

ELEVEN

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4 **Sensing sense and mobility at the**
5 **end of the lifecourse: a methodology**
6 **of embodied interaction**
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14 We do violence to the complexity of lived experience when
15 we make analytical cuts between emotions and thought, or
16 emotion, the senses, thought, and action. (Davies, 2010,
17 p 25)
18

19 **Introduction**
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21 The sun is setting over the Mediterranean Sea far below me, and my
22 front view is a locked gate, seeming in a hostile way to knot the tall
23 fence together around a complex of luxurious accommodations on
24 the top of a mountain by the Turkish Riviera. The car I am sitting
25 in is sloping backwards at an angle of approximately 20 degrees, the
26 back pointing drastically downwards, down the mountain; the driver,
27 83-year-old Howard, is unsuccessfully trying to make the remote
28 controller open the gate. I know he has had some drinks today, which
29 worried me a little as I got into his car 20 minutes prior to this moment.
30 In the early afternoon, I met him while participating at the Danish
31 men's weekly bowling games, doing my fieldwork in this area in order
32 to study elderly retired Danes living in Turkey. He invited me to a
33 restaurant this evening, and as we met in the city at six o'clock, he
34 asked me to leave my car and get into his. When departing the city via
35 the highway along the sea, he said that we would go to his home first
36 to have a drink. Slightly uncomfortable, I realised that I could either
37 refuse and tell him to let me out of the car, or I could learn from this
38 as any other fieldwork experience – and I chose the latter.

39 Now, in a car leaning backwards directly down a small and winding
40 mountain road, I hear Howard saying that the remote does not work,
41 and he'll try from outside. With drops of sweat on my forehead I think:
42 'My God, does he know how to work the handbrakes, and do they

1 work properly? Should I hop out of the car right now?’ He gets out
2 of the car, leaving a thick book in the front window inside. The book
3 is a mix between a calendar and a notebook, typical for many Danes,
4 where you keep track of appointments and write notes at the same
5 time. Howard’s notebook is full of old journal cuttings and memory
6 notes, and he calls it ‘My Memory’.

7 International retirement migration (IRM) is a phenomenon of
8 increasing research interest concerning retirees who practise migration
9 to the ‘solar utopias’ of the world (Simpson, 2015). This phenomenon
10 has been studied in a broad range of disciplines, and from the
11 perspective of different national groups, (King et al, 2000; O’Reilly,
12 2000; Gustafson, 2002; Ackers and Dwyer, 2004; Bozic, 2006; Balkir
13 and Kirkulak, 2009). The field is characterised by people who migrate
14 after retirement. They have been categorised into different types of
15 foreign residents. These are: *full-time residents* who live the year round
16 in their new host land, *returning residents/second home owners* who are
17 residents in their new host land and stay most of the year but return
18 once in a while to their country of origin, and *seasonal visitors* who
19 travel back and forth, but stay mostly in their home country. O’Reilly
20 (2000) and Williams ~~and~~ et al (1997) have slightly different terms which
21 are incorporated here.

22 I have carried out fieldwork studies in Spain and Turkey. The case
23 in this chapter is from Turkey, where I spent five weeks in the spring
24 of 2013, doing participant observation and interviews with 16 Danish
25 permanent residents, aged 42–79 years, and I participated in a variety
26 of social events in both public and private spaces. My studies in Turkey,
27 and previously Spain, pinpoint the heterogeneity of the elderly people
28 who choose to spend their later life in a foreign country. Among all
29 the topics studied, like motivations for moving, health practices in
30 national and transnational contexts, social life and national identity,
31 the results vary depending on the people in question and their life
32 situation – socially, economical, in terms of health, etc. (Blaakilde,
33 2007a; 2007b; 2013; Blaakilde and Nilsson, 2013). There seems to
34 be an overall representation of courage and audacity, mobility and
35 flexibility connected to the migration act, even though many of the
36 interviewees were suffering from various diseases. However, if their
37 functional health seriously deteriorates, life can become much more
38 complicated than when living in their home country, Denmark. In
39 that case, most of them decide to return to Denmark, in order to get
40 access to healthcare services in a context they understand, and where
41 (maybe) family or friends are around. Hence, spatial situatedness,
42 mobility decisions and return migration imply difficult considerations.

1 Furthermore, returning to the homeland can be comprehended as a
2 double decline; life in the solar utopia was indeed chosen because of
3 the higher level of life quality experienced there.

4 In this chapter, the focus of empirical interest is centred around one
5 Danish retirement migrant, Howard, menaced by mental degeneration,
6 who is attempting to maintain and perform a life as it was before.
7 The later part (and maybe more) of his life course is characterised
8 by mobility and transnational experience, and mental illness may
9 imply consequences related to spatiality, which are different from the
10 lives of persons with a lifelong residence in their home country. The
11 primary argument presented in this chapter will be an examination of
12 the ways methodology focusing on senses and embodied interaction
13 can contribute to an understanding of decline at the end of a
14 person's life course. In Davies and Spencer (2010) anthropologists
15 and psychoanalysts are calling for more methodological employment
16 of senses and emotions in ethnography, and this chapter contains a
17 contribution to this request. The methodological approach chosen is
18 influenced by a 'haptic epistemology' (Marks, 2002), trying to grasp
19 and transfer the process of making sense by means of sensing, listening,
20 and by embodied mobility in space.

21 This haptic methodology is first contextualised with a brief
22 introduction to approaches previously examined by ethnographic
23 scholars. Next, the methodology will be presented along with an
24 analysis of Howard's responses and reactions to a kind of mental
25 decline which is not rare at the end of the life course, and which can
26 have crucial impacts when related to a person accustomed to living
27 a mobile life. The chapter concludes by arguing that the employed
28 sensuous theory and embodied interaction of the ethnographer is
29 fundamental in order to grasp a kind of understanding of this kind of
30 life situation as a part of lifecourse research. The perspective provides
31 an argument for ambiguous co-construction perspectives by means
32 of post-phenomenology, allowing for a dissolving of classic dualisms
33 like body/mind and subjectivity/objectivity. Such dualisms are
34 normally adherent to appraisals of objectivity, whereas the argument
35 in this chapter is that intersubjectivity is indispensable for achieving
36 understanding of life course experiences.

38 **Haptic epistemology: from penetration to erotic** 39 **encounter** 40

41 *Haptic epistemology* is a *sensuous theory* and an approach which can be
42 very fruitful within life course research. It is pronounced by the film

critic and film professor Laura U. Marks, who is inspired by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodied perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2002 [1945]). Further inspiration comes from Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic philosophy focusing on organic forms of intertwinement and multiple foldings as a basis for epistemic understanding of the complexity of the world (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980 **{not in Refs}**). Semantically, words synonymous with 'touch' and 'movement' connote both bodily and emotional features. In her book *Touch*, Laura Marks employs the term 'haptic' for a contact that moves, like a mimetic: 'it presses up to the object and takes its shape'. However, it should not be considered a positioning as a mere representation, rather it resembles a process: 'a robust flow between sensuous closeness and symbolic distance' (Marks, 2002, p xiii). For Marks, the haptic is related to 'the erotic', and she defines 'erotic' as the ability to oscillate between closeness and distance. 'A lover's promise is to take the beloved to that point where he or she has no distance from the body – and then to let the beloved come back, into possession of language and personhood' (Marks, 2002, p xvi).

From a methodological perspective, this relates to an ongoing discussion among scholars of ethnography regarding the implications of the term 'participant observation', which involves a kind of paradox between the ethnographer concurrently being a participant and an observer at a distance (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Ethnography has always involved experiential methodology. Bronislaw Malinowski reported in 1922 from the Trobriand Islands that his close observation in the daily lives of the natives was a necessary scientific approach in order to 'penetrate' the 'mind' and 'mental attitude' of the native Trobriands (Malinowski, 1984 [1922], p xv and p 19). Malinowski's modernist, functional ideals represented a hermeneutical approach and a positivist epistemology with the aim of getting the most scientifically valid account of the 'native's vision of the world'; from 'his (the native's) point of view' (Malinowski, 1984 [1922], p 25). Fifty years later, Clifford Geertz criticised a stance then taken within ethnography, which praised 'emic', 'inside', 'experience-near' and subject-penetrating ideals of the ethnographer getting 'into someone else's skin' (Geertz, 1979, p 227). Geertz, on the other hand, argued for an analytic interpretation of the symbols, signs, and structures following a textual interpretation (Geertz, 1972; 1979). Both Malinowski and Geertz conveyed ideas of 'The Native' as a subject who is in contact with and interpreted by the ethnographer, but they did not struggle much in epistemological terms with their own subjectivity, their relationship and interaction with this native; the ethnographic 'other'.

1 Such considerations were propounded by other anthropologists from
 2 the 1980s and onwards in the ethnographic wave of reflexivity and
 3 crisis of representation (Ruby, 1982; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). In
 4 line with the advancement of social constructivism, ethnographers
 5 were challenged with previously learned, strong epistemologies
 6 of modernism grounded in dualisms like subjectivity/objectivity,
 7 language/world, and in deeply embedded notions of the subject as
 8 a firm, delineated container (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). After the
 9 waves of postmodernism, poststructuralism and the linguistic turn,
 10 most social sciences have no expectations of a privileged or objective
 11 representation of a given observation (Katz, 1994; Gergen and Gergen,
 12 2014). The constructivist epistemology presupposes that contact and
 13 interaction is inherent for any comprehension of the world; and that
 14 neutral objectivity is not a realistic – nor an ideal – aim to anticipate
 15 (Hacking, 2007). Transposed to ethnographic methodology, this means
 16 that knowledge is created by – and because of – the ethnographer’s
 17 interaction with a specific field of interest. Furthermore, ‘messy’
 18 methodologies, founded on interpretations and performances of
 19 multiple identities and interactions influenced by situatedness, authorise
 20 methodological uncertainty (Denzin and Lincoln, 1997 {not in Refs
 21 – Denzin, 1997?}; Law, 2004). This interactionist point of departure
 22 takes us back to Laura Marks’ sensuous theory of touch, which may
 23 contribute to new methodologies of sensing and understanding
 24 phenomena of the unknown. In this case, it concerns the consequences
 25 of bodily decline for elderly people accustomed to living mobile lives.

26 The haptic epistemology is embedded in a post-phenomenological
 27 approach to the body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of
 28 the body presents a foundation for human sensing of the world and a
 29 critique of the dualistic distinction between body and world. Embodied
 30 experience is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the substratum of human
 31 cognition (Merleau-Ponty, 2002 [1945]), which means that knowledge
 32 and understanding are results of actions and doings rather than the
 33 opposite causality (Jackson, 2005). The ethnographer’s touching is
 34 included in this post-phenomenological approach, which constitutes
 35 Marks’ interpretations of the erotic element of a haptic relationship.

37 In a haptic relationship our self rushes up to the surface
 38 to interact with another surface. When this happens there
 39 is a concomitant loss of depth – we become amoeba-like,
 40 lacking a center, changing as the surface to which we cling
 41 changes. We cannot help but be changed in the process of
 42 interacting. (Marks, 2002, p xvi)

Yes, Denzin
1997 is correct

1 For the purposes of this chapter, I use sensuous theory and haptic
2 methodology to get a sense and an idea; to understand how it is to
3 be a person like Howard, a previous mobile and capable body now
4 in mental decline.
5

6 **Dinner with Howard** 7

8 Finally, the fence drew apart, Howard entered the car and drove into
9 the gated community – I survived! It was an urbanised area of expensive
10 villas, of which few seemed currently inhabited. His home was all
11 white with exclusive furniture and fur carpets; only the paintings
12 were colourful, some of them painted by his wife, he said. I asked
13 him about his wife; he said that she preferred to stay in Denmark
14 now, painting. Her hearing was so bad; she did not find amusement
15 in travelling anymore, or even in meeting other people. Everything in
16 the house was immaculate and reminded me of an article in a *Home*
17 *and Living* magazine. He showed me all the rooms and as we looked
18 at the tidy and lifeless bedrooms – his, those of his wife, his daughter,
19 and her family – he very directly asked me to go to bed with him.
20 The surroundings being so clean and the situation so straight made it
21 very easy to refuse. There was no bodily contact at all, and my primary
22 reaction was of slight pity for this old man, who accepted my refusal
23 just as plain as he had posed the question. Then we went down to the
24 huge kitchen/living room where he offered Raki, the strong, Turkish
25 alcoholic drink. My thoughts turned to the trip down the mountain
26 in the car, and I suggested we leave for the restaurant. He assured me
27 that we were going there afterwards, but now we would have a drink
28 on the terrace. So we went out on the terrace with a wonderful view
29 over the dark Mediterranean Sea with lights shining from various spots
30 in the hilly landscape, he with a large Raki, me with a small.

31 Maybe the Raki helped me; I was not sweating with fear as we drove
32 down the mountain, and I forced myself to think about studies on
33 the importance of embodied experience in old drivers (Hansen and
34 Hansen, 2002; Kirk, 2012) even though these studies did not include
35 anything about alcohol intake. And now it was dark. While driving
36 along the highway, Howard expressed worry that he could not find the
37 restaurant. He was not sure if it was shut down, but he assured me he
38 had been there lots of times during the years he had stayed in Turkey.
39 Finally, he found the fish restaurant, and we spent some hours eating
40 a delicious dinner. During the meal, Howard told me his life history
41 and showed me pictures from ‘his memory’ – the thick notebook.
42

1 In the fish restaurant, Howard told me about his career as a young
2 sports hero. Cuttings from newspaper journals in 'his memory'
3 documented him as a proud, tall and handsome winner from the
4 middle of the 20th century. Then he became the owner of a successful
5 company. Other newspaper cuttings revealed specific events in which
6 he had participated, dressed in a white suit with broad lapels in the
7 1970s. The presentation he made for me was clearly an arranged
8 performance, organised as a persuasive plot of success, and its steady
9 (and paper documented) components testified to the impression of a
10 well-polished and repeated life story. It was clear from his story that he
11 had been a popular figure among the Danes in Turkey. However, since
12 I, a trained life history interviewer, kept asking him more questions
13 about his life, he also diverged from the strict storyline of the newspaper
14 cuttings and told other stories from his life, even though he did not
15 remember all the details he would have wanted to tell. For instance,
16 he talked about his family, and revealed that his wife had always been
17 angry with him because of his recurrent adultery. He told me that he
18 liked to come down and spend time in his house in Turkey once in
19 a while to amuse himself, but that he actually felt quite lonely. Once
20 again, he asked if I would go home with him after dinner. As he drove
21 me back to my own car, he admitted that his loss of memory was
22 worrisome for him, and that he felt kind of lonely here.

24 **The erotic encounter as a methodology of embodied** 25 **interaction**

27 My encounter with Howard was far from erotic, though that was
28 maybe an intention of his. But Marks' 'erotic encounter' implies an
29 analytical approach to our embodied interaction which can bestow an
30 understanding conveyed by means of three analytical aspects: 'touch',
31 'embodied map', and 'materialised mind'.

33 *Touch*

35 The most salient bodily impression in me was my fright of being a
36 victim of Howard's (lack of) driving abilities, which resulted in an
37 explicit physical reaction in me; I lost control indeed of my body by
38 sweating and considering skipping out of the car. Reversely, my bodily
39 presence did not seem to influence Howard's body much. Verbally, he
40 pronounced a bodily desire, but his body did not send a congruent
41 signal. Moreover as I, verbally as well, tried to influence his bodily
42

1 intake of alcohol, I had no success, though the possible consequences
2 of this scared me and constituted a risk to my person – and to his.

3 This embodied encounter with Howard can be read as erotic in terms
4 of Marks' definition (Marks, 2002), since I fearfully lost control of my
5 body, but 'came back into possession of language and personhood'.
6 The interaction also represented a relation between me, him and the
7 external world, since this experience resulted in my worries about
8 him driving about in his car while he was alone in Turkey. Could this
9 driving result in risk, either for himself or for other people? These
10 considerations represent an oscillation between embodied encounter,
11 and observation and reflection from a distance; between past tense
12 related to his experience, present tense related to my immediate
13 fear, and future tense related to my reflections and worries about his
14 whereabouts.

15 The situation was, however, not quite similar to an 'amoeba-like'
16 reaction, as Marks calls it (see the earlier quote from Marks, 2002,
17 p [xvi](#)), because neither of us were performing a mimetic reaction of
18 each other's. Contrary to me, Howard kept very calm in front of the
19 fence; it was apparently an ordinary situation for him. The 'ordinary',
20 however, is a multi-layered term. What was ordinary for Howard was of
21 course not ordinary for me. Ordinarity varies in a temporal manner
22 as well; what was previously ordinary for Howard was not all that
23 ordinary for him any longer. His mind was no longer as it used to be.
24 His difficulty in finding the well-known restaurant was an indicator of
25 this problem. As a passenger I could sense the tenseness in him while
26 he was driving, just as well as I could understand cognitively from his
27 talk about the 'disappeared' restaurant.

28 29 *Embodied map*

30
31 When Laura Marks writes about the haptic, she refers to Deleuze and
32 Guatarri's description of 'smooth space' which has no clear demarcation
33 and resembles ephemeral spaces, like deserts in permanent transition.
34 Navigating in such spaces requires a nomadic ability combining visual
35 and tactile senses. The smooth space must be bodily experienced as
36 well as being envisioned from well-known sites and signs. The routes
37 and their signs are imprinted in the body, which creates a kind of
38 embodied map complementing or substituting a printed map. Howard
39 was trying to follow this embodied map, which used to be part of his
40 daily life when in Turkey; he had certain routes and routines obtained
41 from his experiences after many years as a seasonal resident there.
42 There is no account of any diagnosis of dementia in this story, which

1 was not part of the outspoken encounter between Howard and me.
2 Only the loss of memory was a candid subject. However, even at
3 the early and still unexplained outset of this diagnosis, loss of spatial
4 orientation is recognised as a problem (Swane, 1996), and this may
5 involve cartographic as well as embodied mapping. Howard's preferred
6 routes and actions while living in Turkey were inscribed in his bodily
7 routines (in cooperation with his car) as a recognisable pattern, and
8 the structure of this embodied map seemed now to dissolve. This
9 confused his mind and disturbed his embodied interaction with his car
10 and the places he once knew very well: the roads along the sea. The
11 anthropologist Keith Basso (1995, p 7) wrote about place making; the
12 making sense of place, which involves a construction of the past, of
13 social traditions, but also personal and social identities. While trying to
14 find his places and follow his routes in Turkey, Howard was also trying
15 to keep up the life he had enjoyed here. He was trying to keeping it
16 in existence; including dimensions of his experiences, his social life
17 and his personal identity.

18 Sarah Pink (2007) discusses the term 'shared corporeal experiences'
19 as a specific, methodological approach when the ethnographer follows
20 a person of interest. Sharing is of course not 100% possible, but
21 according to a classic, hermeneutical perspective focusing on partial
22 access to intersubjective experience, the corporeal following of another
23 person can provide an embodied sensory understanding for this person.
24 With me as an amoeba-like person next to Howard in the car, in his
25 house, and in the restaurant as well, he invited me to sense, absorb
26 and comprehend his routes and his preferred places in Turkey. I also
27 encountered Howard's attempt to maintain his embodied map; the
28 smooth space of this former life as an active, wealthy retired migrant in
29 Turkey, including the habits of acting as a playboy and being unfaithful
30 to his wife. In a lifecourse perspective, this indicates an understanding
31 of his previous life as a retired migrant, but it also granted a present
32 time impression of his slight bewilderment due to decline in memory.
33 The signs of a slipping smooth space do not only indicate a spatial
34 phenomenon, but also signify a mental state and a personal loss.

36 *Materialised memory*

38 The idea of materials as a matter of the lifeworld is presented by post-
39 phenomenology, building on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy about an
40 evaporation of dichotomous distinctions between body and world. The
41 anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007) emphasises that the material and its
42 properties have interacting significance for human life. The material

1 case in question here is Howard's notebook, which he clearly designates
2 vital importance by coining it 'My Memory' and by keeping it by his
3 side at all times. In line with phenomenological thinking, Howard tries
4 to eliminate any gap between his body and his materialised 'memory',
5 which is full of objects reminding him of his lifelong experiences.
6 When Laura Marks writes about haptic senses, she considers Gilles
7 Deleuze's term 'objects of experience' (Marks, 2002, p xv). Such
8 objects can seem to represent simple and even ideal meanings, and yet,
9 if studied meticulously, they can simultaneously contain particularities
10 implying a variety of connotations. Howard's notebook is filled with
11 materialised objects of experience, representing particularities from
12 his life, all helping him to reconstruct his lifestory in a way distinct
13 from everyone else's. At the same time, these particularities constitute
14 strong pillars in a firm story, which, on the other hand, seems idealised
15 and designates a kind of uni-linear lifestory of Howard. However, as
16 I interrogate and challenge him with more questions, he is capable of
17 grasping other stories that do not necessarily contribute nicely to the
18 typified storyline. This other narrated helical and non-linear storyline
19 affects his disposition to represent a more complex person; a human
20 being with problems and worries, like his wife being angry with him
21 and him worrying about his memory loss.

22 Thus, the materialised memory operates as a prosthesis for mental
23 capacity – and identity – by providing Howard with the necessary
24 elements of the storyline to keep track of the whole, and by illustrating
25 and documenting. The book is also used as a materialised medium
26 between him, telling his story, and his audience. When he tells his
27 story, this engenders a connection between him and his interlocutor;
28 his remembrance enables him to nurture his membership in social
29 relationships (Kenyon and Randall, 1997). The opposite effect is also
30 an option, namely that the materialised memory effaces Howard's
31 abilities to sustain his more complex lifestory – and identity – because
32 the strong pillars of specific details, the newspaper cuttings, tend to
33 displace his remembrance of other elements in his lifestory – those that
34 are not materialised and are hence more vague. Such elements may
35 easily become misty, dim, and disappear in the shade of the materialised
36 objects of experience. According to Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory,
37 narrating is a vital human act, as a social activity, configuring and
38 reconfiguring relationships between human beings. It is also a temporal
39 activity, configuring and reconfiguring every narrating person in a
40 world of past and present narratives. Furthermore, it is an existential
41 activity, configuring and reconfiguring a narrating self by means of
42 creating personal, narrative time, which is a temporal moment in the

1 cosmic, perpetual time (Ricoeur, 1990; 2010a; 2010b). Following
2 this line of thought, Howard's narrating is important, whether it is
3 complex and curved, or steady and singular, because the act of narrating
4 is an act of clutching hold of time – and clutching hold of life; by
5 constructing narrative time, Howard is steering clear of cosmic time –
6 he is staying alive. Howard's materialised memory, his notebook, serves
7 as a prosthesis of mental capacity and identity, and keeps him alive both
8 socially and existentially. Methodologically, this materialisation of a
9 mind also works as a tool for improvement of understanding through
10 creating interaction between researcher and the investigated person(s).

12 **Co-construction and the role of the researcher**

14 The three examples of analyses have shown how sensing can contribute
15 to understanding other people's way of making sense. Following the
16 post-phenomenological lead, the idea of this haptic methodology is to
17 provide a sense and an understanding of the challenges experienced by a
18 mobile person by the end of his lifecourse while challenged by memory
19 loss. This understanding is conveyed by disintegrating the distinction
20 between subject and object/body and mind; and by incorporating
21 a sensuous theory and a cultural analysis of touch, embodied map
22 and materialised memory. The methodology primarily focuses on
23 embodied interaction. The a priori premise is that knowledge is
24 co-constructed; the researcher is always inherently involved in the
25 process. There is no ideal of objectivity embedded in this methodology;
26 contrarily the embodied and subjective part of the researcher is seen
27 as a necessity for obtaining interaction and understanding. In the case
28 of Howard, none of the presented analyses would have existed had
29 the researcher not interacted with him, which entailed an embodied
30 impression of his driving and living, an orientation into his navigating
31 in his Turkish 'smooth space', and a presentation of the documents of
32 his 'materialised memory'. Testifying to the haptic epistemology of
33 mutual touch, the events described would not even have happened
34 without the presence of the researcher. Howard's incentive to invite
35 me for dinner was prompted by his interaction with me, and this
36 was furthermore in congruence with previous actions of his. He was
37 buttressing his customs and habits of going out with women; taking
38 them home, to the fish restaurant, following the same routes as he was
39 reconfiguring with me. In this embodied way, it is possible to learn
40 about his previous life in the country of his second home, connecting
41 past and present time, and it also enlightens his present bewilderment,
42 trying to make sense and maintaining his preferred way of living.

Knowledge and ethics

With this analysis, the intention has been to interrogate the methodological process of embodied interaction. The empirical study involves the experiences of Danish elderly migrants in the Southern European regions. Most IRM studies have focused on living situation, motivations for moving, national identity and social life. The population that chooses to migrate is often termed ‘affluent’ or ‘third age’ (Warnes et al, 2004; Simpson, 2015), connoting a pleasant, active retirement life. However, as age passes by, most people become frail in different ways, but only few IRM studies include investigations of what consequences this may have for people who have chosen a life considerably more influenced by mobility than the life of most other retirees. In this chapter, the focus is on a fairly wealthy person, who has a wife and a house in Denmark. The life situation of other retired migrants might be more complicated regarding financial opportunities, living situation, social life, functional decline, etc. However, Howard has his worries; he feels lonely, and his mind is in decline. Hence, this chapter gives an insight into the end of the lifecourse of a man who is struggling to maintain his way of living in a place where mobility interferes negatively with decline in old age.

One may wonder about the ethical consequences of my encounter with Howard. As described, Howard actually did reveal some secrets for me in our conversations, and I disclosed, among other things in this chapter, that he was feeling lonely. It was clear that his situation had changed from being a lively and popular person, to a person who is forgetful and lonely, having trouble finding his way in the landscape, mentally as well as cartographically. His rendezvous with me could have enhanced this feeling of social and mental decline, since I refused him and his wishes, probably reminding him of lost popularity and status. This is an unsolvable problem in ethnography; testifying to the idea of the embodied interaction, which of course not only involves the ethnographer, but also the people we study. Ethnographers may reconcile themselves while calling attention to phenomena – drawing on the epistemological valuing on sense and sentiment – and hoping that the insight, such as that about geographies at the end of the lifecourse from a study like this, also involves you, the reader, and provides us all with a better understanding of spatial aspects of later life in a frail context.

1 Conclusion

2
3 This chapter has presented a methodological approach to embodied
4 interaction, inspired by haptic epistemology, which is informed by post-
5 phenomenologic, sensuous theory. The empirical case is an 83-year-old
6 Danish man who is a double home-owner in Turkey, used to travelling
7 between the two countries. Howard is in a process of mental decline,
8 and the methodologies applied in the chapter exemplify how to
9 understand responses to frailty and decline in the lifecourse, when the
10 life situation is influenced by mobility. A premise of co-constructing
11 knowledge is at the core of the employed methodology, emphasising
12 the impact of interaction between researcher and the people studied.
13 There is no ideal of objectivity embedded in this methodology;
14 contrarily, the embodied and subjective part of the researcher is seen
15 as a bedrock for interaction and human understanding, propelling
16 access to interpretations of sense making and lived experience at the
17 end of the lifecourse.

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