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Sexual Harassment or Volunteer Work? Affordances of Differentiated Whiteness

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Abstract

This article applies the notion of affordance to analyse affective, intersectional emergence of differentiated whiteness in the context of East to West migration after the enlargement of the European Union in 2004. I draw on autoethnography and memory work, juxtaposing encounters with two elderly, white, single and physically impaired Danish men in their homes in 2004 and 2014. Cleaning Ole's apartment in 2004, I was invited to provide sexual services, passing as a sexualized, too young, unemployable female Eastern European love migrant of limited social value. In contrast, interviewing Carsten for my PhD in 2014, I came across as able-bodied, middle-class researcher, progressively feminine and fluent in, perhaps even, Danish. I heard no sexual undertones in Carsten's invitation to 'visit again', instead perceiving it as a suggestion to become a voluntary visitor. Analyzing the affective flows in these encounters, I trace how markers of difference intersect to afford different whitenesses. I discuss how whiteness functions as an affordance, accumulated over time, emerging in situated, affective encounters and constraining bodies' possibilities for interactions, movement and becoming. The article contributes to research on whiteness and intersectionality and to scholarship that explores emergence of 'Europe' by examining relations between centre/periphery and racial formations.[1]

Keywords: *whiteness, intersectionality, Europe, affect, autoethnography, affordance.*

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1. Introduction

This article traces the shaping forces of particular bodies in order to expand theoretical frameworks for understanding intersectional emergence of whiteness (Dyer, 1997; Hage, 1998; Ahmed, 2007; Meer, 2018). I juxtapose the subject positions that emerged in my encounters with two white, elderly and single Danish men in 2004 and 2014 in order to analyse emergence of differentiated whiteness. I argue that differentiated whiteness functions as an affordance: an accumulation of affective and embodied experiences of intersecting markers of difference that enables and constrains interactions in specific spatial and temporal mo(ve)ments.

The gradations of whiteness discussed in this article emerge in the context of intra-European East-West migration. Since 2004, the European Union has expanded from 15 to 28 member states. The largest increase occurred in 2004, when eight Eastern and Central European countries joined the EU: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, as well as two Mediterranean countries, Malta and Cyprus. Some narratives and practices emphasize the unity in this enlarged European body, such as free movement for its citizens. On the other hand, a number of crises, most recently, the 'refugee crisis' of 2015–2016 and the ongoing Brexit negotiations (Loftsdóttir, Smith and Hipfl, 2018) expose how 'Europe', even internally, is contested and unequal.

'Western' versus 'Eastern' Europe is an important marker in this context. Eastern European, post-Soviet countries and their inhabitants are often seen as not quite European: illiberal, haunted by a Soviet past, at best in the process of becoming European, civilized societies and subjects (Buchowski, 2006; Dzenovska, 2013; 2018b; Böröcz and Sarkar, 2017). These tropes rely upon Cold war delineations between capitalism and communism, freedom and authoritarianism, democracy and oppression, but also evoke earlier historical events where political formations in Europe's present core set about to civilize, and dominate, its present peripheries – through medieval Crusades, serfdom and other colonial practices (Kalnačs, 2016). In Western European media, the newer European countries are routinely portrayed as nationalistic, homophobic, racist, corrupt and conservative, some excessively religious. The trending measures of Europeanness shift along with political events, including treatment of ethnic and sexual minorities, reception of refugees and rise of nationalist populist parties (Dzenovska, 2018b). These discourses signify how 'Europe' continues to be enacted as a silent reference point (Chakrabarty, 2000: 28), as progressive, tolerant, enlightened; a destination that 'not quite' European societies might someday be able to reach.

Historical processes of colonization, occupations and foreign settlement situate the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in the crossroads between East and West, as Europe's 'internal others' (Kalnačs, 2016). Trying to overcome the legacies of the Soviet era and claim a position within a European social body, the Baltic countries and societies comprise boundary spaces and figures between East and West. Examining which positions become available for not-quite European subjects as they are evaluated on their (sometimes presumably

impossible) progress towards becoming European can illuminate conceptions and contestations of Europe, Europeanness and European whiteness (Dzenovska, 2018b). In addition to this boundary location of Baltic experience between East and West, this article departs from the author's experiences as a Latvian migrant in Denmark since 2004.

Using memory work and autoethnography, I explore how affective experiences of intersecting markers of difference accumulate into affordances of differentiated whiteness. I draw on insights from critical whiteness studies, challenging binaries of white and non-white and conceptualising whiteness as fluid, relational and performative (Dyer, 1997; Meer, 2018), as operating through potentialities, rather than shades or hierarchies (Lapiņa, 2018; Lapiņa and Vertelytė, 2020). This article contributes to earlier research by proposing to examine how whiteness works as an affordance. I combine perspectives from ecological psychology with analyses of how racialization and other intersecting processes of difference come to matter through affect.

I adopt the notion of affordance from ecological psychology (Gibson, 1986), where it captures how possibilities for action emerge in interaction with our environments, constrained by embodied knowledge and experience. For instance, a chair might afford sitting on, depending on the shape of particular bodies and their experience with chair-like objects as inviting this type of interaction. I analyse my empirical material to show how racialized embodiment materializes as an affordance, enabling particular interactions and movements. A body learns and performs its changing whiteness through embodied, affective encounters. This enables accounting for the role of accumulated experiences as differentiated whiteness emerges in particular contexts. While affordance points to sedimentation of experience, it simultaneously operates in a serendipitous fashion where particular memories, affects and embodied markers of difference come to matter in different ways.

I conceive intersecting markers of difference, and the positionalities they condition, as what Neimanis (2017: 31), revisiting Adrienne Rich's (1984) work on politics of location through a feminist new-materialist lens, calls 'metastable becomings'. Echoing the work of Annemarie Mol (2002), Neimanis (2017: 31–32) observes: 'while these subject-forming lineaments materialize […] very concretely, they also index […] multiple belongings, and anchor […] subjectivity in multiple places. […] the body is always multiple.' This resonates with other feminist writings on subjectivation, for instance, Mohanty's (1988) emphasis on the subject as a 'potential collection of noncorrelating positions'. These positions are constrained by global flows of power, where embodied markers, such as gender, operate as fields of 'structured and structuring difference, in which the tones of extreme localization, of the intimately personal and individualized body, vibrate in the same field with global high-tension emissions' (Haraway, 1988: 588). The analytical challenge becomes to unpack how bodies inhabit time: how, on one hand, 'the body' is always in the making, and how, on the other hand, its potentialities to become materialize in specific contexts. The notion of affordance captures how whiteness emerges as a relational doing and becoming, enabling and

constraining interactions in and across specific social, spatial and temporal locations.

This article explores how differentiated whiteness is affectively made and experienced in my encounters with two aging white Danish men in their apartments in 2004 and 2014 in Copenhagen. A cleaning encounter, which developed into invitation to provide sexual services in 2004, with the author positioned as a young, female, sexualized, relatively precarious Eastern European migrant of limited social value, is juxtaposed with a research interview in 2014, where the author came to inhabit a majoritized whiteness.

I analyse how whiteness emerges as an affordance, intersectionally constituted, affectively experienced and laboured, unfolding through mattering of intersecting markers of difference in situated, spatialized encounters. I draw on the emerging field of research that explores the interplay of affect and intersecting markers of difference, with a particular focus on whiteness (Ahlstedt, 2015; Myong and Bissenbakker, 2016; Loftsdóttir, 2017) and its role in delineating Europe and European bodies (Keinz and Lewicki, 2019). While I could have foregrounded other markers, such as femininity, in my analysis of the two encounters, it is whiteness, modulated by other intersecting markers of difference, including gender, class, language and sexuality, that affords my passing as Danish (Lapiņa, 2018). Earlier research discusses the pivotal role of whiteness for how bodies come to occupy majoritized positions as Danish (Andreassen and Ahmed-Andresen, 2014), Swedish (Koobak and Thapar-Björkert, 2012) or belonging in Europe (Kennedy-Macfoy and Lewis, 2014). By examining how whiteness as an affordance shapes possibilities for movement and belonging in Denmark, the analysis contributes to understanding how 'Europe' continues to be fuelled by racializing processes (Ponzanesi and Blaagaard, 2011; Böröcz and Sarkar, 2017). Consequently, this study addresses the need to nuance whiteness in the European context (Loftsdóttir, Smith and Hipfl, 2018).

2. Methodology: Affective, situated approach to memory work and autoethnography

Following a feminist methodology, I approach knowledge production as situated and embodied, emerging from lived experience (Rich, 1984). I follow Haraway's (1988) emphasis on situated knowledge, where 'partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims', originating from and shaping 'a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body' (ibid., 589). Researcher positionality matters for which spaces, informants and perspectives are accessible and accessed, and which information becomes empirical data. Situated knowledges emerge from places and/as bodies (Lapiņa, 2018). Consequently, this article traces whiteness by examining embodied, emplaced encounters in two apartments in Copenhagen, discussing my trajectory between them to address the accumulation of whiteness as affordance.

I use memory work and autoethnography. Memory work involves writing down personal experiences that are related to the research topic (Berg, 2008). In

the past decade, memory work has been used to examine how racialisation matters in research encounters and knowledge production, and how particular encounters testify to politics of race (Berg, 2008; Kennedy-Macfoy and Nielsen, 2012; Andreassen and Myong, 2017). Prior to writing this article, I have used memory work to revisit and write down episodes and feelings that denoted my position as a migrant in my first years in Denmark, including my meeting with Ole in 2004. Thus the main difference between my memory work fieldnotes and the fieldnotes from the meeting with Carsten in 2014 is the time elapsed between the events and the time of writing.

The encounter with Carsten in 2014 occurred when I was conducting fieldwork and interviews for my doctoral research. My PhD (2014–2017) explored social inclusion, exclusion and intersecting markers of difference in everyday encounters in Nordvest, a gentrifying district of Copenhagen. During fieldwork, I became increasingly aware that my positionings as a migrant researcher could provide valuable perspectives on which differences mattered in Nordvest. This motivated me to adopt an autoethnographic lens. Like memory work, autoethnography is increasingly used to examine intersecting markers of difference, in particular, racialisation and whiteness (Ahlstedt, 2015; Mainsah and Prøitz, 2015; Lapiņa, 2018; Liinason, 2018; Lapiņa and Vertelytė, 2020). Drawing on autoethnography and memory work enables exploring how race is negotiated and experienced in everyday life (Kennedy-Macfoy and Nielsen, 2012; Andreassen and Ahmed-Andresen, 2014; Andreassen and Myong, 2017), focusing on affective, embodied labour in specific social and spatial locations in order to address the broader political configurations (Hinton, 2014) of differentiated whiteness and Europeanness.

Memory work and autoethnography are limited to the experiences of the researcher and can consequently be dismissed as insignificant data without broader relevance. However, everyday lived experience holds knowledge not only about the situations of individuals and communities that carry these experiences, but also about sociopolitical processes and structuring of social inequality. The subject is 'always in a process of becoming (within) a web of political productions' (Hinton, 2014: 109) and 'tied into political commitments and ethical positions by nature of being tied into particular material spaces, like bodies or countries, ghettos or suburbs, kitchens or boardrooms' (Kirby, 1993: 175). My material enables analysing how, on one hand, notions of Europeanness and whiteness are already in place, for instance, when a script of Eastern European love migration is inscribed on my body in 2004. On the other hand, I discuss how these encounters and the trajectory of becoming between them also comprise a terrain for re-negotiating affordances of whiteness.

The encounters I analyse in this article are quite different. I met Ole to clean his apartment in an upper middle-class neighbourhood, as opposed to interviewing Carsten a decade later for research in a gentrifying district often linked to notions of racialized diversity and social disadvantage. Juxtaposing them, I show how these differences outline whiteness as an affordance, accumulating over time. It would

not have been possible for me to meet someone the way I met Carsten in 2004, just after I had arrived in Denmark.

In order to explain how I met Ole, I need to locate myself in Copenhagen in the summer of 2004. After situating myself I give an account of the two meetings. The ensuing analysis traces how differentiated whiteness accumulates through situated, affective interplay of markers of difference in these encounters, and the time elapsed between them. The analysis concludes by discussing whiteness as affordance, experienced and laboured over time.

3. A too young, female, uneducated, unemployable Eastern European love migrant

I moved to Denmark at 18 with my Danish partner Jesper,[2] in July 2004. I had just graduated from high school in Rīga, Latvia. I had met Jesper (white, male, young, middle class) in Latvia the year before. He moved to Rīga to live with me while I was finishing my last year of gymnasium. We both wanted to study, and Denmark seemed to offer more opportunities in this regard. Moving to Copenhagen seemed like a logical step.

Latvia had joined the EU in May. Newspapers were writing about an expected influx of 'Eastern workers' and 'Eastern criminal gangs' stealing from elderly Danish people. I was subject to transitional legislation regarding work and residence permits issued to citizens of the new EU countries. I would have to work full time, difficult to combine with the intensive language classes I wanted to attend after obtaining a residence permit. In addition, my prospective employer would have to apply for the permit and wait up to three months until the application was processed. Without Danish skills and education, I was unqualified labour. It seemed unlikely any employer would be willing to undertake the paperwork. So, one day in August 2004 I pinned handwritten notes on notice boards of a couple of supermarkets in a wealthier Copenhagen district, stating in English that I would clean apartments and houses. Such notes were common at the time, many written in English.

3.1 Ole, 2004

Already the same afternoon, I received a call from Ole. We agreed I would clean his apartment the next day. This would take two hours, and Ole would pay me 100 DKK (around 13.5 EUR) an hour. Ole lived in a spacious three- room apartment with wooden floors. He was in late 50ies, short and hunching, of fragile build, with shoulder-long, fine, greasy hair. Ole's movements were shuffling and nervous. He had a slight physical disability. He wore a flannel long-sleeved shirt, jeans and black-rimmed, stained glasses. The thickness and dirt on the glasses made his eyes look small and far away.

[2] I have changed the names of the three men that figure in the article (Jesper, Ole and Carsten).

The apartment looked orderly and clean. Ole told me the kitchen needed cleaning. I managed to find some old grease and chalk stains on the stove and the shower cabin, located in the kitchen. Ole stayed in the kitchen the whole time. This made me feel uncomfortable. I would much rather have cleaned on my own. But perhaps he was just being polite. Perhaps he did not trust me to leave me alone in the room.

I had noticed several guitars standing in the apartment. Ole told me he was passionate about music and played himself. We talked about music. I told him about my plans of studying psychology or anthropology at the university, the process of acquiring a residence permit and how I was soon hoping to start attending Danish classes. Ole told me about his hobbies. We also talked about social issues, for instance, services to people who were considering committing suicide. I said that suicide could sometimes be a legitimate choice. Ole disagreed. He argued it was always a question of availability of help and support.

Finally, with ten minutes left of my cleaning time, Ole asked me casually if I would take off my sweater for an additional 200 kr. My body went stiff. I avoided looking at him. I kept scrubbing the shower, feeling heat rise to my face. I said no, smiling vaguely, trying to look amused. I managed to stay in the apartment five additional minutes so the two hours would almost have passed, and I would be entitled to receive the cleaning money. I thought Ole said goodbye with a smirk.

After coming home, I started crying. Jesper was there. He got angry and called Ole. They argued in Danish. Jesper hung up after a few minutes, frustrated. He said Ole had just laughed, saying there was nothing we could do.

3.2 Carsten, 2014

I met Carsten almost ten years later, in late spring of 2014, while conducting interviews for my PhD. On a Friday afternoon, I was interviewing Mathias, a freelance web designer around my age. He told me about his neighbour Carsten, the last remaining elderly resident in a staircase now mostly occupied by students. According to Mathias, Carsten had lived there for around 30 years. Mathias told me how Carsten once got arrested after shooting a rifle in the direction of a barbecue party in the backyard on a summer evening. For Mathias, Carsten was a 'character', an authentic remnant from the white, working class past of the neighbourhood. Mathias urged me to talk to Carsten. He also warned me that Carsten could be drunk, foggy or irritable.

Feeling my heartbeat and clutching the keys in my pocket, I knocked on Carsten's door two floors down. Once and then again. Finally, the door opened.

Carsten was skinny, perhaps late 50ies, although he looked older. He was wearing an open black leather vest and jeans. His hair was long and receding, tied in a ponytail. The vest exposed his bare, round stomach and faded tattoos on the thin arms. I could smell stale cigarette smoke and glimpse cream-colored, flower-patterned tapestry; clean and well-kept oak-tiled floors; a square serving window between the kitchen and the living room.

Carsten did seem groggy that Friday afternoon. I had some trouble explaining I was not a journalist. Nonetheless, he was friendly and wanted to help me, and we agreed I would call him to set up an appointment to come by the following week. I took his phone number. I had already forgotten the episode with the rifle.

I visited Carsten two more times. He quickly got exhausted during the interviews and had difficulties remembering and concentrating. The first time he lent me photos he had taken in the neighbourhood just before the building of new condominiums, that I copied and returned on the following visit. The images showed tranquil, almost rural scenes: grass, trees, a bench in the afternoon sun; older buildings in the background; no people at all.

Carsten told me about his life: working as a porter, unemployment, drinking on benches, smoking hash with friends, arthritis, pain, loneliness, friends dead due to drug and alcohol use, estranged and diseased family. He also told me about changes in the district. He recalled how the municipality had moved the benches that he and his friends had sat and drank beers on to the centre of the city – for tourists and young people to drink beers on. This was the only time Carsten raised his voice. He was not able to go for walks anymore, and his friends were gone, but the removal of the benches angered him.

After the second interview, Carsten was hesitant seeing me out the door. He emphasized repeatedly that I was most welcome to contact him again, to visit again. I felt strongly he was recruiting me into a different role than that of an interviewer – perhaps a volunteer-visitor.[3]

4. Differentiated whiteness and intersecting markers of difference

Ole and Carsten both sought to transgress the agreed-upon scripts of our encounters, albeit in different ways. Ole tried to re-negotiate cleaning his kitchen into sexual services. More subtly, Carsten invited me to visit him again. I felt he desired a more personal and lasting relation than that of an interviewer and informant. I proceed to unpack how intersecting markers of difference affectively figured (in) the two meetings, leading to different interactions. I then discuss how the concept of affordance captures the coming-together of accretion and spontaneity, offering a lens for analysing potentialities of whiteness as it comes to matter through affective workings of markers of difference.

Despite their being alike in terms of age, race, gender, nationality, what I perceived as loneliness, being outside the labour market, and different degrees of physical disability, illness and hindered movement, Ole and Carsten are of course different people. However, apart from just hinting at my interlocutors' different personalities, their divergent understandings of which proposals could be made

[3] In Denmark, a 'volunteer visitor' (*besøgsven*) is someone who visits (elderly, lonely, ill, disadvantaged) people in one's spare time, with the intention to improve their quality of life. These relationships are usually institutionalized.

and how point to how I passed as a different subject. I was ten years older – but events during these ten years had also shaped my movements in Denmark.

Encounters, and the subject positions they enable, are simultaneously spontaneously occurring and constrained by individual and collective histories (Ahmed, 2000; 2007). Similarly, while the malleability of race and whiteness is contingent on political and biographical events whose effects accumulate in and on the body (Slocum, 2008; Ohito, 2019), it is also a manifestation of specific mo(ve)ments in time and space. Histories accumulate and inscribe themselves on the body, making the performativity and relationality of how a body passes in a given encounter both contingent and layered (Butler, 1988; Lapiņa, 2018). They pave paths for where bodies can go and how they move through space. Consequently, tracing what unfolds in the two meetings necessitates attending to what transpired between them: how I arrived at a position where my job entailed knocking on Carsten's door to interview him for research.

In 2004, I often passed as a too young, uneducated, Eastern European female love migrant of limited social value in the eyes of white Danes. I did not speak Danish. I did not have the papers, and did not feel I had the skills, to seek legal employment. Instead of passing as Eastern European cheap disposable workforce (van Riemsdijk, 2010; Loftsdóttir, 2017), I was feminized and sexualized due to 'where I came from', the intimate reasons for my migration and markers of gender and age. I was not in Denmark for work or education. In many of my meetings with white native Danish people in 2004, my life story instantly clicked into a pre-available mould with accompanying circumstances and biographical details. They presumed my Danish partner was male and significantly older. They presumed I was from an underprivileged background, with limited options to lead a fulfilled life in Latvia.

This 'knowing' of my circumstances was accompanied by compassion, pity and even sympathy. My white Danish interlocutors did not contest my presumed claim for a better life in Denmark. On the contrary, they could 'understand' and even sympathize with it, acting as charitable, generous and tolerant hosts. This charitable treatment of me as 'not-quite-but-still-white' took on a particular nuance in the encounter with Ole. It struck me that Ole did not express any presumptions about my family or life in Latvia. While it was additional work to manage his presence while cleaning, I felt surprised and relieved to have a 'normal' conversation. I felt able to be 'myself', someone whose future plans and possibilities did not seem interpreted through the frames of love migration or Eastern Europeanness. He seemed interested in my plans to study Danish and attend the university, but without overt encouragement or endorsement. The offer to undress for money came unexpectedly. I remember questioning my reaction. Perhaps I was mistaken in hearing it as a degrading question. Perhaps it was a 'normal' question in Denmark. This sense of uncertainty further underscored my migrant positionality as someone unsure about boundaries of 'normal' interactions.

However, the affective dimensions of the encounter signify that my circumstances mattered for how our meeting unfolded. Before we met, Ole had

asked about my age and where I was from, establishing my positionality of a young, feminine Eastern European love migrant. Ole's ostensible interest in my plans to study in Denmark re-enforced the present as a space where these opportunities were not available. I was not yet the person I spoke of becoming. Ole's laughter on the phone and the immediacy of his response to Jesper that there was 'nothing we could do' conveyed that the proposition to take off my sweater for money was a question he had asked *me*. His laughter underlined the power relations of the situation, him ridiculing our implied naivety. He had heard what I told him about residence and work permits and limited possibilities to seek employment. My male, Danish partner calling to defend me in Danish and Jesper's anger enforced how intersecting markers of difference – origin, gender, age, and legal status – came together to denote a position of powerlessness. Jesper confronted Ole, calling and arguing in Danish. He spoke for me. There was nothing *I* could do.

The affective circulations that denote relations of power in my encounter with Ole and outlined my body in many other meetings after moving to Denmark, delineate what it might mean to be an 'internal other' (Kalnačs, 2016): 'not-quite-but-still-white' young, feminized love migrant in the Denmark in 2004. I was mobile, free to enter Denmark as a white EU citizen. Most of the time, I was not immediately ejected by the spaces I entered. Yet, in moving across these spaces, I was also vulnerable, exposed to judgments and actions that would detect and establish that I was less worthy. The legal conditions of my presence (transitional Danish legislation for citizens of the new EU member states) were an important underpinning of a 'not-quite' whiteness. In addition, my premise for being in Denmark (love migration) and my age accentuated markers of Eastern-Europeanness, gender, sexuality and class. This positionality also entailed a promise of a certain future in Denmark. Instead of being treated as an undeserving migrant, Danes who I met encouraged me to attend Danish courses and obtain university education. This shows how intersecting markers of difference come together to denote a position of 'not-quite, but integrable' whiteness, as attainable mobility. I might have had less worth, but white majority Danes endorsed my claims for future social mobility. Whiteness, youth, gender, a Danish partner, and lack of previous education and qualifications that fixed my Eastern Europeanness in place also enabled me to travel light.

In the following years, I learnt Danish, a requirement to take the BA and MA degrees in Danish. The university degrees were a requirement for commencing a PhD, which involved conducting fieldwork in Danish. Comments that I did not look or dress Danish, and questions about where I came from, gradually ceded. Instead, white Danes told me that I looked Danish or Scandinavian, that yes, there was a smudge of an accent, but mostly not reason enough to ask the question about being from elsewhere. Maybe Finland, maybe Germany or Iceland. I had become educated, employable, apparently Western-passing.

After divorcing my male Danish partner in 2008, I was in a romantic relationship with a Norwegian woman for several years. Even when asked why I was in Denmark, which happened increasingly seldom, I could provide a host of

other reasons than my relationship status. Apart from being older, I did not look much different in 2004 and 2014: I was tall, wore my hair short in an asymmetrical haircut and did not use make-up apart from multi-coloured nail polish and four small, matching earrings, three of them in one ear. However, I carried myself with increasing confidence throughout the years, partly as a result of seldom being questioned about why I was in Denmark. I believe that a body language communicating less hesitation accentuated markers of gender, sexuality and class, coming together in a different enactment of whiteness. I no longer wanted to pass unnoticed, to disappear – which paradoxically contributed to conditional 'disappearance' into Danishness (Lapiņa, 2018).

In 2004, the trope of love migration from Eastern Europe at a young age seemed to interfere (Staunæs, 2003; Geerts and Tuin, 2013) with embodied markers that might have been, and later were, perceived as signifiers of 'queerness', globalized hipster culture and/or progressive femininity. Interestingly, throughout the years, several white Danes expressed the conviction that I must have cut my hair short only after moving to Denmark – as if women with short hair would be unthinkable in Eastern Europe. In 2004, my Danish interlocutors automatically presumed my Danish partner was male and older. Later, having acquired markers of class and language, markers of gender and sexuality mattered for my passing as Western European, even without explicit disclosures of gender preferences in dating. This reflects how nationalist discourses in Western Europe increasingly embrace sexual minorities, feminist values, and what passes as progressive femininity (Farris, 2017; Sager and Mulinari, 2018). These embraces work as closures, as ways of excluding migrant others seen as threatening these presumably Western European values: patriarchal, homophobic, sexually aggressive/repressive, oppressing and oppressed, Muslims (Puar, 2007).

Entering Carsten's apartment as a researcher, as opposed to an illicit cleaner when meeting Ole in 2004, cannot be disentangled from embodied, affective, timely labour that contributed to different markers inscribed on and read from my body. Having started fieldwork in Nordvest a few months before meeting Carsten, I found myself consistently passing as Danish – even my smudge of an accent went unremarked (Lapiņa, 2018). At times informants called me out for being too privileged (white and middle-class) to study a diverse, deprived district. These readings of intersecting markers of difference accumulate into, and are carried by, embodied knowledge. Knocking on Carsten's door, I had accumulated experiences of passing that enabled me to move with smoothness and entitlement. I carried experiences of being employable in Denmark, of not being called out as an Eastern European migrant, of being recognized as someone who could contribute– and these experiences carried me. My capacity to carry, and be carried by, academic whiteness had accumulated over time and had contributed to my employability.

I felt safe in Carsten's apartment, somehow in control. When knocking on the door, I had been prepared to be received with suspicion, but soon I was no longer apprehensive. Entering as a researcher established my worth for Danish society. I was supported and held by my whiteness, Danish skills, gender expression, employment, relative youth and able-bodiedness. I felt sympathy,

compassion and pity for Carsten, a similar constellation of feelings that white Danes had met me with in 2004. Carsten could answer my questions. He could share his life experiences with me. I could walk in and out of his apartment, up and down the stairs, unhindered. Carsten was the vulnerable, underprivileged one of us.

Carsten's vulnerability attests to negotiations of intimacy and asymmetries of power in fieldwork interactions (Catungal, 2017), modulated by intersecting markers of difference (Faria and Mollett, 2016). The asymmetry of our positionings manifested in my interpretation of Carsten's invitation to a prolonged, more personal relationship, as that of a volunteer visitor, rather than a friend. My compassion and sympathy towards Carsten, feeling in control, and the guilt I felt for most likely never returning, attest to a feeling of superiority, denoting the majoritized whiteness I had come to inhabit. In fact, I cannot know what Carsten had in mind when beckoning me to visit again. The improbability of sexual undertones or even a proposition of friendship attests to how I experienced and enacted the power dynamics of the situation. The only 'transgression' I could hear coming from Carsten suggested an asymmetrical relationship – the role of a volunteer visitor.

The scenario of labour of care I would offer Carsten if our relationship had exceeded the interviews delineates the fusing of social, spatial, and temporal mobility into hierarchies of worth. The affective flows of this hypothetical relationship would amplify markers of able-bodiedness, gender and class, as well as my whiteness, extending my ability to move with and into majoritized whiteness. This shows how whiteness works as an affordance: accumulated experiences of how intersecting markers of difference are read from and imprinted on a body, constraining its movements. In contrast, I had felt compelled to stay for additional slow, painful minutes in Ole's apartment after he had asked me to take off my sweater, in order to feel deserving of the fee we had agreed on for my cleaning services. There, I felt stuck, kept in place by gendered, racialized, classed, sexualized and age positionings. This illustrates how affects assign individuals to social spaces or 'align individuals within communities' (Ahmed, 2004: 119), and how race and racialized communities are made through bodies' movements across space (Slocum, 2008).

5. Affordances of whiteness as accumulated bodily capacities

> *'Begin, though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in – the body. […] To write "my body" plunges me into lived experience, particularity'* (Rich, 1984: 212 and 215).

Bodies emerge within the logic of boundaries and the insides and outsides they create (Kirby, 1993: 183), but these boundaries are not fixed. I have proposed thinking of differentiated whiteness as affordance (Gibson, 1986), delineating bodies' capacities for (inter)action as they materialize in embodied encounters. The notion of affordance captures how embodied knowledge of what a body can do,

and what can be done to a body, accumulates over time, constraining possibilities to act and be acted upon in a given setting. Consequently, applying the notion of affordance enables addressing how bodies inhabit, and are shaped by space and time – as 'metastable becomings' (Neimanis, 2017) and 'potential collections of non-correlating positions' (Mohanty, 1988). On the one hand, 'the body' is continuously in the making; on the other hand, its potentialities to become materialize and can seem fixed in specific contexts.

One might ask why I foreground whiteness, instead of gender, sexuality, labour or class, in my analysis of the two encounters. In his seminal work 'White', Richard Dyer (1997: 3) writes: 'Whites are everywhere in representation. Yet precisely because of this and their placing as norm they do not seem to be represented to themselves as whites but as people who are variously gendered, classed, sexualized and abled'. My analyses of intersectional, differentiated and malleable whiteness (see also Lapiņa, 2018; Lapiņa & Vertelytė, 2020) contribute to articulating whiteness in the context of East to West migration in Europe (Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy, 2015; Krivonos, 2019). In a recent study of how Russian female migrants in Northern Norway modify their appearance to 'fit in' (Wara and Munkejord, 2018), the authors examine these gendered and sexualized practices as informants' attempts at 'becoming Norwegianized'. In contrast, reading my own gendered, classed, sexualized passing in the encounters with the two men as signifying differentiated whiteness shows how '[...] whiteness operates as a symbolic field of accumulation where many attributes such as looks, accent, "cosmopolitanism" or "Christianity" can be accumulated and converted into Whiteness' (Hage, 2003: 323).

Conceiving whiteness as an affordance shows how this accumulation operates in a serendipitous fashion: imprints left by previous encounters emerge in varying degrees of intensity and (in)activity. This serendipity of how experiences accumulate into affordances offers a possibility for understanding positions like 'Europe's internal others' (Kalnačs, 2016) or 'not quite' European (Dzenovska, 2013) as locations of differentiated whiteness. While one might conceive these positions as shades of hegemonic whiteness (Moore, 2013) or in-between points on a binary scale of 'Europe' and 'not-Europe', my material challenges the stability and solidity that these ways of conceiving whiteness and Europe imply. Instead, my analysis shows how whiteness is heterogeneous, unstable (Böröcz and Sarkar, 2017) and fragmented (Halej, 2015), fluctuating across socio- and spatiotemporal locations. Different constellations of intersecting markers of difference come together in different spatial and temporal moments to afford different whitenesses.

Eastern European whiteness can manifest into position of a racialized, classed outsider, as Loftsdóttir (2017) shows in her analysis of the situation of Lithuanian migrants in Iceland. Journeying towards whiteness might involve a focus on employability, as well as modifying accents, names and appearance, as Krivonos (2019) discusses in her analysis of Russian speaking migrants' strategies in Helsinki. On yet other occasions, claims to Europeanness might involve morally responsible economic conduct and endurance ('tightening the belt') amidst financial crisis, in contrast to less austere (and therefore less proper) Europeans

(Dzenovska, 2018a). Or, as my analysis shows, passing as a 'quite white' subject might entail figurations of employability, progressive femininity, academic position, able-bodiedness and age. These analyses show how measures of Europeanness fluctuate, from emphasis on gender equality and rights of sexual minorities to navigating the labour market and embracing financial capitalism.

What applies across these locations of whiteness is contingency, a potentiality of becoming properly European, of mobility and extended spheres of action. Conceiving whiteness as affordance emphasizes the navigation of past experiences, future (im)possibilities and changing socio-political and affective figurations of Europeanness, as intersecting markers of difference come together in relational constellations over space and time.

6. Conclusion

This article adopts the notion of affordance (Gibson, 1986) to trace how differentiated whiteness emerges through affective flows that delineate intersecting markers of difference. This enables accounting for malleability and multiplicity of racialized embodiment. Furthermore, my analysis shows how whiteness materializes as/in mobility to occupy and move across spaces, unpacking the role of accumulated experiences and sense of (im)possibility related to bodies' past, present and future movements. The article contributes to research on how readings of embodied, intersecting markers that come together to denote racialized subject positions are relational, spatialized and affectively experienced (Berg, 2008; Slocum, 2008; Hvenegård-Lassen and Staunæs, 2015; Lapiņa and Vertelytė, 2020).

Drawing on memory work and autoethnography, my analysis traces the different modes of movement and passing available to my body in encounters with white, aging, physically impaired Danish men in 2004 and 2014. I draw on feminist theorizations of partiality and politics of location (Rich, 1984; Haraway, 1988; Kirby, 1993; Hinton, 2014) to account for how my mobility in these encounters is simultaneously a process of extreme localization and global flows of power; a 'metastable becoming' (Neimanis, 2017) both spontaneously occurring and accumulated over time. The differentiated whiteness and Europeanness enacted in the two meetings emerges both through large-scale political events, such as the expansion of EU in 2004 and its legal, discursive and affective aftermath, and local circumstances, such as Ole's listening to my future plans to study Danish and enter university reinforcing the present as a space of limited movement and opportunity.

My analysis of emergence of differentiated whiteness in embodied encounters shows how lived experience constitutes a '[…] political terrain [as a] process of differentiation, through which identities and subjectivities are continually emerging in relational configurations' (Hinton, 2014: 108). The experiences and dimensions of intersecting markers of difference that are read from and inscribed on bodies cannot be drawn into a consistent content (Kirby, 1993: 182). However, applying the prism of affordance offers a way of analysing how intersectional, differentiated whiteness materializes through an interplay of

accumulated experiences and specific encounters, constraining bodies' capabilities to act and be acted upon.

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