Coding trees - Talking Borders exhibition

Interview 1: First Rock

L2: Mobility experiences

Exhibition text:

In the First Rock interview, the interviewee talks about the theme of mobility experiences through borders. In this context, the snippets below show different aspects of this theme, such as citizenship, different types of interaction in borders and perspectives on borders. The interviewee is a border scholar who brings his own perspective to the interview, as well as perspectives of different individuals, such as truck drivers, his 6-year-old kid, and border officials. Although these voices are included in the discussion of mobility, it would have been interesting and even more inclusive to represent all these different perspectives through the voice of these individuals themselves, not through the lenses of 1) a border scholar, 2) a student in academia who curated which excerpts to present. Still, due to the context of this exhibition, this is currently the only way to make these voices represented and heard. The interviewee and the curator create meaning of mobility experiences through borders out of other people's experiences, as well as their own.

L1: Perspective of borders (02:30-02:50)

I have talked with my son about borders, every now and then in recent times. He's six years old now and I asked him just four or five days ago. "What is a border? Do you know what a border is?" And his answer was and I quote "A border is where the policeman is and you have to show your passport"

Comment:
This connects with the concept of adding perspectives of borders, as the L1 mentions. The main question we are looking into is "What is borders?" and with this, I thought it was an interesting addition, since the border scholar chooses to use the innocent perspective of his kid to define borders. It also adds polyvocality to what is being said.

L1: Interaction in borders (12:05-12:44)

So, these truckers cross borders all the time as part of their work as well, and so we have something in common and it's very interesting to talk with these guys. They're really interesting characters and a lot of the life experience and how they solve the multiple problems that they face when they have to cross borders, corrupt officials, uncomfortable situations just very personal stuff like that: hygiene, bad nights, bad sleep, long work hours, a boss that keeps breathing down their neck especially on the border, papers, customs, immigration. There's a paper war every time they cross.

Comment:
Similarly to the excerpt which brings the perspective of a 6-year-old, I found it interesting to bring the interviewee's comments on mobility and border experience of truck drivers. In other interviews, I have seen the description of borders being connected to the point of each experience is different, and there are layers of criteria that will impact on how the experience goes. From all the examples, this is the most uncommon one: it not only brings the perspective of someone outside of academia, but also the hardships that come with it. Still, the interviewee, who is a scholar, uses and studies this example to develop the idea of borders, which shows how pertinent this experience is.

L1: Interaction in borders (06:18-06:54)

I quite like the process of going through border checkpoints because I always know that I have nothing to hide, and also I do research when I cross boundaries and sometimes if… checkpoint people are starting to ask me certain questions, I will sometimes tell them "I am actually doing research on boundaries" and then I'm very curious to see what the border checkpoint person- how they react to that because of that moment they realized they are now an object of my research which turns the whole situation around.

Comment:
This excerpt brings a point on types of interactions that can happen with borders, and how they can change based on how the interviewee answers the interviewer during a border crossing moment. This also shows how the interviewer becomes the interviewee and shifts the power relations, showing a somewhat fragility of border interactions.

L1: Citizenship (09:36-10:06)

So, I'm not interested to become a citizen of Britain and therefore potentially have less problems crossing borders in the future. And because of the way the country is going I am really concerned about myself and my family in terms of our long-term future in that country. I don't think they're going in a good direction. I don't want my son to be a foreign citizen in a country where he grows up and I'm not particularly keen myself to be an old person in a country that treats non-citizens differently than citizens.

Comment:
This excerpt adds to the point of citizenship in two ways: first, by acquiring or not certain citizenship which will make their overall crossing of borders easier; secondly, the consequences of carrying and acquiring a certain citizenship. The perspective on obtaining citizenship of a place is often carried with positive outlooks, often discussing its potential to make one's life easier, however, the negative stances are often overlooked, hence why I judged it to be relevant to bring this excerpt to the exhibition.

L1: Border workers (10:47-11:20)

Uh, it is a very different experience most of the time you cross African boundaries than it is to cross European boundaries, mostly because most of the boundaries I cross are on airports in Europe. In Africa it's typically land borders that I cross as part of my work and what's really, really interesting and very different also is the presence of people intensely involved in making a living off the border, which in a sense is funny for me because I'm also making a living off these borders in a way.

Comment:
This excerpt highlights some of the different ways in which some people depend on the borders to live, since they work with and for borders. I asked myself: What is a border for those who work in and for it? The answer, based on this excerpt, is that it is a source of income, a field of study, stability and food on the table. It is not just about the bureaucracies we go through when crossing it, but a way of life. Therefore, this excerpt adds to the exhibition points shedding light to the border workers.