

Exploring the material dimension of human existence:

On the materiality of (forced) migration

From 'bare necessities' to 'promising things'

Prof. Dr. Andrea Lauser

20.09.2019 Seoul National University



Materiality of Migration



GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research



Exploring the material dimension of human existence:

On the materiality of (forced) migration

From 'bare necessities' to 'promising things'

Prof. Dr. Andrea Lauser

Contents:

1. Local Context in Germany
 - 2015 „Long Summer of Migration“
 - Museum Friedland in the sight of the Border Transit Camp Friedland
2. Migration Museum Friedland
3. „Bare Life“ and Things Needed for Survival
4. The Language of Objects about Vulnerability and Expectations
5. Design and Methodology of the Research
6. Research Questions & Theoretical Reference Points
7. „Multilingualism“ of Human-Object Relationships
8. Material Turn in Social Anthropology
 - Daniel Miller – Arjun Appadurai
 - Bruno Latour
9. Material and Temporal Dimensions of Camps
10. The Material Dimensions of Emotions
11. Aims and Ambitions
12. Call for Paper

Local Context in Germany

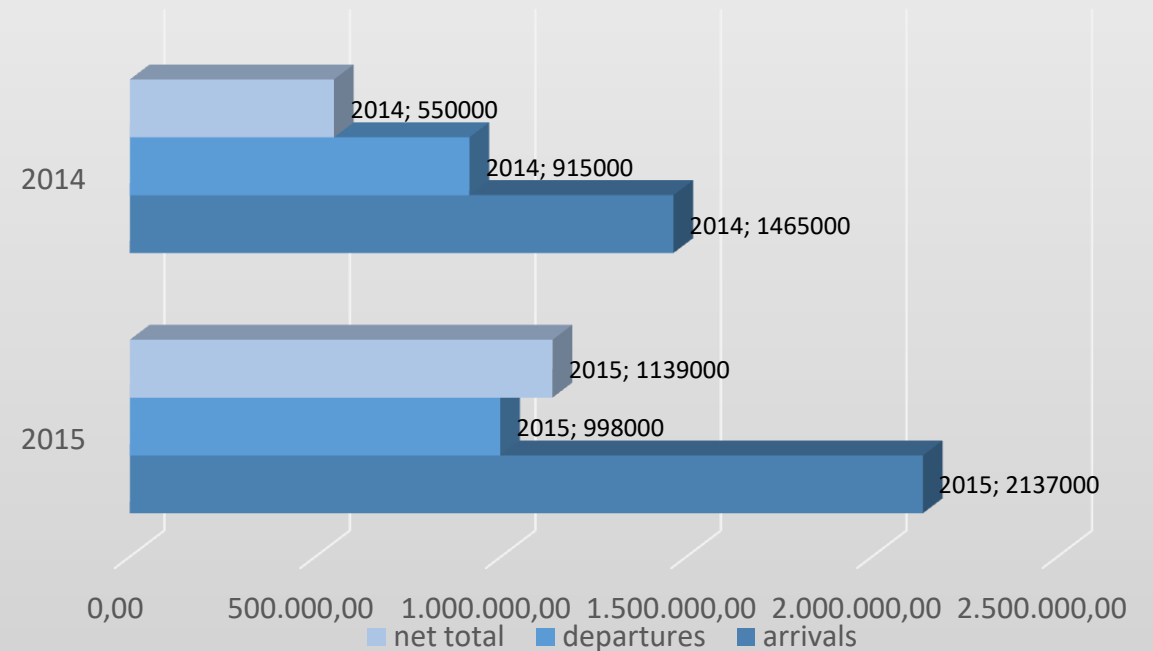
2015 „Long Summer of Migration“



Migration to Germany

Immigration and net immigration peaked in 2015. [online]

Available at: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2016/07/PE16_246_12421.html [Accessed 4 Sep. 2019].



Local Context in Germany

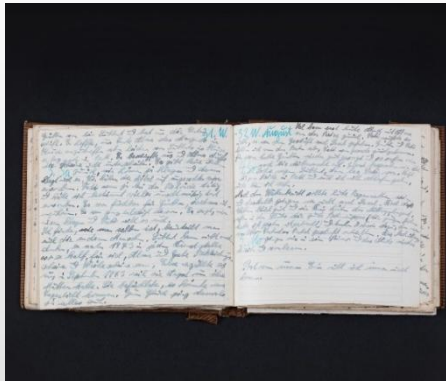
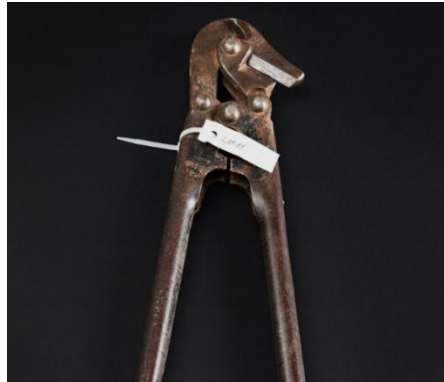
Museum Friedland in sight of the ...



Border Transit Camp Friedland



Museum Friedland



„Bare Life“ and Things Needed for Survival

Starting point:

The value of protecting life and human dignity is
inextricably linked to things

The Language of Objects about Vulnerability and Expectations



Design and Methodology of the Research



Research Questions and Theoretical Reference Points

During the journeys of migration Objects carry excesses of *knowledge* and *meaning* on different levels:

- on *legal* as well as
- on *individual psychological* and *emotional* levels,
- on the level of *prestige, promise* and *aspiration*,
- as well as that of a basic *survival technique*.

'Multilingualism' of Human-Object-Relationships

- the choice of essentials at the moment of departure
- leaving behind objects and mourning for their loss
- losing and acquiring things on the way
- the treatment of the range of things present at the reception center
- the rejection of allocated things
- the desire for new things in the precarious state of waiting
- or reducing one's desire for things while in transit



Material Turn in Social Anthropology

Daniel Miller

“We cannot know who we are, or become what we are, except by looking in a material mirror, which is the historical world created by those who lived before us that confronts us as material culture, and that continues to evolve through us.”

- (Miller, Material Culture, 279).

Arjun Appadurai

„...we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions ... that enliven things ...”

- (Appadurai, The social life of things, 5)

Material Turn in Social Anthropology

Bruno Latour

“You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered in a relationship with you.”

- (Latour, Pandora's Hope, 179)

Material and Temporal Dimensions of Camps

“The essence of the camp is the materialization of the state of exception.”

(Agamben, Homo sacer, 183)

“The camp is the place of the absolute impossibility of deciding between fact and law [...], between exception and rule, and it is the place where it is nevertheless incessantly decided.”

(Agamben, Homo sacer, 182)



The Material Dimensions of Emotions

- personal and collective memories

- recall loss

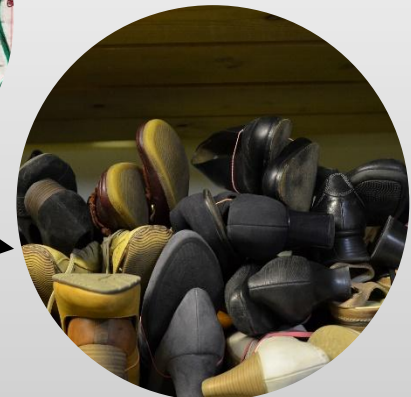
- activate senses of belonging

- facilitate transnational connectivity

- and offer reliability in turbulent times

- trigger affects and emotions

- Spark debates on aid



Aims and Ambitions

not a conclusion

- What is the function of things in the context of flight and states of exception?
- What promises do things carry, which emotions, which aspirations?
- How are things related to identity?
- Can new things create new identities?
- Which things are legitimized for people in a state of exception, which are considered illegitimate?
- Which things determine the status of an asylum seeker as a vulnerable person?
- What do material possessions say about living a dignified life?

Call for Papers

Materializing the Transient: Ethnographies and Museums in the Study of (Forced) Migration

Göttingen (& Friedland), May 14–16, 2020

- Overall Topic: Temporality
- Panel I: Methods
- Panel II: Emotions
- Panel III: Camps
- Panel IV: Representation of Migration
- We invite abstracts for presentations on the topics above

Further Information available
online at
<https://tinyurl.com/MatMig>

Thank you for your attention!

We look forward to welcoming you at our conference next year,
and on our website www.materialitaet-migration.de/en

“Our heads are round so our thoughts can change direction.”

Francis Picaba

Makercity Seewon, Seoul

