of that day as two groups *Persian* and *Arabic* (Example 5.8)²¹ – but also with regards to their competences of their 'target-languages': some of them interpreted in German, others in English to the counsellor.

Anna raises the problem that not all of them understand *both* English and German. On the one hand, Karl, she says, was contrary to regulatory interferences on their behalf. On the other hand, they also would like to avoid that the 'language groups' only talk among themselves (see also Example 5.8). Sami says that he sure would know a good solution – a dig at Karl's stated intention to abstain from interference? – a strong moderation of the event. I remember being excited about this discussion. This could become an interesting experiment. I suggest a swap of roles: Anna and Karl should offer themselves as interpreters of English and German which would function as the two working languages of the meeting. The uptake of this idea is, to my satisfaction, enthusiastic. While I retreat from the discussion, the idea is further explored – for instance, someone affirms that this

21 The mapping of languages and speakers in the minutes should not lead to the quick conclusion that there was no awareness of linguistic differences among the staff, one has to take into account that the languages *Pashto*, *Dari*, and *Farsi* were mostly covered by the same interpreters with their multilingual repertoires. Interpreters for Somali mentioned elsewhere were, at that time, only gaining importance for the daily business at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and still wanting among the linguistic labourforce.

would probably constitute a positive experience for the interpreters too. In the minutes, the proposal is entextualised as a *Super Team-Vorschlag* ('great suggestion from the team' [to the organisers Anna and Karl, probably], Example 5.8).

Example 5.8: Excerpt from the minutes of the staff meeting on November 08, 2016, planning the interpreters' meeting.

➤ **Dolmetscher*innen-Treffen**

- Findet am 22. Nov., 17h30 in der Meyergasse statt
- Anna & Karl sind dabei, es zu organisieren
- Große Frage: wie lösen wir die sprachliche Herausforderung: arabisch, englisch, persisch, deutsch?

- **Super Team-Vorschlag:**

Rollentausch. Die Dolmetscher*innen reden untereinander Deutsch oder Englisch (nicht Arabisch oder Persisch), und Anna & Karl übersetzen dann entweder auf Deutsch oder Englisch. Zusätzlicher Pluspunkt: es läuft nicht darauf hinaus, dass Arabisch-Sprechende nur mit Arabisch-Sprechende und Persisch-Sprechende nur mit Persisch-Sprechenden kommunizieren, sondern wirklich alle miteinander.

→ Anna schlägt das Karl vor

➤ *Interpreters' meeting*

- Will take place on Nov. 22, 5:30 pm in Meyergasse
- Anna & Karl are about to organise it
- Big question: how do we solve the linguistic challenge: Arabic, English, Persian, German?

- *Great suggestion from the*

team: Role swap. The interpreters speak German or English among themselves (not Arabic or Persian), and Anna & Karl then translate into either German or English. Additional pro: it does lead to [a situation where] Arabic-speakers communicate only with Arabic-speakers and Persian-speakers with Persian-speakers, but really everyone together.

→ Anna will propose this to Karl

This vignette on the anticipated ‘language barrier’ shows that the issue of including the interpreters in institutionalised practice of reflexivity is not simply done by offering a space for a meeting to happen. In the eyes of Anna, the fragmented multilingualism of the interpreters is as much a challenge to be taken care of as is the establishment of the meeting in itself. There are competing views in how far an intervention on behalf of the staff can be legitimate – Karl reportedly was a strong proponent of enabling self-organisation, Sami of control, and Anna somewhere in between, a facilitator. Viewed on an institutional level of scale, the fragmentation of the spatial linguistic repertoire – that is, the disconnect between individual repertoires among the interpreters – corresponds to the concentric organisation of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* as described by Jamal (Figure 5.3 on page 227) where the interpreters do not form a group, but the relationships between them are a function of their work for the NGO – in Jamal’s words: *we know each other sometimes ((a pen’s stroke on paper, an arrow from one peripheral dot to the other)) (-) er privately but (.) according to this group ((clicking of pen)) we knew each (other)*. Accounts from several interviews with interpreters of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* confirm that the general perception was that they were seeing most of the others only during work at the counselling centre (with the exception of a few friendships that had formed or had existed previously), and that socialising in breaks tended to be organised in accordance with affiliations to language groups. Linguistic fragmentation is thus, I contend, a symptom or a simple correlation rather than a cause of the scarce integratedness of interpreters as a ‘group’ or a barrier to institutionalising practices of reflexivity.

A resource for the counsellors’ reflexivity

Then the meeting finally happened, on November 22, on the premises of *Meyergasse* which were used for all kinds gatherings, trainings and courses by the Viennese branch of the NGO. When the planning was still in its early stages, I had warily asked Anna whether I might be allowed to join, but she had told me that while she was not against it, Karl was intent to minimise the presence of others than the interpreters themselves at the meeting. I decided to respect this position and did not press for it further.

A week after the meeting, at the staff meeting of November 29, Anna gave an

account of the interpreters' meeting to her colleagues. Despite the rather smallish number of participants – the minutes she circulated a few weeks later listed three participants from the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and two from the Mobile Social Counselling – she sees it as a success. She says the participants had displayed high need to talk and *Themen, die uns nicht bewusst waren* ('topics we had not been aware of') had been raised – for instance, difficulties in dealing with dialectal variation and feelings of shame when interpreters had troubles with a 'translation' (cf. the minutes, Example 5.9). More meetings of this kind were desired by the participants. Her account of the *role swap* – where Anna and Karl indeed assumed the role of interpreters – is positive: it was taken up well by the participating interpreters and for Anna and Karl, it yielded the insight that managing the length of turns is very important for those who do the interpreting.

Example 5.9: Excerpt from the minutes of the staff meeting on November 29, 2016, subsequent to the interpreters' meeting on November 22, 2016, notes of Anna's account to the team.

➤ Dolmetscher*innen-Treffen	➤ Interpreters' meeting
- am 22. Nov., 17h30 in der Meyergasse, es waren nicht so viele Leute da Abu Hassan [sic] Nadeem, Jamal, von den MOBsens waren leider sehr wenige da, weil Menschen wurden nicht im Vorab nochmal informiert	- Will take place on Nov. 22, 5:30 pm in Meyergasse, not so many people were there Abu Hassan, Nadeem, Jamal, unfortunately very few from Mobile Social Counselling because people were not informed once more before
- Themen: Dialekte sind mitunter ein echtes Problem für die Übersetzung (sorgt mitunter für Scham)	- Topics: Dialects are sometimes a real problem for the translation (causes shame sometimes)
- Solche Treffen sind regelmäßig gewünscht (Kostenstelle [identifier of cost centre])	- There is a desire for regular meetings of this kind (cost centre [identifier of cost centre])
- Zusammenfassung und Input kriegen wir nächstes [sic] Mal von Anna	- We will receive a summary and input from Anna next time

What struck me most while listening to Anna's account was that she seemed to emphasise the resourcefulness of the meeting for further reflective processing by the counselling staff as she stressed the 'insights' (*Erkenntnisse*) gained from the event. Awareness and understanding of the occupational Other (Tipton 2016) are transferred or re-integrated into a logic of institutional reflexivity centered on the counselling staff. Moreover, in the minutes, another salient detail is mentioned: the *cost-centre* (see Example 5.9) – that is, an indication on how the interpreters' meeting shall be integrated into the budgeting of the NGO. Thus, as for the multiple agendas mentioned earlier, the interpreters' meeting has to be understood in its structural embeddedness (and dependance from, also in the monetary sense) in the larger scale institutional order: its future depends on its integration into existing agendas, practices, and the allocation of working hours and monetary resources.

The minutes of the interpreters meeting were circulated by Anna among the counselling staff a few weeks later, after Karl had made his edits. In this document, Anna's (and Karl's) communicative work in establishing the value of the interpreters' meeting becomes visible even more than in her account to her colleagues at the staff meeting. Let us have a brief look at how the meeting's value is communicatively established (cf. Cavanaugh 2016) to the readership. All in all, the minutes produced by Anna are structured in the sections (1) *Gesamteindruck* ('general impression', see Example 5.10) which consists in a sort of plea for the interpreters' meeting, (2) *Themen* ('topics') where topics discussed at the meeting are presented in reported/embedded discourse, (3) *Einschätzung zur "getesteten Methodik"* ('assessment of the "method tested"'), with a few evaluative remarks on the moderation techniques, (4) *Zeitlicher Rahmen* ('time frame') with an evaluation of the length as well as the time management at the meeting, and a (5) *Foto-Protokoll* ('minutes in photographs'), consisting in photographs taken of the flipcharts documenting the discussion and photographs of the group socialising at the buffet during a break. The first page contains, next to the text (spanning across the first two paragraphs), a photograph of a flipchart welcoming the participants to the meeting with a text in German and English as well as the drawing of a sun with a smiling face (Figure 5.7 on page 249).

Example 5.10: Excerpt from the minutes of the interpreters' meeting on November 22, 2016, as circulated to the staff of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* by Anna.

Gesamteindruck: extrem gut angenommen worden; sehr positiver und intensiver Austausch sowohl zwischen DolmetscherInnen als auch mit Beratungs-VertreterInnen; viele interessante Einblicke auch für uns als BeraterInnen, die wir ohne solch ein Format nicht bekommen würden und nicht in die Teams weiter tragen könnten; es besteht seitens der DolmetscherInnen Interesse daran, solche Treffen öfter abzuhalten. Wunsch, der im Konsens geäußert wurde: 1x/Monat (angedacht waren alle 3 Monate → wird eine Organisationskapazitäten-Frage); ich persönlich (Anna) fände es sehr wichtig, an die [name of the NGO] mit dem Anliegen heranzutreten, Gruppen-Supervisionen für DolmetscherInnen zu institutionalisieren!

General impression: *extremely well received; very positive and intense exchange both between interpreters and with counselling-representatives; many interesting insights also for us as counsellors which we would not get without such a format nor would we be able to carry to the teams; on the side of the interpreters there is an interest to have these meetings more often. Desire that was brought forward in consensus: 1x/month (it was projected for every 3 months → will be a question of organising capacities); I personally (Anna) would find it very important to bring forward the concern to the [name of the NGO] to have group-supervision for interpreters institutionalised!*

The first paragraph (*Gesamteindruck* 'general impression', Example 5.10) merits a closer look: in terms of evaluation, it assembles of a sequence of positive (epistemic and affective) stances taken by the involved actors, which are upscaled

to positions and interests of the two institutional roles represented – interpreters and counsellors (for instance, *seitens der DolmetscherInnen* ‘on the side of the interpreters’, *für uns als BeraterInnen*, ‘for us as counsellors’). The paragraph closes with an affectively embedded deontic stance taken by Anna who is explicitly identified as the writer of the text and as the principle or stance-owner – *ich persönlich (Anna)*, ‘I personally (Anna)’ – projecting a backing of the project by her colleagues to *institutionalising* (this being the term used by Anna!) group-supervision for interpreters. This last sentence in the paragraph, assembling a participation framework across institutional levels of scale – *individual* Anna, *institutional roles* of counsellor and interpreter, and the NGO as an actor in itself – and finished with an exclamation mark, reads as a plea to the reader.

The entextualisation of the event in this specific form projects, on the one hand, its uptake in the counsellors’ practices of reflexivity, recontextualising bits of discourse from the meeting, and, on the other hand, its continuation in the future: positive evaluation from different angles, a sort of staged self-critique in the evaluation of choices made by the organisers (for instance method of moderation and time frame), and the provision of content (topics and flipcharts). All of this is underlined in the visual-iconic mode of photography: the orderly flipcharts displayed authenticate the topics mentioned in the minutes (functioning as epistemic stances) and the competent moderation of the event by the organising team, the smiling faces (and the sun!) on the photographs individualise and add an affective layer to the entextualised epistemic and deontic dimensions of stance in the multimodal artifact.

Not lastly, Anna’s reports to the team, including the acceptance of input and making it productive for reflexivity, as well as the minutes have to be read as part of her work in legitimising the institutionalisation of such a meeting, both vis-à-vis her colleagues and the management of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (that is Sara and Sami, her deputy at that time) and of the relevant subsection of the NGO responsible for the allocation of funds. On the one hand, her communicative work seems to presuppose a dependency of the interpreters’ meeting from the allocation of material resources and the assignment of institutional structures, such as, probably, the usage of premises for the meeting, working hours for the counsellors moderating the meeting, and provisions for a coffee break, but also from assuring the personal continuity of the meeting – for instance, in

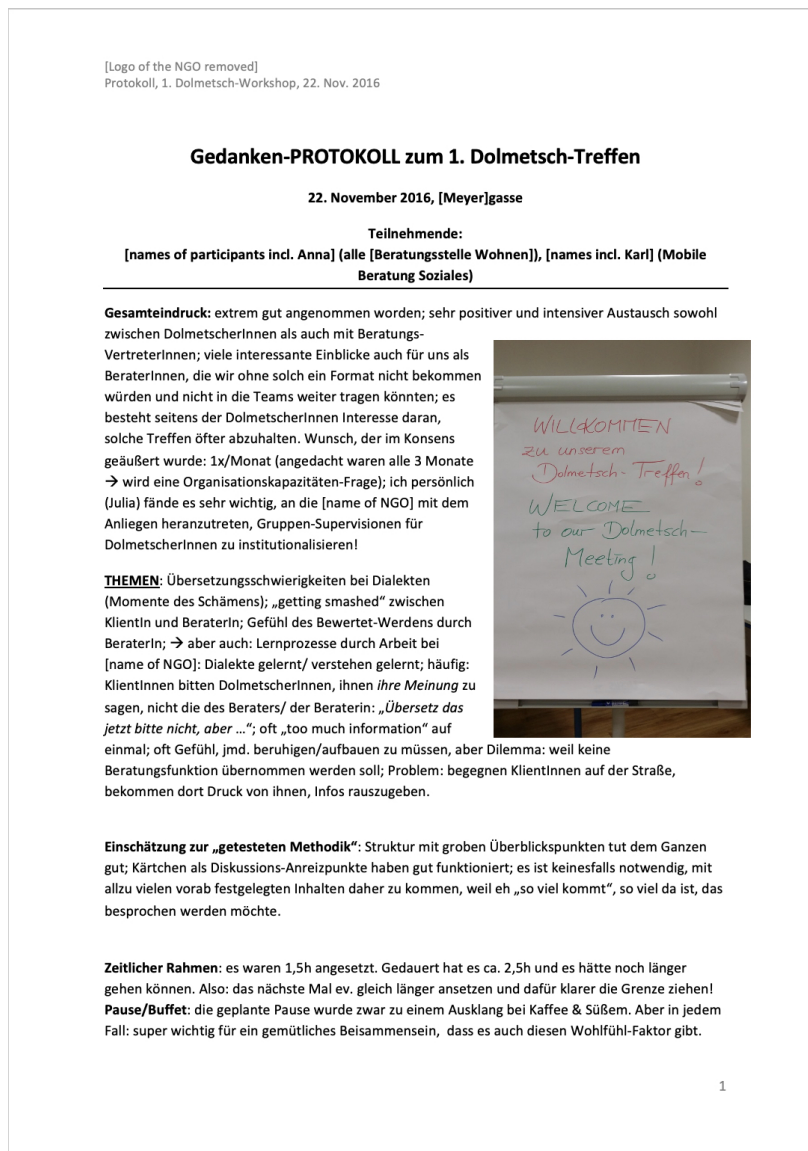


Figure 5.7: Minutes of the interpreters’ meeting circulated by Anna among the counselling staff with photograph placed next to the first two paragraphs *Gesamteindruck* (‘general impression’) and *Themen* (‘topics’). Proper names and Logo of the NGO removed from the document.

the case that Anna would leave her job with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. And indeed, this is what happened a few weeks later – suggesting that Anna had a heightened interest in recruiting her colleagues for the project in order to secure the continuation of her work. From this perspective, the re-integration of the interpreters' meeting into practices of reflexivity of the counselling staff gives the interpreters' meeting a sort of 'added value' produced in communicative practice (cf. Cavanaugh 2016)) and 'invested' both in a plea to the staff of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* where Anna acts as responsible and advocate for the meeting, and to the management whose endorsement and financial support is sought in order to make the meeting a permanent institution. On the other hand, it bespeaks the ideological work of integrating the interpreters' meeting into a heterogeneous assemblage of – partly concurring – interests and agendas, such as those articulated at the staff meeting on October 12, 2016 (see Example 5.7 on page 241), an inclusion in institutional practices of reflexivity (as advocated most clearly by Till), recruiting, integrating or disciplining interpreters into the interests of the team (emergent from Yasmin's and Sami's interventions), propagating notions of 'good interpreting' (that is, institutionalising and professionalising the work of volunteer interpreters, with Yasmin and Mona pushing in that direction), and finally, making the interpreters' meeting a resource for the counsellors' reflection of their own work practices with the interpreters (agenda promoted by Anna).

Blended agendas, heterogeneous forms of institutionalisation

The blending of agendas remained an issue also in the planning and implementation of the following meetings organised for volunteers and interpreters. In preparation for the volunteers' meeting in January 2018, Sara explicitly requested a *comprehensive input* to be given to the participants linking this to the observation that, in her view, the quality of the interpreters' work had been decreasing at that time (fieldnotes, December 19, 2017). The linkage between an inclusion in practices of institutional reflexivity and the maintenance and fostering of 'the quality of work' suggested in Sara's request is noteworthy since apposite measures of professionalisation for interpreters do exist within the NGO as well, for instance, in the form of in-house trainings offered to volunteer interpreters.

Though differing from the meetings discussed above in important ways – they were organised by the internal *academy* of the NGO, a structure in which all in-house trainings were administered, and hence they were farther removed from the direct interference of single staff members and managers, and there was an emphasis on knowledge transfer – they contained a similar blending of agendas as found in the context of the volunteers' / interpreters' meetings.

The trainings of which I attended two – one in February 2018 at the end of my regular engagement with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and one more than a year later, in September 2019 – offered an enormous programme in only two hours: input and discussion around the history of the practice of interpreting, on established scholarly terminology, on professional techniques and procedures (e. g. for preparing oneself for the job), role plays and reflection, the NGO's interpreting guidelines as well as information on possibilities and opportunities for further professional qualification in Austria and interpreting work outside the NGO. Farzaneh, the instructor, was a woman of approximately my age, trained at university as an interpreter for English and French and enrolled in an MA programme of community interpreting. She had worked as a counsellor for the NGO before. Now that she had returned to her studies, she taught the occasional trainings for volunteer interpreters at the internal academy of the NGO.

At the training in September 2019 which I attended, the input part was followed by two role plays. For these role plays, one part of the group engaged in a scene which was based on scripted roles – a client with a specific (scripted) reason for seeking advice, a counsellor and an interpreter. The other part of the group formed the audience and was instructed by Farzaneh to observe the scene and take notes. After the scene had been played, the participants in the audience shared their observations which were then discussed. Following the first role play and discussion, a brief exercise was inserted where participants gathered in small groups to talk about their personal strategies for *setting boundaries* (such as 'getting some air', 'getting a glass of water', 'talking with the counsellor'). It was the second exercise which was interesting in terms of blending agendas, in this case, institutional and professional dimensions. Farzaneh who had played the client in the first role play, now played the counsellor. Two participants, both Arabic-speakers, played the client and the interpreter. Farzaneh left the room with the participant playing the client. After a while, they reentered together and

started to play the scene in a triad with the participant playing the interpreter (who had stayed in the room). After the 'client' had explained the concern of his visit, interpreted from Arabic to German by the 'interpreter', the 'counsellor' took a piece of paper, 'a letter' handed to her by the client, saying that she would make a copy of it for documentation and then make an appointment for a longer consultation on another day. She left the room and stayed away for a couple of minutes. The 'client' now started to repeatedly address the 'interpreter' with questions. I did not understand much of what was being said between the two, since the exchange happened in Arabic, but this was not necessary for me to understand the central point of this role play. What was being enacted here, was an enregistered behavioural type circulating widely in institutional discourse at the NGO. The construed behaviour consisted in the client either talking to the interpreter while the counsellor was not present or asking the interpreter not to translate but instead answer their questions themselves. Connected to this behaviour was a construed intentionality on the side of the client, namely striving to extract additional information or a favour from the interpreter²². This way of socialising between client and interpreter was usually construed as problematic and was, at least at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, sanctioned with rules, for instance, that the interpreter should not stay alone in a room with a client. And as I knew what this was, in principle, about, I was able to make sense of the 'interpreter's' reactions: at first he answered, then at a certain point he hesitated and looked at me – I was sitting in the audience observing. Breaking with the frame of the scene, he asked me whether he was allowed to answer. I shrugged, smiling, and he answered something – as I learned later, declining politely and instructing the 'client' to wait for the 'counsellor' to return (a likewise familiar reply, enacting an institutional script of good practice, which was later reiterated by Farzaneh's concluding comments in the discussion).

Farzaneh came back in, and closed the role play. Immediately, one of the participants raised their arm and said they wanted to say something: that this kind of meeting should happen once a week. Farzaneh replied that she was sorry that this or similar events happened so rarely, assuring that she would like to offer the course more often, but that this was not planned – thereby evoking

²² The construed vulnerability to such behaviour of certain individuals is dealt with more in detail in Chapter 6.

institutional constraints (cf. Anna's work in 'institutionalising' the interpreters' meeting). Her recommendation to the participants was to ask their teams (that is, the counsellors) whether they might participate in the team's supervision. She concluded that the training we were attending was so important because – as she had noticed – there was always an urge for talking. For many interpreters, she said, this was the only occasion to *sich auszusprechen* ('speak out').

After this digression from the established procedure, the group moved on to discuss concrete strategies for dealing with clients asking questions or talking to the interpreter in the absence of the counsellor which – so the presupposition – is both problematic and not infrequent. Farzaneh recommended to insist on the limits of one's role, explaining that one is *only the interpreter*, and telling the client to wait for the counsellor to come back. Or, as an alternative, to proactively start innocuous small talk. A concrete example discussed was that of a client requesting the interpreter's services outside of the institutional encounter: *You are such a good interpreter, would you accompany me to XY?* Farzaneh commented that it was up to everyone themselves to decide whether they wanted to hand out their phone numbers, but she added a differentiation: the situation for a volunteer working for an institution was different than that of a freelancer – for a volunteer who is not paid for their work it might be undesirable or even risky to have one's contact details circulating among clients, while for a freelancer, this was a desirable scenario.

I remember being a bit startled listening to Farzaneh's explanation which made of the issue – interpreters sharing their personal contact details with clients – a question of individual responsibility. As far as I knew – and the interpreting guidelines prove me right²³ – the NGO as a whole had clear and unequivocal

23 In the *Grundsätze für dolmetschgestützte Beratung* ('Principles for interpreter-supported counselling'), it says *DolmetscherInnen geben ihre Telefonnummer nicht an KlientInnen weiter und pflegen keinen privaten Kontakt mit KlientInnen (wenn privater Kontakt besteht, muss dies den BeraterInnen mitgeteilt werden)* ('Interpreters do not give their phone number to clients and do not maintain private contact with clients (if private contact [already] exists, this needs to be disclosed to the counsellor)'). In an additional document – entitled *Wie wir uns **professionelle Zusammenarbeit zwischen Berater*innen und Dolmetscher*innen** vorstellen und wünschen*: ('How we conceive of and expect [wish] **professional collaboration between counsellors and interpreters**'), underlining and boldface in the original) – which seems to spell out the principles set in the other document, it says, under the heading *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries'): *die private Telefonnummer des*der Dolmetschers*in soll nicht hergegeben/angeboten werden. Als Antwort kann auf eine solche Frage gesagt werden: "Ich darf meine Telefonnummer nicht geben, aber sie können mich*

rules in that respect: it was not considered good practice for an interpreter of the NGO to share their contact details with a client. Farzaneh's recommendations do not contradict the rule – after all, she said it is undesirable for a volunteer interpreter to have one's contact details out there – but she does not frame them primarily in terms of compliance with the NGO's regulations. Irrespective of whether there was a conscious distancing from the institutional frame or not, Farzaneh's framing places the interpreter as an ethical subject at the centre of the question – the institutional regulations become circumstances to be considered for the individual interpreter. This perspective is in line with the design of the training which is organised primarily around the *profession* of interpreting, its history, its techniques, and its ethics, than around the NGO as a workplace – which is of course not absent from the course, neither in terms of content nor as an organisational frame. Thereby, the training functions to displace – to recontextualise and resignify – the discourse of good practice from a merely institution-centred logic as we saw it represented in Jamal's sketch (Figure 5.3 on page 227) to notions of professionalism. The training certainly reproduced institutional order as well – for instance, the rules set by the management of the NGO were addressed and the training itself ultimately a measure for raising the quality of unpaid interpreting work. But in contrast to the interpreters' or volunteers' meetings discussed above, it provided an additional discursive frame for recontextualisation.

Professions are traditionally understood as defined by a set of criteria, among them their relative autonomy, especially in the ethical domain (cf. Banks 2004: 51), which relate, in a political dimension, to struggles about status and distinction among occupational groups (cf. Pfadenhauer 2003: 36–37). Seen from this perspective, the training can be understood as a project of professionalisation, as it bears a promise of relative autonomy within the constraints of the workplace by opening up a reflexive space for agency, namely to make decisions not only based on pre-established rules, but also on a reflexive understanding of one's work as part of something bigger (a historical tradition and a profession across

*über das Büro/den*die Berater*in erreichen*". ('the interpreter's private phone number shall not be given away/offered. As an answer to such questions one may say: "I am not allowed to give [you] my phone number, but you may reach me via the office/the counsellor"'). Both documents were handed out to the participants of the trainings in 2018 and 2019.

different domains) and calculated outcomes (as in the differentiation between volunteers and freelancers). However, that the institutional constraints remain very much operative is construable in the way in which the participant playing the interpreter dealt with the 'client's' questions during the role play just before: his question posed to me – whether it was *allowed* for him to answer – orients more to an institutional set of rules than to notions of professional conduct or calculating logics. His hesitation a sign of the Butlerian gap opened up by the recontextualising frame of the training, and his request for permission – directed at me, the only non-interpreter (with the dimension of racialisation entailed in this, see Chapter 6) in the room – the reproduction of institutional order. As we see, professional and institutional orders blend in this discussion at the training in a way that the professional aspects open up the structuring pervasiveness of the institutional order – in the training, the interpreter's 'role' is not just talked about with reference to the work at the NGO, but put in a wider, historical and contemporary context, and the participants are addressed as *interpreters* (and not just interpreters/volunteers of the NGO). But, as we see in Farzaneh's reply to the desire expressed for more meetings of the sort, this happens only within the constraints of institutional contingencies on which the offer of trainings, supervision²⁴ and alike depend. In comparison to the staff meeting which represents a regular and stable form of institutional reflexivity (within a larger apparatus of institutionalised reflective practice coherently organised on different levels of time-scale, see Section 5.2) in which employed counsellors engage, the institutionalisation of similar practices for interpreters is more sparse, irregular and heterogeneous, spanning across different formats, events and depending on different actors of the NGO. As much as the training observed may open up a gap, a liminal space for agency, this is still very much constrained by the institutional context. And as we see in the last example, access to institutionalised practices of reflexivity do not only promise access to knowledge, but also specific ways of embodying an ethical subject.

24 As I had learnt from Yasmin in November 2018 who managed the pool of interpreters at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, group supervision had not been well frequented in her view, so she had decided to offer one-to-one supervision on request.

Reflexivity in unequal labour relations

Why is it, as it appears, so difficult for practices of reflexivity for the interpreters / volunteers to become institutionalised at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, or for them to become included in the existing ones (staff meetings, supervision)? Especially given that there is no lack of initiatives of this sort? The answer seems to lie in the organisation of interpreting and volunteering at the periphery of institutional order.

This section spans the topic of *inequality in reflexivity* from dynamics of in- and exclusion connected to questions of access to social capital and to resources (especially knowledge and knowledge production), to processes of institutional and professional ordering. At the focus of this section were, in line with the previous sections of this chapter, institutionalised practices of reflexivity, that is practices in which institutional agents communicatively process institutional practices and subjectivities (work practice, 'roles', responsibilities etc.). The central question was how unequal access to these practices is regulated by the institution and how this is implicated with the reproduction of asymmetries in institutional order. This is because work at the counselling centre is based on the collaboration of counselling and interpreting staff across a divide of unequal labour relations where a paid core team of counsellors manages a rather instable set of individual, unpaid volunteer interpreters plus the two employed (paid) interpreters. The staff meeting as a regular and frequent institutionalised practice of reflexivity and the interpreters' / volunteers' meeting modeled after the staff meeting served as a case study.

The aim of this is to show how reflexivity as an emancipatory project – in the sense of critical reflexivity – does not only depend on the ideologies invested in the concrete practices, their social legibility and legitimacy as belonging to a register of 'reflective practices', but also to the conditions of access to the very practices. The case of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* shows that the specifics of institutional context – the way teams are organised in labour relations, hierarchies and asymmetries, but also agendas intersecting and blending in the institutional site – cannot be disregarded when considering the emancipatory potential of reflexivity in a given work setting. That is, the question is not only how forms of reflexivity are unequally valued and with what agenda the quality of reflexivity

is appropriated as a method, but also of who gets to do so in the first place, and why.

And moreover, as we have seen across the chapter, practices of reflexivity are implicated by and large in the reproduction of asymmetrical institutional order itself. The inclusive agenda of the interpreters' / volunteers' meeting, for instance, was from the planning phase on inseparably entangled with agendas of management and control, agendas which not only seek to reproduce the place of interpreting work in the asymmetrical institutional order, but also impede a structural change as they reproduce institutional order within the newly established space.

5.5 Discussion: A multi-layered approach to reflexivity

In this chapter, I have looked into how reflexivity can be understood as valued quality of practice and personhood. I have approached this question from three angles: (1) how a practice or a person become recognisable as reflective practices or subjects – reflective workers – respectively as the result of processes of enregisterment, processes which I explored in their connection with the emergence of a moral type or persona which I called the ethical subject of the reflective worker; (2) how the ethical subject of the reflective worker is re-produced as it is enacted in the performative mobilisation and evaluations of embodied semiotic repertoires (the *body image*), with the result of allowing for varying embodyings of reflexivity with varying degrees of agency for the subject; and (3) how a practice that materialises institutional reflexivity, the staff meeting, is entangled with asymmetries and inequalities inscribed in and by institutional order, making reflexivity not only a differentially valued quality, but also differentially accessible. The goal of this was to lay out an ethnographic description of the moral order at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* where being reflective and engaging in practices of reflexivity are highly valued. Moreover, the aim was to sketch an understanding of reflexivity that neither postulates 'good' and 'bad' ways of doing reflexivity (what I called *critical* or *professional reflexivity* in Section 2.4) nor that rests with the idea that reflexivity has no principle value (that it is in fact 'ordinary'). A central notion for this understanding was what I called after Hirschauer (2014:

187) different *aggregate states* of reflexivity. The concept points to different materialisations of reflexivity – and offers an anchor point for exploring processes of valuation, embodiment and unequal distribution. For an analytical understanding of these processes, I thus argue to understand reflexivity as a layered concept – a quality that acquires different degrees of “social hardness” (Hirschauer 2014: 187) in processes of enregisterment. In other words, reflexivity can be understood as a *quale* – a construable quality which consists of something bending back onto itself – which can be taken up as a sign (a *qualisign*), acquiring indexical meanings, for instance, of fairness, political consciousness, self-critique and professionalism, that can be taken up and negotiated in discourse, reinterpreted as inherent features of practices and personhood. Hence, I argue to study reflexivity not just as an ordinary principle, or as a specific technique, but especially the institutionally regimented ways in which it emerges as a meaningful quality of practice and personhood, the ideological projects invested in it and its social consequences.

The larger project to which this kind of analysis shall contribute is to de-mystify the notion of reflexivity. The analysis can be read a note of caution against the celebration of reflexivity in professional practice, joining previous sociolinguistic work in this vein (Bulcaen 2016; Del Percio 2022; C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi 2006). My goal is not to do away with models of reflexive professionalism such as that of the reflective practitioner by privileging an ethnomethodological notion of reflexivity (or other notions which emphasise ‘ordinariness’ of reflexive semiosis) – as proposed by C. Hall, Slembrouck & Sarangi (2006). Nor is it to propose an alternative model of reflective practice – there are more competent (social work) scholars to do so. Rather, my analysis in this chapter can provide an awareness for the multi-layered social situatedness of what it means to *be reflect/xive* or to *do reflect/xivity*. The above analysis contributes to such an understanding by showing that (1) reflexivity can be understood as a valued quality of practice where specific forms of talking are positively evaluated and ascribed efficiency, and that (2) reflective practice (as the questioning of one’s own practice and the conditions of one’s own practice) sets in motion an apparatus of scaling moral responsibilities. In the case of the discussion surrounding the emergency list analysed above, it allowed to scale up responsibility, distributing the burden of decision-making among the team, but also forced a scaling down, producing

ethical subjects through interpellation. Moreover, (3) by understanding the embodiment of the quality of reflexivity as already formed by social evaluation, namely as a resignification of social order on the level of the bodily subject, I show that reflexive mobilisations of the self which are ubiquitous in a communicative workplace as the counselling centre are not equally valued in all subjects and thus do not guarantee agency to every worker to the same degree. In terms of agency, the embodiment of reflexivity is not just a resource but also a constraint. (4) As to the inclusivity of reflexivity in practice, it is relevant to look at the institutional conditions under which these practices take place. This refers both to the unequal access to institutionalised practices of reflexivity as resourceful infrastructures, with the respective gatekeeping mechanisms and underlying unequal relationships between the people involved (or not), and to the agendas which are potentially boosted or curbed by these unequal relationships which are set in institutional order and thus not easily modified, but instead have the potential to perpetuate asymmetries.

These different aspects illustrate the stakes of individual subjects navigating institutionalised forms of reflexivity. They present a perhaps somewhat sombre picture of reflexivity in refugee support work professionalism – indeed the analysis in this chapter does foreground how the quality of reflexivity is often connected to the reproduction of the organisation by inscribing moral, professional and institutional order into practices and subjectivities. It is, in this sense, institutional work (Lawrence et al. 2009). Change and disruption do not prevail in the analyses, even though they are part of what people invest in and do. This should not give the impression that the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is a place where political or self-critical spirit is lacking or where organisational structures are totalising and oppressive – this is not the case. But under the political-economic conditions of refugee support work in Austria, the pressure on resources both for the clients – the scarcity of housing in this case – and for the labour force – the precariousness of the workplaces in general and of the mostly unpaid language work in particular –, provide a context in which only so much is possible. In this context, professional reflexivity helps to deal with these large-scale political-economic problems as they percolate to problems of decision-making on an institutional level. This may help to partially prevent an undesired reproduction of government policies understood to be unjust – in Alena's words *I don't want to*

even start this discussion who is more poor. Nah we don't do that; the new government is already doing this on our behalf (from Example 5.4, Lines 045–056). But more than a real solution, the problem is downscaled, displaced to ethical questioning on the level of the team or individuals which can both act as a relief in form of an ethical valve or increase moral pressure.

This chapter shed light on a specific form of communicative work that I have described as emblematic of the counselling staff. With the next chapter, I will turn to the language worker as the 'occupational Other' (Tipton 2016) of the counsellor in a further exploration of the language part of work (Boutet 2001, 2008) of refugee support work.

6 Borderlands of professionalism: Linguistic labour

6.1 Linguistic labour and the occupational Other

The social function of the Good Immigrant turned Interpreter is twofold. On the one hand, I show the new arrivals from Iran or Afghanistan what great prospects they have if they adapt and assimilate and learn the language: “Chances are very slim you’ll ever become a therapist or a medical doctor, but you *might* become an interpreter. If you work hard enough.”

On the other hand, I’m constantly proving to white healthcare or welfare professionals what a useful immigrant I am. Only as an interpreter – enabling the white professional to work with immigrants – is my presence as a person of color legitimate. (Jebelli & Kanobana 2021: 102)

Upon my first meeting with Sara (April 21, 2016), the head of staff, I asked her about the role of language and interpreting for the counselling services offered by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. I took my notes: A considerable part of the encounters with clients happens with an interpreter. There is, moreover, a counsellor – *Sara is talking about Yasmin, I shall meet her soon* – who does counselling in Arabic as well. There had also been a Farsi speaking colleague, but he is no more on the team (*although I shall meet him soon too, at the occasional social gatherings; he now works for a team of mobile social counsellors in the same organisation*). In all other instances, both interpreter-mediated or not, counselling is carried out either in English or in German¹. Apart from one of them, all interpreters are volunteers. Sara wants to acquire funding for at least one more as soon as they are *anerkannt* –

1 During my time at the counselling centre, there were occasions where Sara and Yasmin would stress that this applied to Yasmin and other Arabic-speaking colleagues as well – they did not do exclusively counselling in Arabic and this had a certain significance for the way boundaries were being drawn among types of actors, practices and linguistic resources.

‘recognised’, meaning that they will gain a legal status which allows to access paid employment. A list of interpreters is being kept on the level of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* as well as on the level of the local subunit of the NGO. The interpreters are mostly recruited from amongst the clients. There is a range of problems with interpreted encounters. *Arbeiten mit Dolmetscher*innen ist auch anstrengend* – ‘working with interpreters is demanding as well’, so she told me: There is a lack in expertise – though there is also a volunteer who is trained in simultaneous interpreting, particularly appreciated by Sara, as he does not merely translate, but also ‘gives feedback’ and explains his interpretations. Not all counsellors are able to work with simultaneous interpretation, some are irritated by it. There are issues of role – *sie fangen an, selbstständig zu beraten* (‘they start to do the counselling on their own’) – as well as role conflicts – for a volunteer who is looking for an apartment themselves, Sara sees a difficulty in having to convey a successful *matching* between a client and accommodation offer from the data base. In addition, it needs to be made clear right from the start that interpreters cannot expect any advantages in terms of accommodation offers (but she will tell me later that they nevertheless try to help them, internally).

It is almost a truism that counselling in refugee support cannot function without the labour of *interpreters, translators, language mediators, language brokers, or speakers of Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, German, Pashto, Somali...* This statement, however, is everything but banal. The picture offered to me by Sara at the occasion of our first meeting gives a perspective on faultlines and boundaries – for instance, between institutional and professional categories of actors, connected to practices and linguistic and material resources – as well as of evaluations and notions of legitimacy which reoccur in my later ethnographic engagement with different actors on site. With her account of how ‘language’ is managed in the encounter between the counsellor and the client, she formulates a *language Other* which is differentiated from her origo as counsellor and manager, and from counsellors more in general. The self-and-other construction in her account builds on narrated references to mutual perceptions, expectations, differentially distributed knowledge and formulations of legitimacy in practice and role alignment – what Tipton (2016), in her work on interprofessional relationships between social workers and (free-lance) interpreters, calls the construction of *the occupational Other*. However, other than in the context investigated by Tipton (2016), the

boundaries between the two positions at stake – counsellor and interpreter – are not neatly separable: on the one hand, there is an Arabic-speaking counsellor who is ascribed a similar function as the interpreter, on the other hand, there is an apprehension towards the idea that interpreters might transgress their role and do counselling². Crucial for the self-and-other construction is the differential positioning of the subjects with regard to categories of ‘language’ – their being *language*d – where language, or rather speakerhood-of, is mobilised as an interpellation for certain subject positions and as a site of distinction between subjects (cf. Barakos 2016: 364; see also the notions of the linguistic repertoire as a dimension of subjectivation, B. Busch 2017b, and of *Lingualismus* ‘lingualism’, Dorostkar 2013, cf. also the notion of *linguaging*, Möller & Jørgensen 2009). Central to this chapter is hence the question which Selves and Others are constructed in the concrete context of refugee support work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Taken as an exemplary site, a closer look into the dynamics of differentiation promises to yield an account of social work in present-day, ‘post-migrant’ Austria: this notion is mobilised by ogsa AG Migrationsgesellschaft (2021a: 11–12) in their introduction to an edited volume on the topic in order to point to a context for social work in which phenomena of migration and displacement are both a generalised condition of society in Austria and a site of problematisation and othering.

Looking into construed ‘language

2 There are other important differences between the context of Tipton’s study and mine, for instance concerning the forms of labour relationship which are at issue: independent free lance interpreters which engage with different stakeholders vs. volunteers and employed workers who become ‘interpreters’ within the organisation.

marked by ‘language’ vs. not, indexicals of professional and moral personhood recur too and are, in the process, being reconfigured – as we shall see in the course of this chapter. The linguistic labourer as *the occupational Other* (Tipton 2016) of the counsellor thus forms a fractioned and scaled picture in the case of refugee support in Austria which cannot be reduced to ‘interprofessional’ dynamics between interpreters and counsellors³. For the fractioned and scaled understanding of this boundary I have chosen the spatial metaphor of *borderlands*, a liminal space (cf. Thomassen 2015: 48) not just of one in-between position but of many. But there is also a more provocative dimension to it, implying wider scalability: in her analysis of asylum seekers’ experiences of borders and boundaries on their way to and in Austria, Lehner (2022) indeed attests a recursion of borders and boundaries in the asylum seekers’ trajectories across different levels of scale and in different sites – lived experience, positioning practices of involved actors, and institutional arrangements, including those characterising institutionalised refugee support work such as in the case of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Importantly, these processes of differentiation are linked to the way in which the institution of refugee support, and the counselling centre in particular, regiment the “trajectories of resources and actors” (Heller 2011: 10, *emph. i. O.*), i.e. to the circulation and distribution of resources, access to infrastructures, valorised practices and material returns in the metaphorical ‘borderlands’ of refugee support work.

At the heart of this chapter lies the question of how forms of ‘linguistic labour’ (cf. Ahamer 2013; Boutet 2008; Cavanaugh 2016; Duchêne 2011; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013) are delimited, regimented and ascribed value at the *Wohnberatung Wien*, understood as an exemplary site for organised refugee support work in Austria. I use the term ‘linguistic labour’ as an umbrella term for the various ways in which linguistic repertoires (*sensu* B. Busch 2017b) are mobilised

3 Important work has been undertaken in interpreting studies on interprofessional dynamics between interpreters and other occupations (Inghilleri 2005), specifically social workers (Tipton 2016). This, however, presupposes a rather clear separation of institutional positions – Tipton (2016: 470), for instance, mentions explicitly that most interpreters in her field of study were freelancers who tended to work for a range of different organisations and institutions. Inghilleri (2005: 75) mentions a blurring of boundaries between clients and interpreters, but only with regards to a biographical dimension (interpreters at asylum hearings with a refugee background). See also the study of linguistic difference in social work practice in Harrison (2009).

as resources in labour relationships. These labour relationships are emergent from and contingent to the political-economic conditions under which the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* operates, and they crucially include both forms of paid as well as unpaid work⁴. The process of mobilising linguistic repertoires in labour relationships comes with metalinguistic discourses, that is, discourses on ‘languages’ as objects or discrete systems (‘Arabic’/‘German’, see Urciuoli 2016), practice (‘interpreting’/‘speaking Farsi’) and a diacritic in categories of actors (‘Arabic-speaker’/‘interpreter’/‘counsellor’) which reinscribe difference and value across levels of scale (sensu Gal & Irvine 2019).

In this chapter, thus, I want to map and explore linguistic labour as the metaphorical ‘borderlands’ of refugee support professionalism in an organisational site in present-day ‘post-migrant’ Austria (ogsa AG Migrationsgesellschaft 2021a): who engages in which forms of linguistic labour in the organisational context, in which ways, under which conditions and why? Which are the discursive logics that regiment various forms of linguistic labour? Which boundaries are drawn among forms of linguistic labour – as well as other forms of labour, counselling, for instance – by whom and why? How is the making of boundaries between forms of labour connected to the making of differences between subjects? How does one become a *language*d worker, a worker for whom language becomes a sign of difference and recognisability (Urciuoli 2016)? And, which orders of social difference and structures of social inequality are articulated in these subjectivities? In order to approach these questions, I examine the positioning of different actors involved – volunteer interpreters, counsellors who speak a ‘clients’ language’ and the staff as a collective – towards the discourses on language, labour and professionalism which intersect in and circulate in and beyond the nexus of the institutional, and more specifically in the organisational, space (cf. R. Scollon & S. W. Scollon 2004: 19 and Heller 2011: 9–12). While the empirical focus lies on the specifics of the organisational site, the analytical cases

4 I use the term *labour* in both cases when the focus lies on the economic dimension of the concerned practices in line with a distinction that traces back to Marxist usages of the term (cf. Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013). Prominently, feminist critiques of Marxist concepts of work/labour (Beer 1984; Dalla Costa 1977 [1972]; Dalla Costa & James 2018; Federici 2004; Toupin 2018), but also research works on volunteering (Allan 2019; Handy & Mook 2011; J. Hassemer 2020; R. Taylor 2015) have pointed to the economic dimensions of forms of unpaid work (cf. also Glucksmann 2005). See more about this below.

are situated within larger processes and dynamics of social differentiation and politics of inequality, citizenship and racialisation (cf. among others Flubacher & Yeung 2016; Kanobana 2022; Khan 2019; Rosa 2019; Vitorio preprint) as they unfold on different levels of scale within the organisation and the institution of refugee support. Tracing the positioning of volunteers and counsellors towards boundaries and differences delimiting 'language' as an object and practice in the workplace across different levels of scale within and beyond the site, I argue, exposes the fractal recursion (Gal 2012, 2016a; Gal & Irvine 2019; Irvine & Gal 2000; Reyes 2017) of a languaged Other in relation to which subjectivities and practices in refugee support work are articulated.

In the following, I want to give an overview of focal theoretical concepts which guide the analysis in this chapter, starting with conceptualisations of language and labour/work, 'the language part of work' (*la part langagière du travail*, Boutet 2001), and what I call *linguistic labour* and *languaged labour/work*, building on Heller (2003), Boutet (2008, 2012) and Duchêne (2009, 2011, 2019). I then expand the relevant concepts beyond notions of waged labour through a reference to feminist critics of the Marxist concept of labour (Bakker 2007; Beer 1984; Dalla Costa 1977 [1972]; Dalla Costa & James 2018; Federici 2004). As complementary concepts in my understanding of processes of subjectivation, difference and inequality I introduce the doubled notion of precariousness/precarity (Bourdieu 1998b; Butler 2004a; Caraher & Reuter 2017; J. Hassemer & Flubacher 2020; J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020; Lorey 2012; Shulman 2011; Spitzmüller & Bendl 2020) which helps me to theorise bodily and economic interdependency and inequalities of speaking and labouring subjects in a neoliberalising welfare state. The introductory section closes with an overview of the rest of the chapter.

The language part of work, linguistic labour and languaged labour

The mobilisation of linguistic repertoires as resources of labour centrally involves processes of (mis-)recognition (Heller & Duchêne 2016: 152): whether and to what extent linguistic (or communicative) practices are conceived of as 'work' (or 'labour') and linguistic repertoires as 'resources' for work/labour is the matter of situated language-ideological constructions varying across and within different workplaces and labour relationships, as well as in a historical dimension (Boutet

2008; Duchêne 2011; Heller 2003). In her historical work (building on, among others, Cohen 1956), Boutet (2001, 2008) uses the term *la part langagière du travail*, ‘the language part of work’, to conceptualise the differential ideological and economic valorisation of linguistic practice from industrial work in factories to present-day call centers. For instance, whether speaking multiple languages is conceived of as a learnt skill or rather an innate talent of an individual, or a ‘naturally’ occurring resource of a territory, makes a difference for the economic valorisation of a person’s linguistic repertoire (Heller 2011: 170–172, see also Duchêne & Heller 2012; Flubacher 2012; Heller 2005). This language-ideological question has an effect not only on whether and to what extent (as well as by whom) certain linguistic practices and repertoires are (mis)recognised and (mis)represented as valuable, but also, crucially for whom this ‘pays off’ (Heller & Duchêne 2016: 152, see also Duchêne 2011). In other words, the question is whether someone is able to derive capital from their labour – be it in pecuniary form or other forms of material remuneration (the Bourdieusian *economic capital*, Bourdieu 1986: 281), access to and strengthening of social networks and ties (*social capital*, Bourdieu 1986: 286) or certified work experience (*institutionalised cultural capital*, sensu Bourdieu 1986: 282–284). In the case of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, the stakes (and the expected returns) of what I call linguistic labour are different for a volunteer interpreter as compared to a counsellor who happens to speak Arabic, and again different, for instance, from a sibling or acquaintance accompanying a client to an encounter with a counsellor. My analysis will principally deal with the first two positions in the institutional order as the latter remained little accessible to me as an ethnographer.

The term *language worker* (*travailleur du langage*, Boutet 2001, 2012; Duchêne 2019)⁵ has been proposed to designate those who engage in linguistic labour. As emphasised in Duchêne (2019), the term was coined as a critical notion, emphasising the exploitative nature of specific forms of language-related work, especially in historically situated contexts of capitalist expansion⁶, and with a specific focus on the service sector as a site of an ideological continuity in the

5 With *parole-d’œuvre* (Duchêne 2009) and *wordforce* (Heller 2010a), similar terms have been proposed. While these terms refer to a range of similar phenomena of exploited speakerhood, Thurlow (2019a: 3) proposes the term *wordsmith* for more professionalised ‘elite’ forms of language work.

6 The term thus carries, at least in some works, a time-diagnostic dimension, see for instance

regimentation of labour force as compared to industrialism's factory work (such as a taylorised organisation of work processes, cf. Boutet 2001; Duchêne 2011). However, as these works have also shown, there is an ambivalence in the value ascribed to linguistic practices as 'work' across different sites (cf. also Duchêne 2019; J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020): for instance, Boutet (2012: 221–224) notes that workers in call centres often present a high degree of skill and education and may see themselves more as 'white-collar workers' than as standing in a continuity with taylorised, exploited factory work. Heller & Duchêne (2016: 152) cite the emblematic case of a hotel maid who translates an email for a Polish client which helps the business of the hotel, but does not lead to extra remuneration for the maid. These ambivalences – between prestige and invisibilisation, distinction and exploitation – are actually shared by a wider array of workers who "perform language-centered activities and display language-related skills" (Duchêne 2019: 24) as part of their work (cf. also Thurlow 2019a). To unfold the critical potential of the term in the context of this ethnography, it is thus necessary to look deeper into the different relationships and conditions under which linguistic labour is carried out. As I emphasised above, this, in turn, requires a look beyond waged labour, especially given the specifics of the site where linguistic labour is carried out in heterogeneous labour relationships.

Work, labour and social reproduction

As mentioned above in this chapter, I understand the construction of difference and Otherness in its material situatedness – adding a political-economic angle to the semiotic analysis by looking into how the construction of boundaries between speaking subjects, linguistic practices and objects relate to the circulation of resources and phenomena of in- and exclusion (cf. Del Percio, Flubacher, et al. 2017: 69; see also Heller, Pietikäinen, et al. 2018: 1). Crucially, I thus consider 'work' – or, for that matter, *labour* – not simply as a feature of the context of these processes, but as an analytical dimension in itself (cf. Del Percio 2021: 1022–1023) which allows me to look into the production, reproduction and circulation of values. Scholars of linguistic labour have raised not only the question of how language

Boutet (2012) who frames the language worker in the title as an *emblematic figure of late capitalism*.

repertoires and practices become part of the labour process as resources and the production of (surplus) value, but also of how workers are constructed as (and, in ethnographic terms, *made*) labouring, languaged, racialised, classed and gendered subjects (Del Percio 2018a, 2022; Flubacher 2020a,b; Lorente 2018; Urciuoli 2016) – thus (re-)producing difference in multiple dimensions. Adopting labour as an analytical dimension thus goes beyond a conceptual focus on language as a ‘resource’ in the workplace, as it offers a lens on subjectivation processes with ‘language’ working both as medium and object of such constructions.

This perspective comes with a range of theoretical and conceptual choices: I use the analytical term *labour* whenever I focus on the (political-)economic dimension of work practices (cf. Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013: 176) in the broadest sense, that is, (1) not merely the ‘productive’ (as in the provision of services), but also the reproductive dimension of work (cf. Marx 2019 [1867]: 534) as proposed by feminist critics of Marxist thought (Bakker 2007; Beer 1984; Dalla Costa 1977 [1972]; Dalla Costa & James 2018; Federici 2004) including, for instance, the reproduction of labour force and of the institution, and, (2) not merely including waged forms of work, but also unpaid forms as they pertain to subjects’ economic lives – their practices of making a living (Narotzky & Besnier 2014: 5) – as proposed, for instance, by scholars of volunteer work (see R. Taylor 2015, drawing on Glucksmann 2005)⁷. In the reception of Marx’s œuvre, and more generally in sociology of work, labour has long been equated with waged, ‘productive’⁸ labour – which is, however, a rather specific form of work, relevant under specific

7 In scholarly discourse, the two English terms *work* and *labour* have come to designate conceptual differentiations and nuances which however – no wonder given their more complex histories of usage (see, for instance, Frayssé 2014; Williams 1983a,b) – are not consistent across different schools of thought. Among them is the prominent Marxist usage (Frayssé 2014; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013) in the English language – the German source text (Marx 2019 [1867]) operates with a number of conceptual distinctions and tensions such as productive vs. non-productive work, a general, anthropological concept of work and a particular concept of alienated labour under capitalist conditions of capitalism etc. (see Karlsson & Månson 2017; Voß 2018), but there is no usage of a single lexical binary as there tends to be in English receptions. I tend to consider a strict lexical distinction as only little productive: Voß (2018), in his extensive reading of Marx’s works contrasted with alternative conceptualisations such as in Arendt (2003 [1967]) as well as more recent developments in the field, demonstrates the epistemic productivity of research which broadens and breaks categorial boundaries of what counts as ‘work’/‘labour’ and what does not, under given social and historical conditions (Voß 2018: 64–65). In a similar vein, my usage of the binary is, though loosely based on Marxist usage, informed by works who aim to amplify and transgress its boundaries.

8 The term productive labour carries the capitalist perspective in which work is only productive

historical conditions under which the discipline flourished – a conceptualisation which thus carries a rather specific perspective on these conditions as well, namely one that is corporatist, capitalist, androcentric and eurocentric (cf. Voß 2018: 22–24). Feminist critics have been arguing since the 1970s that this focus is inadequate to understand how capitalism operates – namely as it disregards *reproductive* work – that is work which reproduces the labour power, such as childbearing and rearing, or housework (Beer 1984; Dalla Costa 1977 [1972]; Federici 2004), arguing that in fact, capitalist wage labour crucially depends on unpaid reproductive labour and the appropriation of otherwise ‘free’ resources such as common land (Federici 2004: 3–4, 75). Building on these historical arguments, reproduction has become a focus in the study of work/labour (cf. Bakker 2007): that is, on the one hand, the ways in which the regimentation of work/labour is involved in the reproduction of difference and inequality in society and, on the other, the ways in which this reproduction of difference and inequality serves capitalist accumulation (Federici 2004: 63–64). In her seminal publication, Federici (2004: 61–115) argues that the (re-)production of difference among the labour force, the devaluation of certain types of work (for instance, housework), the exclusion from waged labour of certain segments of the population, women in particular, and the violent appropriation of ‘free’ resources including (women’s) bodies and land (which are ‘free’ from the capitalist’s perspective, not from the worker’s), were and continue to be crucial to the functioning of capitalist economic systems by *primitive accumulation* (thereby critically expanding the notion of *ursprüngliche Accumulation* [coined as a translation of Adam Smith’s *previous accumulation*] used in Marx (2019 [1867]: 674–717), cf. Federici 2004: 12):

As I have argued, the power-difference between women and men and the concealment of women’s unpaid-labor under the cover of natural inferiority, have enabled capitalism to immensely expand the “unpaid part of the working day,” and use the (male) wage to accumulate women’s labor; in many cases, they have also served to deflect class antagonism into an antagonism between men and women. Thus, primitive accumulation has been above all an accumulation of differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions, which

when it produces more than needed for subsistence of the worker themselves (*surplus value*) (cf. Karlsson & Månson 2017: 111–112).

have alienated workers from each other and even from themselves. (Federici 2004: 115)

Seen from this perspective, unpaid and paid forms of labour are not only inter-dependent in peoples' economic lives, but they are also entangled in economic processes of larger scale (cf. Glucksmann 2005; Overgaard 2019; R. Taylor 2015). The (re-)production of difference among labouring subjectivities, or their (mis-)recognition as labourers in the first place thus can be contextualised in structures of inequality of higher scale. Previous work on volunteering has pointed to (moral and legal) *citizenship* and *the state* as relevant categories of analysis (see for instance Allan 2019; Muehlebach 2012; Yap et al. 2010). As elaborated in the sections to follow, the status of asylum seeker and refugee crucially structure the way linguistic labour is carried out at the counselling centre as they come with different degrees of in- and exclusion from the nationalised labour market. The ethnographic account allows to make visible how such forms of inequality and exclusion are articulated in, as well as sustained and contested by, the positioning of subjects at the counselling centre. A salient dimension of these positioning practices consists of constructions of precariousness and precarity (cf. Spitzmüller & Bendl 2020: 13–15) a field of indexicalities (Jaffe 2016) constituted by ascriptions of affective, moral, and material vulnerability, (inter-)dependency and insecurity. Throughout my data, these are mobilised in self- and Other-positionings and, as we shall see, consequential in the (self-)regimentation of linguistic labour force.

Precariousness and precarity

Precarity or *precarisation*⁹ has been described by Bourdieu (1998b: 99–100) as a form of political domination serving capitalist exploitation of labour which is based on insecure living conditions in certain segments of society and – crucially – on a more generalised *experience* of insecurity which also touches those not directly affected by what he describes as 'objective insecurity': "[l]'insécurité objective fonde une insécurité subjective généralisée qui affecte aujourd'hui, au

9 The term has also been translated as *casualisation* and *job insecurity* in the English version of the text (for instance Bourdieu 1998a: 82). Because of parallel conceptualisations in Lorey (2012) who uses the terms *Prekarität* and *Prekarisierung* I use the term 'precarity' as translation for the French *précarité*.

cœur d'une économie hautement développée, l'ensemble des travailleurs et même ceux qui ne sont pas ou pas encore directement frappés" (Bourdieu 1998b: 96–97) ('[o]bjective insecurity gives rise to a generalized subjective insecurity which is now affecting all workers in our highly developed economy [even those who are not or not yet directly affected, JH]' (translation in Bourdieu 1998a: 83)). In a similar vein, this mode of domination (Bourdieu 1998a: 85) has been theorised by Lorey (2012) as 'governmental precarisation' (*gouvernementale Prekarisierung*, cf. Lorey 2011 for the English translation), bringing together notions of economically conceived precarity and Foucaultian notion of governmentality (Foucault 2004), as well as an ontological notion of *precariousness* drawing on Butler (2004a, 2009). Butler (2004a) uses the term *precariousness* to denote a shared condition of all forms of life consisting in a generalised social-and-bodily (inter-)dependency and existential fragility (which already figures in her understanding of social (intel)legibility as a dependence on the Other in a potentially injurious scene of address, cf. the notion of *linguistic vulnerability*, Butler 1997a: 1, see Shulman 2011). In Butler's usage of the concept, 'ontological' *precariousness* and the politically conceived notion of precarity are inseparable: while *precariousness* is a shared condition of all life – conceived in terms of bodily survival, but also of social existence –, not all lives are valued and supported to the same degree and sheltered from the risks and injuries they are prone to incur, or recognised at all (Butler 2009: 25, see Spitzmüller & Bendl 2020: 12; J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020: 141). Central for Butler (2009: 13–15, 26) is an ethical and political argument that hinges on the question whether a life is recognised as worth being saved, supported, protected, grieved etc. According to this argument, acknowledging *precariousness* as a shared condition of life and differential exposure to it – that is precarity – is, while not an automatic step towards recognition and reduction of violence and inequality, a way of enabling lives to become perceivable, allowing successively to displace norms governing the recognisability of subjects (see Butler 2009: 3–4). This, so she argues, can inform "progressive or left politics in ways that continue to exceed and traverse the categories of identity" (Butler 2009: 3) which impose orders of difference and exclusion onto life.

The situated effects of discourses of *precariousness*/precarity in a specific context – here in the context of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* – constitute an empirical object to be explored. Thus, coming back to difference and inequalities inscribed

in the (re-)production of languaged occupational Others, I was indeed able to observe a negotiation and reflective processing of languaged subjects' precariousness / precarity in metapragmatic discourse. In order to gain an understanding of the situated logics and effects of discourses of precariousness / precarity, I look into constructed notions of embodied precariousness and structural precarity, to understand not only how they are interactionally negotiated, for instance as moral stances, and drawn upon in positioning practices (cf. Spitzmüller & Bendl 2020: 13–15), but also, in ethnographic terms, how they serve as rationales in the distribution of resources and processes of in- and exclusion. The metapragmatics of negotiated precariousness / precarity in situated discursive practice thus has an ethical dimension in the Butlerian sense, but the concrete social consequences of such discourses remain an empirical question. Finally, by re-scaling the analytical application of the notion of precariousness / precarity, I formulate the discursive practices themselves (in which precariousness / precarity are being negotiated) in terms of precariousness and precarity, as I seek to work out which bodies are left vulnerable participants to these practices, how and why, and which material insecurities are being mobilised and / or reproduced by them.

Outline of the remaining chapter

In order to theorise the occupational Other, the following sections zoom in on different aspects of linguistic labour at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. In a first step, I look into the attribution of social value to (linguistic) volunteer labour, by engaging with volunteers' narrative positioning practices with regards to their work trajectories and by contextualising these trajectories in the institutional orders regimenting them (Section 6.2). In this section, I thus use the volunteers' narrative positioning practices as a window onto larger-scale political-economic conditions of linguistic labour in refugee support with a specific focus on volunteer labour carried out by asylum seekers. In what follows, I shift perspective and focus on the positioning of languaged counsellors. On the one hand, I look into the ways in which they are constructed as resourceful, yet vulnerable, precarious workers, and on the other, how this connects to processes of boundary-making between counselling and interpreting work as two distinct workers' positionalities (Section 6.3). In a last step, I look into how counsellors not only discursively construct

the volunteer workers' linguistic labour force, but thereby also regiment and exert control over it, though with limited agency (Section 6.4). I locate the effects of such positioning practices not only in the construction of languaged Others but also in the construction of professional Selves. Taking up this argument in the final section, I discuss the findings of the preceding analyses to get an understanding of the construction of social work professional Others and Selves and of the role played by linguistic labour in these processes (Section 6.5).

6.2 Trajectories in volunteer interpreting

John, from Syria, recognised refugee, trained in simultaneous interpreting as part of his studies of English linguistics at university. Left the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* after having worked there for some time as a volunteer interpreter because he did not get a paid job. Doesn't want to work in the asylum sector anymore. Moved on, participated in an advanced training for English teachers, but couldn't find a job as a teacher: he is not a *native speaker*. Multiple jobs in restaurant kitchens.

Jamal, from Afghanistan, one negative *Bescheid* (decision in the asylum procedure) after a long waiting period. Worked as an English and Computer teacher, and as an interpreter for the British and American troops before his flight. Volunteer interpreter at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and for the City of Vienna. Successfully started a business later on and secured his right to stay in Austria.

Jaleh, from Iran, still waiting for her asylum interview, studies pharmacology in Vienna. Volunteer interpreter at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* beside her studies. Wants to lead a pharmacy after her studies and become involved in work for women's rights.

Hakob, Armenian from Syria, recognised refugee, used to work as business man. First a volunteer interpreter, then became one of the two employed interpreters of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Worked additionally in a basic care facility for unaccompanied minors. Found his way back into his business working with the same category of products as back in Syria.

Emran, from Afghanistan, one negative *Bescheid*. Don't know much about him and his background. Volunteer allotted to the *Recherche-Eck* because his German and English were not considered good enough for interpreting. When there were no clients for him to work with, he used to open his

notebook and ask me about the meaning of words he had come across the preceding week. He rarely gets assigned clients.

These five people represent only a fraction of the volunteer interpreters' workforce at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Their number is fluctuating and the languages they cover as well – among them Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Pashto, Somali. Why do they do this kind of work? What is at stake for them? What does the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* mean for them? These short sketches of five *trajectories* (Heller 2011: 10) of people intersecting in the institutional space of the counselling centre give us a first insight on where to start looking for answers: All but John and Jamal had neither professional training nor experience in the field of interpreting before they started the job, but it was John – the only one with formal training – who was not able to secure himself a paid job in the field. Apart from John and Hakob who were granted asylum before and during their time as volunteers, their volunteer engagement fell in a time of their lives, for some of them still ongoing, where their right to live and work in Austria was not secured. The volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* for them is only a transient phase of their working life trajectories (cf. Akan Ellis 2013) – apart from Jaleh who projects herself as a volunteer beside her work in the future too. They are, apart from Jaleh, young and middle aged men – as is the case for the majority of volunteer interpreters at the counselling centre.

Volunteering is not a uniform phenomenon, but embedded in people's practices of making a living. In her work drawing on the notion of *total organisation of labour* (Glucksmann 2005), R. Taylor (2015) looks into unpaid work both in terms of how people organise their economic lives and in terms how different forms of unpaid work are organised historically (for instance, unpaid engagement in charities as upper-class forms of unpaid work *versus* unpaid work in trade unions, cf. R. Taylor 2015: 489–491). The case of an integrative cooperative in Italy presented by Del Percio (2018b) shows how in order to function under the political-economic conditions – specifically the successful participation in the market for organic farming products sold by the cooperative on the one hand and in the welfare system on the other – depends on the extensive recruitment of unpaid volunteer labour. In this section, I want to look into volunteering as embedded in its specific political-economic context, that is, the restricted access

to paid work and a permanent right to settle in Austria for the volunteers. This is because, unlike in other studies of volunteering in refugee support work where volunteers and migrants are conceived of as separate groups (Han-Broich 2012; Salmi-Niklander & Laine 2017), the volunteers under concern are, as asylum seekers, themselves part of the marginalised group targeted by the NGOs they work for¹⁰. Relevant here are two phenomena described in the literature on volunteer work: the phenomenon of state-induced volunteering, where individuals who are disadvantaged on the labour market are incentivised or otherwise induced to do volunteer work (Allan 2019; De Waele & Hustinx 2019); and that of a retreating welfare state which is accompanied by the fostering of active citizenship, that is, volunteers who fill the gaps of what was once paid work (cf. Allan 2019; Eliasoph 2011; Muehlebach 2012). Volunteering at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* plays out at the intersection of these processes: as we shall see, the volunteering refugee in refugee support work is an active-citizen-to-be (cf. J. Hassemer 2020; Mansouri & Kirpitchenko 2016; Yap et al. 2010), as they fill in a void in the welfare system – providing linguistic labour – and are incentivised to do so in a system of citizenship and labour market exclusion while producing economic value – though not necessarily for themselves (Allan 2019: 80–81). For a better understanding of these processes I look into (1) the entanglement of volunteering and the Austrian asylum procedure, (2) the organisation to volunteering at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and (3) the sense-making of their trajectories of two volunteers at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, Kourosh and Jamal.

At the centre of these analyses lays the notion of *trajectories* – in a double sense: as the discursively regimented movement of resources and people in space, economy, institutions (Heller 2011: 39; see also Zimmermann 2016), and as situated, narrative co-constructions of stretches of biography (*sensu* B. Busch 2017a, see also Sarangi 2010: 76). Especially relevant for understanding the economic dimension (Narotzky & Besnier 2014) as well as the dimension of

10 Volunteering by migrant groups has received systematic attention in the social sciences only recently; yet the dimension of migration/displacement has been included in the first two reports on volunteering which have been issued by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection in 2009 and 2015 respectively (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz 2009 and Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz, Abt. V/A/6 2015), with the former one offering a more in-depth sociological analysis by the sociologist Christoph Reinprecht (2009)).

agency (Emirbayer & Mische 1998) are projections of such trajectories into the future: which are, on the basis of the current conditions, imagined futures and how does one think to attain them (Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 984; Darvin & Norton 2015: 39)? Where does this locate the volunteers in “the tension between personal expectations, the capacity to design projects, and the actual ability to accomplish them in a given conjuncture” (Narotzky & Besnier 2014: 4)? That is, I understand what Darvin & Norton (2015) in their model of language investment call *imagined identities* and *patterns of control* both as parts of the phenomenon of agency – or more general, enablement and constraint as two sides of the same coin. Before I move on to the narrative data and its ethnographic situatedness, I want to further situate my understanding of the notion of investment and trajectory in the literature.

Investment and trajectory

Central to the concept of investment – as elaborated in sociolinguistic approaches to language learning, drawing on the work of P. Bourdieu (Darvin & Norton 2015; Duchêne 2016; Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018; Norton Peirce 1995) – is the notion of capital¹¹: As “accumulated labour” (Bourdieu 1986: 280), it has neither fixed appearance nor value. Instead, it comes in various degrees and types of materialisation – for example, a network of friends and colleagues which Bourdieu (1986: 286) analyses as *social capital*; of acquired knowledge of the ‘German’ language where, in Bourdieu’s terms, the speaker *embodies cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1986: 282–284); or of a certificate of volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* analysable as an *institutionalised* form of capital (Bourdieu 1986: 285–286) derived from the work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. The specific value (or even the quality of being a form of capital in the first place) depends on processes of conversion from one form of capital to another, i. e. on how far the document that certifies volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is recognised as a token of exchange in another context (here, as we shall see, in the asylum procedure). From this perspective, to investigate the value of a given resource as capital requires thus to ask which objects or practices become (potentially) ‘convert-

11 This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 2. *Theoretical underpinnings* in J. Hassemer (2020: 47–49).

ible' at which sites and in which processes of exchange ('markets'). Individuals operating within the logics of such markets may anticipate the convertibility of resources at their disposal (not necessarily rationally and consciously) and thereby their socioeconomic value as capital. Capital value, then, is a function of its anticipated *convertibility* under certain market conditions. This requires from the actor a certain familiarity with its dynamics; that is, to "[h]av[e] the feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1998c: 80; cf. Darvin & Norton 2015: 47). Such anticipation of capital conversion is referred to by Bourdieu (1998c: 76–85) as *investment*.

Investment in a given market is not purely individual, but rather part and parcel of the socioeconomic and political processes in which social inequalities are inscribed and reproduced. People in different social positions and under different conditions have unequal resources to invest and unequal opportunities to participate in practices of investment (Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018). This point is particularly salient when we want to consider narrative accounts by the people whose investment we want to study. Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. (2018: 4–10) criticise approaches that focus on the subjects' constructions of (language) investment because they fail to account for the socioeconomic and language-mediated inequalities that lie behind and are reproduced in practices of investment. I therefore attempt to conceptualise the narrated trajectory of an investment in relation to the situated political-economic conditions under which it takes place.

In order to flesh out the notion of trajectory for the below analysis, in a first step, I want to consider *trajectories in narrative* as situated constructions of stretches of biography (B. Busch 2017a) before turning to their institutional and material situatedness. As shown by Park (2017), mobile workers build interdiscursive connections between the here-and-now and past places along their trajectories in the construction of their 'transnational' subjectivities. In this sense, trajectories are not 'objective facts' and cannot be reduced to traceable movements through time and space. They are rather ideological, metapragmatic objects, and, as such, are the result of "interdiscursive work" (Park 2017: 36). Trajectories can thus be conceptualised as interpretive devices that subjects deploy to organise time, space and agency in their positioning (or to situate themselves in time, space and agency). Such a theorisation is informed by the concept of *chronotope* (Bakhtin 1981), the narrative appropriation of time and space, "'invokable histories,' elabo-

rate frames in which time, space, and patterns of agency coincide, create meaning and value, and can be set off against other chronotopes" (Blommaert 2015: 110). That is, trajectories in narrative are co-constructed interconnections between time–space configurations. In order to analyse how personae (or *figures of personhood*, cf. Park 2021) emerging from these narrative appropriations of time and space relate to constructions of subjectivity in interview narrative, Sonnleitner (2018) proposes to link chronotopes to stance or positioning. This means that speakers establish their positions in the examined interviews by positioning themselves "in relation to chronotopic versions of the past" (Sonnleitner 2018: 34–35) and of the future which appear in my data in the form of (short) narratives. Thereby, they align and/or disalign with the personae unfolding in the co-constructed narrative (see also Spitzmüller 2013b, 2015). This allows to trace the emergence of participants' subjectivity and agency through an analysis of their positioning on multiple levels of the narrative: on the level of a timespace unit, throughout the narrated trajectory (both on the level of the storyworld), on the level of the interaction where the narration takes place (the research interview), and with relation to the (more 'macro') circulating discourses and values indexed in the narrative (Bamberg 1997).

From a political-economic perspective, trajectories are also objects of control, distribution and competition (Heller 2011: 39) within and beyond institutional contexts. For the purpose of this paper, I thus relate the narrative constructions of volunteers' trajectories to the discursive means by which they are regulated, that is, the ideological and material conditions which enable and constrain the narrators' actions. In line with Butler (1997a), I understand the subject's *agency* as a function of the citationality of discourse. The subject needs to 'cite' discourse – in its material or in its ideological dimension – in order to be both intelligible and transgressive with respect to the discursive order. The individual volunteer's agency thus crucially hinges on how they are able to mobilise the ideological and material conditions they find themselves in. These act both as a resource *and* as a constraint to individual action. In the case of practices of investment, the effects of the individual's doings are (at least partly) deferred to the future. Though not all self-fashioning narratives are based on an anticipation of market conditions and thus relate to speculative investment (Tabiola & Lorente 2017),

they still may be indicative of political-economic conditions and processes as narrative reconstructions of the subject's agency.

Volunteering as an asylum seeker in Austria

A survey by the IFES (*Institut für empirische Sozialforschung GmbH*) concluded that the share of migrants volunteering in refugee support was above average in Austria in 2016 (Institut für empirische Sozialforschung GmbH – IFES 2016: 41). Referring to a report produced in Germany for the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Huth 2013), the second report issued by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection in 2015 stipulates a salient connection between migrants' own experiences and their engagement in volunteer work (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz, Abt. V / A / 6 2015: 177) – as if this was not, arguably, the case for everyone in one way or the other – entailed is probably here that experience of *migration* plays a particularly salient role. With the following analysis, I try to give a more nuanced, ethnographic picture, as it situates the volunteer's 'motivation' in the political-economic conditions of the Austrian migration and 'integration' management.

As a substantial part of the volunteers¹² working for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* consists of (current and former) clients of the very same NGO, many of whom are still in an ongoing asylum procedure, questions of 'citizenship' are crucial to an understanding of the position of these volunteers in the political economy. By *citizenship*, I refer less to a single legal category with clear boundaries or in a binary of citizen and non-citizen, but more to interdependent and constructed categories (cf. e. g. Ramírez et al. 2021: 3) with, for instance, ideological, legal, moral and political dimensions, which are articulated in binaries of citizen and noncitizen but also systematically produce in-between statuses with different degrees of rights and recognised belonging (Lori 2017)¹³. I want to explicitly include the morally charged notion of *Integration* ('integration') in this notion which has dominated the political discourse on migration in Austria in the last

12 This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 3.1. *Volunteering as an asylum seeker in Austria* in J. Hassemer (2020: 49–50).

13 Ataç (2021), for instance, with a view on the situation of migrants in Austria cites the analytical dimensions of *legal status, access to rights, participation, and belonging and identity*.

decades and has found its way into legal-political instruments of government and gatekeeping (such as the *Integrationsvereinbarung*, see de Cillia 2012) and contributed to a figure of model-immigrant connected to neoliberal politics of activation and investment as well as exclusionary and discriminatory discourses of difference and belonging (Flubacher & Yeung 2016; Hametner & Rodax 2017; Lehner 2017). Crucial for the volunteers at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is the circumstance that for asylum seekers in Austria, access to the labour market is restricted by law, a legal barrier which does not apply to unpaid work¹⁴.

As argued by Muehlebach (2012), volunteering goes hand in hand with specific ideological underpinnings, especially of citizenship, such as the promotion of particular forms of the legitimate moral selflessness in a neoliberal state. These become particularly salient where access and belonging to the category of ‘citizen’ cannot be taken for granted. As shown by Yap et al. (2010), voluntary engagement by asylum seekers (or migrants in general) is prone to respond to the pressure of having to prove one’s qualities of ‘good citizens’. This can mean to show one’s investment in learning and practicing German, making friends with ‘Austrians’, gaining work experience in Austria (see Garrido & Codó 2017 for comparable observations in Catalunya) – all of which were recurrently named ‘motivations’ by my informants for doing volunteer work. While this is a rather general observation which has validity for various kinds of migration experience (at least) in Europe, this logic appears in a very specific form in the context of asylum procedures in Austria. Besides the evaluation of the applicants’ entitlement to refugee status or subsidiary protection, the caseworker of the ‘Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum’ (*Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl* henceforth *BFA*) evaluates also their eligibility for a so-called humanitarian residence status. This includes an assessment of the applicants’ ‘integration’ in Austria (cf. Lehner 2018) which has its rationale within the aforementioned investments in linguistic, social and economic capital (see Federal Office for Immigration and

14 During the first three months of the asylum procedure, no access to the labour market is granted. Thereafter, strict regulations apply to employment and self-employment, see http://www.fluechtlinge.wien/asyl_und_arbeit/ (accessed May 28, 2018, information by the *Vienna Social Fund*, based on the *Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz* (*AuslBG* ‘Alien Labour Law’) and the so-called *Bartenstein-Erlass* which restricts possibilities of employment to seasonal work of a maximum of six months and under the application of certain quota regulations).

Asylum 2019, 2021). Here volunteer work comes in – as evidence the applicant may offer to prove a sufficient degree of (investment in) “integration”.

Thus, volunteer work becomes a liminal site of investment in accessing various degrees of legal and/or moral ‘citizenship’. As an individual investment, volunteer (language) work promises to yield capital – language ‘skills’, social commitment, etc., being indexical in the ascription of the symbolic capital of ‘integration’, and networks formed by NGOs providing volunteers with social capital – required on what could be termed as ‘markets of citizenship’ (most importantly the asylum procedure) and the mainstream labour market (after a positive outcome of the asylum procedure). From the perspective of political economy, volunteering offers an anchorage for discursive means of governing migration at the nexus of (nationalised) citizenship, labour and welfare, as it allows to subject those who are in fact excluded from the national labour market to processes of regulation and self-regimentation governing the ‘nationalised’ labour force (Flubacher & Yeung 2016). Moreover, it shall be taken into account that institutionalised refugee aid in Austria is itself confined to the margins of the social welfare system (based on the so-called Grundversorgung, ‘primary care’) and lacks durable structures with stable funding.

Volunteering at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*

At the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*¹⁵, volunteers work as interpreters in individual counselling and in workshops, but also for the previously mentioned *Recherche-Eck*, a sub-project where they assist the clients in their search for apartments via online platforms. The ‘recruitment’ of volunteers is prevalently initiated by employed staff members in the context of counselling. In fact, many volunteer interpreters serving at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* came in the role of ‘clients’ or in support of a client (for instance, as *ad-hoc* interpreters). There is no formalised recruitment procedure, as this recruitment is instead based on existing or unfolding networks and word of mouth, regulated by an employed staff member appointed for the task (Yasmin and, for the *Recherche-Eck*, Alena), and discussed amongst

15 This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 3.2. *Volunteers in the counselling centre* in J. Hassemer (2020: 50–52).

the counsellors in their weekly staff meetings (for a more detailed description and analysis see Section 6.4).

Volunteer interpreters are expected to have certain linguistic ‘skills’ – which includes competences in one of the clients’ first languages or lingua francas, and in German or English (which are considered to be the two languages every counsellor shall be able to work in¹⁶). Among the counsellors, the amount of metalinguistic reflection on the volunteers’ competences in clients’ first languages or lingua francas (e. g. ‘Arabic’, ‘Farsi’, ‘Somali’) I was able to observe is scarce. It consists mostly in problematising geographical variation of these languages (for instance, the ‘different dialects’ of Arabic). Concerning their command in German and English, however, metalinguistic reflection is frequent, and more so, these competences are evaluated and re-evaluated in an *ad-hoc* manner by the counsellors in their weekly staff meetings (from which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Section 5.4, interpreters are excluded; see Section 6.4). These specific linguistic requirements are of course selective with respect to the population of asylum seekers in Austria, privileging those who had either prior access to English language education or who were able to acquire German since their arrival in Austria to a level which could be considered sufficient for the job by the staff. In terms of social class background, this makes it likely that access to volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* reproduces already existing inequalities between possible candidates, as opportunities and resources to invest in acquiring the aforementioned required languages are not equally distributed (cf. Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018).

Mobility between unpaid (volunteer) and paid work (employed staff) within the counselling centre is rare. Apart from one of the two employed interpreters, Hakob, who had started as a volunteer, I witnessed one single case of such a trajectory – starting out as a volunteer and then becoming an employed counsellor in a regular application process. Aspirations by volunteers to gain a paid position are in some instances raised as problematic by the staff, especially when they are suspected to motivate the voluntary engagement, as they are seen as the cause for unfulfillable expectations and thus the basis for a troublesome relationship of dependency between the volunteer and the institution (see Section 6.4).

16 Sara explicitly mentioned to me that she required from every counsellor to be competent in English in order to be able to work with all (volunteer) interpreters.

Mobility to paid work outside the institution is instead facilitated and attested in my observations both in terms of concrete individual support, and in a more general, programmatic way. For example, at the in-house training workshops for volunteer interpreters I attended (see Section 5.4), Farzaneh, the speaker included an overview of possibilities for further (formal) qualification in interpreting and sketched ways into paid work.

Lowering expectations is a technique for managing the relationship between volunteers and the institution that works in both directions (see Section 6.4). Briefing a new volunteer – which is done primarily by the counselling staff appointed manager of volunteers/interpreters – includes explaining that neither compensation in terms of privileged treatment as a client by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (even if it is, in fact, conceded) nor job opportunities (usually also de facto excluded, see above) may be expected. But talking about volunteers' work performance (for instance, in staff meetings, see Section 5.4 and Section 6.4) also means taking into account their individual needs and not taking their workforce for granted. Moreover, it is not assumed that volunteer work happens out of pure altruism. A commonsensical conviction I encountered on various occasions – for instance, as explicitly voiced by Sara in our interview (on January 9, 2018) – was that no one would work without the expectation of gaining something in return. Volunteer work is organised in a highly reflective manner and I should note here that great efforts are made by staff to level many of the described asymmetries that derive from their precarious situation as asylum seekers and the reproduction of this situation in work relationships (cf. also the initiatives to institute *interpreters' meetings*, Section 5.4). At the same time, the very practice of appointing asylum seekers as volunteer interpreters is connected to contingent institutional and supra-institutional structures and power relations that it cannot fully escape. These are, especially, the lack of financial resources accorded to language work – and to refugee support work in general –, the legal barriers that impede asylum seekers to pursue paid work, and the discourses of willingness and integration (indirectly taken up, too, at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*) targeting newcomers in Austria.

Trajectories in narrative

In the analysis that follows¹⁷, extracts from two semi-structured interviews with volunteer interpreters are examined. The interviews were conducted in early 2018, at a time I was myself a volunteer at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, with informants Kourosh (in an office at the University of Vienna) and Jamal (in a room at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*). We had known each other from quite early on in my time at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and they knew about me and my research (as I did about some of their issues) from our recurring chats during breaks and at social events, as well as from a more ‘official’ letter of information I had handed out to them when we first met. The interviews were based on a number of guiding questions prepared beforehand on their experiences at and views of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* as well as on their expectations connected to their volunteer work. Both of them, Jamal and Kourosh, were roughly in their twenties and they had been working as interpreters (of Farsi and Farsi/Dari/Pashto) for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* for more than a year at the moment of the interview. Their countries of origin were Iran and Afghanistan, and they both lacked the security of a final decision in their asylum procedure. The interviews were conducted in English (Kourosh) and in German and English (Jamal), the languages we would also recur to in our previous encounters. Both explicitly addressed the question of ‘language choices’ in the interview before I would: Kourosh asked for the interview to be conducted in English. Jamal merely asked me to acquiesce to English as a second option in case he would have trouble expressing himself in German. As I (of course) agreed to these initiatives, I encouraged Jamal (not Kourosh, since he himself was categorical about English) to switch and mix if he wanted to.

While the two participants exhibited differences in their positioning vis-à-vis the contingencies of their situation at that time, it is striking how they converge around discursive references, the sites of capital conversion they orient to, and the depiction of gatekeeping mechanisms and barriers. In what follows, salient aspects of their narrated trajectories will be presented: (1) how they make sense of their gaining access to volunteer work which I will call here *retrospective*

¹⁷ This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 4. *Analysis: volunteer interpreters making sense of their trajectories* in J. Hassemer (2020: 52).

trajectories (cf. Park 2017), (2) the return they expect to gain from their work as well as the sites (or ‘markets’) where the gained *capital* is to be converted, or *speculative trajectories* (cf. the notion of speculative capital Tabiola & Lorente 2017), and (3) their constructions of a desirable, but momentarily suspended or inaccessible future, *imagined trajectories* (cf. Darvin & Norton 2015: 39). All three¹⁸ are narrative co-constructions that happened in research interviews and need to be read in terms of an ethnographic *epistemology of contact* (Slembrouck 2005: 628–631, for a discussion see Section 3.1), where the researcher’s engagement with the researched lifeworld is crucial to the co-production of knowledge.

These co-constructed narrative trajectories form three dimensions of constructions of agency and subjectivity between biographical projections of past and future, projections of constraint and hope (see Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 984, cf. also Steen 2012 for an interactionist take on the concept). *Hope*, to reiterate the above, is not only of salience to a *projective dimension* of agency (Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 984), but also as an interpretive concept for an anthropological understanding of how subjects make a living, “point[ing] to the tension between personal expectations, the capacity to design projects, and the actual ability to accomplish them in a given conjuncture” (Narotzky & Besnier 2014). That is, I read the narrative co-constructions of past and future trajectories against their political-economic conditions and viability.

Retrospective trajectories: accessing volunteer work

In the course of the interviews¹⁹, Jamal and Kourosh align with distinct personae they evoke more or less explicitly. Jamal motivates and rationalises his actions with a (sometimes strategically framed) reference to qualities and practices emblematic of the discourse of ‘integration’ (Flubacher & Yeung 2016; Hametner & Rodax 2017; Lehner 2017) prevalent in Austria. He thereby aligns with a subject position of the Austrian migration regime, or rather with the one who knows how to navigate it (that is, fulfilling the ‘expectations’ of learning German, interacting with locals, being self-sufficient, etc.). Kourosh foregrounds more emphatically

18 This sentence, in a modified form, stems from the section 2. *Theoretical underpinnings* in J. Hassemer (2020: 47–49).

19 This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 4.1. *Retrospective trajectories: accessing volunteer work* in J. Hassemer (2020: 52–54).

an intrinsically motivated persona of a committed worker. The alignment with these personae, in Jamal's case that of the aspiring and thus compliant worker, in Kourosh's case the autonomous and intrinsically motivated worker, emerges in the way they talk about their contact with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and other connected actors.

The moments before and during the first contact can be analysed as a moment where their embodied linguistic repertoires become reformulated as *linguistic capital* (Bourdieu 1977; Heller & Duchêne 2016). Both narrate how their linguistic competences were subject to metalinguistic evaluation. Jamal explicitly quotes the voice of an acquaintance who helped him to get the job – *du hast eine gute Sache du verstehst Englisch* ('you have a good thing you understand English') – a linguistic licensing and encouragement by a friend and mentor. Kourosh admits his German was not 'good' at the time and adds that the counselling centre *really needed someone who could speak perfectly one language that they understand and the clients understand* – English in his case – collapsing the narrator's voice with that of Sara, the head of staff who voiced the need.

Both explicitly draw on past trajectories of work when explaining their investment in volunteer work. Jamal, for example, tells me about his work as an interpreter for the armed forces in Afghanistan and frames this as 'experience', thus relevant for his skills and accumulated capital as a volunteer interpreter. In this way, he is able to deploy a stretch from his biography in the construction of himself as a skilled interpreter. Kourosh grounds his strong affection for his work in his past working life as a teacher, an attachment which he raises to a principle later in the interview: *in every job it's important to love the job from the bottom of your heart*. Let us consider how, in Example 6.1²⁰, he describes his first contact with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

20 The transcribed extracts in this section are presented as minimal transcripts (no notation of pauses and intonation, see Selting et al. 2011: 7) given the lower level of granularity needed for the analysis.

Example 6.1: Transcribed extract from the interview with Kourosh, February 01, 2018.

- 001 Jonas: can you tell me a bit how you came to <name of the
NGO>
002 Kourosh: er I love working
003 I cannot help working
004 ((laughs))
005 as I told you I started teaching at the age of fifteen
006 and I always stood on my own feet
007 my father always loved to spend money for me
008 but I didn't need his money
009 I just earned money myself
010 bought my cars
011 bought my every things myself
012 when I came to Austria it was like uh seven months
013 that I I hadn't worked
014 and I was feeling ill
015 so I wanted to do something
016 I went to different places to ask for a job
017 they said I'm I was not allowed to work
018 I was only allowed to work at a hundred ten euros
monthly
019 Jonas: uhu
020 Kourosh: and nobody would give me that job
021 so er at Donauinsselfest two thousand sixteen
022 Jonas: mhm
023 Kourosh: a friend of mine who was in Austria for a longer time
024 he said I could work voluntarily
025 Jonas: uhu
026 Kourosh: I said
027 how
028 he said that I could work voluntarily simply

029 I could go to one of <names of two NGOs> places
030 at that time I was living in the erm
031 I guess
032 no
033 I was living in <name>camp
034 I came to this <name of NGO> branch
035 because I just knew this < name of NGO > branch very
well
036 Jonas: uhu
037 Kourosh: I came here
038 and er Martin was there at that time
039 Jonas: ah okay
040 Kourosh: I said I want to translate here voluntarily
041 he said wait a moment
042 I waited
043 and Sara came out
044 Jonas: uhu
045 Kourosh: and she invited me into her office
046 and she said it was interesting
047 I said why
048 she said
049 right now we were talking in the team meeting
050 that we needed desperately someone to er come and
051 translate for us
052 Jonas: uhu
053 Kourosh: and you were at that
054 at the same time sitting outside to come and translate for
us
055 Jonas: uh ((laughs))
056 Kourosh: so I signed the paper which is there
057 er
058 and I started work the next day

The short narrative in Example 6.1 follows a question by which I, the interviewer, make relevant an act that connects moments in time and space to a trajectory in the form of a narrative of how he became a volunteer in that particular NGO (Line 001). He starts with a generalised description of himself invoking a persona, positively aligning with it, if not essentialising it: *I love working I cannot help working* (Lines 002–003, Example 6.1). The following narrative builds on a trajectory of five interconnected timespaces, which are constructed as narrative components with distinct protagonists and a plot, each with internal positioning of the protagonists vis-à-vis each other (on the level of the storyworld; Bamberg 1997).

He starts by presenting his former self as a person who began to work early and was therefore autonomous. He then introduces his father whose love for spending money for his son somewhat contradicts the picture of the autonomous, early worker. The formulated disalignment with the role provided by the figure of the father in the narrated event, that of the pampered son, produces an alignment with the autonomous and self-sufficient persona on the interactive level of the interview (part 1, Lines 005–011, Example 6.1). The following part starts with his arrival in Austria (part 2, Lines 012–020 and continued in Lines 030–035). In contrast to the preceding part, here, the *I* is not working, and he expresses a strong bodily articulated stance (*ill*, Line 014) towards these circumstances. He introduces underspecified agents (*they*, *nobody*, and a passive construction in *I was not allowed*, Lines 017; 018; 020, respectively) that prevent him from fully inhabiting the self-sufficient worker's persona he aligns with. This tension between what is presented as his essential qualities as a subject and his constraining situation is relieved at a turning point (part 3, Lines 021–029). It is nestled in part (2) both in terms of timespace and narrative linearisation, and precisely specified in terms of time and space. Rendered in reported speech, another protagonist, a friend, introduces him to the possibility of volunteer work (Lines 024–029). In this timespace, agency is returned to the *I*, as the accessibility to work is restored and seemingly barrier-free (with the use of *simply*, Line 028), with a certain range of opportunities (*one of ...places*, Line 029). Returning to the framing timespace (part 2, Lines 030–035), the knowledge gained is connected to the subject's already existent knowledge of a relevant NGO, which provides the basis for contacting the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

The self-sufficient persona is also evoked in the way he narrates his recruitment into volunteer work (part 4, Lines 037–054, Example 6.1): Enacting a dialogue with two staff members of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, Martin, the former legal counsellor, and Sara (Lines 040–041 and Lines 045–054), he narrates the first contact with the CC when he asked to work there as a volunteer. Through the positioning of the protagonists vis-à-vis each other, the moment where his linguistic repertoire becomes a capital granting access to the desired position is rendered as a convergence of interests from the two parties of the labour relationship. This is expressed by the other party (Sara, head of staff) who tells him that his skills are strongly needed (Lines 049–050). The last point in the trajectory is made up of two actions, signing (probably the confidentiality / volunteer agreement) and starting to work (part 5, Lines 056 and 058), which build the passage into the present situation.

Throughout the biographical narrative in Example 6.1, that is, on the level of the narrated event, he aligns with a self-sufficient, autonomous persona. This metapragmatic alignment is “grounded” (Park 2017: 25) in his biography, and coherent along his migration trajectory. The barriers experienced – not being allowed to work – are presented as external. On the level of the interview as the narrating event, this results in an alignment with the persona of an intrinsically motivated worker where the economic dimension is secondary. Investment in volunteer work is presented as an investment in the worker’s self.

Speculative trajectories: sites of conversion

In the interviews, I observed orientations to not only past but also future trajectories where the participants speculate about the convertibility (and thus the values) of resources at their command²¹. Asked about how he benefits from his work as a volunteer, Jamal names a number of resources he is able to either access or develop by virtue of his position. He emphasises the *social capital* (Bourdieu 1986) provided to him by the NGO, by saying he had met people who would help him with his asylum procedure (I often witnessed how he would sit with one of the counsellors and discuss his case) and to improve his German, keep

²¹ This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 4.2. *Speculative trajectories: sites of conversion* in J. Hassemer (2020: 54–56).

him busy, and updated about job opportunities. In other words, he attributes a convertibility to the social relationships he participates in and which thus form a social capital on specific 'markets'. Besides the idea that he enjoys them in a form of 'direct consumption' for his individual well-being (*being kept busy* in order to think less about the situation and his former life in Afghanistan, as he put it in our interview), which he declares as his initial and primary motivation, these are all related to accessing a moral and /or legal citizenship status (the supposed institutional logics of the asylum procedure, of achieving 'integration') and the labour market. Jamal describes the constraints he faces in his current situation – that of a *prisoner* –, concluding that the way out, to a *good life*, would be to receive asylum and to work independently (by which he means working as an entrepreneur / freelancer). When I ask him if this has something to do with his work at the CC, he answers as follows, describing the 'market' of citizenship, in Example 6.2.

Example 6.2: Transcribed extract from the interview with Jamal, April 04, 2018.

001	Jamal:	also natürlich	<i>well of course</i>
002		das ist eine eine positive Punkt für mich	<i>that is a positive point for me</i>
003		in meinem Interview	<i>in my interview</i>
004	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhh</i>
005	Jamal:	äh dass ich zeigen kann dass i	<i>er that I can show that I</i>
006		äh	<i>er</i>
007		ich arbeite	<i>I work</i>
008		ich helfe ein Organisation für geflüchtete Leute	<i>I help an organisation for refugees</i>
009		dass ich mich integriere	<i>that I integrate myself</i>
010	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhh</i>
011	Jamal:	das is sehr wichtig in Interviews	<i>that is very important in interviews</i>
012		äh	<i>er</i>
013		äh dass man zeigen kann dass man äh (zu /so) viele Freunde hat	<i>er that one can show that one has (too/so) many friends</i>

014	Jonas:	okee	<i>okay</i>
015	Jamal:	Freunde zum Beispiel Österreicher oder Österreicherinnen kennen lernen	<i>friends for example to meet Austrians <masculine> or Austrians <feminine></i>
016	Jonas:	mhm	
017	Jamal:	ähm das ist auch wichtig wenn du ehrenamtlich irgendwo arbeitest	<i>erm it is also important if you work somewhere as a volunteer</i>
018	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
019	Jamal:	ähm () auch zeigen kann dass	<i>erm () can show that</i>
020		dass ich eine Bestätigung habe	<i>that I have a certificate that I</i>
021		dass ich für einem Jahr oder ein und halb Jahr hier gearbeitet habe	<i>worked here for one year or one and a half year</i>
022	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
023	Jamal:	ja	<i>yes</i>
024	Jonas:	woher weißt du dass das wichtig ist	<i>from where do you know that this is important</i>
025		fragen die danach	<i>do they ask about it</i>
026		oder äh	<i>or er</i>
027		hast du das gehört	<i>have you heard about it</i>
028	Jamal:	ich hab das gehört von den Beamten	<i>I have heard it from the civil servants</i>
029	Jonas:	okee	<i>okay</i>
030		mhm	<i>uhu</i>
031	Jamal:	offizielle Beamten	<i>official civil servants</i>
032		auch von dem Leute	<i>also from the people</i>
033		private Leute	<i>private people</i>
034	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>

035	Jamal:	auf dem Straße oder (irgendwo) woanders	<i>on the street or (somewhere) somewhere else</i>
036		das ist sehr wichtig	<i>this is very important</i>
037	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
038	Jamal:	ja	<i>yes</i>
039	Jonas:	und ähm fragen sie danach dann im Interview oder	<i>and erm then they ask about it in the interview right</i>
040	Jamal:	ja die fragen auch was du arbeitest	<i>yah they also ask you what you work</i>
041	Jonas:	okee	<i>okay</i>
042	Jamal:	oder was	<i>or what</i>
043		äh wo verbringst du dein Zeit	<i>er where you spend your time</i>
044	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
045	Jamal:	äh	<i>er</i>
046		zum Beispiel die türkische Leute sind in eim Grupp	<i>for example the Turkish people are in a group</i>
047	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
048	Jamal:	() sie sind	<i>() they are</i>
049		die arbeiten miteinander	<i>they work with each other</i>
050		und die sprechen	<i>and they talk</i>
051		die haben Sitzungen	<i>they have meetings</i>
052		die sind in einem Grupp	<i>they are in a group</i>
053		und die Afghanen sind in einem Grupp	<i>and the Afghans are in a group</i>
054		keine Integration	<i>no integration</i>
055	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
056	Jamal:	ähm raus von diesem Grupp zu gehen	<i>erm to go out of this group</i>
057		mit anderen Leuten zu äh arbeiten	<i>er work with other people</i>

058	und äh deswegen das ist sehr wichtig für die Österreich	<i>and er therefore it is very important for the Austria <or: Austrians?></i>
059	dass solche Gruppen äh nicht	<i>that such groups er not</i>
060	die die brauchen nicht solche Gruppen	<i>they do not need such groups</i>
061	die wollen dass die Leute äh	<i>they want that the people er</i>
062	die da sind äh	<i>who are here er</i>
063	können mit Österreicher	<i>can with Austrians</i>
064	können mit andere Leute äh	<i>can with other people er</i>
065	arbeiten	<i>work</i>
066	wohnen	<i>cohabit</i>
067	das ist eine Integration für die Österreicher	<i>that is an integration for the Austrians</i>
068 Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
069 Jamal:	und das ist sehr wichtig von für BFA und äh diesen Beamten	<i>and that is also very important for the BFA and er this civil servant</i>
070 Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
071 Jamal:	ja	<i>yes</i>
072	da können wir äh auch spre Sprache verbessern	<i>we can also improve our language there</i>
073	da können wir besser leben	<i>we can live better (t)here</i>
074	äh auch besser lernen	<i>er also learn better</i>
075	über den Kultur in Österreich	<i>about the culture in Austria</i>
076	über den Religion	<i>about the religion</i>
077	über den Frei Freizeit äh sache	<i>about the free free time er thing</i>
078	über den Allgemein	<i>about the general</i>
079 Jonas:	mhm mhm	<i>uhu uhu</i>
080 Jamal:	die die können auch also die die Referenten schauen was du für Bestätigungen haben	<i>they they can also well the the caseworkers look what kind of certificates you have</i>
081	was hast du ähm ähm gearbeitet	<i>what you have erm erm worked</i>

082	äh ehrenamtlich	<i>er honorarily</i>
083	wo bist du angemeldet in einem Sportverein	<i>where you are enrolled in a sports club</i>
084	oder in einem Sprachkurs	<i>or in a language course</i>
085 Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
086 Jamal:	ja	<i>yes</i>

In Example 6.2, he replies by saying that his volunteer work is a ‘positive point’, thereby recontextualising it as value in a logic of calculus (Line 002, Example 6.2). He names the ‘market’ (Bourdieu 1986) where the value is to be attributed and, ideally, converted: the *interview* (Line 003) – which is the widespread term for the asylum hearing. He then enumerates the valued qualities a subject aspiring to acquire the right to abode must present: to be working, to make an effort for integration (Lines 005–015). This is something one has to *show* to the caseworker (Line 005); in terms of agency it is clear that this is not conceptualised as an exchange between equals, which betrays the logic of a rational calculation between investment and return invoked before (Line 002). He adds that the value of volunteer work also receives an institutionalised form (see also Bourdieu 1986: 285): the certificate (Line 020). I ask him about his source of knowledge (Lines 024–027) and he indicates both an authoritative source from the centre of value creation (the civil servant) and peripheral sources (Lines 028–033), evoking the circulation of that knowledge. In the next turn (Line 039), I ask him if the caseworkers ask about it (unspecified) in the asylum hearing, to which Jamal replies by indirectly quoting two questions, the first referring again to work, the second, in a parallel construction, to leisure time (Lines 040–043). What follows rationalises the logic implicated in these questions, by deducing them from an evaluative stance against ethnically segregated groups taken by *Austria(ns)* and the *BFA* (046–069), before he transposes this external stance in a logic of self-improvement or self-regimentation (072–078). Finally, he reaffirms the value of certificates as institutionalised forms of prior trajectories, which are bundled and projected to be convertible in the asylum procedure (Lines 080–086). The asylum procedure is thus oriented to as a centre where “*trajectories of resources and actors*

intersect (or not)” (Heller 2011: 10, emph. i. o), that is, where capital conversion is supposed to happen, though its success remains uncertain.

Imagined trajectories: projected agency and hope

What is particular about what I termed here as an imagined trajectory (see also Darwin & Norton 2015; Steen 2012)²² is that this is even more radically conditioned than speculative trajectories which lead to uncertain future events of exchange. It is less an object of calculated speculation (which of course may not be successful as well) than the former. Even if it seems to follow from the constructed subject position, it is in the current conditions that it becomes an unreachable course of action, as the agency of the subject is momentarily suspended. It positions the subject as separable from the constraining environment. Let us consider Example 6.3, where I ask Kourosh about his plans or expectations for the (then) year to come.

Example 6.3: Transcribed extract from the interview with Kourosh, February 01, 2018.

- 001 Jonas: what do you envision for this year for your work
 002 or what do you expect
 003 Kourosh: I can’t expect anything
 004 Jonas: mhm
 005 Kourosh: right now I’m dangling in the air
 006 n the middle of air and earth
 007 because I don’t have my positive so far
 008 Jonas: mhm
 009 Kourosh: I don’t know what’s going to happen
 010 if I had received my positive a year ago
 011 exactly a year ago when I started working at Stadtschulrat
 012 now I would be a teacher
 013 a full time teacher there

²² This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 4.3. *Imagined trajectories* in J. Hassemer (2020: 56–57).

- 014 Jonas: yah
015 Kourosh: with full salary
016 but I'm still there with this voluntary system
017 erm I can't expect anything for my tomorrow even
018 without this positive thing
019 Jonas: mhm
020 Kourosh: but er if I get
021 or when I get my positive
022 the first thing I'll do is to apply at the at the school for a
job
023 Jonas: mhm
024 Kourosh: because it's a great thing
025 everyday from eight to one
026 Jonas: yah
027 Kourosh: almost a full salary
028 Jonas: yah
029 Kourosh: the evenings are fully free
030 and I can pass thirty ee tsee
031 ee cee tees
032 Jonas: mhm
033 Kourosh: and start as an English teacher wi
034 who earns more
035 Jonas: mhm
036 Kourosh: and that's what I love
037 Jonas: mhm mhm
038 Kourosh: and Stadtschulrat is in in whole Austria
039 I can travel to other cities to live to
040 I can move to other cities
041 and work still in Stadtschulrat
042 that's a great bonus
043 Jonas: yah yah
044 Kourosh: I love to work in <name of NGO> too
045 but I don't know if it's possible

-
- 046 if it's
 047 if if
 048 if it's acceptable for <name of NGO>
 049 or they accept my resume or whatever
 050 but my resume is mostly about English teaching
 051 Jonas: mhm
 052 Kourosh: so that
 053 that's a better opportunity to work at school
 054 Jonas: mhm mhm
 055 so that is your plan
 056 Kourosh: and working at school looks more secure for me
 057 Jonas: mhm
 058 Kourosh: so there's job security there
 059 Jonas: mhm
 060 Kourosh: you're not easily out of your ()
 061 Jonas: mhm
 062 Kourosh: but with < name of NGO > for example
 063 when this project is finished
 064 okay goodbye

As a reply to my question (Lines 001–002), in Example 6.3 Kourosh denies the availability of a trajectory as an interpretive device: *I can't expect anything* (Line 003). Being dependent on the (positive) outcome of his asylum procedure (Lines 003–009), he positions himself by invoking the picture of *dangling in the air* (Lines 005–006), which constitutes a timespace of insecure temporality and locality, through which a bodily, affective positioning towards this lack of agency is achieved. In a hypothetical manner, he develops an imagined trajectory under favourable conditions which at the moment do not apply (Lines 010–015), a sort of alternative chronotope where he inhabits the role of a teacher (working for the *Stadtschulrat*²³, the 'Schools Council', a municipal authority over human resources in public schools, Line 011–012) instead of the unpaid teaching assistant he cur-

23 Since 2019, the municipal authority has been renamed *Bildungsdirektion* (Bildungsdirektion Wien 2022).

rently is. This role, in turn, is connected to the idealised persona of a worker with a full-time job and salary (Lines 013–015). He contrasts this chronotopical order of values and personhood with that which he – strikingly – calls the *voluntary system* (Line 016), wherein he places himself under the given, ‘real’ conditions (Lines 016–018). Then, he develops this alternative trajectory (Lines 020–042), which crucially involves work that yields economic capital (Line 027; 034) and institutionalised cultural capital (*ee cee tees* probably referring to *ECTS*, credit points for university, Lines 030–031), but also certain freedoms and mobility (Lines 029; 039–041) as well as affective value (Line 036). He then positively realigns with his role as an interpreter for the NGO (Line 044), raising the issue of whether his resume would be *acceptable* to work in exchange for a salary there (Lines 045–050). This indexes another order of values applying to his worker self in this imagined trajectory. Here, his resume, the institutionalised, entextualised version of his work trajectory (Line 050), gains importance, which calls into question whether he fits the position – which, on the other hand, is telling with regards to how he experiences the current, ‘real’ situation where his inapt qualification is no obstacle because indeed, it is no issue at all. Moreover, in this alternative timespace, what currently is a factor of stability, the work at the NGO, becomes a rather instable one (Lines 056–064). With his legal position secured and the labour market accessible, it is the precarious working environment provided by the NGO – the fact that employees’ job security depends on a project-based funding of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Line 063) – which he hesitates to align with.

The introduction of an imagined chronotope produces two trajectories with orders radically opposed in terms of value, which offer him diverging subject positions with a considerable difference in agency: The interpreter in the *volunteer system* who cannot shape his future nor deploy his resources fully as a worker versus the teacher in a regularised employment which allows for optimal conversion of capital, and who enjoys mobility, good salary and free time. The imagined trajectory of the teacher is suspended, as its realisation depends on the outcome of the asylum procedure, difficult to plan, yet still part of the construction of the interviewee’s self and agency.

At the margins of 'work' and 'citizenship'

The analyses above²⁴ show that the interviewed volunteers draw on trajectories co-constructed in narrative as *interpretive devices* (Garrido & Sabaté-Dalmau 2020) to make sense about their present and future, especially in terms of agency. This includes the reference (1) to past events and selves in order to legitimise skills or maintain a subject position in adverse circumstances, (2) to anticipated moments of conversion where speculation allows for some form of precarious agency, i. e. trying to play "the game" (in terms of Bourdieu 1998c) and (3) to the invocation of imagined trajectories, which allow to perform a subject within a suspended – i. e. not applicable under current conditions, yet still effective – order one aspires to. In the third type of trajectory, the subject's agency is imagined as separated from the current, constraining conditions. But to say that this trajectory is 'imagined' does not mean that it only reflects some internal state of mind of the interviewed, this is not simply an 'escape from reality'. Rather than as an individual 'coping strategy', I suggest that this is to be read as indexically linked to the situated political-economic conditions in Austria. In this sense, both the speculative and the imagined trajectories alike show that these volunteers think of themselves as labourers and citizens-to-be. This is also revealing as to the orders of social value that are projected to offer available subject positions once the asylum procedure is over (in these cases that of a full-time worker in a public school or an entrepreneur).

The value(s) of volunteer work as constructed in the interviews (leaving aside those more related to self-care, as keeping themselves busy), are by far no single, individual cases. A number of distributors of information for asylum seekers and refugees in Austria (e. g. Fonds Soziales Wien 2019), as well as the state institution regimenting and evaluating recognised refugees' (performance of) integration (the *Österreichische Integrationsfonds*, short *ÖIF* 'Austrian Integration Fund'), ascribe the same benefits – contact with locals and language learning – to volunteer work, as seen in the statement *Voluntary work in an association or organisation can help you get to know people in Austria. This can be a good way to improve and practice your German skills*, from a learning application by the *ÖIF*,

²⁴ This subsection presents a revised version of the subsection 5. *At the margins of 'work' and 'citizenship'* in J. Hassemer (2020: 57–59).

section *cultural integration* (see the screenshot in Figure 6.1, cf. Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2021). There is a striking convergence in the wording between the various entextualisations of these values of volunteering. In the specific case of the ÖIF, the specific value ascribed to unpaid labour by the newcomer is framed by an image of volunteering as typically Austrian and beneficial to society as a whole (see the first two paragraphs in Figure 6.1), presupposing (and entailing) an image of Austria which is (and deontically construed: should be) culturally and linguistically homogenous. Unpaid labour is thus positioned as a technique of belonging for the target group of the learning app (recognised refugees) which has its rationale in the reproduction of a nation state of German-speakers labouring for the common good.

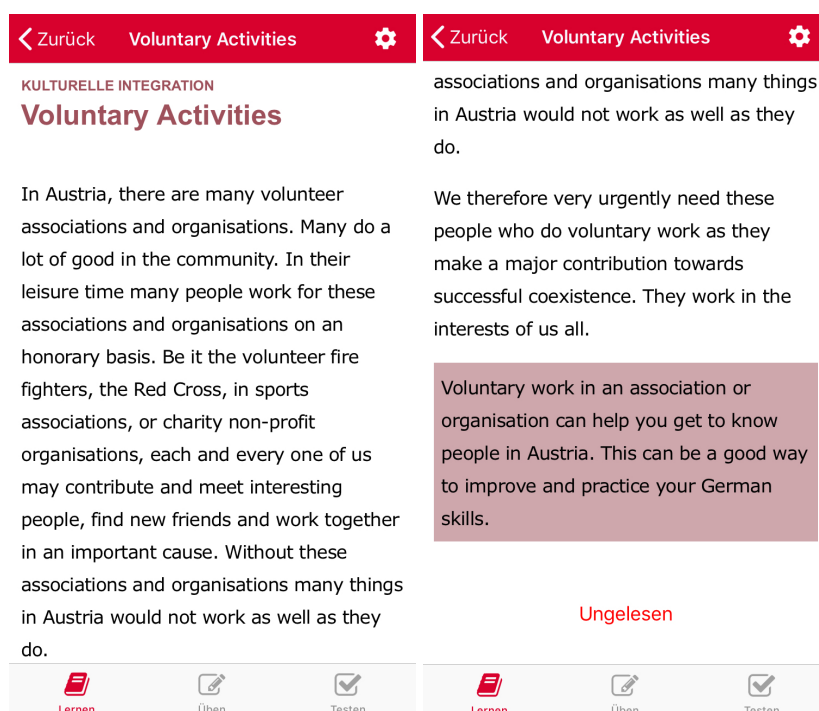


Figure 6.1: *Voluntary Activities*, gloss from the app *Meine Integration in Österreich* by the 'Austrian Integration Fund' (ÖIF), learning section *Kulturelle Integration* ('cultural integration'; screenshot taken on June 07, 2022).

This aspect needs to be explored further, but in connection with this case study, we can infer: Asylum seekers who do not yet have, and maybe never will, access

to a stabilised legal status in Austria are already inserted into a subjectivating logic that interpellates them (Butler 1997a) as ‘citizens-’ and workers-to-be (the ‘not-yet’ part is crucial). This logic draws on discourses of ‘integration’ (through language, self-responsibilisation, etc.) characteristic of neoliberalising discourses of migration in Europe (Flubacher & Yeung 2016). It is enforced by its institutionalisation in the asylum procedure and reproduced by surrounding institutions, including those where the volunteering happens. Crucially, in the framing of the ÖIF (Figure 6.1 on the preceding page) (unpaid) labour becomes connected both to the individual’s ‘successful’²⁵ belonging and the reproduction of Austria as culturally and linguistically homogenous nation (cf. de Cillia et al. 2020).

The institution of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* assumes an ambivalent role in facilitating and constraining the various trajectories. As shown in this case study, they are providers of access to different forms of capital, in the forms of networks, certificates, experiences, etc., that may (or may not) be convertible into other forms of capital – symbolic capital on the citizenship market and economic on the labour market. They provide thus a perspective onto the future, a position imbued with recognisable (yet insecure) value on multiple scales (personal well-being, job opportunities, contacts, etc.). But in doing so, they also reproduce the system that instantiates the insecure conditions in the first place, namely the specific workings of the asylum procedure and the related discourses of ‘integration’ that set and circulate the social value(s) of volunteering. Moreover, the discourses of integration, work and citizenship also reproduce the volunteers’ marginality, and the uncertain value(s) of volunteering are in great part dependent on subjection to the values circulated in these discourses, which also appear in the narratives analysed above: *socialising with Austrians, learning German, being economically independent, etc.* Volunteers draw on these ‘activating’ values in their positioning and ground their agency in this positioning, thereby being disciplined (Del Percio 2016) as ‘good citizens’, in an act of speculation, while the space for the subject’s present and future agency – and the value of any investment – is very much constrained by the asylum procedure. The *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is – to a certain degree and despite the emancipative stance taken – part of this system as it offers to institutionalise the capital gained from investing in volunteer work in the

25 In the double sense of a meritocratic understanding of integration (Lehner 2017) and of a felicitous outcome of the individual’s struggle for recognition.

form of certificates. Under the unstable financial conditions of institutionalised refugee aid explicitly alluded to in one interview (see Example 6.3), interpreting and other language work – which is crucial to many of the services offered – is left to unpaid workers, positions filled prevalently by those who, as asylum seekers, lack access to paid work, and who, in turn, happen to be recruited from the target group of the very same services. This results in an off-loading of parts of the welfare services to those who are also its recipients, in a mode of *governmental precarisation* (Lorey 2012), i. e. the intertwined working of state governance and self-regimentation by establishing and maintaining a situation of precarity of the subjects. In that sense, the analysis of the volunteers' narrated trajectories contributes to making visible how the interviewees invest in the institutionalised logics of citizenship exclusion to which they are subjected. It offers an example of how language and labour become intertwined in the discursive regimentation of displaced peoples' transnational trajectories in present-day Europe. As described by Allan (2019), volunteering functions as a form of *hope labour* (drawing on Kuehn & Corrigan 2013): the engagement in (precarious) work in the present is construed as an investment in an insecure future (asylum and employment) which produces forms of value, though not necessarily for the volunteer worker: while *work experience* and *integration* are construed as relevant returns by Kourosh and Jamal, their investment certainly produces value through the *linguistic labour* entailed in volunteering – translation, interpreting, brokering – for the NGO, the institution of refugee support, and the welfare state.

6.3 The ambivalent value of language: Arabic-speaking counsellors

When I first joined the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* as a researcher, there were two Arabic-speaking staff members, Yasmin and Sami. At that time, Sami had started working there only very recently, in spring 2016. Later, Mona joined, first as a volunteer, then as a counsellor. Sami was – even later when he was no more part of the team – cited as an emblematic case of distanced, bureaucratic reasoning: in fact, he had pushed for a standardisation of the anamnestic *Erstgespräche* ('first interviews') with new clients when the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* reoriented its

services from that of brokering for accommodation to social and legal counselling. The script for these first encounters which was designed for short, efficient encounters to relieve some of the pressure on counselling staff, was sometimes referred to as *Erstberatung nach Sami* ('first interview after Sami'). After Sami had left, I learnt from Sara, that he had been unhappy with his job as a counsellor, as the deputy head of staff, he had hoped to retreat from counselling and dedicate his work force entirely to management tasks. Yasmin, on the other hand, had often problematised the moral pressure she faced from clients who expected from her, the *Arab woman* a sort of solidarity she was not able or willing to give. It is certainly not a coincidence that scaling the metaphorical, moral distance was so salient in Mona's, Sami's and Yasmin's trajectories as counsellors in the organisation. What does it mean to be a counsellor and to speak *the language of the client*? As we shall see, their positioning at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* has liminal qualities (J. Hassemer 2018), caught between those of *counsellor, interpreter, client*, with salient boundaries which nevertheless remain blurry.

Institutionalised boundaries of language and work

At the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*²⁶, there is little overt regulation of language on an institutional level. As a competence, *Arabic* does not appear to be treated so much as a bounded, homogeneous system and measurable skill, but as a continuum of varieties where intercomprehension is possible to varying degrees. Hence, the value of a variety and its speakers is rationalised with reference to more or less ad-hoc notions of intercomprehension. Apart from this, the unequal values of varieties of Arabic as well as speaker stereotypes circulate in jokes and stories among staff and volunteer interpreters. Since there are no standardised language requirements for the posts, individual repertoires among employees vary greatly in terms of competence in different varieties, registers and literacy. One Arabic speaking counsellor in particular, Yasmin, seems to play the role of an *ideology broker* (Blommaert 1999) in the microcosm of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* in the

26 This subsection presents a revised and extended version of the subsection 5.1 *Division of labour: The institutionalisation of language work* in J. Hassemer & Garrido (2020: 149–152). Only those parts of the text are reproduced in this section (Section 6.3) which refer to my own work and of which I am the author. Where I refer to joint results from the co-authored paper I do so by explicit reference.

sense that, by virtue of her expert status as a 'native', she selects, reproduces, circulates, contests and adheres to discourses on *Arabic*. As one of the longest serving staff members at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and as manager of the pool of volunteer interpreters, her voice is consequential as to the ambivalent values of the linguistic varieties of Arabic. It resonates with more general discourses on the different varieties of Arabic circulating at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, which I was able to record: the alleged scarce intelligibility of North African varieties, the pop-cultural importance of Egyptian varieties, the boldness of Iraqi varieties, and the closeness to the 'standard' (which might refer to the registers usually known as *Fuṣḥa* and/or *Modern Standard Arabic*) of some (but not all) Levantine varieties. I noticed that a standard variety was sometimes invoked as a common ground, as, for instance, in a counselling situation, where an interpreter said *We'll speak Hoch-Arabic* [German-English 'high Arabic', probably a translation of *Fuṣḥa*] *since you are from Iraq* as a English/German back translation of his own turn – which was directed to the client in a variety of Arabic – for the counsellor and myself (fieldnotes, April 28, 2016).

Within the division of labour at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, the position of the *Arabic-speaking counsellor* constitutes a differentiated category which circulates among the staff and serves as a point of reference for them in the organisation of work tasks. The position is not, however, institutionalised on a formal level. That is, there is no position of an *Arabic-speaking counsellor* in the staff hiring scheme. Language competences (of any sort) do not constitute a formal requirement – no tests nor diplomas are mandatory for counselling posts. However, they do appear in job advertisements for counselling posts (Figure 6.2 on the facing page): German is listed as a requirement and other ("foreign") languages as an asset. These other languages are specified as "Farsi/Dari and/or Arabic" which reflects the two most prominent language categories at the time (2016) into which speakers were grouped as they became clients of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

English does not appear as a requirement in the job advertisement (Figure 6.2 on the next page), but in internal communication Sara repeatedly categorised it as a fundamental competence for contact with both clients and interpreters. In sum, speaking Arabic as a foreign language is an asset, a cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) highly valued at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, but not a requirement for becoming a counsellor.

Ihr Profil

- Abgeschlossene psychosoziale Ausbildung oder mehrjährige Erfahrung im Asylbereich
- Sehr gute Deutsch- und PC-Kenntnisse (MS Office)
- Kommunikations- und Teamfähigkeit und die Fähigkeit, selbstständig zu arbeiten
- Hohe Belastbarkeit und Flexibilität
- Eigene Migrationsbiographie von Vorteil
- Fremdsprachenkenntnisse (Farsi/Dari und/oder Arabisch) von Vorteil

Figure 6.2: Clipping from a job add for the post of a counsellor at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* issued in September 2016. The cutout shows the description of the applicant's profile, listing (my translation): 'a completed psycho-social training or several years' experience in the asylum sector', 'very good German and computer knowledge (MS Office)', 'capacity for communication and teamwork and the capacity to work autonomously', 'high resilience and flexibility', 'own migration biography an advantage' and 'knowledge in foreign languages (Farsi/Dari and/or Arabic) an advantage'.

There is no fully institutionalised differentiation between Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking counsellors. Formally, Arabic-speaking counsellors have the same tasks as the other counsellors: individual counselling with clients (speakers of various languages, including varieties of Arabic), communication with administrative bodies from e. g. the city of Vienna, thematic workshops for larger groups of clients (external and in-house) etc. Nevertheless, a differentiation among the staff based on linguistic competences is present and consequential. More so as its presence destabilises another boundary, which in turn becomes more openly negotiated and affirmed: that between (paid) Arabic-speaking counsellors and (mostly volunteer) interpreters. As I repeatedly observed, Arabic-speaking counsellors tend to assume and/or be asked to perform ad-hoc tasks that they are not originally paid for and which overlap with those of the interpreters, i. e. translation of documents, phone calls to clients, or even interpreting for their colleagues. In the employment structure, the boundaries between *counsellor* and *interpreter* are firmly institutionalised (as we have previously seen): counsellors are employed full- or part-time; interpreters are in most cases volunteers, except for two, who hold a so-called minimal employment (*geringfügige Beschäftigung*).

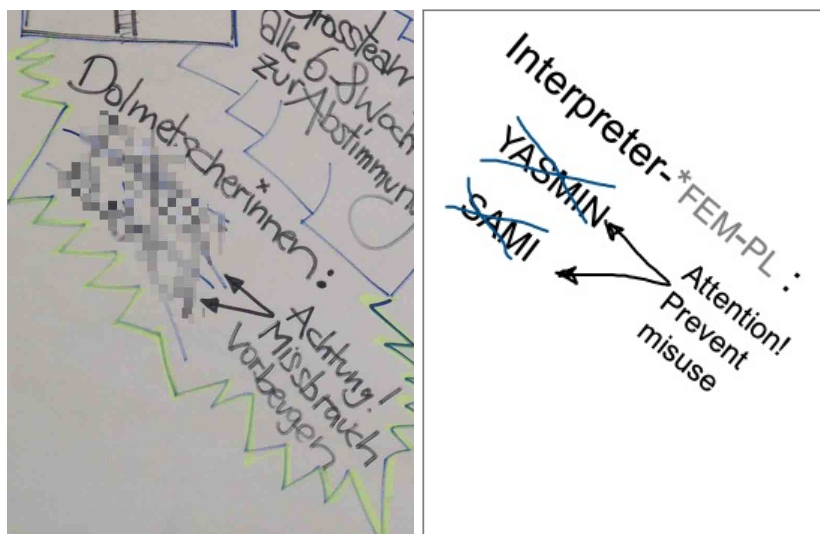


Figure 6.3: Clipping from a poster made by the staff at the annual reunion (*Klausur* 'closed meeting') in May 2016. Photograph (June 29, 2016, on the left) and my translation (on the right).

However, boundaries are blurred in the division of tasks, leading – whether it be by their own initiative or not – to extra work for the Arabic-speaking counsellors.

This situation of blurred boundaries and conflicts in the allocation and assumption of language-related work-tasks was something that the staff members and the management, Sara, were very well aware of. It was the topic of recurrent discussions in staff meetings. A rather drastic formulation was, for instance, found in one of the posters which were produced to gather and document the results of the discussions at the annual *Klausur* ('closed staff meeting')²⁷ in May 2016 (see Figure 6.3): *Missbrauch*, that is 'misuse'.

On the poster of which a clipping is shown in Figure 6.3, the specific responsibilities of individual team members are laid out. The named role designator (Agha 2007: 249) *interpreters* and two names of staff members, namely Yasmin and Sami, are singled out, added in a sort of list below the role designator and

²⁷ At these annual meetings, counsellors convene to assess their own work processes and structures and decide on new directions to take in the future.

– crossed out. There is a morally charged ontology-claim in this little list in the corner of the poster which makes unmistakably clear: just because they speak Arabic, Yasmin and Sami *are not* and *ought not to be used as* interpreters. Because this, it says, would classify as *misuse* of their labour power.

I see this little fragment of discourse as a *mise-en-scène* of ‘role conflict’. The staff members discern counsellors (among them generalist, social counsellors and specialized legal counsellors) from interpreters. Interpreters, in turn, are subdivided in part-time employed interpreters (of which there are only two) and a large number of volunteers. Counsellors are hired by the NGO based on certain professional requirements concerning training and experience (see, for instance, Figure 6.2 on page 307), interpreters are mostly former clients or siblings of clients, i. e. mostly asylum seekers without an Austrian work permit. There are no formal requirements. As a result, the order is not only asymmetrical with regards to the labour relations (paid vs. unpaid work), but results furthermore in an institutional order that is to a significant degree differentiated in terms of citizenship. We see that on the one hand, these professional *roles* (as emic role designators) are firmly institutionalised positions associated with professional paid work versus unskilled volunteer work respectively. A linguistic repertoire that transgresses the boundaries between these positions is seen as a potential source of trouble. And this is where the question of roles and the boundaries between them become salient in the first place – in the moment where the clear boundaries of imaginations of the prototypical roles of counsellor and interpreter become unsettled.

Staff members recurrently re-draw these boundaries between the roles of (Arabic-speaking) counsellors and interpreters. The contingencies of everyday work practices however regularly lead to their transgression and, as a consequence, to their re-affirmation. An example is the following interaction I recorded in my fieldnotes (February, 28, 2017): It is a Tuesday morning and as usual, I am at the office for the staff meeting. Today, Sara and Sami (who was at that time Sara’s deputy) are not in the office. As I arrive at nine o’clock, I find Alexandra (the legal counsellor) and Yasmin at their desks, they seem to be busy. So I decide to leave them alone and go to the kitchen, passing by the front desk where Benjamin, the civil service person, is talking to a woman in the waiting room. He is explaining to the lady that the counselling centre will remain closed today.

The lady seems to have difficulties to understand the details of what Benjamin is telling her. He addresses the language situation: *today*, they would have to speak German because, since it is not a counselling day, there are no interpreters present at the office. He then changes his way of speaking, passing to a more elliptic, reduced utterances. They sound like citations to me, for their stereotypicality: leaving out some of the inflectional morphology and replacing schwas with full vowels, it seems that he is enacting a client's voice. But it looks like he is doing this consciously, with an instrumental intention of making himself understood. After a while, he says he needs to get Yasmin – for *interpreting*. He goes to the backoffice and comes back with Yasmin. Yasmin starts to talk to the woman and Benjamin leaves the scene. He joins me in the kitchen, gasping, with a posture that I cannot readily read – annoyed, bleak, strained. I ask him whether he is alright, he answers evasively, and I leave him be. I go to the conference room where the staff meeting should be taking place. I sit down with Mona and Alexandra and we have a chat. When Yasmin and Benjamin join us, Alexandra approaches Yasmin saying *du hast jetzt nicht wirklich übersetzt?* ('you did not really translate now?'). Yasmin corrects her saying that she interpreted which is something distinct from translation, *interpreting is an oral activity*.

There are different layers to this interaction – Alexandra not only sanctions Yasmin's willingness to fill in for the missing interpreter, she also sanctions Benjamin, the civil service person, who is made a bystander to this exchange. Yasmin evades an answer and a discussion and corrects Alexandra's usage of the term *übersetzen* ('to translate'). Alexandra clearly addresses the boundary that has been crossed here: Yasmin should not be doing language work for someone else. It does not seem to be relevant to Alexandra nor Yasmin (nor the others present) that Yasmin took over the interaction from Benjamin rather than doing the mediator. It is thus not so much the triadic constellation which is at stake here, no: it is Benjamin, the 18 year old civil servant from the front desk who had recruited Yasmin to do a job which was usually done by him and a volunteer. Yasmin who was notorious among the staff for taking over too much work, too many responsibilities. The participation framework, Alexandra addressing Yasmin, with Benjamin as an overhearer, and Yasmin evading the question, does not only enact the hierarchy where Yasmin is the one to make decisions and Benjamin to execute his tasks, it is also the picture of a complex, layered

responsibility for what has just happened. There is Yasmin who accepted to take over the interaction with the client, which she should not have done, Benjamin who asked her, which he should not have done, and perhaps, Alexandra herself who let it happen. So, there is a moral interpellation to everyone present in this interaction to care for the integrity of Yasmin's role and of her labour force.

But however sedimented these boundaries, the Arabic-speaking counsellors fill in with their linguistic labour whenever interpreters are absent or scarce, or when the interpreters' expertise – as the untrained volunteers they are – is deemed insufficient to the task at hand, as is often the case with the translation of documents. The professional position of a counsellor being categorised as speaker of Arabic is hence a precarious one. It is characterised by an unequal distribution of labour, namely extra, language-related tasks with respect to colleagues who do not have specific language resources in Arabic. In addition, this exposes these languaged counsellors' professional position to the symbolic risk of slipping across the fuzzy boundaries to unpaid language work done by volunteers or other helping tasks.

These problematics can be understood as unintended consequences of institutional practice (Lawrence et al. 2009: 11) and the process of institutionalisation of language work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* which builds on constructed and contingent dichotomies – paid work vs. unpaid work, skilled vs. unskilled work, 'marked' or 'languaged' linguistic repertoires of Arabic speakers and 'unmarked' ones, citizens vs. noncitizens – which overlap and come in alignments and correlations, but remain too messy to produce an isometrical order of superposable axes of differentiation. Paid counsellors sometimes speak Arabic, unpaid interpreters have sometimes considerable training or experience, for instance. Let us take a closer look at the subject-making dynamics underlying the work of the 'languaged' staff members.

Skillful usage of repertoires

In a language biographical interview which involved the work on a language portrait (B. Busch 2018a,b; see the portrait in Figure 6.4 on the next page),²⁸ I asked

²⁸ This subsection presents a revised and extended version of the subsection 5.3 *Effective communication: Being a (good) counsellor* in J. Hassemer & Garrido (2020: 154–157).

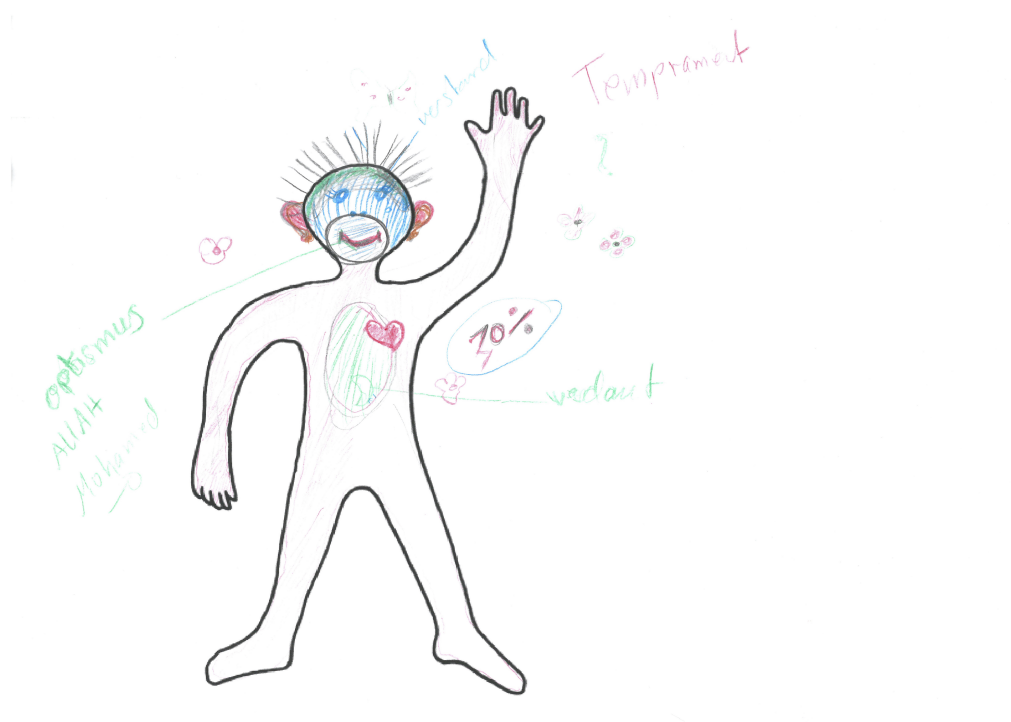


Figure 6.4: Language portrait by Yasmin, filled in during an interview on October 10, 2016. On the left, an arrow connects the words *Optimismus* ('optimism'), *ALLAH*, and *Mohamed* with the mouth she has painted and evidenced with a circle in the head of the silhouette.

Yasmin about her use of Arabic at work. In the sequences which followed, Yasmin and I co-constructed 'Arabic' as an effective resource when communicating with her clients. In her accounts, Yasmin takes a professional distance to the persona enacted in the narrated events, decoupling her Arabic-speaking biographical self and even 'Arabic' as a named language from the communicative resource she actually uses.

Actually, the interview was a rather difficult, clumsy situation for both of us – I did not have much experience with the interview technique and Yasmin was obviously not at ease with the topic and the form (months later we talked about the interview again, she seemed a little embarrassed that she 'had not been able

to help me' with the interview and I apologised to her for the trouble). When I formulated and reformulated the instruction to the task, she readily picked up the term *Dialekt* ('dialect') I had mentioned as one example among others for *ways of speaking* she might want to give room in the silhouette. She then described the *dialects of Arabic* as a resource she could use to create intimacy and the usage of certain *words and sayings* as to give her better access to her clients, to make them talk. But when I asked her to locate the varieties of Arabic (she had just told me that she was particularly affectionate of Iraqi varieties) in relation to the silhouette, she refused, explaining to me: *nein ich war* (.) *nee ich darf nicht dass ich* (.) *ich werd sicher nicht reden jetzt über die iraker weil die iraker eben weil sie weil ihr dialekt schön ist so is das jetzt* (nee) ((chuckles)) *also* (-) *niemand hat eine speziellen platz jetzt bei mir* (.) *also es is* (-) *nichts* (-) *anhand* (-) *nein also* (-) *es is schön mal die dialekte zu hören aber das war_s dann=ja* ((chuckles)) ('no I was (.) nah I cannot that I (.) I will certainly not speak about the Iraqis now because the Iraqis well because they because their dialect is beautiful so it is (nah) ((chuckles)) anyway (-) nobody has a special place with me (.) anyway it is (-) nothing (-) on the basis of (-) no (-) anyways (-) it is nice to hear the dialects sometimes but that's it then=okay'). Her reply to my question seems to presuppose an insinuation from my part – or an unwanted uptake from a later audience of the interview – which she tries to fend off: that any sort of (aesthetic or affective) closeness *she* felt for the dialects could imply that she is, in fact, privileging certain clients over others. As if to underline the low affective significance of these language varieties, she inserted them as little flowers and a butterfly around the silhouette – they are pretty, but nothing more, and they are outside of her body. Whereas the threat of being evaluated as *unprofessional* is certainly an issue – which will be dealt with further below – she did, however, describe her use of her linguistic repertoire as instrumental in several sequences of the interview which followed – presenting herself as a skillful communicator who happened to be an Arabic speaker rather than the other way around.

Consider for instance how she organises her communication in Arabic into registers. She explains that she speaks with certain clients – the ones she categorises as *konservativ* ('conservative') – in a specific form of Arabic. This register she characterises by naming its emblematic words *Allah* and *Muhammad* as well as idiomatic phrases containing them (e. g., *إن شاء الله* [*'in šā' allah*] 'if God wills;

let's hope so', Almaany.com 2022). In her portrait she lists these two words below the term *Optimismus* ('optimism') and connects them with an arrow to the mouth she has painted and evidenced with a circle in the head of the silhouette (Figure 6.4 on page 312). She says she would not use these phrases in her private life – her mother, she says, "would not believe it". In the interactive context of the interview, she achieves a complex (dis)alignment with this "conservative" register – both as an object of the conversation at hand and as a figure of personhood (positioning levels 2, that is, in the narrating event, and level 3, towards relevant discourses, sensu Bamberg 1997). She connects positionings in at least three narrated interactive scenes, that is, (1) when she talks with clients, (2) in her *privatleben* ('private life') and (3) with her mother. She explains me that she performs the register (1) with clients, thus aligning with it, though not (2) with interlocutors in her 'private life' or (3) with her mother (disalignment, on the level of the narrated event). In her description, she distinguishes two registers to which contrasting figures of personhood are attached, a *conservative* one, which is characterised by religious terms and expressions (among them the ones listed in her language portrait, Figure 6.4 on page 312), and an unmarked one characterised by their absence (and thus probably a "secular" one). While she aligns more intimately with the secular register / persona (positioning level 3) that is characterised by the absence of the emblematic expressions, she attributes a specific, twofold effectiveness to them: It serves to induce the clients to accept the limited scope of action she has as a counsellor. And moreover, it also serves to give them *wenigstens* ('at least'), she says, some *hoffnung* ('hope') as they leave *ohne ergebnis auch* ("even without a result") from the counselling, describing the – as she terms it – somewhat "magical" effect of these expressions (*wie so ein magisches wort allah und muhammad*, 'like a magic word, Allah and Muhammad') on the psychological state of the clients (quotes from the interview with Yasmin, October 10, 2016). The two registers allow her to play with distance and closeness: She distances herself from the persona attached to the register she uses at work, a register she uses to achieve common ground with a subset of her clients.

Moreover, she expands the scope of this register beyond linguistic boundaries. In what precedes the following extract of an interview with her (Example 6.4), I ask her if it makes a difference to conduct counselling in Arabic or in German. She hesitates but finally rejects that idea, as it would rather depend on the individual.

As an example, she describes how she engages with young Afghan and Iranian clients through non- and paraverbal gestures – using body language, speaking more gently – saying they understand her because they had a “similar mentality”, although they are not Arabs. She goes on to explain the verbal dimension of achieving “understanding” (Example 6.4).

Example 6.4: Transcribed extract from an interview with Yasmin, October 10, 2016.

001	Yasmin:	aber (.) i i ich mach es so:,	<i>but I I I do it like tha:t</i>
002		dass ich:	<i>that I:</i>
003		ich weiß: zum beispiel (.) die	<i>I know: for example the</i>
		afghanen wenn sie: (.) sie	<i>Afghans when they: they</i>
		haben (.) immer wieder so (-)	<i>always have these Arabic</i>
		arabische begriffe?	<i>terms,</i>
004	Jonas:	mhm?	<i>uhu?</i>
005	Yasmin:	und ich kenne s:	<i>and I know th:</i>
006		diese arabische begriffe die sie	<i>these Arabic terms exactly</i>
		auch genau verwenden. =	<i>which they also use</i>
007		=und die: sag ich (die).	<i>and the:se I say (them)</i>
008		ich [sag] diese wörter.	<i>I say these words</i>
009	Jonas:	[mhm]	<i>mhm</i>
010	Yasmin:	nicht? =	<i>right</i>
011		=und sie freuen sich. =	<i>and they are happy</i>
012		=ah die is	<i>ah she is</i>
013		das spüren sie; =	<i>they feel it</i>
014		=aha die is von ()	<i>aha she is from ()</i>
015		sie ist näher.	<i>she is closer</i>
016		sie kommt näher; =ja?	<i>she comes closer right</i>
017	Jonas:	mhm	<i>mhm</i>
018	Yasmin:	nicht so wie:	<i>not a:s</i>
019		(-) die macht (irgendwie)	<i>(-) she does</i>
020		also sie fühlen sich dann	<i>so they feel more at ease,</i>
		wohler,	

The communicative effectiveness is not attributed to the comprehensive use of a shared language by Yasmin (as implied by the interviewer's question), but more to specific word forms and concepts which index a shared ground on which she can positively align with the clients. She introduces these forms – the *arabische begriffe* ("Arabic terms", Example 6.4, Line 003) – to me as her conversational partner as part of a specific knowledge about her clients' language practices. In the narrated event, they act as a shibboleth: she describes their effect (*sie freuen sich* "they are happy", Line 011). Then, embodying the voice of a client persona (Lines 012 and 014–019), she attributes an affective stance to the client persona (Line 013) that results in positive alignment (Line 020) with her in the narrated event. On the level of the narrating event, this narration elaborates the dimension of "understanding" she focuses on in her answer to my question about potential differences between counselling in Arabic and German.

This way, the effect of her using the shibboleth in the narrated event (positioning level 1) serves to construct an effectiveness of her approach on the level of the interaction with me in the interview (positioning level 2) which helps to construct a legitimate professional persona (positioning level 3). In the underlying logics of linguistic difference and miscommunication, Yasmin is able to position herself as someone who commands the creation of cultural and linguistic closeness as a resource or talent. While she constructs her knowledge of the register as somehow connected to her own "cultural" knowledge (viz. the argument of the "similar mentality" above), she does not explicitly position herself as really "culturally close", but leaves this ascription to the reported voice of her Afghan clients (Lines 12–19). Thereby she positions herself as a professional who deploys her knowledge (whether constructed as based on her biography or not) to create intimacy as a favourable condition for her work, in order to make her clients "feel more at ease". Language is thus co-constructed as a resource in this sequence, where linguistic performance, which comes with all sorts of indexical meanings, can serve to construct intimacy. This intimacy hinges not only on the recognisability of the register, but also on the (mis)recognition of the speaking subject as aligning with the attached figure of the conservative speaker and morals. In this instance, (mis)recognition is desirable to create favourable conditions for

her work – even if Yasmin risks being misrecognised to a certain degree as the religious “conservative” person she refuses to be.

Her professional positioning is thus characterised by a tension between a ‘private’ self and a ‘professional’ performance. The indexical meanings associated with what is constructed as Arabic can thus be reformulated as a resource. This is, however, at the expense of ‘buying into’ reified notions of Arabic speakerhood, which in other instances jeopardise the counsellors’ professional position, constructing them as more vulnerable than their colleagues. This imputed vulnerability – or threatened professionalism – forms another aspect of Arabic speakerhood at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* which is intimately related to the former, that of imputed intimacy with the client.

Vulnerability of the languaged Other

At the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, Arabic²⁹ as part of a counsellor’s linguistic repertoire is regarded as a vulnerable point, in the sense that it potentially undermines the counsellor’s professionalism. This issue comes up in narrated episodes (e. g. at staff meetings) of Arabic-speaking counsellors’ encounters with their clients: Here, being addressed as a speaker of Arabic was construed to come with an invitation to transgress defined institutional roles, for instance, to offer preferential treatment and extra services. Being recognised as a speaker of a linguistic variety of Arabic in these narrated episodes often explicitly points to a geographical origin or even religious affiliation (cf. Durrani 2020; Khan 2020) which can be used by the other to ground their claims for acts of solidarity. Sami, one of the Arabic speaking counsellors, had a name for the phenomenon: the *Bruder-Bruder- und Schwester-Schwester-Mentalität* (‘brother-brother and sister-sister mentality’, see Example 6.5, Line 041). At a meeting between Yasmin and Sami which I was allowed to join and record, a conversation developed on the norms of recognisability underlying Arabic speakerhood (see Example 6.5).

²⁹ This subsection presents a revised and extended version of the subsection 5.2 *Precariousness and misrecognition: Being addressed as an Arabic speaker* in J. Hassemer & Garrido (2020: 152–154).

Example 6.5: Transcribed extract from a meeting on Arabic terminology between Sami, Yasmin and myself, July 15, 2016.

001	Jonas:	habt ihr den eindruck dass sich die leute auf euch auch einstellen	<i>do you have the impression that the people also adjust themselves to you</i>
002	Yasmin:	nein	<i>no</i>
003	Jonas:	wenn sie reden	<i>when they speak</i>
004	Sami:	() bei mir schon	<i>() with me they do</i>
005	Yasmin:	vielleicht mit ihm ein bisschen	<i>maybe with him a little</i>
006	Jonas:	okee	<i>okay</i>
007	Yasmin:	weil sie weil sie hören das dass es nicht muttersprachlich ist	<i>because they because they hear it that it is not native <verbatim: 'mothertonguely'></i>
008	Sami:	genau	<i>exactly</i>
009	Yasmin:	also man hört das: is (-) dass arabisch nicht muttersprache ist	<i>so one can hear that is that Arabic is not mothertongue</i>
010	Jonas:	und (-) was machen sie dann	<i>and what do they do then</i>
011	Sami:	(-) sie (-) gehen entweder ähm (-) ((chuckles)) runter auf mein level	<i>they either go down erm ((chuckles)) to my level</i>
012	Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
013	Sami:	ja	<i>yes</i>
014	Yasmin:	die geschwindigkeit ((laughs))	<i>the rate ((laughs))</i>
015	Sami:	von der geschwindigkeit her	<i>regarding the rate</i>
017		und verwenden dann ähm (-) weil ich halt ägyptisches arabisch sprech	<i>and then they use erm because I speak Egyptian Arabic</i>
018	Yasmin:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
019	Jonas:	ja	<i>yes</i>
020	Sami:	und und und ähm (-) ich hab das glück (.) gott sei dank ähm dass viele andere (.) volksgruppen (.) ob das Syrer sind ob das iraker sind (- -) das schon auch können	<i>and and and erm I have the chance thank God erm that many other peoples be they Syrians or Iraqis know it as well</i>

	[...]	[...]
041 Sami:	und das ist auch der riesenvor weil (.) dieses bruder bruder und schwester schwester mentalität vor allem in der beratung	<i>and this is also a giant ad because (.) this brother brother and sister sister mentality especially in counselling</i>
042 Jonas:	((chuckles softly))	((chuckles softly))
043	(- -)	(- -)
044 Sami:	äh: was natürlich (-) sehr sehr mühsam is	<i>er: which is of course (-) very very tiresome</i>
045	(-) is für jemanden der muttersprachlich is viel viel schwieriger	<i>(-) is much much more difficult for someone who is a native <verbatim: 'mothertonguely'></i>
046	(-) weil das kommt häufig	<i>(-) because that happens often</i>
047 Jonas:	mhm (-)	<i>uhu (-)</i>
048 Sami:	bei mir kommt das nicht	<i>with me it does not happen</i>
049 Jonas:	okee	<i>okay</i>
050 Sami:	weil für sie (.) bin ich ein ausländer	<i>because for them (.) I am a foreigner</i>
051 Jonas:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
052 Yasmin:	()	()
053 Sami:	sie sie checken am anfang auch nicht warum warum warum kann der überhaupt irgendwie arabisch	<i>they they don't even understand at first why why why can he somehow <speak> Arabic at all</i>
054 Jonas:	((chuckles))	((chuckles))
055 Sami:	weil ich (-) (wie) auf n ersten blick auch nicht so ausschau	<i>because I (-) (like) at first glance also do not look that way</i>
056	und und und sie glauben das ist n österreichischer (-) der halt zum spaß irgendwie arabisch gelernt hat	<i>and and and they believe this is an Austrian (-) who apparently somehow learnt Arabic for pleasure</i>

At this meeting, Yasmin, by virtue of her having had a formal education in the Arabic language, was supposed to give directions to Sami on technical vocabulary (such as legal terminology) needed for counselling. There was a lot of laughter, stylisation of clients' voices and anecdotes of how they managed to achieve understanding. At a certain point I asked the two whether they thought that clients would adapt as well to their ways of speaking. And interestingly, there is immediately a differentiation made on which both of them agree (Example 6.5, Lines 004–009): Yasmin is a native, that is, her Arabic is *muttersprachlich* ('mothertonguely') – hence the clients do not accommodate to her speech. Sami is perceived as a non-native (*nicht-muttersprachlich* 'non-mothertonguely'). Of course this does not mean that there is no accommodation whatsoever by clients towards Yasmin; but this shows something about how the language of the languaged worker is imagined in professional discourse at the counselling centre: namely, that there is a difference between a naturalised native competence and an acquired skill. This rather widespread cultural model of the native speaker with often detrimental effects for the speakers (Love 2016; Musha Doerr 2009; Rosa 2016; Silverstein 1996) is given a specific significance in this context by Sami. Before he mentions what the model means to him, in terms of embodying Arabic speakerhood, Sami explains in which way he perceives the clients to be accommodating their speech to his (Lines 010–020): by slowing down their speech rate and adapting to the Egyptian variety he is familiar with³⁰. But not only do the clients accommodate to *him* – not being perceived as a native also has a distinct advantage, he explains. It means he does not have to deal with what he calls the *Bruder-Bruder- und Schwester-Schwester-Mentalität* ('brother-brother and sister-sister mentality', see Example 6.5, Line 041–048) – a concept which draws on a somewhat caricatured, stereotypical, culturalised persona of *the Arab client* who pretends to be treated with intimacy. This, so he says, is *sehr sehr mühsam* ('very very tiresome', Line 044) to work with and for a native *viel viel schwieriger* ('much much more difficult', Line 0045).

The co-constructed notion of Arabic speakerhood emerging in this interaction

30 His repertoire is subject to a triple scaling: a comparably low competence (*runter auf mein level* 'down to my level', Line 011), slow speech rate (Lines 014–015), and small geographical scope (Lines 017–020).

is problematised in a way that is not random: it is construed as indexing intimacy for the client Other, which has to be fended off, in order to function properly in one's job. In other words: someone's linguistic repertoire makes their professional positions problematic. But – and this is crucial – it is not (the Arabic) language *per se* which induces this effect, yet a specific form fitting a naturalised model of speakerhood. This presupposes recognisability, which – as co-constructed by Sami, Yasmin and myself – hinges not just on the the form of his utterances, but on his physical appearance: *sie sie checken am anfang auch nicht warum warum warum kann der überhaupt irgendwie arabisch weil ich (-) (wie) auf n ersten blick auch nicht so ausschau* ('they they don't even understand at first why why why can he somehow < speak > Arabic at all because I (like) at first glance also do not look that way', Example 6.5, Line 053–055). The notion of *Arabic speakerhood* thus appears here in a reified form, connected not only to notions of native speakerhood, but also of *race* (Love 2016; Rosa 2016, 2019). The underlying understanding of language in Sami's narrative (on how he is usually not read as 'an Arab', Line 053–056) is thus naturalised as something inherent to the subject which can be discerned from an acquired competence. This naturalised notion draws on a differentiation made between native and non-native which can be mapped onto the difference between Yasmin who is recognised as 'Arab' and himself who passes as *White*. Hence, in the end, it is not language *per se* which matters, but crucially, in Rosa's words, there is a "co-naturalization of language and race" in place, as epitomised in "the notion of *looking like a language* and *sounding like a race*" (Rosa 2019: 2). So when, in the following, we look into the problematisation of Arabic speakerhood, there seems to be a need for caution that not all speakers are construed as equally embraced by this notion and 'touched' by its indexicality. Arabic speakerhood is a racialising notion.

To a certain extent, this whole complex field of indexicalities is part of the languaged counsellors' everyday work and they have developed counterstrategies of *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries'). For example, at times, a routine task such as contacting a presumed real estate broker for a client may turn out to be problematic. I want to exemplify this with an event that occurred to Mona and was discussed at a staff meeting on February 07, 2017. In the entextualisation of the event as incident and as an object of commentary at the staff meeting, strategies of setting boundaries were institutionally regarded as necessary for the

Arabic-speaking counsellor and this was intimately connected to the positioning of the counsellor with regards to language.

The episode which I recorded in my fieldnotes was told to the other staff members by Sami, the then deputy head of staff. He tells the others that Mona – who was on leave that day, that is, not present at the meeting – had made a phone call for a client to someone whom she had expected to be a real estate agent. But, quite unexpectedly, she had a man on the phone whom she recognised as *Hussein A*³¹. Hussein A. is rather well known to the staff. He was convicted for real estate fraud against clients of the counselling centre and the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* had helped to persecute him. Now, at this staff meeting, Sami tells the others how during the call, Hussein A. would have soon figured out that Mona too was an Arabic speaker. As Hussein A. noticed that Mona spoke Arabic – according to Sami – he tried to continue the conversation in Arabic. Mona continued in German though. He then said things like *we are all Muslims*, asking her why she would not want to speak Arabic with him. He also said he wanted to meet with representatives of the counselling centre and ask them why they complicated his life by suing him. Sami says Mona had reacted *correctly*. He says the behaviour of Hussein A. – his wish to make contact with the counselling centre and the sense of threat he was displaying – was indicative of their ways of dealing with him in general being fruitful.

With an analytic look at this episode, we may distinguish two narrative levels (cf. Wortham & Reyes 2020: 3) – a narrated event (corresponding to positioning level 1 in Bamberg 1997), that is the episode told by Sami³², and a narrating event (positioning level 2), that is, the interaction in which the episode is being told³³. On the level of the narrated event, we have Mona as a representative of the counselling centre and of the client sitting beside her. We have Hussein A. and his real estate business which is considered fraudulent by the staff members. Now Hussein A. does two things: (1) recognising Mona as a speaker of Arabic, he tries to achieve a switch of denotational code, mobilising a number of identity ascriptions connected to Arabic speakerhood. (2) Referring to the history he

31 A pseudonym.

32 The narrated event, to be precise, presupposes an exchange between Mona and Sami and thus a further narrating event in which the narrated event was first co-constructed.

33 Of course this narrating event becomes a narrated event in its own right through its entextualisation in my fieldnotes which are recontextualised in this chapter.

shares with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* – that they had sued him – he asks for cooperation. We have two levels of scale here: the individuals Mona and Hussein A. and the institutions, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and Hussein A.'s business. Crucial for the narrative positioning is how alignments and disalignments on these two levels of scale are ordered in parallel: alignment in shared Arabic speakerhood and cooperation between the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and the real estate business and disalignment in Mona's refusal to speak Arabic – continuing to speak German – and maintaining the institutional stance against Hussein A. On the level of the narrating event, that is in the staff meeting where the story is being told, Sami evaluates Mona's reaction as 'correct', and thus her language choice as effective in this situation. Because Sami is not just a colleague and a speaker of Arabic himself, but the deputy manager of the team, Mona's way of dealing with the encounter is entextualised as an institutionally sanctioned example of good practice. Sami does not exactly naturalise negative stereotypes connected to Arabic speakerhood here – but he does problematise language as a site of trouble for Mona in her capacity as a professional and as representative of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

To sum up: in the narrated event, *language* – both as an embodied repertoire and denotational code in practice – emerges as a terrain of alignment and disalignment. And *language* is connected to a *field of indexicalities* (Jaffe 2016) in which various dimensions of differentiation are lumped together – linguistic repertoire, ethnicising or racial and religious ascriptions. In the narrating event then, *language* is entextualised as a crucial factor for Mona's professional integrity, namely for a stable embodiment of her role as counsellor. Whether Sami and the others present really buy into the indexical stereotyping underlying this logic or not, what remains here is that for a certain category of individuals, their linguistic repertoire is understood to be connected to a vulnerability of the professional role.

Interpellation and vulnerability

The episode that is told during a staff meeting constitutes³⁴ – and is presented as – a critical moment for the professional integrity of the institution and its representative Mona. While the event is delicate per se, even independently of the counsellor being languaged as a speaker of Arabic, this aspect becomes central in the way the event is entextualised in the narrative. The man on the phone, who is categorised as a fraudster with victims among the clients of the institution, is attempting to establish cooperation with the CC. The encounter is recounted by Sami, who is Mona's colleague and, as the deputy head of staff, her superior. As such he ratifies her response to the man on the phone as appropriate. "Arabic" figures here in a scene both of recognition and misrecognition. He narrates how the man identifies "Arabic" (i. e. no specific variety but a bounded, named language) as part of Mona's linguistic repertoire and tries to achieve a switch of language. The fact that Mona does not comply with this becomes an effective counteract in Sami's narrative as he subsequently explains how the man connects the overt request to speak a linguistic variety qualifying as "Arabic" with figures of identity (such as being a Muslim, an Arab). Denying linguistic alignment becomes thus a way to maintain a professional distance, with language constructed as the site of performance of a shared ground. Such shared ground is perceived as an entry point for undermining the counsellor's professional position. Episodes of this type are recurring in my observations of Arabic-speaking counsellors' self-presentation at staff meetings, especially Yasmin shared these kinds of encounters from time to time: the counsellors recount how they are recognised as speakers of Arabic. This recognition is met with attempts by their interlocutor to deploy it towards their own ends (at odds with institutional procedures) – attempts that the counsellors manage to contain. This seems to function as a re-affirmative positioning of the counsellor's professionalism while, of course, reiterating the presupposition that the presence of Arabic in an individual's linguistic repertoire jeopardises their professional persona. This assumption is a recurring element of the institutional discourse on

34 This subsection (in continuation of the preceding one) presents a revised and extended version of the subsection 5.2 *Precariousness and misrecognition: Being addressed as an Arabic speaker* in J. Hassemer & Garrido (2020: 152–154).

counsellors who are constructed as Arabic speakers. It systematically exposes the languaged counsellors' professional personae to a misrecognition risk.

Being addressed as a speaker of Arabic works as an interpellation in a process of subject-making (Butler 1997a), an address carrying a field of indexicalities of morals, race, religion and language attached to Arabic speakerhood to which the addressed is bound to respond in some way or the other. This is a sort of primary vulnerability of the speaking subject to being addressed by the Other and to having one's social position temporarily fixed by such an interpellation (Butler 1997a: 26–27). Being addressed by the Other is a sort of precondition for inhabiting an intelligible social position, but it also contains a violence in the sense that entails subordination to pre-established categories, in this case that of Arabic speakerhood which entails all sorts of indexical meanings beyond Mona's or Sami's immediate control. In the context of the counselling centre, this condition of vulnerability is not equally distributed among all professionals (cf. the notion of *precariousness* as unequally distributed human condition in Butler 2009), but concentrated in those individuals we could call *languaged workers*.

Such primary vulnerability has been described by Butler (2004a, 2009) in her later work as a shared human condition of precariousness or dependency on the Other. Precariousness becomes *precarity*, a politically induced condition of unequal exposure to risks and violence of certain lives, through unequal protection of bodies and unequal distribution of wealth among populations (J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020, building on Butler 2009). In the case at hand, the evaluation of Mona's response to the address by Hussein A., precariousness is construed in a symbolic dimension, concerning the negotiation of professional positions, that is, a vulnerability to a hailing into Arabic speakerhood. As such, one might argue, there is no direct effect in terms of precarity, that is to say, job (in)security and work conditions. But this is only true as long as the counsellor is able to contain the imputed risk. And we have seen that this is not always the case. In spite of efforts among colleagues to support them, the onus to do so falls on the languaged counsellors. I am aware at least of one case where the imputed inability to set boundaries in the ways expected ultimately led to a contract termination. This is a case where the unequal distribution of symbolic risk results in an unequally secured access to resources and thus precarity. In the following section I look into how access to volunteer language work – which,

as we have seen above (Section 6.2), is valorised in several dimensions relevant for those entering the Austrian welfare system and job market – is regulated by the counsellors as gatekeepers building on situated, construed notions of linguistic competences on the one hand, and of precariousness/precarity on the other hand.

6.4 The vulnerable Other or the making of volunteer language workers

Dolmetscher, ‘interpreters’ – being the minute keeper at the staff meeting on January 23, 2018, Yasmin announces the usual first point on the agenda. She succinctly adds that interpreting workforce for Arabic is currently short in supply – *wir haben nicht viel arabisch* | *wir haben nur zwei arabisch* ‘we don’t have much Arabic | we have only two Arabic’ – rephrasing a note from the minutes of the previous meeting (*Brauchen Arabisch-Dolmetscher*innen!* ‘[we] need interpreters [for] Arabic!’). This is taken up by her colleague Helena who reminds her of a potential candidate she had proposed to her at a previous occasion. She says he is coming over that day, for the *Recherche-Eck* together with his father. Helena suggests Yasmin might take the opportunity and talk to him. *Äh er ist minderjährig, Sara*, ‘er he is a minor, Sara’, says Yasmin, addressing her superior instead of her colleague Helena. *Er is siebzehn*, ‘he is seventeen’, Helena throws in. Briefly hesitating, Yasmin then agrees to talk to him. Helena explains: the young man had been there, at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, with his father. The father had asked whether there was volunteer work for his son, ‘this would be so great for him’ – *das wäre so super für ihn*, Helena paraphrases his words. *Aber sie suchen selbst Wohnung*, Sara now intervenes – ‘but they are themselves looking for an apartment.’ Helena confirms and Sara adds: *ich find das so schwierig die Jungen* ‘I find that so difficult [problematic] these youngsters.’ She clears her throat. *Ich find wir dürfen auch dann nicht ähm n unterschied machen weil er ein junger mann is und bei der jungen frau sagen wir nein sie soll nicht* – ‘I find we are not supposed to make a difference then because he is a young man and for a young woman we say no she can’t.’ Sara is hinting at Jaleh, a young woman who had come to volunteer for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*: at the previous meetings, it had been

decided that she should ‘only’ work as an interpreter and not for the *Recherche-Eck* on the grounds that she was herself searching an apartment at that time. This is what I can reconstruct from my audio-recordings as well as the minutes of previous weeks’ meetings. Helena seems to construe the same referent series of events and she resolves what is jointly constructed as a misunderstanding: *Na is eh nicht fürs Recherche-Eck; er wär für do...für beratung* – ‘not for the Recherche-Eck anyways; he would be [there] for inter-...for counselling’. Helena explains: he wants to use the *Recherche-Eck* together with his father (*as a client*) and he wants to volunteer as an interpreter for counselling. *Okee ...okee ...okee*, she got it, Sara relinquishes. Helena explains that while she did tell the father that his son was still quite young, she also had felt bad saying no to him (i. e. denying the possibility to do volunteer work as an interpreter). She had not seen any particular reason against it. *Ja, ausprobieren*, Sara concedes – ‘try [it] out’. *We got to try this out* is a fitting paraphrase for the outcome of much of what is going to be discussed with regards to new volunteer candidates that day. Sara opines that the young guy will not stay for long anyway, he’ll have other things in mind than the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. He might have been pushed by his father to do volunteer work or maybe the volunteering might turn out to be an excuse to get off the father’s radar – *Alibi Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, Svenja throws in with a chuckle. Helena concludes *ja, man kann ja mal schauen* ‘yah, we can see [how it will turn out] ...’

This vignette gives an insight into the staff meeting as a backstage space where access to volunteer language work is regulated. Previously, we have seen how volunteer language workers ‘invest’ – and are made to invest – in their moral and legal citizenship by engaging in volunteer work, hoping to gain – in Bourdieusian terms – capital that is convertible on markets of citizenship (see Section 6.2). Such an investment in citizenship (as I have framed it) presupposes that candidates are able to access (volunteer) language work in the first place. Similar to recruitment procedures into paid work, this entails some sort of gatekeeping procedure in which candidates reformulate their communicative repertoires as resources or skills relevant to the job (not merely language competences, as we shall see below, cf. Roberts 2013) or more so, given the backstage character of the procedure, to *have them reformulated* by the staff. Thus, we are dealing with yet another instance of capital conversion here, one which happens before or when volunteer work is

being accessed by a candidate. In the context of volunteering at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, the staff meeting emerges as a crucial site where communicative repertoires become reformulated as resources with capital value. In that very process, the staff, in turn, end up in the position of gatekeepers. But what the above vignette illustrates in particular, is the challenges experienced by the staff not so much when speculating with linguistic volunteer labour force supply and demand (cf. Duchêne & Daveluy 2015), but crucially, when, on top, dealing with their role as gatekeepers. In the above example, ‘Arabic’ had just been declared a wanted resource; a linguistic resource the young candidate could provide. But his age, and especially the potential dependency on his father is seen as problematic in terms of moral responsibility towards the volunteer-to-be. The decision is deferred. Conscious of their role as gatekeepers for the valuable resources which a position as a volunteer worker with an NGO provides for a young displaced person in Austria on the one hand, and the potentially exploitative nature of that very same labour relationship on the other, Helena, Yasmin and Sara struggle to come to a satisfactory conclusion (and in fact, they do not come up with a conclusion at all that day).

Volunteer interpreters at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* are in the majority not formally trained as interpreters, though some of them have had previous experiences in the field – as, for example, Jamal who worked for the foreign armed forces before he had left Afghanistan. Thus, when counsellors look out for candidates to become volunteer interpreters or volunteers for the *Recherche-Eck*, they rely on a range of criteria which, at least in part, they assess by and for themselves. For instance – *are their language competencies sufficient? Are they emotionally fit? Trustworthy and reliable? Are the motives behind the desire to become a volunteer compatible with the way volunteer work is constructed at the Beratungsstelle Wohnen?* These questions and others, which were discussed at the staff meetings in January and February 2018, constitute not just an instrument of gatekeeping, of sorting who is in and who is out; they function to *make* the volunteer language labour force. That is, they function to construct and regiment the volunteer labour force at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Del Percio 2018a; Urciuoli 2016; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013). Indeed, this sort of scrutinising is, at times, applied to long-standing volunteers too when there is a perception among the staff that, for instance, a volunteer is not doing a good job, or consideration for a volunteer who is understood to

be personally going through a hard time. Thus, the practice described above functions – and not just in the case of deferred decisions – as a sort of prolonged gatekeeping process or, even more appropriately, as a continuous monitoring and management of the volunteer labour force. A central discursive means of this practice consists in constructing figures (Park 2021) of volunteer workers in a process of narrative entextualisation of staff members' observations, experiences, perceptions of the volunteers and their work in the context of the staff meeting. As the above vignette illustrates, there is a self-conscious, reflexive element to this construction of the languaged professional Other. When Helena says she feels bad about saying no to the young man and when Yasmin objects that he is a minor, they do not just display being conscious that their decisions have consequences, but by doing this, they project figures of moral and professional selves. In this section, I argue that the construction of figures of the professional Other are to be understood, at the same time, as constructions of the staff's professional selves. The 'making' of volunteer language workers means allowing someone to become a volunteer worker (giving or denying access), discursively calibrating volunteer candidates' entextualised behaviour against figures of what is understood to be a (good) volunteer worker, and finally, reinstating and thereby reassuring the origo of such factual gatekeeping and narrative construal. Before I turn to the mechanism of narrative construal, I want to reconstruct the making of volunteer language workers in its procedural dimension, looking into the institutionalised procedures and scripts that are usually followed when a new candidate is proposed, and the blanks left open within these scripts and procedures. This is to provide the reader with some more background knowledge on the relevant practices, but also to further explore the particularities of the labour relationship between volunteers, the staff and the organisation.

Becoming a volunteer worker at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*

The process of recruitment into volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is only partly formalised. After some sort of mutual interest between the volunteer candidate and the staff – usually in the person of the volunteers' coordinators Yasmin (interpreting) and Alena (*Recherche-Eck*) – has been established, the future volunteer would generally come to the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* for a few trial

sessions in real life counselling situations. At these occasions, they would also sit down with Yasmin – or with Alena, if they come for the *Recherche-Eck* – to talk about the job, receive information and instructions regarding regulations and expectations (based on the interpreting guidelines) and sign a volunteer's agreement. In this three-page document, the exact branch of the NGO (for instance, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*), the task area the volunteer is going to be engaged with and the responsible contact person of the NGO branch are put on record, as well as the starting date (and, if applicable, the end date) and the frequency / number of working hours per week. It contains a number of paragraphs on how the parties can end the volunteer work relationship (laying out a preferred procedure, but no specific terms nor liabilities), on refunding costs, insurance (volunteers are insured for liabilities and occupational accidents), the issuing of certificates and a confidentiality / data protection agreement.

The document thus provisionally fixes the work relationship between the organisation and volunteers and the volunteers' work trajectories, by putting in writing a number of its key parameters. I understand this document as an attempt at institutionalising, that is, at putting into order and fixing, the messiness of blurred institutional roles (of being a potential client and agent of the organisation at the same time) and of the rather unstable work trajectories and relationships (which is potentially the case in many other contexts of volunteering too, but exacerbated here given the poor economic stability and legal security of great part of the volunteers³⁵). The contract provides a range of basic liabilities granted to the volunteer by the organisation and vice-versa (such as the above mentioned insurance for work-related accidents and commitment to confidentiality on work-related issues).

Decisions on whether and how to employ a volunteer (as an interpreter or at the *Recherche-Eck*) are discussed at the staff meeting. Here, observations are gathered and scrutinised for relevant cues: *how good are the competences in German*

35 The instability of living conditions, in economic and legal terms, is a factor that has been noted as impeding the volunteer engagement of migrants in Austria in the first report on volunteering issued by the *Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz* ('Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection') in 2009 (Reinprecht 2009: 140). The situation of refugees volunteering for refugee aid is, however, a very specific one, given the circumstances laid out above (systemic incentives and the very specific demand on the side of the organisation in terms of linguistic repertoires).

and /or English? In the case of the Recherche-Eck, do they have sufficient computer literacy? Which are their motives? Are they old enough? Is it their own decision to do volunteer work? Do they understand what the job will consist of? Do they expect to get a paid position on the long run? Or an internship? How are their own housing conditions – are they themselves searching for an apartment? This is the range of questions which were discussed at the meetings I recorded in January and February 2018. In the data, there are instances where a staff member has found a new candidate they retain fit for the job and propose them to their peers, and others where the candidate already went through a work trial which is then discussed. Sometimes, these questions are not only discussed with reference to new arrivals on the job – also long-standing volunteers can become subjects of such scrutiny, for instance, when it is felt that their wellbeing is at risk or the quality of their work is decreasing.

In many ways, this process resembles instances of gatekeeping in recruitment procedures (cf. Roberts 2013, who, however, deals with the ‘frontstage’ part of the procedure, namely job interviews). That is, these ‘backstage’ encounters form a procedure by which, ultimately, access to volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is granted or denied/ended. Looking at the volunteer as a speaking subject, the staff meeting is a space where a step in capital conversion (sensu Bourdieu 1986) happens, that is, where the volunteers’ communicative and affective repertoires become reformulated as communicative *resources* (for instance, as ‘German competence’, ‘computer literacy’ or the ability to set affective boundaries) that can be used at work. This entails the entextualisation, enregisterment and objectification of communicative display as indexes of communicative and affective resources (the “thinginess” of language, Urciuoli 2016: 469, see also Silverstein 1996: 290) and the attribution of value to these linguistic resources (in the sense of use/exchange or added value, cf. Heller 2003, 2010b; Heller & Duchêne 2016; but also, more broadly, indexical value, sensu Agha 2007; Silverstein 2003, cf. also Agha 2011; Johnstone 2013). The question is then, which rationalities underlie these processes of valorisation and undergird choices in the assumption, maintenance and allocation of linguistic volunteer labour force, as well as its management and regimentation (cf. Boutet 2001, 2008). In other words: How are speaking subjects construed as volunteer workers?

Looking at a somewhat different set of societal contexts, business advertise-

ment and the state management of the unemployed, such processes have been described through the conceptual lenses of *language speculations* (Duchêne & Daveluy 2015) and *language investment* (Duchêne 2016; Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018) stressing the prevalence of strategic rationalities guiding language choices and practices in the respective contexts under investigation. These rationalities result in attempts at 'reading' and anticipating the (linguistic) market through cost-benefit logics and may run counter the self-images of speakers who become the target of such processes. Under these rationalities, speaking subjects are construed as *bundles of skills* (Urciuoli 2008) and as a labour force to be governed (Del Percio 2018a).

In the vignette at the beginning of this section, decision-making (as far as decisions are actually made) seems to be only partially guided by the counsellors' reconstructions of the niche market of interpreting workforce, that is, by their anticipations regarding the availability of interpreters for certain languages (or other volunteer labour force), the respective capacities needed and the selection of fitting candidates. For instance, at the time of recording (January / February 2018), there was a stated need for interpreters for Arabic; interpreters for Somali constituted a rare category of linguistic workforce, interpreters for Farsi/Dari did not. On the one hand, this has to do with the workforce which is already secured by the organisation; for example, Arabic had always been covered to a certain degree – but given the high demand not necessarily to a sufficient one – by employed staff member Yasmin and employed interpreter Hakob, Farsi was at least partly covered by Pune (the other employed interpreter); Somali, on the other hand was needed for a large portion of clients, but not covered by any of the staff. On the other hand, both supply and demand of linguistic labour force depend on broader linguistic market conditions and networks. But as we have seen – and as we shall see below –, such evaluation goes beyond a projection of supply and demand and a calculation of costs and benefits³⁶. We have seen this in the opening vignette – here, a skills discourse was backgrounded while an ethical evaluation of the projected labour relationship was foregrounded. In the following example from the same staff meeting, candidates' 'skills' are

36 An analysis of the volunteer interpreting market in Vienna goes beyond the scope of this ethnography which is more concerned with the rationales underlying internal decision-making processes and their relation to the political-economic conditions of refugee support in Vienna.

treated more extensively. But again, what is at stake seems to go beyond capital conversion and language speculation.

Indeed, the case of Farhad and Emran, two volunteers who worked at the *Recherche-Eck* at the same time as I did, suggests that the notion of a fitting candidate can be handled flexibly. They were both from Afghanistan, two young men in the midst of their ongoing asylum procedures. When Sara first mentioned them as potential candidates to her team at the staff meeting on January 23, 2018, she did so while ambivalently displaying her reservations but also arguing on behalf of them. The sequence in Example 6.6 follows the discussion on the young candidate proposed by Helena in the vignette above. It is part of a longer sequence which unfolded in the first nine minutes as part of the point *Dolmetscher* ‘interpreters’ on the agenda, just after the opening of the staff meeting. While the young candidate’s language competences had not been discussed at all, Farhad and Emran’s were a central issue and a criterium to consider them only for the *Recherche-Eck*, not for interpreting (Line 078).

Example 6.6: Sara announces the coming of two new volunteers for the *Recherche-Eck*, Farhad and Emran, at the staff meeting on January 23, 2018 (transcribed extract from audio).

071	Sara:	äh:m (- -) ja fürs rechercheeck gibt_s zwei neue ehrenamtliche,	<i>erm yes for the Recherche-Eck there are two new volunteers</i>
072		(-) die waren gestern da,	<i>they were here yesterday</i>
073		(-) das muss man WIRKlich ausprobieren;	<i>one has to try this out really</i>
074		(-) das deutsch is okee;	<i>the German is okay</i>
075		aber nicht so super,	<i>but not that great</i>
076		(-) deshalb müsst man halt wirklich ausprobieren ob sie das: (-) also wie das funktioniert;	<i>that is why one would have to try this out really if they well how it works</i>
077		(- -) im rechercheeck;	<i>at the Recherche-Eck</i>
078		also ma äh man kann ohne dolmetscher mit ihnen reden natürlich aber (-) für die normale beratung geht_s nicht-	<i>like one er one can talk to them without an interpreter of course but for the normal counselling it doesn't work</i>

079	aber ich hab mir gedacht rechercheeck könnt man trotzdem mal ausprobieren-	<i>but I thought one could still try out the rechercheeck</i>
080	Helena: ja=bei mir war gestern auch eine fürs rechercheeck,	<i>yes there was one for the Recherche-Eck with me yesterday too</i>
081	(- - -)	<i>(- - -)</i>
082	(weil:) bin mir irgendwie nicht so sicher;	<i>(becau no) I am not so sure somehow</i>
083	Sara: ich bin mir bei den beiden auch nicht [(.) sicher;]=	<i>I am not sure either about the two</i>
084	Helena: [((laughs))]	<i>((laughs))</i>
085	Sara: =aber ich (.) hab auch ich hab ihnen das auch wirklich erklärt;=	<i>but I also did explain them really</i>
086	=wir probieren das mal aus-	<i>we'd try this out</i>
087	und wir schauen dann mal;=	<i>and we'll see then</i>
088	=und	<i>and</i>
089	(-) ich glaub man muss es echt ausprobieren;	<i>I believe one has to try this out really</i>
090	Helena: ja;	<i>yes</i>
091	[ich find (sie)]	<i>I find (they/she)</i>
092	Sara: [sie kennen sich] gut aus;	<i>they are well-versed</i>
093	sie wissen wie man am computer sucht und darum soll_s ja eigentlich gehen,	<i>they know how to search on the computer and that's what it should be about really</i>
094	ihnen schon gesagt dass sie ja eh einfach nur (-) eigentlich am computer unterstützen-	<i>told them already that anyway they only (need to) give support at the computer</i>
095	und (.) nix inhaltliches-	<i>and nothing content-related</i>
096	und	<i>and</i>
097	das heißt bei denen wären dann halt wirklich halt nur die: dari farsi sprachigen (.) klientinnen,	<i>that means for them then really just the Dari Farsi speaking clients would be</i>

098	(- -) [möglich;]	<i>possible</i>
099	Sebastian: [ghörn die] irgendwie zam?=oder was?	<i>do they belong together or what</i>
100	[(xxx xxx)]	<i>(xxx xxx)</i>
101	Sara: [äh (-)] sind befreundet;	<i>er <they> are friends</i>
102	Sebastian: (mhm;)	<i>(mhm)</i>
103	Sara: (waren) zu zweit da;	<i>(were) here together</i>
104	genau==aber sie kommen auch getrennt.	<i>exactly but they also come separately</i>
105	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
106	weil_s is sonst zu viel auf einmal glaub ich;	<i>because if not that's too much at once I think</i>
107	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
108	ja;	<i>yes</i>
109	Yasmin: schickst du dann die daten,	<i>will you send the contact details then</i>
110	soll ich das jetzt notieren (im) protokoll	<i>shall I note this now (in the) minutes</i>
111	oder schickst du ihr die daten-	<i>or will you send her the data</i>
112	Sara: ich trag_s [einfach] in die liste ein.=oder?	<i>I just insert it into the list okay</i>
113	Yasmin: [(von den)]	<i>(of them</i>
114	Sara: ja.	<i>yes</i>
115	Yasmin: ja (.) ähm:	<i>yes erm</i>
116	Sara: beziehungsweise ich weiß nicht also	<i>or else I don't know like</i>
117	Helena: also ich	<i>so I</i>
118	Sara: ich würd_s ehrlich gesagt erst ausprobieren bevor ich alles in die liste eintrag weil ich (-) [keine ahnung]	<i>to be honest I would try it out first before I add everything into the list because I have no idea</i>
119	Helena: [voll] wenn sie noch nicht	<i>absolutely if they are not yet</i>

120	ich (.) die eine trag ich auch nich [(xxx xxx xxxxxx xxx)]	<i>I the one I won't add her either ()</i>
121	Sara: [(ich find) die arbeit sonst relativ umsonst]	<i>(I find) the work will else be quite in vain</i>

In the opening of the sequence, Sara introduces the two new candidates as a topic in a first stanza (Example 6.6, Lines 0071–073) and then effectuates a scaling of the language competences of the two across the two following stanzas (second, Lines 074–077, and third stanza, Lines 078–079). In terms of language competences, German is the unique focus (at least at first; later, when their linguistic repertoire is mapped onto that of the clients, Dari and Farsi come into focus, Line 097). As volunteers at the *Recherche-Eck* assist clients to read German online adds on real estate platforms and write emails to real estate agents, this focus is rooted in the task to be performed by the candidates³⁷. In the second stanza, their German competences are evaluated in a rather underspecified manner (*okee*.; *aber nicht so super* ‘okay | but not that great’, Lines 074–075). In the third stanza, the evaluation is rephrased³⁸ in more concrete terms, in a sort of ad-hoc, ex-negativo assessment of communicative competence: *man kann ohne dolmetscher mit ihnen reden natürlich* ‘one can talk to them without an interpreter of course’ (Line 078). The so scaled linguistic competences are mapped onto or calibrated against the two relevant interactional spaces and the pertaining spatial repertoires respectively – the *Recherche-Eck* as a potential fit and counselling (which presupposes their work as interpreters) as not fitting³⁹. Each of the three stanzas ends with a variation on the same phrase *das muss man wirklich ausprobieren* ‘one has to try this out really’ which echoes the preceding discussion around the 17 year-old candidate and which is gradually expanded by the mention of the

37 Thus, the situation differs from gatekeeping mechanisms described by Roberts (2013) as *linguistic penalty*.

38 With the particle *also* (Line 078) which can be paraphrased roughly as ‘that means’, used comparably to the colloquial ‘like’.

39 English competences which in the case of many volunteer interpreters such as Jamal, Kourosh and Hakob were, at least initially, the shared work language with the counsellors are not mentioned by Sara, probably because neither of them spoke English any better than German.

interactional spaces of the *Recherche-Eck* (second stanza, Line 077) and counselling as well as the *Recherche-Eck* (third stanza, Lines 078–079). Reiterations of the phrase reoccur again in the ensuing sequence – Helena’s intervention (Lines 080–082) is treated as parenthetical (Lines 083–084) – in a reported conversation between herself and the two (Lines 085–087), that is, in a narrated event, and as an explicit positioning in the narrating event, as a stance towards the issue that is being interactively processed at the very moment in the staff meeting. Interestingly, she expands her evaluation once more, shifting to a different focus, the computer literacy of the two which she treats more as a hard skill, practical knowledge they positively possess. With *und darum soll_s ja eigentlich gehen* ‘and that’s what it should be about really’ (Line 093), she positions herself once more in the gatekeeping procedure under way, aligning with the decision to allow them in provisionally, while rescaling the importance of their limited German competences – and reaffirming their previously established limitedness at the same time. The limitedness of their linguistic repertoires is matched on their role as volunteers in the *Recherche-Eck* (Lines 094–095) and the spatial domain of their work rescaled: they will only work with the *dari farsi sprachigen* (.) *klientinnen*, ‘Dari Farsi speaking clients’ (Line 097). All in all, the linguistic repertoires of the two – Sara treats them as a unity which triggers a question by Sebastian on their relationship (Line 099) – are evaluated by Sara as limited. This is treated as problematic by Sara (and as such not a matter of discussion – Helena indirectly aligns with her, Lines 080–082) who argues on their behalf amongst significant hedging and with only a provisional decision taken in the end. In fact, when Yasmin initiates the procedure of formalisation, which means putting their contact details on record on the corresponding list, Sara hesitates and says she would prefer to wait. Given the low expectations, the work invested at this stage could prove to be in vain later, so her final judgement (Lines 112–121)⁴⁰.

Although their German competences continued to be problematised in the following week and some insecurity remained – Sara commented on their first trial sessions that they had not seemed too fond and that she was not sure they would continue to show up – Farhad and Emran stayed longer as volunteers

⁴⁰ Again, Helena mentions another candidate, as a sidenote, which is not discussed in detail (Line 120)

than I did.⁴¹ I spent a lot of Tuesday afternoons with Emran at the *Recherche-Eck* (Farhad came on Thursdays). Demand for Dari or Farsi was never particularly high at the *Recherche-Eck*, but they were the only Dari/Farsi speaking *Recherche-Eck*-volunteers. I remember that there was a time when the proportion of clients from Iran and Afghanistan was particularly low, and most clients were speakers of Arabic and Somali. During that time Emran was most of the time working on a small notebook (much like the one I was using to record jottings for my fieldnotes) studying German vocabulary, chatting with interpreters who used the sofa in the *Recherche-Eck* for their breaks, or discussing his asylum case with one of the counsellors, while me and the other volunteers were working with clients.

As the example of Farhad and Emran was meant to illustrate, the rationalities of letting someone into the organisation as a volunteer do not amount to a utilitarian logic, a transparent calculation of costs and benefits. While the labour relationship between volunteers and the organisation at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is interwoven with economic rationalities of investment and return, and the exploitation of labour force (see Section 6.2), they are not always prevalent and consequential. ‘Language’ (understood both as a practice and as a bounded object) figures in this process, but it does not do so exclusively. More centrally, these interactions revolve around the construction of a speaking and working persona. There are formulations of communicative repertoires as ‘skills’ in the above example (the scaling of their language competences, their computer skills). But they are not primarily treated as commodities of speculative value (cf. Tabi-ola & Lorente 2017), but more as *potential* indicators and necessary conditions for their functioning in the workplace. This is precisely what differentiates the case at hand from the neoliberal skills discourses described in Urciuoli (2008), characterised in the following way: “There is never a sense of ‘try this technique, it might work’ but, rather, ‘these skills will get you these outcomes and you should acquire them’ and ‘this is who you should be’” (Urciuoli 2008: 224). In the case of Farhad and Emran, *trying* seems to be the key and skills are not construed as something to be bought and sold, but something which unfolds in practice and requires controlled development and calibrated use.

41 They continued to be there when I left in October 2018.

Apart from a range of parallels, gatekeeping dynamics differ from recruitment into paid positions (cf. Roberts 2013) at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* which depends directly on the availability and allocation of funding for more or less defined posts. With volunteer labour force, the organisation has more leeway – but also less stability and less clearly defined regulations, for the transitory character of this labour relationship and the comparably lower degree of its contractual formalisation (see also Section 6.2). Thus, to a certain degree, there is always a lack, or at least the risk of a lack in volunteer labour force. Indeed, recruitment of volunteer language workers at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* was never fully halted during my time there. However, having more leeway does not mean that maintaining the volunteer labour force comes without costs. Just to name an example, such costs include the working hours of the employed staff to train and supervise the volunteers and to support them, as it is generally practised by the staff, when they face difficulties, for instance, in their asylum procedure or in their housing situation. So while there is no defined number of available posts to be filled, capacities can probably not be stretched indefinitely. This can explain why, in some of the cases presented below, evaluation of candidates does not necessarily result in definite, immediate decisions, yet is still carried out meticulously, but more as a form of control than gatekeeping in the strict sense⁴².

As mentioned in the previous sections, volunteers at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* are mostly recruited by word of mouth: only in the case of new volunteers' project set up from scratch towards the end of my time at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, a 'buddy system' in which clients would be paired with a volunteer during their search for an apartment, have I experienced the organisers working with public ads (for instance, I posted one at the billboard of my university department). In contrast to this specific case, it was a common practice to recruit new volunteers, especially interpreters, directly from amongst the clients, their kin and acquaintances. This practice finds its reflexes in short 'reminders' to look out for new interpreters that can be found repeatedly in the minutes of the weekly staff meetings. And indeed, virtually all volunteer interpreters shared a history of more or less recent displacement and a more or less precarious legal

⁴² And indeed, it is often applied to long-standing volunteers too; functioning as a sort of prolonged gatekeeping process or maybe more appropriately understood as a continuing management of their workforce.

status in Austria. This is, as I argue above (see Section 6.2), connected to their availability as linguistic labour force: (1) Their linguistic repertoires tend to match those of the clients to a good extent – or at least, they are construed as matching them⁴³. (2) They are, as a result of Austrian asylum and migration policies, incentivised to engage in volunteering. As we have seen in Section 6.2, especially asylum seekers in the Austrian system have good reasons to aspire to become volunteers at a local NGO as these organisations are understood to provide them with an occupation, useful networks, and certificates which are objects of value and an investment in the asylum procedure. (3) And finally, asylum seekers are comparably easy to reach for the organisation. Not infrequently, it happened that candidates would present themselves out of their own initiative at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. This latter point seems perhaps banal, but it is not: establishing contact with volunteer candidates for interpreting requires no extra apparatus from the staff as the candidates are in touch with the organisation anyways. Among the volunteer interpreters, divergent trajectories were an exception⁴⁴. On the one hand, volunteering at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is *language*d, that is, it builds on specific linguistic repertoires as selection criteria. On the other hand, interpreting as a form of volunteer language work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* is migrantised or even more specifically *refugee-ised*, that is, its labour force is systematically recruited from that specific segment of the population.

For the *Recherche-Eck*, the situation is a little different: apart from those recruited through the same channels as the interpreters, there were a few volunteers who were recruited through various other channels (such as the NGO's broader

43 It would be an empirical question to what extent they actually do, given that likely, volunteers do not constitute a random, representative sample of the client population, but a selection in terms of, for instance, higher educational background and privileged access to the acquisition of German and/or English. And again, most likely, these factors are not equally distributed across the client population, neither in terms of social stratification, composition of linguistic repertoires nor geographical origin. Language categories employed in the planning and allocating linguistic labour force such as 'Arabic' and 'Dari/Farsi', however, tend to span across continua of linguistic variation as well as across multiple national centres. Hence the question of matching linguistic repertoires is a sociolinguistically rather complex question, but one that is dealt with in practice according to rather ad-hoc logics of monoglot ideologies as well as intercomprehension.

44 For instance, one such example would be Mona who started as a volunteer before she became an employed counsellor and who had not been a client of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* before.

networks, staff members' private networks etc.). Here, the composition of the volunteer labour force was more heterogeneous. In fact, the *Recherche-Eck* seems to be construed as a de-linguaged version of volunteer work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* – see, for instance, Sara's characterisation in the example above (Lines 077–079; 092–095, Example 6.6) – with lower stakes and lower specificity in terms of language competences. It has to be noted that this is not equally valid for everyone: for instance, my own linguistic repertoire which was of little use for the job of an interpreter's job (I once did a painful attempt as a volunteer interpreter for French which – luckily for everyone – was never needed again) was treated as almost universal at the *Recherche-Eck*. This means I was allocated clients from all language groups (sometimes together with an interpreter). This situation was different for, for instance, Farhad and Emran, two volunteers, who tended to be matched specifically with Dari-, Farsi- or Pashto-speaking clients (as anticipated by Sara in the above example, Line 097, Example 6.6). I shall briefly expand on the dynamics unfolding between me and the other volunteers with regards to the construction of the volunteer language worker in an autoethnographic post-script to this section. Before that, I want to turn to the central question of this section which is the construction and regimentation of volunteer workers as Others and counsellors as Selves in narrative practices at the staff meeting.

Figures of professionalism, figures of precariousness and precarity

As we have seen in the discussion around the young volunteer interpreter candidate and in the interactional reconstruction of Farhad's and Emran's communicative repertoires, deliberation among the staff on whether to assume someone as a volunteer or not is not limited to an assessment of language competences, that is, a reformulation of linguistic repertoires as resources borne by individual speakers. More precisely, we are confronted with a complex process of construction of (linguaged) professional Others entangled with a construction of professional selves. In the case of the young man who was proposed as a volunteer interpreter by Helena, this co-construction was not merely one of valorisation, but also touched upon a moral dimension. Decision-making is characterised by a reflexive awareness for the staff's own role as gatekeepers and regulators of volunteer language work. This is a pattern in the recorded data of the staff meetings: talk about new

volunteer candidates comes not just with an assessment of their communicative repertoires, but also with a reflective assessment of the candidates' respective living conditions, motives and psychological state through a range of construed notions of (in)stability, (in)dependency, (dis)symmetry and vulnerability in the dimensions of psychological resilience, living conditions and expectations as well as calculations of their ascribed potential impact on their capacity to function properly as interpreters or *Recherche-Eck* volunteers. In other words, the making of language volunteer workers does not only entail the formulation of situated notions of communicative resources by the counsellors, but also of situated notions of precariousness and precarity, vulnerability and structural dependency (cf. J. Hassemer & Garrido 2020; Spitzmüller & Bendl 2020). Narrated episodes of work trials and conversations with the candidate are presented and analysed by counsellors in staff meetings as empirical evidence in the process.

In the following, I look into the entangled processes in which counsellors construct and select volunteer language workers by scaling their linguistic resourcefulness on the one hand and their vulnerability and dependency on the other hand. This process can be understood as a configuration of indexical signs into a *figure of personhood* (sensu Park 2021), a cultural model which makes the volunteer candidate conceivable as belonging to a particular person type, in terms of, amongst others, moral character, behaviour, competence and psychological structures (cf. Park 2021: 48–49). Specifically in the situation of gatekeeping at hand, this process is at least partly regimented by the goal of acquiring volunteer labour force, by making candidates categorisable as fit for the job or (rather) not. In other words, counsellors' evaluations of a candidate's fitting – a sequence of stances in the interactional here-and-now of the staff meeting – come with the alignment or disalignment of candidates with construed figures of volunteer workers.

Park (2021) stresses the dimension of affect for analytically accessing figures of personhood in narrative. Drawing on the notion of chronotope (Bakhtin 1981; see Section 6.2), he proposes to look into how figures of personhood emerge not only from the entextualisation of time and space, but also of affect. And indeed, a salient dimension of the construction of volunteers' vulnerability and dependency construed as problematic in the data which I analyse below is the entextualisation and interpretation of interpreters' display of emotions with a

specific focus on the affects of *desire* (cf. Flubacher 2020b) in the staff's management of volunteers' expectations and the affect of *compassion* (cf. Ticktin 2011: 112–119) in the relationship between volunteers and clients. *Emotion* and *affect* are broad notions which have been theorised in a range of different ways and with different purposes, sometimes in a terminological distinction from each other⁴⁵. In this section, the primary interest in these concepts lies in an understanding of the meaning making processes, the positioning of subjects and the (re)production of difference and inequality as counsellors talk about interpreters' affectedness at work. Therefore, I draw on a relational and social understanding of affect in sociolinguistics (cf. Flubacher 2020b). This means that I do not understand affect to be something which resides within the individual, but rather as something which happens in practice (Wetherell 2012) and circulates (Ahmed 2004) in the social realm, thereby gaining (indexical) meaning and producing social effects (cf. also McElhinny 2010). In a similar vein, already Besnier (1990) argued to look into "how affect is used and manipulated across contexts" (Besnier 1990: 437) – that is, how it is entextualised and recontextualised in discourse – for an understanding of "culturally constructed categories of emotionality" (Besnier 1990: 437). And these play a role in the enactment of cultural models of personhood (Park 2021, cf. also Illouz 2007: 3). In line with feminist and postcolonial scholarship, I conceive of such *affective uptake* as a locus for the construction and reproduction of difference and asymmetrical power relations (cf. Whitney 2018 drawing on Frye 1983). By affective uptake I mean precisely what happens in the staff meeting when counsellors talk about the interpreters' display of emotions and affective orientation during work (such as compassion and projected desires): such phenomena of affect become entextualised in discourse, and are, in the form of narrative (as a narrated event) recontextualised in a particular practice, the staff meeting. That is, the interpreters' display of emotions and their affective orientations become represented, circulate and are interpreted according to the specific institutionalised procedures and scripts of reflective practice (cf. Chapter 5). In counsellors' talk about the interpreters at the staff meetings, affect tends to become the object of uptake when it is construed as resisting institutionalised affective relations and the smoothness of institutionalised

45 For a review of theories of affect and emotion see Wetherell (2012: 1–25).

processes: for instance, misaligned desires (*Erwartungen* 'expectations') between volunteers and the organisation or excessive compassion with the client. They are treated as problematic, *willful* elements of practice and subjectivity (cf. Ahmed 2014: 42), misaligned with institutionalised order, rationality and purpose – or, for that matter, the *institutional will* (Ahmed 2014: 146)⁴⁶. Speaking of affect as willful and resistant does not, however, mean that affect escapes control – in the data, it appears as already being recontextualised in an institutional practice which builds on professional vision, to achieving “the alignment of the will of the part with the will of the whole” (Ahmed 2014: 104) in a process of professional socialisation and boundary-making.

Looking at this process from another angle, namely as constructions not only of Others but also of selves, the specific form of affective uptake under concern can be understood as a procedure in which counsellors enact professionalism. They do so not only by constructing interpreters as their (less) professional Others, but also by applying specific forms of coding and interpreting the indexicalities of the interpreters' demeanor at work and in the presentation of themselves. That is, they draw on professional *coding schemes* (Goodwin 1994: 608–609). Seen from this angle, affect becomes an object of knowledge for the counsellors, through uptake, as they dissect the interpreters' affect as well as their living circumstances in the context of their staff meetings. In other words, I understand such (affective) uptake to function as part of the counsellors' *professional vision* (Goodwin 1994): with this term, Goodwin (1994: 606) denotes “socially organised ways of seeing and understanding events” by which professionals produce situated realities and truths, structure conditions of sayability (Goodwin 1994: 626) and at the same time make their expertise recognisable as such, affirming their legitimacy.

Thus, the assessment of volunteer candidates' qualities as part of the gatekeep-

46 In her discussion of willfulness, Ahmed (2014: 97–104) draws on the Rousseauian notions of the *particular will* as opposed to the *general will*. Here, willfulness marks not only the will of a part, but the will which refuses to align with and integrate into the whole. Willfulness as a metapragmatic label thus carries the perspective of a specific order in which the individual will is opposed to a 'whole', for instance, institutional ways of doing, seeing and understanding – willing – things (Ahmed 2014: 146). The aspect of volition or intentionality (Ahmed 2014: 32–36) central to the indexicality of *will* is more pronounced in some entextualisations of affect than in others (for instance, when referring to a volunteer's 'expectations' or 'desires' as opposed to their 'being overwhelmed', see examples below). *Willfulness*, then, functions more as a gradated ascription of will to that which obstructs the will aligned with an established (moral, institutional, professional) order.

ing process is not the enactment of a transparent representation of outside reality in professional terms, but a powerful formulation and configuration of moral, behavioral, affective etc. indexicals pointing to contrasting figures of personhood (Park 2021): a ‘good’ worker in refugee support, reflective, in control of their affects and desires and a ‘deficient’ one, lacking control, as well as emotionally and economically vulnerable (see also Chapter 5). Such an assessment does not happen from nowhere, but is in itself part of the (metaleptic) construction of the origo from where professional vision (Goodwin 1994) is exerted.

Managing expectations

By the end of 2017, just before I started recording the staff meetings, Mahmoud, a volunteer at the *Recherche-Eck* and interpreter, had left. Mahmoud was a middle-aged man, perhaps in his fifties, from a country in Northern Africa⁴⁷. With a professional training in law, so he said to me, he had been particularly interested in the work of the two legal counsellors. When I learnt the news of his exit, I remember being rather puzzled: I had just been to an in-house training workshop for volunteers with him. He had been exceptionally engaged, chatty, especially towards me and the trainer, and seemed intent to display professional expertise, especially in the legal field. His presence had been a sort of contrast when compared to the other volunteers who were usually not only much younger – although it is hard to tell, I would have estimated him to be at least 50, most of the others around 30 or younger – but also less imposing and more reserved. When Alena explained to me what, according to her, had happened, it all made sense: Mahmoud had expected to gain a paid position. This version is also entextualised in the minutes of the first staff meeting in 2018, on January 2. Alena told me she figured that he had expected to be in a good position to take over Yameen’s job. Yameen was the civil service person at that time and his term would soon have been over. As soon as Mahmoud had realised that this was not going to be the case, he had left and had not responded to Alena’s messages anymore. Clearly, it is difficult to imagine a situation where he would have taken over Yameen’s position as the civil service person – civil service being a work scheme

⁴⁷ I am not sure about his migration trajectory, but as far as I could gather from his stories, he was not and had not been an asylum seeker in Austria.

by the Austrian government which works exclusively as an alternative to military service for young men. From Alena's perspective, this was as much absurd as it was tragic – it was definitely not going to happen for Mahmoud. I am not sure whether Alena was right with her guess as Mahmoud did not reply to me either when I tried to get in touch with him. Also, I was not able to obtain further information from Alena and the other counsellors on what exactly had happened that had led to his exit (if something had happened at all). Maybe he had pictured a different kind of job opportunity to open up, or he was expecting another sort of return from his engagement. Whether his calculations had been reasonable or not, I cannot judge, but Alena's rationalisation and its further uptake at the staff meetings in the following weeks are telling as to the rationalities which undergird the management of volunteer labour force at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*.

Volunteer candidates' expectations are of central concern for the management of volunteer labour force. From the volunteers' perspective, their expectations can be understood in terms of speculative trajectories – projections of returns which are anticipated to yield from an investment in practices of volunteering (see Section 6.2; J. Hassemer 2020). They are thus connected to the volunteers' desires and hopes. From the perspective of the employed counselling staff, such expectations are not infrequently treated as problematic, especially when they are construed as pointing to knowledge asymmetries or incongruences and to a relationship of material liability or dependency deemed excessive. To be precise, expectations are not *per se* seen as problematic – in an interview with me (on January 09, 2018), Sara reiterated what she had said on multiple other occasions, namely that she did not consider volunteering to be a selfless act –, but as the examples below shall illustrate, not all expectations are treated as equally unproblematic or legitimate. In fact, the two central concerns – reiterated in the examples reported below – relate to the two relevant, yet limited material resources that the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* controls: work and housing. On the one hand, unpaid work is to a certain degree remunerated through a facilitated access to these resources – a certificate gives the volunteer engagement and experience an institutional form which can be used in other contexts (see Section 6.2), and the staff is diligent to help the volunteers when they experience 'housing problems' (see below). On the other hand, there are important limitations: as we shall see in the examples below, the definition of the volunteer labour relationship in the

issued certificates is carefully handled. In the case of housing, the matter is more complex and will be dealt with further below. First, I want to turn to the issue of labour. In the analysis which follows, I look into how the management of volunteer candidates is construed in the staff meeting, which figures of personhood emerge in the categorisation of volunteer candidates' expectations (on the level of narrated events) and how this serves the positioning of the staff members in the interactional narrating event.

Expectations and the labour relationship

The first example concerns expectations regarding the work relationship. At a staff meeting a few weeks after Mahmoud's exit on January 9, Alena announced she had found two new volunteer candidates (see the extract in Example 6.7 and Example 6.8), Ms Gulieva (later called by her first name, Nuray) and Mr Khalid (later called by his first name, Amin). Based on their imputed expectations, the staff, especially Sara, raised doubts about their fitting as volunteers. As we shall see, this does not come out of the blue: In the way Alena organises her account at the staff meeting, it becomes apparent that she anticipates the doubts raised by Sara. These doubts are certainly connected to Mahmoud's infelicitous exit and therefore are at least in part the product of a particular, recent event. Indeed, Alena explicitly refers to Mahmoud when accounting for her way of handling the new candidates' expectations. Nevertheless, looking into the rationale applied in the interactional procedure of categorising expectations and typifying the candidates allows to analytically access shared logics, schemes and figures. In that sense, Mahmoud's exit was oriented to as an interactional affordance which compelled the staff to co-fabricate an explicit construal of the relationship between the organisation and the volunteers. The transcribed sequence is subdivided in two parts for better readability. The entire sequence can be divided roughly in four subsequences, the first two organised around Alena's accounts on – or even 'pleas' for – the two candidates: (1) one for whom she introduces as an Azerbaijani⁴⁸ woman looking for an internship (Example 6.7, Lines 013–58) and (2) one for a man – a speaker of Dari, Farsi, Hindi and Urdu as put by Alena not

⁴⁸ This is not the candidate's actual nationality which I have disguised for reasons of data protection.

without excitement – who had sent in an application for a paid job (Example 6.8, Lines 059–099). (3) Upon Yameen’s request, the new volunteers’ names are shared (in Example 6.8, Lines 100–121 not displayed in the text). (4) This is followed by another account by Alena as a sort of ‘coda’ where Alena comments on her activities around the acquisition of new volunteers (Example 6.8, Lines 122–132).

The first extract starts with Sara opening the meeting (Example 6.7, Lines 001–003), then a number of candidates are announced for a work trial – starting with two interpreting candidates announced by Karoline (in co-construction with Alena, Lines 004–010). The announcement of these first two is treated as a routine account of a routine procedure. It is when Alena announces two more candidates that her account becomes more elaborate and its interactive processing more complex (from Line 012 onwards).

Example 6.7: Alena proposes two new volunteers for the Recherche-Eck, Part 1 ‘the Azerbaijani woman’ (Ms Gulieva). Transcribed interaction from the staff meeting on January 9, 2018.

001	Sara:	gut.	<i>good</i>
002		(-) dann fang_ma an,	<i>let's start then</i>
003		gibt_s was neues dolmetscher(.)innen;	<i>is there something new interpreters</i>
004	Alena:	morgen übermorgen kommen	<i>tomorrow the day after tomorrow come</i>
005	Karo- line:	mor (.) morgen übermorgen (-) kummt jeweils (.) also amol (.) farsi amol (-) somali?	<i>tomorrow <and> the day after tomorrow one comes I mean on each <of the days> one Farsi and one Somali</i>
006		(-) und dann: (-) (gibt_s) da	<i>and then there is</i>
007		(- -) oder?	<i>isn't it</i>
008		gesprä	<i>conversa</i>
009		also hamma a gespräch mit denen und schau dann (.) einfach ob_s passt,	<i>I mean we have a conversation with them and then we'll just see if it is a fit</i>
010		oder wann_s (-) kumman würdn zum (-) probiern,	<i>or when they'd come for a trial</i>

011	Alena:	ham gar keine araber grad hier-=	<i>we currently have no Arabs here</i>
012		ja=und ich ha:b für heute zwei neue rechercheeckleute-	<i>yes and I have two Recherche-Eck people</i>
013		eine aserbaidshcherin,	<i>one Azerbaijani</i>
014		(-) die russisch und aserbaidshchisch eben auch spricht,	<i>who speaks Russian and Azerbaijani</i>
015		äh die arbeitet (in)	<i>er she works (in)</i>
016		also die macht eben diesen integrations(.)coach-	<i>I mean she is doing this integration coach</i>
017		irgendso einen lehrgang,	<i>some kind of training</i>
018		und die will das als praktikum dann quasi-	<i>and she wants this as an internship practically</i>
019	Sara:	mhm	<i>uhu</i>
020	Alena:	also sie	<i>I mean she</i>
021		ich hab ihr eh	<i>I <said it> to her anyways</i>
022		o oder wir ham das gklärt-	<i>o or we did clear this up</i>
023		sie ist nicht quasi unsere praktikantin,	<i>she is practically not our intern</i>
024		aber sie kann halt diese stunden (-) die sie bei uns ist (-) dann mit unsrer	<i>but she can then just submit these hours she is going to be with us together with</i>
025		mit der normalen bestätigung die jeder kriegt (-) dort abgeben und das dürfte passen,	<i>together with the normal certificate that everyone is getting and that should work</i>
026		und sie hat gesagt sie will_s nämlich sowieso	<i>and she said she wants this anyways</i>
027		also sie interessiert das selber,	<i>I mean she is herself interested in that</i>
028		weil sie arbeitet jetzt irgendwie zwanzig stunden für den verein nebenan?	<i>because she works now like twenty hours for this association next door</i>

029	ich hab das (.) noch garnicht gkannt vorher,	<i>I did not know them before</i>
030	und ehrlich gsagt jetzt auch noch garnicht recherchiert,	<i>and to be honest I haven't yet done research either</i>
031	aber das hört sich auch recht spannend an-=	<i>but it does sound quite exciting too</i>
032	=was die da machen-=	<i>what they do there</i>
033	=und die ham halt ganz viel auch das wohnthema-	<i>and they also get this housing topic a lot</i>
034	aber auch	<i>but also</i>
035	also eigentlich alle: themen dabei-	<i>I mean actually all kinds of topics in there</i>
036	da kann man vielleicht bei gelegenheit mit ihr (.) auch noch drüber reden,	<i>this is something one can maybe also talk about with her on occasion</i>
037	[und eben]	<i>and as I said</i>
038	Sara: [aber sie] weiß dass das kein praktikum is;	<i>but she knows that it is not an internship</i>
039	Alena: ja ja ja.	<i>yes yes yes</i>
040	Sara: weil das zeugnis kriegt sie auch nicht wenn sie	<i>because she won't get that internship certificate even if she</i>
041	Alena: ich hab_s eh [gsagt];=oder?	<i>that is what I said didn't I</i>
042	Sara: [ja.]	<i>yes</i>
043	eh-	<i>sure</i>
044	Alena: ((chuckles))	<i>((chuckles))</i>
045	Sara: aber nur ob das wir	<i>but just if that we</i>
046	ja=aber das ham wir wirklich oft ghabt dass sie dann nachher ein praktikumszeugnis haben [wollten] von einer bestimmten stundenanzahl-	<i>yah but we had that really often enough that they wanted a certificate for an internship of a specific number of hours</i>

047	Alena:	[mhm,]	<i>uhu</i>
048	Sara:	und das kann ich nicht machen;	<i>and I cannot do this</i>
049	Alena:	na ich hab ihr sogar zeigt (.) [die bestätigung] die (.) wir ausstellen für die freiwilligen,	<i>I even showed her the certificate we issue for the volunteers</i>
050	Sara:	[ja (.) okay]	<i>yah okay</i>
051	Alena:	und wie gsagt=	<i>and as I said</i>
052		=sie macht (-) auch aus interesse	<i>she does this out of interest</i>
053		sie hat sich das sehr gezielt offenbar rausgsucht-	<i>she apparently picked this very much deliberately</i>
054		unsere: einrichtung,	<i>our institution</i>
055		(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
056		genau und ich find die ziemlich cool-	<i>yes and I find her quite cool</i>
057		also ich glaub das kann schon	<i>I mean I believe that can</i>
058		also die is: w:ird eine gute unterstützung sein,	<i>I mean she is will be a good support</i>
059		und ich hab eben auch schon mit der (.) cari	<i>and I also just talked with Cari</i>
060		carina sag ich tschuldigung	<i>Carina says I sorry</i>
061		karoline ((laughs)) gredet	<i>Karoline ((laughs))</i>
062		ähm dass sie sich halt speziell kümmert um sie heute im rechercheeck,	<i>erm that she will look specifically look after her today at the Recherche-Eck</i>
063		weil: nämlich ein zweiter neuer kommt auch,	<i>namely because a second newby is coming as well</i>

Sara opens the meeting by announcing the first point on the agenda *dol-metscher(.)innen* ‘interpreters’ (Lines 001–003). Alena and Karoline then announce in co-construction the coming of two new (volunteer) interpreters (Lines 004–010) and Alena mentions in passing what it also says in the minutes of the previous

meeting, namely that there is a lack of interpreters for Arabic (Line 011). Then Alena goes on to announce that she has two new volunteer candidates for the *Recherche-Eck* (Line 012). While the first announcement by Alena and Karoline is treated as an account of a routine procedure⁴⁹, the other two volunteering candidates for the *Recherche-Eck* presented by Alena in what follows receive more thorough communicative processing, that is, both Alena's accounts to the others present and their reactions are more extensive and substantial.

The first subsequence starts with a short portraiture of the first candidate through categories of ethnic or national origin (which in German is marked for gender: *eine Aserbajdschanerin*, 'an Azerbaijani woman') and linguistic repertoire. With respect to the two candidate interpreters mentioned by Karoline before, the presentation is not only expanded – Alena also mentions a current occupation of the candidate, a training for which she reportedly intends to use the volunteer engagement as internship – but also introduces 'her' candidate in a way which stresses her agentivity: while Karoline uses language 'names' to refer to the candidates (*amol* (.) *farsi amol* (-) *somali* 'one Farsi one Somali', Line 005) in the form of a *pars pro toto* which centres on their function as bearers of linguistic resources, Alena uses a person deictic noun and adds the languages in a relative clause of which the 'Azerbaijani woman' is the grammatical subject. The critical bit – the fact that the candidate has given her intention to make her volunteer engagement count as an internship – comes embedded in another bit of contextual information, namely her current work and professional training. Thus, before her colleagues react to the issue which consists in agreeing on a definition of the labour relationship with the candidate, Alena has interactively established the candidate not so much as a linguistic resource, but as a worker with potential linguistic and professional skills.

Sara throws in a signal of discomfort and withheld alignment (Line 019). She does not elaborate at first; the problematic is anticipated by Alena who assures

⁴⁹ The account is organised in a way that it reinscribes routine categories and procedures. Alena starts (Example 6.7, Line 004) and Karoline takes over her turn (Line 005) indicating the days they will come by and their source language categories as interpreters. This is followed by a short account relative to the institutionalised procedure for new entries. Karoline seems to display a slight insecurity regarding her knowledge of the established procedure (the question tag and the breaking off in her utterance, Lines 006–008), probably related to her status as a relative newcomer on the job at that time, but she resumes immediately and there is no contestation from her colleagues. Alena moves forward to the next candidates.

that she has ‘cleared’ the matter already in her previous exchanges with the candidate (Line 022), namely, that her engagement will not be treated as an internship by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Line 023) and that the usual certification will suffice for her purpose (Line 024–025). The metaphor of visibility (*gklärt* ‘cleared’, Line 022) is remarkable as it anticipates a communication ideological orientation underlying the following exchange. Beneath the negotiation of (dis)alignment, there is a shared assumption on the communicative nature of expectations: expectations held by the volunteers are understood to be a potential source of trouble, hence they need to be managed. Such management has a communicative form: expectations need to be rendered explicit, externalised, intersubjectively confronted with each other. Directness and explicitness are key⁵⁰: it is when Alena assures that she has provided the candidate with an ‘immediate’ (i. e. visual) experience the material boundaries of her expectations – the sample certificate – that Sara is content. And Sara embodies these virtues with her questioning, becoming ever more explicit. Underlying this is an ideology of mediation (cf. Keane 2018) that privileges the externalisation of intentions. By being externalised, expectations gain reality status. The deontic logic of this process of materialisation is two-staged: (1) The verbalised expectations need to match their inner representation as closely as possible (a variant of the *ideology of inner reference* as described by Carr 2011). The relevant cultural model applying to this is that of the *misunderstanding*. (2) Presupposing that they do, the verbalised representations override any claim to inner truths at a later stage – that is, ‘reality’ is reformulated in terms of legitimacy and contractual force. The counsellor’s responsibility thus lies in the correct interpretation of the other mind (the candidate’s) and is subsequently delineated and limited by it.

Alena further expands on the candidate’s motivation, framing it as intrinsic (Lines 026–027) and connected to her work for the Viennese association *Nebenan* ‘next-door’⁵¹ (Line 028). She adds that this association has shared interests with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, suggesting that the candidate would potentially function as a networking partner in addition (Lines 029–36). All in all, Alena does not

50 This observation resonates with various contexts for which semiotic *ideologies of immediacy* (cf. Keane 2018) have been described as central, cf., for instance, Eisenlohr (2010) and Weichselbraun (2021).

51 A made-up name to protect the candidate’s identity.

elaborate either on the rationale underlying the problematisation, but it can be inferred that volunteer engagement ought to be held distinct from internships. Instead, bits of information seem to be placed strategically by her and in anticipation of both problematics and interests from the NGO's perspective which are embodied by Sara.

In what follows, Sara makes explicit what was implicitly anticipated by Alena, asking Alena whether the candidate *knows* (Line 038) that volunteer work *is* not an internship. The verb 'to be' is used deontically: it inscribes a boundary in institutional order. Alena confirms with a tripled *ja* ('yes', Line 039). Sara resumes to speak stating that no *Zeugnis* '[internship] certificate' will be issued (Line 040), but she is cut off by Alena who, referring back to her earlier turn, affirms that she has already addressed the issue in her account (Line 041). Sara confirms, Alena chuckles, but Sara resumes once more explaining her insistence by referring to an existing stock of experience in the relevant category (Line 046), namely that a number of volunteers had sought at a later point to have their engagement officially rendered as an internship which, she claims, is impossible for her to fulfill (Line 048). She only seems to be content – in the sense that she stops insisting after a confirming *ja* (.) *okay* 'yah okay' (Line 050) – when Alena states that she has shown a sample of the document which is usually issued as a certificate for volunteer work by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Line 049). Alena concludes with a sort of plea realised as a coda (*und wie gesagt* 'and as I said', Line 051) where she states the specific motivation of the candidate (Lines 052–054), her personal sympathy for her (Line 056) and the anticipated value of her work for the organisation (Lines 057–058).

Why all this fuss about a new volunteer candidate, one could ask. Speaking of gatekeeping as at the outset of this section, Alena seems to embody the role of an advocate for the candidates similar to Sara with Farhad and Emran in the previous example (see Example 6.6), but with the difference that the opposition to the advocate's position is interactionally realised (and not just presupposed). In a way, this sequence can be understood – metaphorically speaking – as an arm-wrestling between Sara and Alena (Lines 038–050), that is, a situation where Alena's agenda collides with Sara's claim to management powers. In this sense, what is at stake here is control – control not only over access to (and, crucially!, exit from) volunteer work, but also among the staff, within workplace hierarchies.

Alena anticipates resistance in the presentation of ‘her’ candidate: From the outset, that is, before Sara’s first audible reaction (Line 019), this presentation is more elaborate than the former by Karoline who mentioned only the relevant language categories of the candidates collapsing categories of languages with such of personhood *amol* (.) *farsi amol* (-) *somali* ‘one Farsi one Somali’ (Line 005). Alena introduces the candidate in a way that stresses her agentivity. When Sara signals minimal disalignment (line 019), Alena is quick to anticipate her concerns – though with salient rephrasing of her own turns (Lines 020–022) – which allows to analytically deduce that a more or less explicit rule is at stake (i. e. that volunteering at the *Recherche-Eck* cannot be formalised as an internship) which is assumed to be shared knowledge at least by Alena. She explains that she has *cleared* the matter (Line 022), that is, that expectations and their contingencies have been made explicit. Then she goes on to stress the candidate’s independent will to work at the *Recherche-Eck* (Lines 026–027).

The second candidate presented by Alena is positioned even more explicitly in terms of agentivity (as a opposed to figures of precariousness and precarity, Example 6.8, Lines 063–099). The following transcribed extract starts where Alena moves the conversation from the first candidate Ms Gulieva to the second – Mr Khalid whom we will encounter again – as Amin – in the ensuing subsection (see Example 6.9).

Example 6.8: Alena proposes two new volunteers for the Recherche-Eck, Part 2: ‘the technician and engineer’ (Omar). Transcribed interaction from the staff meeting on January 9, 2018.

058	also die is: wird eine gute unterstützung sein,	<i>I mean she is will be a good support</i>
059	und ich hab eben auch schon mit der (.) cari	<i>and I also just talked with Cari</i>
060	carina sag ich tschuldigung	<i>Carina says I sorry</i>
061	karoline ((laughs)) gredet	<i>Karoline ((laughs))</i>
062	ähm dass sie sich halt speziell kümmert um sie heute im rechercheeck,	<i>erm that she will look specifically look after her today at the Recherche-Eck</i>

063	weil: nämlich ein zweiter	<i>namely because a second</i>
	neuer kommt auch,	<i>newby is coming as well</i>
064	das is der der die bewerbung:	<i>that is the one who sent in an</i>
	allgemein reingschickt hat,	<i>application in general</i>
065	und eigentlich halt einen	<i>and who in reality wanted a</i>
	bezahlten dolmetscher oder	<i>paid interpreter or caretaker</i>
	betreuerjob (.) wollte,	<i>job</i>
066	und ich hab ihn vor	<i>and I called him before</i>
	weihnachten anrufen und	<i>christmas and asked him</i>
	gfragt ob er sich nicht	<i>whether he could imagine</i>
	vorstellen kann eins zweimal	<i>coming by once or twice</i>
	zu uns zu kommen,	
067	und dann war er so njä;	<i>and then he was like nyeah</i>
068	überlegt er sich mal,	<i>he'll think about it</i>
069	und dann: war er aber da	<i>and but then he was here last</i>
	letzte woche,	<i>week</i>
070	u:nd will halt jetzt doch	<i>and he wants to come now</i>
	kommen solange er halt auf	<i>nevertheless as long as he is on</i>
	jobsuche is,	<i>his jobsearch</i>
071	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
072	eventuell vielleicht sogar	<i>maybe even both days</i>
	beide tage,	
073	und eben der spricht nicht nur	<i>and you know he does not only</i>
	farsi dari,	<i>speak Farsi Dari</i>
074	sondern auch hindi;	<i>but also Hindi</i>
075	und urdu;	<i>and Urdu</i>
076	was super [cool] is find ich-	<i>which is extremely cool I think</i>
077 Sara:	[mh]	<i>mh</i>
078 Svenja:	und was hast du so im gefühl?	<i>and what is in your feeling</i>
079	also (.) macht der sich so n	<i>I mean does he still hope a</i>
	bissl hoffnung dass er halt	<i>little that he will then get a</i>
	dann (.) wenn er jetzt bissl zu	<i>paid job when he comes to us</i>
	uns kommt doch n bezahlten	<i>for a while</i>
	job bekommt?=-	

080	=oder	<i>or</i>
081 Alena:	kann ich (find ich) nicht so richtig ausschließen;	<i>I cannot (I find) quite exclude this</i>
082	[wir ham über das: schon gredet,]	<i>we did talk about this</i>
083 Svenja:	[(xxx xxx xxx xxx xxx xxx xxx)]	<i>()</i>
084 Alena:	und ich hab mich bemüht sehr klar zu sein;	<i>and I made the effort to be very clear</i>
085	nämlich eben=jetz is ja auch grad das mit_m mahmoud quasi passiert-=	<i>as you know the thing with Mahmoud has practically just happened now</i>
086	=jetz war mir das auch wichtig eben (-) zu betonen-	<i>hence it was important to me now to emphasise</i>
087	und dann	<i>and then</i>
088	und er hat dann aber gsagt (xxxxxx) nein nein das versteht_er,	<i>and then he said (xxxxxx) no no he understands this</i>
089	das is auch ein voll: vifer typ irgendwie und ein techniker,	<i>he is also a really smart guy somehow and a technician</i>
090	äh (und) ingenieur,	<i>er (and) engineer</i>
091	von beruf,	<i>as a profession</i>
092	äh und er hat eben gsagt er kommt halt,	<i>er and he said he would just come</i>
093	und erhofft sich dass das seinen lebenslauf aufbessert,	<i>and he hopes that this would enhance his CV</i>
094 ?:	mh.	<i>mh</i>
095 Alena:	und eben sobald er einen job hat,	<i>and as soon as he has a job</i>
096	is er weg (.) bei uns.=	<i>he is gone for us</i>
097	=wo ich eh auch gsagt hab naja sicher;=	<i>to which I told him yes for sure</i>
098	=das verstehma eh,	<i>that we understand of course</i>

- 099 das passt; *that's fine*
- 100 Yameen: wie heißen (.) die zwei (.) *what is the names of the two*
dolmetscher? *interpreters*
- ((Karoline shares the name of both candidates. Svenja recognises one of the names and Alena confirms that they have already talked on the phone. Alena mentions that she is still on a surname-basis with them.))
- 122 ja eben also i i wie gsagt=ich *yah I mean I I as I said I tried a*
hab mich da jetz auch ein bissl *litte more actively now to come*
(.) aktiver drum bemüht für_s *up with people for the*
rechercheeck auch wieder *Recherche-Eck*
leute (.) aufzustellen,
- 123 äh weil eben jetz viele (.) *er because many now have*
verschwunden sin, *disappeared*
- 124 über die feiertage,= *over the holidays*
- 125 =eben der mahmoud zum *like for instance Mahmoud*
beispiel kommt (.) gar nimmer *won't come back back to us*
zu uns,
- 126 Jonas: achso=krass wieso; *oh really gosh why*
- 127 (- -) *(- -)*
- 128 Alena: eben wahrscheinlich weil er *you know probably because he*
enttäuscht ist dass er nicht *was disappointed that he did*
eine bezahlte stelle dann *not get a paid position then*
gkriegt hat?
- 129 (- -) *(- -)*
- 130 genau=und eben auch ich *exactly=and I also thought I*
dachte ich bereit schon ein *would prepare already a little*
bissl vor,=
- 131 =weil irgendwer (-) muss *because someone will have to*
dann drei wochen lang das *take over for three weeks then*
übernehmen;
- 132 von mir,= *from me*

Again, Alena anticipates potential doubts regarding the new candidate. Her introduction of him presupposes that he is already known to her colleagues (*das is der der ...* 'that is the one who ...', Line 064). The attribute she mentions to make her colleagues recall him has potential for controversy – he has previously applied for a paid position with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (Lines 064–065) which is manifestly problematic given that Mahmoud's exit has just been discussed the week before. Yet she does not frame this first narrated event with any sort of explicit, problematising metapragmatic commentary. Instead, she constructs a similar narrative positioning as with the previous candidate. Reporting on the exchange she had with him and which led to the scheduled work trial (Lines 066–076), her storyline is carefully crafted to characterise a candidate with an independent career trajectory, picturing him as almost hard-to-get (Lines 067–069), entextualising him as the one on the offering end, the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* on the receiving: he would offer his multilingual (Lines 073–075) services to them until he would find a paid position, Alena says, indeed again expressing her exaltation for him (Line 076). In a chronotopical construction of agency – understood as the narrative entextualisation of time, space and affect (Park 2021) – the candidate emerges as a largely independent subject in the narrated world from Alena's account, presupposing a disalignment with figures of precariousness and precarity construed as problematic. Consider how in Alena's narration, the candidate emerges as a subject of expectations in the chronotopical dimensions of time, space and affect: In terms of entextualised time, it is the candidate who largely controls the tempo and progression of the narrated event: Alena makes a phone call to involve him (Line 066), but the candidate suspends the progression until he appears again; indeed what is not entextualised in the narrative sequence is how his reappearance had come about, whether there had been some kind of appointment made and whose initiative – his own or of the staff – ultimately had led to his visit to the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* at the beginning of the new year (Line 069). The entextualisation of (movement in) space runs parallel – the candidate is moving while the counselling centre is pictured as static in Alena's narrative, for instance, when she asks him whether he will 'come by once or twice' (verbatim *zu uns* 'to us', Line 066) or when, later, she states *sobald*

er einen job hat, is er weg (.) *bei uns* ('as soon as he has a job he is gone for us', Line 095–096)⁵². In terms of entextualised affect, there is an (again parallel) asymmetrical pattern in the mutually displayed affect of *desire* (cf. Flubacher 2020b: 120–122) between the narrated figures: the organisation's desire is clearly directed at the candidate's volunteer labour force and embodied by Alena as a narrator who displays her excitement and admiration (see, for instance, Lines 070–076). The candidate's affect of desire is entextualised as pointing elsewhere, namely towards obtaining a paid position. Crucially, the candidate's expectations are entextualised by two concurring indexicals – his earlier application for a *Betreuerjob* ('caretaker job', Line 065) vs. his statement that he is looking for a job elsewhere and the displayed detachment (Lines 067–070) – pointing to two concurring objects of desire: a paid job at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and a paid job elsewhere. While Alena foregrounds the latter, depicting the candidate as an independent subject in the timing of events, his spatial relation to the counselling centre and his desire, Svenja's question (Lines 078–079) recentres the doubt on which one of the two indexicals to give credit in the construal of the candidate's personhood (and the doubt is, on the level of the interactional here-and-now, formulated in an experiential-affective dimension of analytical character which contrasts with Alena's preceding display of excitement: *und was hast du so im gefühl* 'and what is your feeling', Line 078). Responding to Svenja, Alena acknowledges the doubt raised. Aligning with her, she resorts once more to the logic of transparent communication which had been the key argument in the case of the previously discussed candidate (the 'Azerbaijani'): *und ich hab mich bemüht sehr klar zu sein* ('and I made the effort to be very clear', Line 084), making explicit reference to Mahmoud's exit (Line 085). Alena's concomitant alignment with the logic (or communication ideology) of transparency is supported by a reported conversation with the new candidate in which she confronts the candidate with the limits of the volunteer labour relationship (Lines 086–099). Yet, at the same time, the narrated conversation functions as well as a vehicle to restore the candidate's alignment with a figure of autonomy established in the earlier narrative sequence: on the level of reported speech, the candidate is entextualised as rational speaking subject in an interaction that plays out between

52 Note that in these two instances, the temporality of the event is entextualised in a way that assigns asymmetrical control over the timing of what happens.

equals – he reacts with a reassuring statement of understanding – *und er hat dann aber gesagt (xxxxxx) nein nein das versteht_er*, ('and then he said (xxxxxx) no no he understands this' Line 088) – which is then mirrored with reversed interactional roles as Alena assures her understanding for the contingencies of his situation – *und eben sobald er einen job hat, is er weg (.) bei uns.=wo ich eh auch gesagt hab naja sicher;=das versteh_ma eh* ('and as soon as he has a job he is gone for us to which I told him yes for sure that we understand of course', Lines 095–096). She supplements this figure with explicit metapragmatic characterisations of him as *ein voll: vifer typ irgendwie und ein techniker, äh (und) ingenieur* ('a really smart guy somehow and a technician er (and) engineer', Lines 089–090) underlining the credibility of her argument.

All in all, two ideological notions of communication and subjectivity are crucially at stake in this sequence – (1) the transparency of intentions or explicitness of mutual expectations and (2) the independency of the candidate as a willing subject. Especially the former aspect seems to be shared by the three 'active' participants in the sequence – Sara insists on the question whether institutional boundaries have been made explicit and intentions on both sides made transparent, Svenja enquires about potentially hidden expectations and Alena is intent to disperse the doubts by stressing the transparency of her communication. To bring about explicitness emerges as a moral responsibility of the counsellor towards both the organisation and the volunteer candidate. Transparent communication promises control – control over candidates' expectations and over the staff (in that case: Alena) managing such expectations. Alena appears to be prepared to readily display that she has complied with this. But in her argumentation for the first candidate, Alena redirects the attention to the second notion, that of an independently willing subject, giving it considerable room in the organisation of her 'plea' (Lines 026–037). Interrupted by Sara's inquisitive questioning, she reiterates this point of hers as soon as Sara gives in (Lines 051–054) and continues in the presentation of her second candidate (Lines 067–068; Lines 088–099). The persona emerging from Alena's description contrasts with the stereotypical persona of a volunteer candidate underlying Sara's arguments: Alena positions her candidates vis-à-vis the organisation as independent working selves who take charge of their career trajectory, thereby meeting the purposes of the counselling

centre in an exchange that is pictured to happen on a sort of level playing field⁵³. This contrasts with scenarios where a volunteer cannot access such a level playing field, for instance since they lack accurate knowledge of it – making them dependent on the good intentions by the staff and as such a figure of dependency and precariousness – or who refuse the level playing field by not disclosing their intentions – a likewise precarious trickster figure. In both cases, it is treated as a task of the counselling staff to prevent the sort of scenario from happening.

What was already remarkable about Sara's presentation of Farhad and Emran, namely the fact that she took on the role of an advocate for the candidates, becomes more explicit in Alena's presentation of the two volunteers. Of course, this has to do with the fact that Alena is opposed by her superior Sara. But why – if this is a gatekeeping situation – does she run the double risk of conflict with her colleagues over a logic she actually shares with them and of hence supposedly real dangers of a later conflict with the volunteers? In the case of Farhad and Emran there was a discomfort with the role of the gatekeeper on the one hand, and not much to loose on the other (if it was not going to work out, that would have been an acceptable outcome). In the case of the candidates proposed by Alena, the projected danger is one of conflict over mutual obligations. But as the coda-like sequence which follows the presentation of the two candidates shows, Alena positions herself not so much as a gatekeeper selecting from a number of candidates, but rather as a 'canvasser' soliciting interest and commitment in potential candidates. Mahmoud is mentioned again, as an exemplary case of a more general exodus of volunteers from the *Recherche-Eck* (Lines 123–125)⁵⁴. The expectations of the volunteer candidates are thus a potentially troublesome aspect of the materiality of volunteer language work. But Alena is faced with yet another problem related to the management of resources, namely an acute loss of volunteer labour force. Thus, staying with the metaphor of gatekeeping, Alena seems to focus less on controlling *access to*, but rather *exit from* volunteer work. And in fact, it was only a few weeks later, by the end of January 2018, that

53 Note that Kourosh described his first contact with the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* in similar terms (see Example 6.1 in Section 6.2).

54 He is also aligned with a contrasting figure in terms of affect, characterised as *enttäuscht* ('disappointed') by Alena. The affect of disappointment does not only work as the unfulfilled version of the affect of desire, it is also, as much as desire (Flubacher 2020b: 120–122), a social phenomenon, which is construed to negatively affect relationships.

Mr (Amin) Khalid found a job and left. Ms Gulieva stayed only a week longer (her reasons were not shared at the meeting). *Sie hat gekündigt* – ‘she resigned’ – as Karoline and Helena put it with a chuckle at the meeting on February 06, 2018. Contested by Yasmin as condescending, the overtly cited term – *kiindigen* ‘to resign’ was the word used by Ms Gulieva in her email, so Helena in her and Karoline’s defense – is then accepted by all as an index of how serious Ms Gulieva had taken the volunteer’s job. Both in the banter and in the explicit positive moral evaluation, there is a sense of anomaly – it is implied that usually, one does not need to ‘resign’ from a volunteer’s position, one simply leaves. In this sense, Alena was both right and wrong about the two candidates: she was right that they pursued their work life choices in relative independence from the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* as they did not rely on volunteering, neither in terms of citizenship, as, for instance Jamal did (see Section 6.2), nor in economic or in professional terms (as they were probably well qualified in their respective fields). She was right that they were thus valuable labour force. Also her picture of Mr Khalid as hard-to-get proved right. But this, of course, sheds doubt on the candidates’ respective speculative values as indeed both of them appear as ideal, but also rather unlikely volunteers for the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Jamal and Kourosh, the two volunteer interpreters we have encountered above (see Section 6.2), are contrasting examples: their labour force is highly valued too. As we have seen, their projections to the future (speculative and imagined trajectories) as well go beyond the counselling centre. Kourosh wants to work as a teacher and Jamal wants to be self-employed. Kourosh is highly skilled, Jamal invests in becoming an enterprising self. But both have been – and would continue – serving for a long time as volunteers at the counselling centre at the time I interviewed them. What distinguishes them from Ms Gulieva and Mr Khalid is their restricted access to the (paid) labour market. Without wanting to infer direct causal links, there is a pattern: ‘good’ volunteers, that is, who are understood to do a good job *and* who stay, tend to have no paid employment, mostly due to their precarious citizenship status.⁵⁵

What does this say about the institutional understanding of volunteer workers’

⁵⁵ Of course, this is not a monocausal relationship – other reasons for not pursuing paid work are thinkable (for instance, being a stay-at-home parent), but the specific salience of the citizenship dimension lies in its pervasiveness.

expectations? And what does this, in turn, tell about the way professional others and selves are construed by the staff? *Expectations* as a metapragmatic notion point to orientations or aspirations invested by a subject in practice (with its temporal, spatial and affective entextualisations, as orientation to the future, movement and encounter, and desire) and intimately connected to the distribution of material resources. As the above analysis shows there are, on the one hand, communication ideological notions of (1) independent or autonomous will and choice as well as (2) transparent communication, connected to the staff's construal of the notion of expectations. These ideologies of communication concern the figure of the fitting volunteer worker candidate which emerges from the discussion between Alena, Svenja and Sara, but also, in a sense, the figure of the staff member as they make a selection in the context of the very encounter. On the other hand, we have seen how such construed notions of autonomy are decisively constrained by the material conditions in which the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* operates and which it produces: in fact, the need for volunteer labour force renders the staff dependent in their choice of candidates, requiring some compromise from them; and the candidate – however independent they are from the organisation in terms of their work-related choices – needs to fit their expectations to the boundaries defined by the organisation (which, as we have seen, works better, if there is some kind of calculated dependency). That is, in a relationship of actual dissymmetry, interdependence and precarity, professional selves and Others are projected as figures of autonomy, mediated by the ideology of transparent communication.

Wohnungsprobleme

As mentioned earlier, the other troublesome aspect of materiality related to volunteer language work – besides work – concerns the resource of *housing* to which the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* acts as a gatekeeper. This is per se a terrain fraught with moral dilemmas and practical impasse, requiring complex communicative boundary work from the counselling staff (see Chapter 4). Such (meta-)communicative work – as I termed it – around the resource of housing pertains to the management of volunteer labour force too. As mentioned earlier, counsellors do assist the volunteers of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* when they encounter problems

to their livelihood in Austria, especially when these problems are related to housing – finding a new home, settling conflicts with landlord/-lady, or even helping to organise furniture etc. (see, for instance, the below example, Example 6.9). However, as with the resource of labour which is carefully delimited to a defined labour relationship, there are certain boundaries constructed around the resource of housing as well. Different from the well-defined – yet, as we have seen above, still malleable – boundaries drawn around the resource of labour, the resource of housing presents itself as a more complex and shifting object. This is because housing as an object of distribution and gatekeeping pervades the major part of the activities at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Volunteers come into contact with the desired resource everywhere in their work practice, in the function of interpreters when they assist, for instance, in a counselling situation where an emergency apartment is offered to a client, and in the context of the *Recherche-Eck* when they are supposed to assist clients to search for apartments on the internet (which is basically everything they do). In both cases, having *Wohnungsprobleme* – ‘housing problems’ – is construed as problematic for the relationship with clients and the organisation, variably understood as a potential conflict of interest, a threat to a relationship of trust between the different parties, or an emotional burden for the volunteer. Hence, helping a volunteer (or a volunteer candidate) out with their housing problems is a way of keeping their labour force functioning and intact. At the same time, it means giving them – as clients – preferential treatment which is arguably why the transition (and potential relapse) between the two positions within the institutional order is given particular attention by the staff. In order to illustrate the management of such boundaries and the related positioning practices, let us consider the following transcribed extract (Example 6.9) from a staff meeting on January 30, 2018, where the ‘housing problems’ of two volunteers – one ‘new’ candidate, Omar, and one that had been there already a few times, Jaleh – are being treated.

Example 6.9: Volunteering and ‘housing problems’, talking about Omar and Jaleh at the staff meeting on January 30, 2018 (transcribed extract from audio).

- | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 016 Sebastian: | lasst uns beginnen;; | <i>let us begin</i> |
| 017 | (- -) mit (.) dem (.) punkt (.)
dolmetscherinnen. | <i>with the point interpreters</i> |

018	(approx. 4s)	(approx. 4s)
019 Helena:	äh:m: (- -) gibt_s irgendwas neues?	<i>erm is there something new</i>
020 Sebastian:	einen neuen kandidaten ham wir;	<i>one new candidate we have</i>
021	(- - -)	(- - -)
022 Yasmin:	dolMEtscher?	<i>interpreter</i>
023	[ja?]	<i>yes</i>
024 Sebastian:	[mh,]	<i>uhm</i>
025 Yasmin:	ja,	<i>yes</i>
026	also (ihr) muss nur sagen (wer/ wie) er dolmetscht;=	<i>so you just need to tell (who/how) he interprets</i>
027	=<<faster> arabisch>.	<i><<faster> Arabic></i>
028 Helena:	wie heißt er?	<i>what is his name</i>
029 Sebastian:	der o'mar.	<i>O'mar</i>
030 Yasmin:	'ʕomar.	<i>'ʕOmar</i>
031 Helena:	ah: wann kommt der?	<i>ah when does he come</i>
032 Yasmin:	heute.	<i>today</i>
033 Helena:	mh.	<i>uhm.</i>
034 Sebastian:	er kommt heute nachmittag.=oder?	<i>he is coming this afternoon isn't he</i>
035	[also]	<i>so</i>
036 Sara:	[ist] (.) das ein klient von uns?= =oder hat sich der nur so	<i>is he our client or did he just</i>
037	[ähm]	<i>erm</i>
038 Sebastian:		
039 Yasmin:	na ich habe zu[erst] ihm gefragt ob er problem hat=	<i>yah I asked him right away if he has [a] problem</i>
040	=er hat gesagt er hat kein problem.	<i>=he said he has no problem</i>
041 Sebastian:	mit gestern hat der omár NULL wohnungsprobleme.	<i>after the day of yesterday Omár has NO housing problems whatsoever</i>

042	Helena:	ah: der is von dir oder was;	<i>ah he is one of yours or what</i>
043	Sebastian:	[voll,]	<i>yeah</i>
044	Yameen:	[ayoub;]	<i>Ayoub</i>
045		al-ayoub;	<i>Al-Ayoub</i>
046	Sebastian:	al-ayoub genau;	<i>Al-Ayoub exactly</i>
047	Sara(?):	a::h;	<i>ah</i>
048	Sebastian:	er wohnt in eine:r (.) äh in	<i>he lives in a er in</i>
049		er hat a(n) mietvertrag mit	<i>he has a renting contract with</i>
		einer wohnungseigentümerin,	<i>an apartment owner</i>
050		(-) ähm	<i>erm</i>
051		(- -) die miete ist zwar ein	<i>the rent is a little higher that</i>
		bisschen: (-) höher als er	<i>he can comfortably afford</i>
		sich_s gut leisten kann;=	
052		=aber die wohnung is relativ	<i>but the apartment is relatively</i>
		neu,=	<i>new</i>
053		=die vermietetin is sehr nett,	<i>the landlady is very nice</i>
((Sebastian mentions that his client has been given a particular insurance for the apartment which triggers marveling comments from his colleagues. He discloses details on the process which relate to the duration of his residence in Austria. The sequence is not included for reasons of data protection.))			
071	Sara:	mhm,=super.	<i>uhum great</i>
072		(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
073	Sebastian:	ich war: ich war auch	<i>I was surprised too</i>
		überrascht,=	
074		=aber (-) ja.	<i>but yeah</i>
075		(- -) also omár hat (.) keine	<i>so Omár has no housing issues</i>
		wohnungs(.)thematiken mehr.	<i>anymore</i>
076		(-)	<i>(-)</i>
077	Helena(?):	super.	<i>great</i>
078		(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>

079	Sara:	jaleh auch nicht mehr.	<i>Jaleh doesn't either</i>
080	Sebastian:	eh:[=mh]	<i>sure uhm</i>
081	Helena:	[ja.]=mh;	<i>yeah uhm</i>
082	Sara:	sind am freitag umgezogen.	<i><they> relocated on friday</i>
083	Helena:	mhm,	<i>uhum</i>
084	Sara:	(mit) fa[milie-]	<i>(with) family</i>
085	Sebastian:	[wo::w-]	<i>wow</i>
086	Helena:	mh:=sie sucht ein doppelbett für ihre eltern;=	<i>uhm she is looking for a double bed for her parents</i>
087		=ich hab mit ihr im sachspendenmanagement geschaut-=	<i>I've looked with her at the donations management</i>
088		=aber leider (-) nix gefunden.	<i>but unfortunately didn't find anything</i>
089	Sara:	ja.	<i>yes</i>
090		sonst einzelbetten zammstelln-=	<i>otherwise combine <two> separate beds</i>
091		=halt eine: (-) große matratze kaufen;	<i>just buy a big mattress</i>
092	Helena:	ja=das hab ich ihr auch gesagt;=	<i>yah that's what I told her as well</i>
093		=wir schaun noch amal.	<i>we will see</i>
094		kommt sie heute?	<i>is she coming today</i>
095		(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
096	Sara:	nein,	<i>no</i>
097	Yameen:	[(die kommt) (xxx xxx).]	<i>(she is coming) (())</i>
098		[die hat morgen deutsch:] (-) prüfung,	<i>she has her German exam tomorrow</i>
099	Helena:	aha;	<i>aha</i>
100		okee.	<i>okay</i>
101		(-)	<i>(-)</i>
102	Sara:	genau.	<i>exactly</i>
103		(- - -) ((sound of someone typing))	<i>(- - -) ((sound of someone typing))</i>

104	Sebastian:	das heißt jaleh darf auch im rechercheeck (.) sein-	<i>that means Jaleh may also be in the Recherche-Eck</i>
105		falls sie [will] (-) oder?	<i>if she wants right</i>
106	Yasmin:	[wer?]	<i>who</i>
107	Sara:	ich find schon.	<i>I find she may</i>
108	Helena:	(mh-)	<i>uhm</i>
109	Yasmin:	wer.	<i>who</i>
110	Sebastian:	jaleh.	<i>Jaleh</i>
111	Yasmin:	eh.	<i>okay</i>
112		(-)	<i>(-)</i>
113	Helena:	mhm,	<i>uhum</i>
114	Sebastian:	[(wenn sie jetzt sagt) (xxxxxx)?]	<i>(if she says now) (())</i>
115	Helena:	wär [garnicht schlecht weil amin] is: nicht mehr dabei;=	<i>wouldn't be bad at all because Amin is no longer there</i>

The transcribed extract starts with the opening sequence of the meeting. Sebastian who is taking the minutes manages the transition into the 'official' part of the meeting and introduces the first point on the agenda: *dolmetscherinnen* ('interpreters-FEM', Lines 016–017). After a perceivable silence, Helena asks whether there are any news (Line 019) and Sebastian himself announces a new candidate. In the next few turns, basic information about his person are made manifest, initiated by staff members' questions: the interpreting language – 'Arabic' (Lines 026–027), his name – Omar⁵⁶ (Lines 028–030), and his next scheduled visit to the counselling centre – on the very same day (Lines 031–034). These points are all part of a routinised procedure which fit the candidate into existing ordering structures (such as the categorisation according to source languages for

56 This is one of the occasions where Yasmin claims authority as an Arabic speaker (see Section 6.3) as she corrects Sebastian's pronunciation (Line 029–030) – not with much success though, it seems (see Line 041). *Omar* is a pseudonym as are all participants' names. In order to ensure coherence of the pseudonymised text for the reader, a comparable phonological case (that is, a contrast in the realisation of stress and consonants by Sebastian and Yasmin) was constructed on the basis of the chosen pseudonym.

interpreting and the insertion in the timing/ of the work). The exchange which follows is arguably no less part of the ordering process – but in contrast to the preceding questions which were followed by more or less concise, elliptic replies⁵⁷, a markedly longer sequence unfolds after the question posed by Sara: *ist (.) das ein klient von uns?=oder hat sich der nur so* ('is he our client or did he just', Lines 036–037). Again, the question positions Omar in the institutional order where people can be categorised according to their relationship with the organisation as staff members, volunteers, civil service persons and clients etc. Whether intended by Sara or not – the uptake of her question by the other staff members in the subsequent turns is telling as to how the volunteers' position in the institutional order is construed as a position of precarity and as an issue to be managed by the staff. Theoretically, Sara could have asked her question – whether Omar is a client or someone who just came in contact for volunteering – in order to understand if he is someone she has already met before. There is, in fact, no 'direct' reply to her question (at least in the verbal modality). Instead, without any overt logical linking between the propositions, Yasmin assures that 'right away' (*zuerst*, Line 039) she asked him was whether he has '[a] problem' (*problem*, Line 039) which he reportedly denied (Line 040). Indeed, Yasmin does not even need to specify the notion of 'problem' – the term is, without any overt repair, replaced with the more specific *wohnungsprobleme* ('housing problems', Line 041) in the following turn by Sebastian. Both Yasmin and Sebastian assure Sara and their colleagues that Omar does *not* have such problems (anymore), yet based on differing epistemic stances and as part of differing positionings within the narrated and narrating events. Yasmin does so via a reported interaction between her and Omar (a *small story*, sensu Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2007). In this narrated event, she asks him whether 'he has [a] problem' (Line 039) which he reportedly denies (Line 040). On the level of the narrated event, Yasmin thus positions her narrated self as a gatekeeper, checking access criteria or at least inserting the candidate into institutional categories. On the level of the narrating event, she thereby accounts for her role in maintaining institutional order. Yasmin's assessment rests on Omar's (reported) self-declaration. Sebastian, on the other hand, enacts a personal assessment saying that 'after the day of

57 The first question by Yasmin is subsequently answered by herself (Lines 026–027).

yesterday Omár has NO housing problems whatsoever' (*mit gestern hat der omár NULL wohnungsprobleme*, Line 041). This affirmation is construed by Helena as an epistemic stance or claim to a somewhat exclusive knowledge (indeed pointing to Sebastian as the *origo* of the utterance), namely when she asks back whether Omar is *his* client (interactively displaying a process of deductive reasoning, *ah*;, Line 042). It is at this point that the interactive genre becomes hybridised (cf. Sarangi, Polese, et al. 2011) as the genre of case reporting – which has a separate slot within the sequential organisation of staff meetings and in which people are construed as clients rather than as volunteers – is inserted into the volunteer labour force management practice (for instance, besides the genre of backstage gatekeeping talk). Sebastian reports on Omar's case (Lines 048–075), that is, how his 'housing problems' were solved. This effects an ambivalent positioning of Omar within the institutional order – positioning him as a (albeit former) client of the organisation, yet also 'clearing' his access to the position of a volunteer by objectivising Omar's claim which was reported by Yasmin initially (with the affirmations in Lines 041 and 075 framing the case report sequence). Sebastian positions himself as a successful counsellor vis-à-vis his colleagues and Omar as someone who is no more dependent on the resource of housing controlled by the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Coming back to Sara's question, the construed presuppositions to it are thus: (1) that being a client is connected to having 'housing problems', (2) that this, in turn, is worth talking about because it constitutes a problem in the management of volunteer labour force (and in the gatekeeping process) and (3) thus finally, that it is something which needs to be assessed by the counsellors in the process of managing (access to) the volunteer labour force. Omar is construed as a volunteer worker who is not – or rather: no more – subject to affects and expectations construed as rooted in housing precarity and negatively affecting his performance as a volunteer.

Analytically, the aspect of gatekeeping, that is, granting selective and gradated access to volunteer work, at the outset of this sequence, is only accessible via the presuppositions which can be induced in the sequentially unfolding of Omar's positioning. It is made explicit, however, in Jaleh's case. *Jaleh dolmetscht für uns jetzt Farsi, sie soll aber nicht ins Recherche-Eck, weil sie selbst gerade Wohnung sucht* – 'Jaleh interprets Farsi for us now, but she may not [be inserted] in the Recherche-Eck because she is currently looking herself for an apartment' – it reads

in the minutes of the staff meetings two weeks earlier (January 16, 2018)⁵⁸. This logic is also made interactionally manifest at the end of the sequence presented in Example 6.9: Sara positions Jaleh as an analogous case to Omar, likewise a volunteer-as-client (or client-as-volunteer). She too has no more ‘housing problems’, Sara affirms (Line 079) explaining Jaleh and her family have moved to a new apartment the week before (Lines 082–084). Helena and Sara then discuss details regarding the organisation of furniture (Lines 086–093)⁵⁹ and then, moving back to the routine procedure, Helena asks about Jaleh’s next scheduled visit to the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* with a co-constructed reply by Sara and Yameen (Line 094–102). In what follows, the gradated access to (spaces of) volunteer work is overtly connected to ‘housing problems’, namely as Sebastian asks whether ‘that means’ that Jaleh may work at the *Recherche-Eck* too (Line 104) to which his colleagues concur (Lines 107–115). This speaks of a concern with a scalable distance to the resource of housing within the work process – here, in Sebastian’s turn, the *Recherche-Eck* is construed as a space where contact with the resource is particularly intimate. These spatial politics also speak of a concern with the affective distance of the volunteer, that is, the ability to control desire.

Sara’s and Yasmin’s positive replies (Lines 107; 111) are emphasised by Helena with reference to a scarcity of volunteer labour force at the *Recherche-Eck* due to the recent exit of Amin (Mr Khalid, Line 115). So this is where the circle is closed: the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* needs functional volunteer labour force and, at the same time, it controls resources which are of value for the range of people from which the volunteer labour force is being recruited – given the life circumstances shared by most of them. The spatially (and as we shall see more below, affectively) construed intimacy with the resource of housing in the everyday work context of the volunteers is then understood as a problem to be solved. Therefore, the staff engages in a double form of boundary work, at the same time maintaining boundaries by categorising and sorting people (as having ‘housing problems’ or

58 The minutes serving as a basis for the meeting on January 30, 2018, – which is where the sequence in Example 6.9 stems from – reiterate a (shortened) version of this proposition: *Jaleh nur Dolm ‘Jaleh only interpr’* (minutes of the staff meeting on January 23, 2018).

59 One can see here, in exemplary manner, the amount of support being offered to clients at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* of which helping to organise furniture (or public funding for furniture for instance, through the *Hilfe in besonderen Lebenslagen* ‘support in extraordinary life circumstances’ scheme of the City of Vienna) is a regular part.

not, as being viable volunteer workers or not) *and* by moving them across these very boundaries through their interventions. A good volunteer candidate, then, is ideally someone who does not need the resources commanded (anymore).

Apart from a construal of volunteers' precarity – in terms of material resources – an affective dimension of precariousness is a salient component in the institutionally sanctioned construal of the volunteer. This affective precariousness concerns the relationship with the resource of housing (as well as labour) as condensed in the spatial politics of allocating volunteers to work domains within the counselling centre, but also, as we shall see, in relationship to the client Other. As we shall see in the following examples, affect towards the client Other, such as compassion, is as well the object of boundary-making practices in the construction of professional selves and others.

Construing emotional precariousness

In the previous examples, I looked into affect as a dimension of the construal and construction of subjectivities in counsellors' narrative practices at the staff meeting – such as the entextualisation of desire – and as a indexical phenomena in the interactions (narrating events) – for instance, Alena's excitement when she talks about a candidate, the narrative *mise-en-scène* of desires and so forth. With the following example, I want to look into affect as the object of explicit, metapragmatic discourse. As we have seen in the previous chapters, categories of emotionality such as 'feelings' are from time to time the object of explicit thematisation at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*: we have encountered them as objects of entextualisation, discursive negotiation and /or regulation; on an organisational level of scale, for instance in the 'relationship rules' (*Beziehungsregeln*) defined in the counselling guidelines (*Beratungsleitfaden*, see Chapter 4), or an individual level of scale, as self- and other regulation and control, for instance the controlled and measured affects I observed in interactions between Sara and her clients or the staff's joint work on a counsellor's emotional distress I observed a number of times during case discussions (see Section 5.3). Here, categories of emotionality played a role in the reflexive construction of embodied professional selves. In the audio-recorded staff-meetings – and across my fieldnotes of over two years of staff meetings – affect also played a role when talking about the work of vol-

unteers. Again, *control* of affect is key. In the following, I look into how it figures in the construction of professional selves and Others.

In the piece of interaction discussed above, taken from the staff meeting on January 30, 2018, Jaleh had been ‘cleared’ to work at the *Recherche-Eck*. This had been regarded necessary because she had been looking for an apartment for herself and her parents. As we have seen in the opening vignette at the beginning of this subchapter Section 6.4, the fact that she had previously (on January 23) been barred from working at the *Recherche-Eck* had been the object of ethical questioning by Sara at the meeting preceding her ‘clearing’. Were they treating her – a young Iranian woman who had joined the volunteer interpreting workforce rather recently – differently because of her gender? A few minutes into the meeting, they came back to her (Example 6.10).

Example 6.10: The emotionally affected volunteer – talking about Jaleh’s work trials at the staff meeting on January 23, 2018 (transcribed extract from audio).

218	Yasmin:	okee.	<i>okay</i>
219		u:nd ä:hm (- -) ja.	<i>and erm yes</i>
220		(-) und jaleh es is eh schon (.) drinnen beim (.) dolmetschen,	<i>and Jaleh is already in for interpreting anyway</i>
221	Svenja:	ja-	<i>yes</i>
222	Yasmin:	nicht rechercheeck;	<i>not Recherche-Eck</i>
223	Sara:	<<slightly palatalised, breathy voice> die IS so süß;>	<i><<slightly palatalised, breathy voice> she is so sweet></i>
224	Svenja:	die is [so::: sü::ß]	<i>she is so sweet</i>
225	Helena:	[das passt voll ja.	<i>that works well yes</i>
226		nur dolmetschen] nicht rechercheeck.	<i>only interpreting no Recherche-Eck</i>
227	Svenja:	((chuckles))	<i>((chuckles))</i>
228		(6s)	<i>(6s)</i>
229		((typing on keyboard))	<i>((typing on keyboard))</i>
230	Sara:	<<whispering> ich weiß noch immer nicht von wo ich sie kenn;>	<i><<whispering> I still don't know where I know her from></i>

231	Jonas:	((chuckles softly))	((chuckles softly))
232	Yasmin:	so.	so
233		(-) (xxxxxx) Recherche-Eck jetzt hab ich ihn mal weggetan,	(xxxxxx) Recherche-Eck now took him <it?> away
234		(-) weil gibt_s nix neues,	because there is nothing new
235		außer du du schickst die zwei pung äh [kontakte (xxx);]	unless you you send the two poin er contacts (xxx)
236	Sara:	[also bei ihr ich] hab sie bei einem beratungsgespräch dabei gehabt das sehr emotional war,	well with her I had her with me in a consultation that was very emotional
237		und da hat man dann auch gemerkt dass sie da ziemlich (.) eingegangen ist während dem gespräch-	and there one could feel that she kind of shrinked during the consultation
238		also auf sie muss man echt ein bissl (-) aufpassen.	so one has to look out for her a little
239		(-) das war dann nachher hab ich echt mit ihr ein entlastungsgespräch geführt weil die	it was then later i really did a de-briefing with her because the
240	Svenja:	mit der jaleh;	with Jaleh
241	Sara:	ja.	yes
242		(- -)	(- -)
243		weil die klientin sehr viel geweint hat-	because the client cried a lot
244		und und sehr depressiv (-) is-	and and is pretty depressed
245		(-) und auch in dem gespräch war-	and was also during counselling-
246		und da hat man dann echt gemerkt dass sie da ziemlich überfordert war-=	and there one could really feel that she was kind of overwhelmed

247	=und dann hat sie auch	<i>and then she partly didnt</i>
	teilweise nicht mehr übersetzt.	<i>translate any more</i>
248	Svenja: mhm;	<i>mhm</i>
249	Sara: weil sie einfach	<i>because she just</i>
250	Jonas: mhm;	<i>mhm</i>
251	?: mhm;	<i>mhm</i>
252	Sara: voll überfordert war in der	<i>was really overwhelmed by the</i>
	situation;	<i>situation</i>
253	(3s)	<i>(3s)</i>
254	ein bisschen drauf achten;	<i>have a bit an eye on this</i>
255	Yasmin: so.	<i>so</i>
256	(- -) kee.	<i>kay</i>

Yasmin, who is keeping the minutes, moves the conversation to Jaleh (Example 6.10, Lines 218–222). What follows is a dense moment in the construction of Jaleh as a person and volunteer worker. Asking her colleagues to confirm her allocation to interpreting work rather than the *Recherche-Eck* (Lines 220; 222), Yasmin reiterates the politics of differentiation and division of volunteer work as well as the positioning of Jaleh within. Svenja and Helena confirm (Lines 221; 226). What follows is a sequence of evaluations of Jaleh and her work, reiterating the pattern observed in the previous cases where a volunteer is named and then all sorts of evaluations are gathered by the staff members present. Sara's first evaluation, however, is different – positioning Jaleh as an object of her own (that is, Sara's) or even a more generalised beholder's affects: *die IS so süß* 'she is so sweet' (Line 223). The modulation of her voice (with a little breathy quality and slightly palatalising the sibilants) marks – and as we shall see in the uptake, is interpreted as, a change of register (cf. Podesva & Callier 2015; Sicoli 2010). It is immediately echoed – and, prosodically, augmented – by Svenja: *die is so:: sü::ß* 'she is so:: swee::t' (Line 224). Helena does not take up Sara's evaluation but instead carries on answering Yasmin's question (which she started earlier, Line 221): *das passt voll ja. nur dolmetschen nicht rechercheck* ('that works well yes. only interpreting no Recherche-Eck', Lines 225–226). This more conventional evaluative statement is followed by a speaking pause during which one can

hear Yasmin typing on the audio. Sara whispers, as if speaking off the record, seemingly elaborating her previous statement – *ich weiß noch immer nicht von wo ich sie kenn* ('I still don't know where I know her from', Line 230). I respond with a short and soft chuckle (Line 231)⁶⁰ which sounds just a little embarrassed, displaying that something feels odd to me with the way Sara is positioning Jaleh the volunteer candidate. As an expression of endearment, *süß* 'sweet' carries a range of potential indexicalities which threaten Jaleh's position as a worker (usually small, little, young individuals or things are called 'sweet') and of Sara as a counsellor (calling the interpreter and volunteer, a young woman, 'sweet' might be construed as paternalistic). Indeed, there are a number of subtle indexes that Sara's utterances are construed as outside register and her evaluations thus not belonging to the ongoing procedure: the modulation of Sara's and then Svenja's voice and prosody in Svenja's reiteration of Sara's turn, in a form of double-voicing which is not ironical but marks a change of register (Line 224), Svenja's chuckle (Line 227), the following silence (Line 228), Sara's whispering in the elaboration in the following (Line 230), and the lack of uptake by Helena and Yasmin. Most markedly Yasmin: she moves on to the next point – treating Sara's evaluations more as parenthetical interjections than as part of the ongoing practice (Lines 232–235). She is interrupted by Sara who recentres on Jaleh, but now following the more generally employed script initiated by Yasmin earlier: she recounts a work situation leading to an evaluation of Jaleh's work (Lines 236–254).

What follows is a narrated event in which Sara arranges the narrated characters in the affective tissue of a counselling situation. In fact it is, in a first move, the counselling situation as a whole which she characterises as *sehr emotional* 'very emotional' (Line 236). Here, affect is indeed at first entextualised as something which resides within the encounter or the practice (although at a later turn, the individual psyche/body of the client is singled out as a site – or source – of the emotionality within the encounter, cf. Line 243–245). Within this affect-laden situation, Jaleh is positioned as a vulnerable body – she is *eingegangen*, she 'shrunk' or 'died' (Line 237). This rather common idiom evokes the metaphor of a flower or a pet, a living being whose survival passively depends on the caring attention

60 Unfortunately, I cannot reconstruct whether Sara was addressing specifically me in her whispered turn.

of another (an asymmetry and complementarity in their positions which was already present in the affective evaluation of Jaleh as ‘sweet’), positioning Jaleh as a vulnerable bodily subject (cf. DWDS 1964)⁶¹. And this is what Sara asks her team to do: to have an eye for her, to take care of her (Line 238). Sara also recounts how she managed the situation herself, how she took care – and charge – of it: she had an *Entlastungsgespräch* with Jaleh, a debriefing or literally, a ‘relief talk’ (cf. Tipton 2016: 474). In this narrative sequence, we can see how what is at stake in this narrating event is not just Jaleh the volunteer, but very much so Sara the professional counsellor. When she rephrases the entextualisation of the scene in the following, she zooms in on the individual actors of the narrated event. The client is crying, depressed (Lines 243–244) and Jaleh overwhelmed and failing to carry on with her work (Lines 246–252). Again, Sara closes the stanza with a request towards the team to be aware of her affective responses at work (*drauf achten*, ‘pay attention’, Line 254). Looking at this as an enactment of professionalism, one can say that Sara exerts professional vision (Goodwin 1994): the process of entextualisation at the heart of the narrative practice works as a way to represent a past event, in a necessarily selective fashion, giving it the status of an object of knowledge (coding) and a distinct perspective (highlighting). This process, as described by Goodwin, is productive in a double sense: it produces and processes legitimate representations of reality, arranging objects and people within them, so that they are seen from a specific vantage point. At the same time, it produces the origo of such vision as a privileged perspective:

61 Whenever I presented the transcribed extract to colleagues, the metaphor of *eingehen* drew their attention, triggering rather strong moral rejection in some. The metaphor is rather common and therefore I do not want to reify its source meaning(s) as indexical meaning. In Eastern Austrian varieties of German the verb is, for instance, used to describe someone investing considerable effort into a certain activity (for instance, in sports or when taking an exam) but ultimately failing due to insufficient (bodily or mental) capacity (but cf. also codified usage in standard German, see Dudenredaktion 2019: 493). As such it may have both a pitying (the failure) and a commendatory (the exhaustive effort) indexical value. Note however, that in both usages, the speaker orients their caring attention towards an affected subject. From a perspective of interactive processing, either indexical value might apply (or even both, as they do not entirely exclude each other). In other contexts, a transitive usage is possible too: *auf jemanden/etwas eingehen* ‘to respond to someone/something’ (cf. DWDS 1964) – and indeed, Jaleh is constructed as responding to the clients! Despite the agentive focus, the transitive usage too positions the subject as reacting to another entity. Thanks to my colleagues, especially to Lisa Krammer, for making me aware for the complexity and ambivalence of the expression.

the professional vision of the professional. The specific perspective is one in which affect figures as a central concern at work – both as a hazard to the functioning of communicative work as well as as something which can be and needs to be treated by communication (viz. [meta-]communicative labour). The coding scheme applied by Sara is that of *Abgrenzung* ('setting boundaries') which allows to divide affective display into two sets of affective practices, controlling affect on the one hand and being affected on the other. A salient contrast thus lies between agentive and non-agentive forms of affective practice, with the former being the preferred, professionally valued form. Affect is not excluded from professional rationality, but subjected to a communicative processing which allows the subject to extract itself from the affective tissue of the encounter, to take it 'at a distance' (to use the ethnographer's metaphor), and to make it the object of professional evaluation and decision-making.

As Ticktin (2011: 118) has shown in her ethnography of illness and humanitarian reason in the French immigration system, compassion is a practice in which new staff needs to be trained and which is deployed in a measured and strategic manner (recall my description of Sara's way of controlling her affective display towards a client, see Section 5.1). Counsellors need to evaluate the legitimacy of performances of affect (Ticktin 2011: 121, referring to Butler 2009) which has to do with determining a client's status as, for instance, an 'emergency case' (see Section 5.2, cf. Lipsky 2010 [1980]: 136–139), thus giving access to certain resources or not (gatekeeping). But where does this place the (volunteer) interpreter? In Jaleh's case above, the focus was twofold: on her vulnerability as a precarious worker, as a subject of care, and on her functioning as an interpreter, a subject of control⁶². Care and control come up again, though with a different weighting, in the example discussed in the following subsection.

Language speculations, professional socialisation and the willfulness of affect

At the same meeting – chronologically before Jaleh had come into focus – another new volunteer interpreter, Cali, had been the topic. In this instance, affect

⁶² See also Tipton (2018) who looks into how non-professional interpreters have been historically mobilised themselves to exert care and control over refugees.

had already come up as the object of interactive processing. Affect becomes the object of professional practices – both on the level of the narrated event and of the narrating event –, thus indeed forming the immediate interactional context in which the above extract (Example 6.10) had unfolded. At the centre of the sequence is a narrated event related to the others present by Helena who – in interactive collaboration with the others – positions Cali as an affective subject in her narrative and herself as intervening in his professional socialisation. This instance differs from the previous example of Jaleh in the specific way in which affect is entextualised as an index of personhood, effecting a shift from vulnerability to a more explicit entextualisation of affect as index of willfulness (Ahmed 2014). Speaking of a ‘shift’ is not quite exact in terms of interactional time, since, as mentioned above, the talk on Cali precedes that on Jaleh. In terms of how the interpretive scheme is co-constructed across the interactive series of narrating events, it would be more accurate to speak of a shift towards vulnerability. But as we shall see, it is vulnerability where the interactive configuration of indexicals starts off in Cali’s case as well, being successively adjusted in a co-constructed interpretive practice of entextualisation. This leads me to consider willfulness (as much as vulnerability) as a variation of the more general theme which could be labelled *uncontrolled affect*.

Moreover, the example allows me to reconnect the question of affect to that of language speculations, as besides Cali’s affective display, his linguistic repertoire comes to be evaluated in the narrative practice. Cali’s case provides a maximal contrast to that of the two candidates introduced just before him by Sara, of Farhad and Emran (which were discussed earlier in this section, see Example 6.6): a speaker of Somali, Cali’s linguistic repertoire is of distinctive value to the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*. Both at the *Recherche-Eck* and in counselling, numbers of Somali-speaking clients had been continuously high and the staff had been struggling to secure the corresponding linguistic labour force (in contrast with both Dari, Farsi and Pashto labour force supply and demand). Helena’s concluding comment to the sequence reported in the below extract states the value of Cali’s repertoire in commonsensical terms (with an affirmative, factual mode of the utterance): *ja:= und ich mein er es is auf jeden fall eine hilfe weil er einfach somali (is)*. (‘yeah and I mean he it is helpful in any case simply because he is somali’, Line 181, Example 6.11). This turn contains the only reference to his linguistic

abilities in the extract below. The situation was different in the following week, on January 30, where Yasmin would state that he had some difficulties ‘to build nice sentences’ (*schöne Sätze zu bauen*). Yasmin will advise her colleagues to accommodate to him by building simpler sentences and paying more attention to him – *gute Ohren für ihn haben* (‘to have good ears for him’). Similar to the way Farhad and Emran’s abilities were being treated, the tenor will be to *make it* work from the side of the counselling centre. But at the meeting on January 23, another aspect of Cali’s work trial gained attention. The below extract gives the full length of the sequence, initiated by a question from Sara who introduces him as an object of the narrative practice (Lines 130–131, Example 6.11).

Example 6.11: Talking about Cali, the new interpreter for Somali, at the staff meeting on January 23, 2018 (transcribed extract from audio).

130	Sara:	ah und der cali,	<i>ah and Cali</i>
131		wie funktioniert das bei euch (.) mit ihm?	<i>how does it work for you with him</i>
132		der somali?	<i>the Somali</i>
133		[(xxx xxxxxx)]	<i>(xxx xxxxxx)</i>
134	Yasmin:	[der ist gestern] NICHT gekommen.	<i>he did not come yesterday</i>
135	Svenja:	der kommt heute;= [(.) oder?]	<i>he is coming today isn’t he</i>
136	Sara:	[ja eh nicht.]	<i>yah he wasn’t anyway</i>
137	Svenja:	[steht im kalender;]	<i>it’s written in the calendar</i>
138	Sara:	[der kommt] auch heute.	<i>he is coming today actually</i>
139	Svenja:	also ich hatt EIN gespräch mit ihm,	<i>well I had one consultation with him</i>
140		(-) das hat ganz gut geklappt.	<i>and that went quite well</i>
141	Yasmin:	also	<i>well</i>
142	Helena:	ich hatte auch eins mit ihm-=	<i>I had one with him too</i>
143		=er hatte danach sehr viel rebededarf-	<i>he was very much in need of talking afterwards</i>

144	(- -) weil das war (-) ja so ne familie,	<i>because this was that kind of family</i>
145	wo ich n bisschen	<i>where I a little</i>
146	weil die wollten einfach unbedingt ne wohnung,	<i>because they just wanted an apartment by all means</i>
147	und ich hab dann halt mehrmals (.) sagen müssen es gibt hier keine wohnungen,	<i>and i had to say several times (.) there are no apartments here</i>
148	und halt auch etwas [(-)] intensiver vielleicht,	<i>and also a little more intensely maybe</i>
149	Sara: [mhm;]	<i>mhm</i>
150	Helena: und er hatte halt voll viel redebedarf=	<i>and he was so much in need of talking</i>
151	=ja (.) das is so schwer für die leute,	<i>yah it is so difficult for these people</i>
152	und sie finden halt keine wohnungen,=	<i>and they just don't find apartments</i>
153	=und	<i>and</i>
154	Sara: ((chuckles))	<i>((chuckles))</i>
155	Helena: und ich war dann-	<i>and then I was like</i>
156	Helena: ja eh das wissen wir auch aber manchmal ist es wichtig ihnen das zu sa	<i>yah we know that too but sometimes it is important to tell them</i>
157	also es hat ihn [(-)] glaub ich bisschen	<i>so it did I believe a little</i>
158	Sara: [mhm;]	<i>mhm</i>
159	(- -)	<i>(- -)</i>
160	Svenja: berührt.	<i>it touched him</i>
161	Helena: ja.	<i>yes.</i>
162	Svenja: mhm;	<i>mhm</i>
163	Helena: ja=berührt es hat ihn eher so: woah irgendwie.	<i>yah touched it rather like wow somehow.</i>
164	Svenja: krass-	<i>gosh</i>

-
- 165 Helena: <<chuckling> wir geben ihm> <<chuckling> we won't give
keine wohnung so ungefähr; him> an apartment in that
sense
- 166 Bern- mhm; mhm
hard:
- 167 (naja,) well
- 168 Yasmin: also ich hab jetzt (.) de cali für so I now have Cali for the
die WORKshop hier laut workshop here according to the
protokoll. minutes
- 169 das ist NICHT richtig. this is not right
- 170 oder ist das [richtig so;] or is it right so
- 171 Sara: [nein ich hab ihn] no I <asked> him
- 172 also ICH hab ihn nur gefragt so I just asked him if he if he
ob er (.) ob er sich AUCH could imagine <to do>
workshops vorstellen könnt;= workshops as well
- 173 =ich hab ihn halt alles gefragt - it's that I asked him everything
- 174 Yasmin: mhm- mhm
- 175 Sara: was er sich vorstellen könnte; what he could imagine
<doing>
- 176 aber eh wie immer wir but just as always we have to
müssen_s halt ausprobieren. try
- 177 (- - -) aber dadurch dass ER but because it's him texting
mir die ganze zeit schreibt, me all the time
- 178 ((clears her throat)) und ich ((clears her throat)) and I
noch nicht mit euch reden haven't yet been able to talk to
konnte- you
- 179 hab ich jetzt gesagt ja er soll I told him yes he should come
heute kommen; today
- 180 weil ich_s halt nicht wusste; because I just didn't know it

- | | | | |
|-----|---------|---|---|
| 181 | Helena: | ja:= und ich mein er es is auf
jeden fall eine hilfe weil er
einfach [somali] (is). | <i>yeah and I mean he it is helpful
in any case simply because he
is Somali</i> |
| 182 | Sara: | [ja,] | <i>yes</i> |
| 183 | | voll- | <i>totally</i> |

Sara's question initiates a series of narrative sequences and evaluations by the staff (Example 6.11, Lines 130–133). The first to respond is Yasmin, with a narrative sequence consisting of just one intonational unit: *der ist gestern nicht gekommen* ('he did not come yesterday', Line 134). The implicit evaluation of him – as unreliable, as one might infer – is quickly countered by Svenja and Sara in a collaborative rebuttal: Cali did not miss his work trial (as entailed in Yasmin's previous turn), instead it was Yasmin who misread the shared digital calendar. The following narrative sequences follow the scheme we have already encountered in some of the previous examples: entextualisations of work trials as narrated events, followed by more or less explicit evaluations and self-positioning through professional vision.

The first one, by Svenja, is again rather short, simply relating a joint counselling session to her colleagues which she evaluates positively (Lines 139–140). The following narrative sequence, by Helena, is much longer and more complex (Lines 142–165). The first two lines form a stanza (set aside by the ensuing lines by a speaking pause) in which the first line is organised in parallelism with Svenja's turn – reiterating syntactic structure and propositional content as well as tied together by deictic reference (*auch eins*, 'one [...] too', Line 142). This way, the second line of the stanza ends up in parallel with Svenja's positive evaluation. The poetic organisation of her utterance makes her evaluation of Cali's (narrated) communicative disposition (*viel redebedarf*, 'much need of talking', Line 143) conceivable as an evaluation of him as a volunteer worker. Helena pauses briefly, then she elaborates, stringing together two narrated episodes which form two separate time-spaces: First, the counselling situation in which she positions herself and the client family as interacting parties (Lines 144–148). In this narrated episode, Cali is absent from the propositional level of the text. He comes to be construable as a bystander of the interaction only via the second

narrated episode where he figures as a commentator on the preceding event. The second episode parallels what Sara will later call an *Entlastungsgespräch* ('relief talk') when talking about Jaleh. Yet, in this instance, Helena does not frame it as a specific professional genre and indeed her intervention is entextualised, in the narrative linearisation of interactional time, as a reaction to Cali's verbalisation of his affective state. He is quoted by Helena – *ja (.) das is so schwer für die leute, und sie finden halt keine wohnungen,=und* ('yah it is so difficult for these people and they just don't find apartments and', Lines 151–153) as an explication of his *redebedarf* ('need of talking', Line 150). All of this, that is both the interaction with the clients and Cali's reaction to it, is, moreover, framed as a rather unexceptional course of action – note Helena's repeated use of the particle *halt* (and earlier, *einfach*; both approximately translatable with 'just', Lines 146;147;148; 150) conferring a stance of rather weak commitment to the noteworthiness of the narrated events and Cali's understanding of them (as quoted by Helena, Lines 151–153). Sara's reactive listening signals, specifically the chuckle (Line 154), support the interpretation that the described course of action is not only construed as unexceptional, but as 'typical'. Cali's affective reaction in the narrated episodes – his *redebedarf* ('need of talking') – the narrated interaction with Helena (*ja eh das wissen wir auch* 'yah we know that too', Line 156) and Sara's chuckle align Cali with the figure of a compassionate and slightly naïve neophyte, not acquainted with the 'ordinariness' of clients' ordeals on the housing market and the typicality of the sometimes not so gentle encounters between clients and counsellors. This makes of the episodes narrated instances of professional socialisation where a neophyte is trained by a senior figure in professional control and channeling of compassion (and reflexivity, see Section 5.3; cf. Ticktin 2011: 112–119) – which of course presupposes professional vision: to be able to *read* the encounter with the clients in a specific way.

The entextualisation of Cali's affects is complex – it happens throughout the narrated episodes and through multiple and, towards the end of the sequence, openly negotiated metapragmatic characterisations (Lines 157–167). His absence in the first episode is remarkable not only because it presupposes a specific professional order where he, the interpreter, figures as a non-actor per default. This absence opens a blank in his affective positioning amongst characters clearly positioned in the affective dimension: the clients with their intensely articulated

(*unbedingt*, ‘by all means’, Line 146) desire for a resource for which they might understand Helena to act as a gatekeeper; and Helena reiterating the claim that there are no apartments to be had from the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* (see Chapter 4) with an affective modulation of her speech (or, actually, a loss of affective moderation, if understood as a litotes:) *und halt auch etwas (-) intensiver vielleicht* (‘and also a little more intensely maybe’, Line 148). The blank left by Cali’s absence in the first narrated event is cataphorically as well as anaphorically filled by what Helena calls his *redebedarf* (‘need of talking’). In terms of affect, Cali the narrated figure is entextualised as controlling his feelings within the encounter with the client where stakes are high for his role as an interpreter, but at the same time as articulating a form of compassion which is, in terms of entextualised time and space, retrospective and reflexively referencing elsewhere, namely to the bygone counselling situation. Thus, in the dimensions of time, space and affect (Park 2021), Cali’s figure emerges as drawing relevant boundaries and reflexively controlling his affective display – this is where the narrated episode differs from Jaleh’s. In Cali’s case, there is no reference to a loss of control over his role as it will be the case with Jaleh. Yet still, Cali is being *affected* in the narrated episodes, carrying this affectedness across encounters. Similar to Jaleh’s case above, this is constructed as necessitating the caring and controlling intervention by the concerned staff member / narrator (Helena in Cali’s case)⁶³.

In order to understand the significance that is given to Cali’s affect of compassion we need to look closer into how the embodied affect is negotiated towards the end of the narrated episode (Lines 157–166). Summarising the previously narrated episode of professional socialisation in (inter)action (*also*, ‘all in all’ / ‘that means’, Line 157), Helena concludes with a metapragmatic, evaluative comment on Cali’s positioning within the narrated episodes. Helena’s characterisation explicitly frames him as ‘affected’, positioning him as a passive recipient of the narrated encounter between client and counsellor. Helena does not finish her turn, leaving open the metapragmatic categorisation of the affective process undergone by Cali. After a brief speaking pause (Line 159), Svenja fills in the syntactic blank left by Helena, offering a label for the affective process: [*es hat ihn*] *berührt* (‘[it] touched [him]’, Line 160). The choice of the term, mobilising a

63 Though Helena does not explicitly frame their talk as an *Entlastungsgespräch* (‘relief talk’) as Sara will a little later with Jaleh.

bodily metaphor, indexes a situated (albeit somewhat generic, cf. Wetherell 2012: 2) understanding of affect in itself, of affect as something which happens to the bodily subject. I contend that Svenja's choice of words is little coincidental and rather revelatory at once, given the fill-in-the-blanks form of the exchange: prepared by the syntactic and propositional constraints of Helena's unfinished turn, she 'inserts' a term which is predictable in the given context. Her paradigmatic choice thus gives insight into presupposed and entailed discourse (cf. Silverstein 2003), short, into a sort of attempted (by Svenja) default indexical construal of the narrated event. Indeed, the sketched understanding of affect (quite generically) fits with the professional discourse on affect we have encountered a number of times so far: as something which is present in the work encounter and which has an impact on the subject – threatening professional agency if not properly contained, managed and controlled. But the range of possible construals (its meaning potential, cf. Verschueren 2018) of the term *berührt* ('touched') is not as generic. Indeed, Helena who approves at first (Line 161), then makes an effort to rephrase. Hesitating, she then makes an interesting choice in the entextualisation of affect: she replaces the term with a series of quotes – not actual quotes but virtual verbalisations of Cali's imputed affective state, a sort of transmodal paraphrase (marked as such: *so: [...] irgendwie* 'like [...] somehow', Line 163; *so ungefähr* 'approximately in that sense', Line 165): *woah* ('wow', Line 163), reformulated by Svenja as *krass* (approximately 'gosh', or 'crass/extreme', Line 164), and then again by Helena as *wir geben ihm keine wohnung so ungefähr* ('we won't give him an apartment in that sense', Line 165). Progressively moving the stance ascribed to Cali from the bodily-affective towards a verbal modality, the ascribed stance increases in its moral dimension. In this process of entextualisation, the affective dimension of his positioning is recalibrated too, gaining more reactive and expressive character across the rephrased instances. Though mitigated by the embedding stance – Helena's accompanying chuckle (Line 165) which continues the prior alignment of Cali with a compassionate, but slightly naive neophyte –, the stance ascribed to Cali in the narrating event amounts to an affectively articulated, moral criticism: on the level of the narrated interaction, Cali's affect of compassion is rendered as questioning the institutionalised ways of doing things as through virtual reported speech, he positions Helena (and perhaps himself) as a gatekeeper in her (or their) function as a representative(s) of the NGO (note

the first person plural deixis, *wir* 'we', Line 165⁶⁴). As an object of professional socialisation, affect becomes entextualised on the level of the narrating event not so much as vulnerability, but as a reluctance to give in to the established moral order embodied by Helena. To use a visual metaphor, Cali's affect of compassion is thus successively reformulated as 'blocking' professional vision. In this instance, thus, affect is not one-dimensionally conceived of as vulnerability, but indeed as having a willful potential as well, which refuses to fit in with the established order. However, this does not mean that affect functions as resistance in this case, as the indexicality of willfulness is mobilised by Helena in an act of positioning herself affirmatively within moral order (and as conducting Cali, the neophyte, in). The moral criticism is not further taken up as a position in the narrating event. Indeed, there is no further overt interactive processing of the narrated episodes and Helena's and Svenja's collaborative meaning-making than a minimal response by Bernhard (Line 166) signaling closure of the argument (Line 167).

Yasmin then actively changes the topic, asking about the tasks Cali is – according to the minutes – going to be allocated with (Lines 168–170). Similar to the example cases discussed earlier, Sara explains the provisional nature of these decisions – *aber eh wie immer wir müssen_s halt ausprobieren* ('but just as always we have to try', Line 176). She adds that it is Cali who is seeking and initiating contact – embedded in a slightly ambivalent stance *die ganze zeit* ('all the time', Line 177) – referring to the internal decision-making process delimiting her decision (Line 178–180). The argument is closed by Helena who, corroborating Sara, declares that Cali is *auf jeden fall eine hilfe weil er einfach somali (is)* ('helpful in any case simply because he is Somali', Line 181). This epitomises the nature of the sort of language speculations we have encountered in these examples: it is the organisation which has to accommodate Cali and not so much the other way around. This includes the allocation of tasks (Lines 171–175) and linguistic accommodation (as Yasmin would say at the next meeting, see above). Moreover, it requires them to invest in his professional socialisation. All in all, the power

64 The deictic referent of first person plural pronoun is syntactically and pragmatically ambivalent: in the given context, it might be construed to refer (1) to Helena and the staff as representatives of the NGO (an institutional us), with deictic anchoring in the narrating event, or (2) to Cali himself and Helena in the narrated event (potentially too, understood as an institutional us).

balance might therefore seem to lean more in favour of the volunteer candidate than in some of the previous examples (Jaleh, Farhad and Emran; and similar to the cases of Mr Khalid and Ms Gulieva), given the more agentive entextualisation of him as an affective and ethical subject. Still, affectedness – though not treated unequivocally as vulnerability – is constructed as an index of the not quite or not yet of professional requiring the intervention of the counsellor-as-professional. The volunteer interpreter emerges as a professionally liminal figure characterised by their lack of (professional vision to) control their affectedness.

As a postscript: clients' choices

At the end of my usual shift at the *Recherche-Eck*, on a Tuesday afternoon, the last client I had been working with, a young Somali woman, asked me whether I was going to be there on Thursday too. I reply that no, I am there only on Tuesdays. But there are other volunteers, I add. Rather emphatically, she asks me whether there will be 'good ones' too. I think I know what she is hinting at. At that time, I have been observing that my linguistic repertoire had acquired a rather stable valorisation, both from the staff and the clients. Among the staff, it seems that I am considered the most 'universal' speaker: I speak both English and German, my German is considered better suited for working with both low proficiency speakers and with an interpreter. I am paired with clients of all kinds of linguistic repertoires and skills. The only ones that get assigned a comparable share of clients are the Somali speaking volunteers – as they map onto the largest group of clients at that time. Many clients, like the woman at the end of my shift, seem to prefer working with me rather than with my fellow volunteers. I have a few guesses why: they know from their own experience about racist prejudice and discrimination on the real estate market. Whether we are writing an email or making a phone call to a real estate agent or owner, my communicative repertoire promises to get a step further than usual. Often enough when making a phone call, the person at the other end would have been polite and inviting – up to the point when I would explain for whom I was calling. I had thus adopted the practice of making the clients call themselves – if possible – putting the phone on loudspeaker and assisting by prompting and noting down relevant dates and times. My impression was that it made no difference in the outcome: if the

person on the other end was racist, they would hang up sooner or later no matter what. The ideal of an independent, engaged client at the heart of the project of the *Recherche-Eck* certainly played its part too – I was convinced that it boosted the client's sense of self-efficacy and was well received and even rewarded by some real estate agents and house owners. This practice of mine apparently had no deterring effect, whether clients gave in to my regime or whether they tried to convince me to making the phone calls on their behalf. I suspected there was a racialising dimension to this as well. *Will there be good ones too, on Thursday?* With all of this in mind, I insist that all of my fellow volunteers are competent. The expression on her face tells me that she is not convinced at all. Her question was probably aiming elsewhere.

Reproducing professional Others and Selves

In this section, I have explored the valorisation of volunteers' communicative repertoires in the context of the counsellors' weekly staff meetings. It thus made the counsellors' communicative representations of the volunteers' positions the object of analysis⁶⁵. The present section started from the assumption that these representations were produced as part of backstage gatekeeping practices. But as the analysis of the recorded interactive processes revealed, these practices have a more layered character and function. An emergent theme across the analysed events was that of control – controlling one's own and others' affect, controlling communicative encounters and the consequences of structural and emergent interdependencies between the different parties involved (on different levels of scale: the organisation, counsellors, volunteers and clients). Such disparate phenomena as calibrating volunteer candidates' language skills to their projected tasks, managing volunteers' expectations – as in being 'clear' about the bound-

65 This necessarily tells only a very specific part of the story of *the making of volunteer language workers*, one which admittedly centres and reproduces the institutional perspective on the volunteers' positions. The risk in adopting this perspective certainly lies in a potential reification of power-asymmetries in the analysis, allowing, however, to produce a detailed account of this very consequential perspectival asymmetry. The vignette in the previous subsection was not inserted with the aim of balancing a picture which is built of inequalities of different qualities and scaling, nor is it to produce a 'holistic' account – which in turn would run the risk of reifying 'the' perspectives of counsellors, clients and volunteers. Rather, the aim of this is to break the logic of the above analyses and to emphasise their partial, piecemeal character (Clifford 1986).

aries of the volunteer labour relationship (no internship, and no transition into paid work), or in the differential spatial allocation of workers (to counselling and the *Recherche-Eck*) based on a set of criteria – and managing the way volunteers affectively relate to the clients form a field of indexicalities (Jaffe 2016) of professionalism which allows counsellors to position their professional Others and Selves. In this field of indexicalities, the position of the volunteer language worker is constructed in relation to the counsellor and vice-versa.

From a perspective of an ethnography of language and labour (Del Percio 2021; Urciuoli & LaDousa 2013), it is relevant to note that such positioning is consequential for the regimentation of the volunteer labour force. It forms the basis for a significant accommodation towards the volunteers – their communicative and affective repertoires — and, moreover, for active interventions – acting on their work practice, managing their affects, shaping volunteers in their professional socialisation, and, not least, working for the stability of their livelihood – ultimately to control the effects of vulnerabilities and (inter-)dependencies which are seen as detrimental to the functioning labour force as a whole. Rather than sorting who is to be allowed into the volunteer labour force and who is not, the practices under concern are geared towards managing a situation where linguistic labour force is not per se short in supply, but barely professionalised, keeping control of the different levels of competence and training, aspirations and trajectories, and not least, trying to retain suited workers as volunteers. Securing the necessary linguistic labour force cannot conclusively account for the logics underlying counsellors' choices. If we take, for instance, the cases of the young Arabic-speaker, mentioned at the beginning of this section, or of Farhad and Emran: here, a reflexive, ethical questioning came to be more salient and consequential. Such ethical questioning is at least as much reflexively directed at the counsellors, as speaking subjects, themselves, as it is at the volunteer language worker. So while processes of language speculation, i. e. projections of value of (investments in) a candidate's linguistic repertoire, are not absent from the data, they fail to explain what is going on when counsellors talk about volunteers at their staff meetings. The documented practices work primarily to manage and control the volunteers' – and crucially – the counsellors' own positions within different dimensions of order – institutional, professional and moral. Interventions such as in helping out with housing and lending an ear in moments of distress do not just function

as informal remuneration in exchange for labour, but also to maintaining – i. e. reproducing – a functioning labour force. Thus, I argue that reproduction is the salient dimension for understanding the political economy of linguistic labour in refugee support work.

Through the lens of reproductive labour (Bakker 2007; Beer 1984; Federici 2004), volunteer (language) work done by asylum seekers and refugees can be appropriated on different levels of scale by different actors: (1) on the level of the individual subject, by the volunteers themselves as they navigate and make a living in Austria (reproducing their livelihood and investing in a better future), (2) on the level of the organisation, by the NGO (or the sub-unit of the counselling centre), as it is able to source linguistic labour power at low cost (at least compared to paid interpreting), a logic that returns also (3) on the level of the institution of refugee support in Austria, which relies to an important degree (though not only) on (formal and informal) volunteer language work. Finally, we have seen, how volunteering can be appropriated (4) on the level of the state for a reproduction of the imaginary of a coherent, monolingual nation-state of Austria, as voluntary labour is framed as typically Austrian, producing value for society as a whole and allowing for belonging (becoming part by working for free). These processes of reproduction crucially hinge on the maintenance of difference among the labour force – difference between legal status and access to the labour market, profession and professionalism, and ethics. On the level of the counselling centre, this leads to a complex entanglement of processes of (de-)linguaging subjects and the circulation of resources/ allocation of labour which is seen as requiring management and control in order to ensure the reproduction of professionalism. Reproduction is where the two analytical dimensions of subjectivation and political economy meet.

As we have seen across this chapter, the languaged Other – embodied in a fractally reiterated form by the volunteer (interpreter) and the Arabic-speaking counsellor (projected ‘inwards’; projected ‘outwards’ we find the figure of the client as a sort of constitutive outside) – tends to be positioned as vulnerable in the field of indexicalities of professionalism. In the concluding section to this chapter, I want to discuss what we can infer about the role of linguistic labour for professionalism in refugee support.

6.5 Discussion: The languaged Other of professionalism

The primary question guiding the analyses in this chapter has been about the role of linguistic labour – conceived as practices in which all sorts of linguistic phenomena are turned into, capitalised upon or appropriated as labour – in the constitution of professional Selves and Others at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* as an organisational site of refugee support work in present day, ‘post-migrant’ Austria (cf. ogsa AG Migrationsgesellschaft 2021a). Professionalism, in this context, was understood as metapragmatic ordering device in a double sense: (1) as evaluation and performance of ‘good’ work practice, that is, as a phenomenon of order reflexively projected onto work practice and the workers’ selves, and (2) as a productive and transformative operation, a projection of order, onto the world by work and the worker. Both processes are intertwined in the production of difference and inequality among the workforce through the positioning of subjects within institutionalised work practices and the enactment of professional vision.

The case studies in this chapter, of individual investment in volunteering, of linguistic division of labour, and of constructions of volunteer Others and counsellor Selves, offer different perspectives on situated forms of linguistic labour within institutionalised refugee support work. Linguistic labour is not a uniform phenomenon within the organisation – it spans a range of labour relations, experiences and perspectives: of employed counsellors, counsellors whose linguistic repertoires become ‘languaged’, paid and volunteer interpreters, volunteers at the *Recherche-Eck*. However, as we have seen in the above analyses of metapragmatic discourse on linguistic labour, specific forms of linguistic labour which I referred to by ‘languaged’ labour are made salient in the – not always stable – delineation of categorial boundaries among types of workers – counsellors who do and do not speak Arabic (Section 6.3) and between counsellors and volunteers (Section 6.4). This is particularly evident in discursive practices involving the counsellors which – as the analysed cases show – reproduce scaled, fractally recurring constructions of Others and selves where the Other is marked by language while the self is not. This holds too for the self-positioning of languaged workers: their position is constructed in relation to the scaled order of difference. As a model of professional order, it is not a reality in itself, carrying the per-

spective of a specific positionality, of the counsellor with a normalised linguistic repertoire. This consequential, hegemonial perspective is built on contingent structures of inequality and difference (such as access to paid work, citizenship, racial order) and institutionalised within the organisation. The struggle to remain in control which becomes evident especially in the counsellors' management of volunteer work practice and labour force (see Section 6.4) bespeaks both the power and the fragility of this perspectival ordering: controlling discourse and infrastructures, the counsellors have, however, only limited control over the constitution of linguistic labour force on which, in turn, discourse and infrastructures crucially depend. The conditions of the constitution of such labour force, however, are reproduced elsewhere: for asylum seekers and refugees, language work as volunteer labour means an investment in the future and at the same time reproducing the order which excludes them (see Section 6.2). The institution of refugee support, then, stands itself on liminal ground, threatened by economic and political instability, it relies on the volunteers' insecure investments in their future. The centrality of practices of control, such as the management of expectations undertaken by counsellors towards volunteers, can be regarded as a symptom of these conditions (see Section 6.4).

To sum up, the main findings of this chapter can be formulated in the following way: Refugee support work, in the context of this ethnography, is constituted in a scaled order of difference where languaged subjectivities fractally appear as Others of linguistically unmarked selves. Individuals within the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* position themselves in function of this scaled order of difference. In such position practices, 'languagedness' accrues indexical meaning of affective, moral and professional dimensions. From analytical point of view, these indexes point to political-economic conditions under which refugee support work operates, specifically legal and moral citizenship which structures not only the objects of work practice, but also, as we have seen, the labour force itself. The observed practices of differentiation within the organisation often take a reflexive – and reflective – form with regards to this fractally scaled structure of inequality.

A case in point is the figure of precariousness/precarity and vulnerability which recurs as a metapragmatic frame at different points in the analysed cases of this chapter. There, precariousness/precarity and vulnerability form not only a material condition, but also an interpretive and ethical resource which, in turn,

by its projection onto professional and moral order becomes consequential for (language) subjects. Professional vision provides a scheme of how to deal with precariousness / precarity and vulnerability as a condition: by *setting boundaries*. Thus, the imperative to set boundaries does not apply to everyone in the same way, frequently singling out the language Other whose vulnerability is thereby reinscribed. Hence, this chapter can serve to reiterate what I concluded from the previous chapter, namely that reflexive operations tend to reinscribe inequalities and difference even if they are aimed at transformation. Crucially, namely, the case studies show how such communicative practices are embedded in and are co-constitutive of material conditions of inequality from which they cannot 'extract' themselves. A critique of practices of interpreting, translation and language mediation thus needs to account for the political-economic conditions under which it happens – as linguistic labour.

Part III

Conclusion

7 Conclusion: Towards a *language*d understanding of refugee support work

In the preceding chapters, I presented a range of analytical cases which allowed me to trace the way in which forms of communicative and language-related work and their appropriation as communicative and linguistic resources by the NGO play a role in the ordering of institutional, professional, moral and 'language'd subjectivities in the context of refugee support work. The thesis thereby brings together a range of – quite diverging – ways in which 'language' and 'communication' come to matter in institutionalised refugee support work as of today in Austria: (1) (*meta-*)*communicative labour* as a way of preserving institutional order towards the 'outside' on different levels of scale, the organisation, its layered agenda (and morals!) of communicative service and distribution of resources, the counsellor or interpreter in their institutional functions; (2) various forms of *reflective labour* as forms of controlling Selves as well as Others (for instance, the volunteer as the less reflexive Other), and crucially as forms of negotiating and aligning subjects in moral order within the institutional context; and finally, (3) multilingual, *linguistic labour* which, while being directed at the client Other, produces differences and hierarchies within institutional order. In some of the analysed cases, 'language' and 'communication' were heavily discussed by the involved actors themselves, especially by the counsellors. This concerned, for instance, interpreting as a form of linguistic labour, but also communicative practices in the team as aspects of reflective labour. In other instances, 'language' and 'communication' come more as defamiliarising sociolinguistic, analytical notions on phenomena which usually circulate under other labels within the organisational context, for instance, in the case of boundary-making analysed

as (meta-)communicative labour. By bringing them together in the frame of this ethnography, I do not intend to conflate the ways in which linguistic repertoires and language ideologies, as well as questions of power asymmetry, control and exploitation matter in these diverse practices – for instance, in the counsellors' communicative boundary-making practices on the one hand and in asylum seekers' volunteer interpreting work on the other. What the case studies show, however, is that these different constellations of language and labour – what Boutet (2008: 6–7) calls “la vie verbale au travail” (‘the verbal life at work’) and “la part langagière du travail” (‘the language part of work’, see also Boutet 2001) – do not only coexist in the organisational space of the counselling centre (and, scaling up, the institution of refugee support in Austria), but that they are indeed interconnected and interdependent.

The case studies across the chapters show how these forms of labour are productive in the sense that they constitute subject-positions both as objects or targets of the labour practices, and metaleptically, as subjects. To make this point more tangible, I want to spell it out with respect to (meta-)communicative labour in an – albeit somewhat reductive – triad of (non-language)d counsellor, volunteer interpreter and client: here, (meta-)communicative labour plays a role in the discursive constitution and regimentation of client subjectivities, as ‘proper’ clients of the counselling centre, as ‘proper’ subjects of welfare, and as refugees more in general. At the same time, it works as a delicate, contradictory positioning device for the counsellors themselves, producing leeway in handling questions of distributing resources and carrying out everyday work processes, but resulting also in a communicative straightjacket which functions to instill neoliberalising logics and morals – of scarcity, activation, and deservingness – into counsellors' political subjectivities. On the one hand, these contradictions present themselves as ethical dilemmas to the counsellors and risk, at least in some, to produce a sense of alienation (cf. Lipsky 2010 [1980]: 71–80). This can be understood as the result of processes of institutionalisation and political and economic interdependencies as suggested by comparative work on grassroots- and institutionalised organisations in refugee support (de Jong & Ataç 2017). On the other hand, they allow the individual counsellor to manage frontstage encounters and ensure the institutional reproduction. Thus, what we see in (meta-)communicative labour, is Foucauldian microphysics of power (for instance, Foucault 1975: 34–38;

see Knorr-Cetina 2014 [1981]: 22–23) at work: activating and excluding logics ‘quietly’ make their way into the work practices and workers’ subjectivities. As interpreters are recruited into (meta-)communicative labour practices (for instance, in the context of the *Recherche-Eck*), they encounter similar contradictions. Insofar as the languaged worker is seen as particularly ‘vulnerable’ to the client Other, (meta-)communicative labour as boundary-making becomes connected to the construction of languaged subjectivities and linguistic labour. Linguistic labour at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* presupposes a client Other as its target, a monoglot German (or bilingual German–English) institution, and a languaged subject. In this sense, linguistic labour too becomes a site where subjects are constituted as speakers, institutional actors, affective and moral beings. Reflective labour projects ethical subjects of counsellors, yet here as well, the position of the client Other comes as a co-product, for instance, in the scaling of deservingness, and in (the reflection on) ordering devices such as the various lists kept by the staff. To sum up: institutional, professional, moral and languaging dimensions are entangled in all these constellations of language and labour. Here lies the specific contribution of my thesis: an ethnographic look into the microscopic processes on organisational scale in which different forms of language-and-labour constellations come together and which give an outlook onto wider political-economic processes. As a way of drawing conclusions, I want to formulate five theoretical propositions which build on my findings and reach beyond in that they are connected to desiderata and questions for further research.

(1) Institutionalised refugee support work in Austria operates under precarious conditions which affect all actors in the field.

With the analysed cases, I have highlighted the economic and affective insecurities which characterise contemporary refugee support work in Austria. This does not mean that the different actors are all affected in the same way, their differentiation and division is crucial to the phenomenon of precarity as a form of political domination (cf. Bourdieu 1998b). Analysing processes of differentiation among the labourforce at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* revealed that there are indeed unequal workers in refugee support (cf. Bonduelle 2022) with languaged workers often in the most precarious positions.

Specifically, looking into boundary-making and the bound agency of the post-sovereign subject allows for an account of how difficult it is under given conditions – characterised by material constraints and ideological tensions – to carry out the refugee support worker's job. My ethnography shows that a dichotomy between activist, grass-roots actors and 'big' NGOs comes to its limits when describing the problem. The material and institutional constraints under which refugee support operates make communication – and metacommunication – relevant, not merely as a proxy (cf. Del Percio 2016), but also as a field where discursive struggles around the distribution of the very little resources available are happening. The various forms of language and communication-related labour could be understood as indicators of the counsellor being hostage to the same systematic logics of oppression as the client, resulting in a proliferation of communicative management of Others and selves. While the logics of oppression do apply, at least to a certain extent, to the counsellor too, I argue that, in the case of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen*, it is more complicated than that: the observable proliferation of communication and metacommunication is also an indicator that counsellors try to navigate the partly nationalist and neoliberalising logics of the Austrian welfare state, in order to carry out a different agenda – which surely does get 'contaminated', as we have seen across the chapters. The (politically induced) material constraints mean that one cannot distribute resources – ever – fairly. In this sense, my analysis points to ambivalences of communication and metacommunication in a context of material constraints.

A thematisation of the refugee support workers' Selves is pervasive in practices of reflexivity, ethical questioning and affective (self- and other-)control attested in the case studies. Differentiation matters in these practices by which actors make sense of, navigate and reproduce the precarity of refugee support work, as these practices rest on unequal access to resources, infrastructures and institutional positions. The salience of certain types of self-referential communicative practices, however, does not mean that the counsellors' is a non-job. I argue that, as phenomena, they point to precarity and precariousness, yet they do not constitute the counsellors' primary work. In other words and to prevent a misunderstanding of my framing: the counsellors at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* solve their clients' very much 'real' problems of fraud, eviction, homelessness etc. and they distribute 'real' resources – which makes work under conditions

of precarity even more precarious. *Professionalism* serves as a critical lens on the way diverse actors make sense of, navigate and reproduce the precarity of refugee support work: as a type of metapragmatic discourse on work practices and working subjects, it produces order both among clients and institutional agents, with ambivalent ascribed functions and effects of control and resistance (cf. Evetts 2018; concerning control, see also Heller 2005, drawing on Strathern 2000). In a perhaps unorthodox second reading, the term ‘professionalism’ – in its more colloquial usage – also carries a cautious appreciation of refugee support work, hopefully without falling into the trap of celebrating the institution of refugee support in Austria nor the organisation of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* in particular. (Meta-)communicative labour, reflective labour and the regimentation of linguistic labourforce are symptoms (and methodologically, indexes) of precarisation. Linguistic labour, specifically, becomes a burning lens of processes of precarisation: unpaid, unacknowledged or part-time work converge with governmental logics and the reproduction of dominant ideologies of language, labour and the nation-state.

(2) Practices of reflexivity form a terrain where differences and inequalities in refugee support work become articulated.

The institution of refugee support in Austria is a liminal site of political integration of critical forces and governmentality. Part of what makes work at the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* precarious lies in a field of constitutive political, ideological and moral tensions which I have described just above, relating to processes of institutionalisation, legal frames and political and economic dependence on state funding (cf. de Jong & Ataç 2017). My ethnography shows that, despite this situation (and despite Sara’s worries, see Section 4.4), many members of the staff were very much invested in an activist understanding of their work. If being critical means to not let oneself be governed too much – understanding critique as a historically situated “art of not being governed like that and at this price” (Foucault 1996: 384) –, then there is no ‘pure’ position of a critic anyway. (Meta-)communicative labour and practices of reflexivity, we have seen, enable a limited resistance to the effects of power, while incorporating them. In this sense, my analysis goes beyond an attestation of co-optation of progressive critique and

activism by NGOs (cf. de Jong & Ataç 2017: 31), tracing, in this mix of agendas, governmentality effects on a microsocial level of organisational practices.

Critical reflexivity becomes central. On the one hand, we have seen how there is unequal access to reflexivity as an institutionalised practice. On the other hand, not from everybody it is expected to be reflexive or to control their affects in the same way and to the same degree. Linguistic labour proved to be a field where such inequalities converge. From whom is it expected that they set boundaries and when? Who takes part in the staff meeting? These questions led me to discover processes of languaging and racialising subjects. Practices of reflexivity are sites in which communicative and affective control is exerted over labourforce, and where boundaries, differences and inequalities are reproduced. While practices of reflexivity are important, there should be caution not to celebrate them as magical instruments against inequalities. My analysis has pointed especially to the infrastructural inequalities and ideological regimentation that characterise practices (and projects) of reflexivity, both in terms of access and effects. Thereby, this ethnography can be a further inspiration for processes of critical re-evaluation of projects of reflexivity (meta-reflexivity) as they are happening in various fields where questions of emancipation and empowerment are at stake. The histories and political economies of reflexivity remain a larger comparative and ethnographic project to be explored. My ethnography lays some of the groundwork by proposing a layered understanding of the phenomenon of reflexivity as a heuristic for inequalities and more broadly the working of power in practices of reflexivity.

(3) A critical sociolinguistic perspective helps to both centralise and decentralise questions of language and communication in refugee support work.

Languaging the refugee support work/er has a double meaning: it denaturalises the connection between 'language' and the worker by pointing to processes in which a specific set of workers becomes construed through 'their' linguistic repertoires – as for instance, the Arabic speaking counsellor – and by pointing to processes in which speaking subjects become *resources of labour*. This view, as pointed out by many scholars in the field, shows how language *comes to matter*, but cautions

against a fetishisation of language as simple explanation (Roberts 2013: 91) or '(intercultural) communication' as solutions to problems which arise for actors in the field (be they conceived as, for instance, 'ethical', 'political' or 'practical problems'; cf. also Del Percio 2016). Here, as sociolinguists have shown in many fields, language and communication often work as a proxy for other sociopolitical agendas (cf. Dorostkar 2013: 356–357) or as a digression from questions such as the material precarity and forms of domination and exploitation described above (and thereby indeed working as a technique of power themselves, see Del Percio 2016: 96; cf. also Piller & Lising 2014). Multilingualism in refugee support work, I have shown, is more than an assemblage of languages and speakers, communication processes and barriers. They are embedded in relations – and politics – of inequality and difference articulated along the lines of citizenship and racialisation (cf. Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Flubacher & Yeung 2016).

The same holds also for practices of reflection as forms of professional and/or critical reflexivity: they are important resources in the context of refugee support work, but precisely because they are, language-ideological dynamics (such as the scalar projects described in Chapter 5) and questions of access and distribution, in- and exclusion should not be neglected. While my goal is not to argue against the work of promoting awareness and practices of critical reflexivity, I want to join those sociolinguists and push to de-centre language (cf. Tupas 2020) and problematise notions of communication in refugee support work (Del Percio 2016): in the sense that language and communication are not the cause nor the single solution of the problems. This, however, presupposes a centring of language and communication in analysis: a notion of language practices as they connect to materiality, and perhaps paradoxically, a valorisation of communicative (and meta-communicative) as well as linguistic labour. This allows to keep track of the more or less explicit differentiation of workers in refugee support and the resulting inequalities and divisions.

(4) As sociolinguists, we need to continue problematising linguistic labour in refugee support.

A growing body of work in sociolinguistics and interpreting studies problematises practices of interpreting and translation in the context of asylum and refugee

support work (for instance, Dabić 2021; Inghilleri 2005; Jacquemet 2011; Pöllabauer 2004; Rienzner 2011). Joining my predecessors, in my thesis I shed light on practices, ideologies, and their social consequences. Understanding practices of interpreting, translation and language mediation in refugee support as linguistic labour is more than merely applying another label for the phenomenon: it implies an ethnographic analysis of the labour relations and the political-economic conditions which characterise the respective phenomena.

Given the multiplicity of forms in which linguistic labour is carried out – even within a single organisational unit like the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* – an ethnographic approach to the phenomenon proved productive as it revealed entanglements between positions within the same work context and patterns of language management across different levels of scale, and concomitant processes of subjectivation. The result is, *prima facie*, a very specific, contextualised account of how inequalities between the various languaged workers and forms of languaged work are produced and how they play out: the analysis showed (1) the centrality of unpaid labour in this context, but also the complicated dynamics between paid and unpaid languaged workers; (2) practices of gatekeeping, valorisation and control, under market conditions which are more ‘messy’ in terms of morals and power relations, and complicated in the respective logics of language speculation and investment (Duchêne 2016; Duchêne & Daveluy 2015) than the anticipated asymmetry of asylum seeker and NGO; (3) as well as processes of racialising the languaged subject and connected discourses of vulnerability and professionalism.

These results allow for an *ethnographic critique* (Pietikäinen 2016: 270–272), that is one which looks into the articulation of inequality and difference in the contextualised and the specific, and thereby complexifies our understanding of these notions. By including a political-economic dimension, that is by tracing historically situated, institutional and material conditions of the way in which difference and inequality are articulated (Pietikäinen 2016: 270), this critique allows a political evaluation: the analysis of ‘microscopic’ processes of meaning making on interactional and organisational scale – “an examination of what counts as knowledge in a particular time and place, according to what criteria, and decided by whom” (Pietikäinen 2016: 270) – points systematically to processes of institutional and societal scale. The political viz. legal regimentation of migration,

especially the restriction of access to paid work for asylum seekers, the economic precariousness of welfare infrastructures in the field of refugee support, and societal discourses of deservingness and activation, culturalised and / or racialised difference are the ulterior targets of my critique as it is they which allow to exploit speakers' linguistic labour force 'for free' and / or under alienating conditions.

I propose looking into practices of reflexivity and (meta-)communicative labour and using the analytical insights as a lens for critical reflection on ways of navigating and resisting politics of difference and inequality. This can help to not fall into the trap of locating practices of resistance and critique outside of the historical, political and economic conditions to which they respond (cf. Foucault 1996). This, I argue, is important when thinking about scale, sites and targets of critique and intervention and when imagining progressive futures for linguistic labour in refugee support work. An intervention on an organisation-level of scale can, for instance, support efforts of self-organisation and access to institutional infrastructures for volunteer interpreters, or think about ways for counsellors to resist passing on logics of deservingness and activation to their clients. All this is, to a certain degree, happening in the field of refugee support work and sociolinguistics can be an ally in these struggles. Yet what my ethnography shows as well, is that more 'systemic' and 'structural' issues cannot be neglected, necessitating forms of language advocacy above and beyond organisational and institutional scale (cf. also Flubacher & B. Busch 2022: 553–555).

More research into the political-economic conditions of linguistic labour can further substantiate this critique. For instance, building on the analysis presented here, it would be promising to follow the various threads from the case studies farther beyond the organisational context. What is the role of volunteer (language) work in asylum seekers' efforts to making a living, in the long run? How do the trajectories of volunteers in refugee support work unfold beyond volunteering and beyond the asylum procedure? How is volunteering in refugee support integrated in other forms of formal and informal, productive and reproductive work? Looking into sites of investment, conversion and gatekeeping will reveal further details on how such trajectories are institutionally regimented, enabled or constrained: to what extent does the applicant's engagement in volunteer work become valorised in the asylum procedure and how so? How is it valorised when seeking access to paid work? How are these processes further institutionally

regimented, for instance by training and professional development programmes specifically designed for asylum seekers to work in interpreting and refugee support? Here, further work on the Austrian context could be insightful, as well as a comparative analysis with regards to similar studies carried out in other contexts (see for instance Brüning et al. 2019; Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018; Kanobana 2022; Van Hoof et al. 2020). What about other languaged workers in refugee support work? How are fluctuations in demand for specific linguistic repertoires (as the one described by Sami, see Chapter 1) articulated in working life trajectories, and how in organisational language management? Are there informal markets for interpreting in Vienna, and if so, how do they operate? These questions are a point of departure for further analysis with the aim of grounding a sociolinguistic critique of the regimentation of asylum-seekers' labourforce in Austria, in Europe and in the global North more broadly, both within specific institutional and organisational contexts and in terms of policy.

All in all and as a critical appreciation of refugee support work today in Austria, my thesis shows that communication and language in refugee support is not simply about a multiplicity of languages, but about difference and inequality which are linked to political phenomena of gatekeeping and distribution, sedimented in institutionalised infrastructures, and with effects on the individuals working in refugee support.

(5) Critical ethnographies of language and labour provide a sociolinguistic outlook on phenomena of social reproduction.

In this ethnography, I have traced what counts as 'work' and as 'language' or 'communication' (Del Percio 2021: 1023–1024) in the context of the *Beratungsstelle Wohnen* and beyond, the indexical meanings associated, processes of valorisation and control. The question of linguistic value production is, in this endeavour, only a subordinate concern. With a focus on differentiation and subjectivation at the margins of language and work, the primary contribution of my thesis lies in the domain of social reproduction. How does the institution of refugee support contribute to the reproduction of society, of social difference and inequality?

The notion of *reproductive labour*, I argued in Chapter 6, following Federici (2004: 115) in her feminist critique of capitalist accumulation, ties the agenda

of understanding the social and economic valorisation of language (Heller & Duchêne 2016) to that of subject positioning in relation to social differentiation and linguistic variation (cf. Spitzmüller 2022: 223–225). The notion has proven productive in connection with an ethnographic approach, as it allows to understand how, why and to which effects individuals subject themselves to orders of inequality and difference.

A deeper understanding of the workings of reproductive labour in sociolinguistic differentiation and inequality calls for further ethnographic investigation of affective, linguistic and reflexive forms of labour which happen both in frontstage and backstage encounters of workplaces as well as in institutions of different societal domains (Cameron 2000; Del Percio 2022; Flubacher 2020b). Beyond the workplace, forms of reproductive labour are not new to the analytical eyes of sociolinguists – there is, for instance, work on the reproduction of minority language communities (for instance B. Busch 1999; Heller & Labrie 2003), institutions which are connected to the regulation of the labourmarket (cf. Allan 2019; Flubacher, Duchêne, et al. 2018; Van Hoof et al. 2020), educational institutions (cf. Heller 2007) and the non-governmental sector (cf. Codó & Garrido 2014; Del Percio 2018b). This research has been formative for this thesis. Furthermore, a focus on reproductive labour also includes the household as a relevant unit of analysis (as for instance in Ahamer 2013, but also in work on *family language policies*, Purkarthofer 2021; Spolsky 2012). The notion of reproductive labour could help to tie these conversations together in a critical understanding of the complex processes of differentiation, inequality, exploitation and resistance in capitalist reproduction. Thereby, it can be instrumental in imagining different futures by decentring corporatist, capitalist, androcentric and eurocentric as well as neoliberal notions of work, as waged labour (Voß 2018: 22–24), or as an investment in an enterprising self (as documented for instance by Del Percio & Van Hoof 2017; Flubacher 2020a; Gershon 2014).

The contribution of my thesis lies in the analysis of micro-processes of subjectivation. How are, on the one hand, ideologies of language, particularly in relation to the nation-state and categories of difference and belonging, and on the other hand, ideological understandings of labour, of making a living, inscribed into subjectivities? My work has shown this in different facets, in reference to a specific organisational context which is, however, connected to wider societal

processes, as discussed above. Yet still, this agenda is necessarily broader in scope: taking further the analysis presented here, a deeper historiographic understanding of registers of reflexivity (cf. Del Percio 2022) in the Austrian context, and a broader, comparative ethnographic look into inequalities in reflexivity are called for. The same holds for the different forms of (formal and informal) unpaid linguistic labour, in a wider institutional scope of socialisation in educational and organisational (on the job) contexts, in particular regarding work trajectories and ways of making a living in and beyond the institutional scope (and, potentially, beyond the practice of volunteering). It might be useful to include other forms of unpaid, but also paid reproductive labour, such as care work (cf. Gonçalves & Schluter 2020; Lorente 2018) or, for instance, by re-reading work on language socialisation and learning through the lens of reproductive labour. My thesis contributes to such a project in that I have brought together analytical threads and elaborated a framework to study speaking and labouring subjects for a critical sociolinguistic ethnography of language and labour under the notion of reproduction.

Postscript

Before I contacted Sara, I had heard that she had voiced the wish for scholarly work to document what was happening in refugee support in Vienna at that time. I can only speculate whether her primary concern was an acknowledgement of her and her colleagues' work, raising awareness for the living conditions of asylum-seekers in Vienna, the material and political conditions of refugee support work, or something entirely different. I was never directly asked by her to do this and I never asked. Yet anyways, this piece of writing comes all too late to fulfill individual claims: the staff has fluctuated a lot since – and already during – my fieldwork. Institutional arrangements may have changed too, but the issues raised above, the politics of inequality and difference characterising refugee support work and asylum seekers' lives in Vienna, stay.

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Appendix: Abstracts

Abstract in English

This thesis is a critical sociolinguistic ethnography of the construction of linguistic, 'language' and professional subjectivities in the context of refugee support work in Austria, specifically in the years following the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015. Underlying the study is an ethnographic engagement of two and a half years (from April 2016 until Sept. 2018) in a specific organisational site, a counselling centre in Vienna. The counselling center is operated by an NGO and offers social and legal advice to refugees, independently of their legal status, on matters related to private housing (i.e. outside of organised accommodation facilities). 'Linguistic' and 'communicative' work in the broadest sense plays a central role in this context, that is in the practice of counselling per se and in 'language mediation/brokering' – that is, interpreting and translation services as well as forms of counselling in clients' 'native languages' [so called *muttersprachliche Beratung*], which, taken together, crucially enable the functioning of the counselling centre. At the same time, 'language' and 'communication' are also the object of continuous problematisation in institutional/organisational discourse, not least in connection with an institutional marginality of the practices concerned and a precarity of actors and labour relationships. Based on a range of data (observational notes, audio-recorded workplace interactions and interviews with different actors, institutional documents etc.), I conduct a materially embedded, metapragmatic analysis of subject positioning and (bodily-affective) lived experience, as connected to processes of differentiation, valorisation and regulation of speaking subjects and material as well as symbolic resources in a political-economic dimension. Based on this analysis which is organised in case studies, I argue – and discuss the implications – that forms of communicative and language-related work and their appropriation as communicative and lin-

guistic resources by the NGO play a crucial role in the ordering of institutional, professional, moral, affective and 'linguistic' / 'language'd' subjectivities in the context of refugee support work. By analytically revealing contingencies and effects of these processes – specifically the mobilisation of responsabilising logics, racialisation and precarisation of ('language'd') labourforce – the thesis makes a sociolinguistic contribution to a critique of politics of difference and inequality which structure, as I show in this thesis, refugee support work today in Austria.

Abstract in German

Bei der vorliegenden Arbeit handelt es sich um eine kritisch-soziolinguistische Ethnografie zur Konstruktion sprachlicher, 'versprachter' [language'd] und professioneller Subjektpositionen im Kontext der Flüchtlingsarbeit in Österreich, im Speziellen in den Jahren nach der sog. 'Flüchtlingskrise' 2015. Die Arbeit basiert auf zweieinhalbjähriger ethnografischer Feldforschung (April 2016 bis September 2018) in einer Wiener Einrichtung. Bei dieser handelt es sich um eine Beratungsstelle, die von einer NGO betrieben wird und die Geflüchteten unabhängig von deren aufenthaltsrechtlichen Status soziale und rechtliche Beratungsservices zu Fragen des privaten Wohnens (d. h. außerhalb organisierter Quartiere) anbietet. Im weitesten Sinne 'sprachliche' und 'kommunikative' Arbeit spielt in diesem Kontext eine zentrale Rolle, sei es in Bezug auf die Beratungstätigkeit an sich, oder in Bezug auf 'sprachmittlerische' Leistungen, also Dolmetschen und Übersetzung sowie Formen sog. 'muttersprachlicher Beratung', die zusammengenommen das Funktionieren der Beratungsstelle erst ermöglichen. Gleichzeitig sind 'Sprache' und 'Kommunikation' auch Gegenstand kontinuierlicher Problematisierung im institutionell-organisationalen Diskurs, nicht zuletzt im Zusammenhang mit einer institutionellen Marginalität der entsprechenden Tätigkeiten und Prekarität der Akteur*innen und ihrer Arbeitsverhältnisse. Auf Grundlage verschiedener ethnografischer Daten (Beobachtungsnotizen, Audioaufzeichnungen von Interaktionen am Arbeitsplatz und Interviews mit verschiedenen Akteur*innen, institutionellen Dokumente usw.) erarbeite ich eine materiell eingebettete, metapragmatische Analyse, die Subjektpositionierungen, (leiblich-affektives) Erleben und damit verbundene Prozesse

der Differenzierung, Valorisierung und Regulierung sprechender Subjekte und materieller sowie symbolischer Ressourcen aus politisch-ökonomischer Sicht in den Blick nimmt. Diese in ethnografischen Fallstudien organisierte Analyse zeigt, dass Formen kommunikativer und sprachbezogener Arbeit und ihre Aneignung als kommunikative und sprachliche Ressourcen durch die NGO eine entscheidende Rolle bei der Ordnung institutioneller, professioneller, moralischer, affektiver und 'sprachlicher'/'versprachter' Subjektpositionen im Kontext der Flüchtlingsarbeit spielen. Indem die Analyse Kontingenzen und Effekte dieser Prozesse – insbesondere die Mobilisierung responsabilisierender Logiken, der racialisation und der Prekarisierung von ('versprachter') Arbeitskraft – aufzeigt, leistet die Arbeit einen soziolinguistischen Beitrag zu einer Kritik an Politiken der Differenz und Ungleichheit, die, wie ich in dieser Arbeit zeige, die Arbeit in der Flüchtlingshilfe im gegenwärtigen, österreichischen Kontext strukturieren.