Navigating Dreams

An anthropological study into migrant trajectories, racial capitalism, and social navigations of non-European workers in the Netherlands

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"Detrás de cada inmigrante hay un sueño y aspiramos como sacarlo adelante"

"Behind every immigrant, there is a dream and we aspire to make it come true"

- Laura

Plagiarism declaration

I have read and understood the University of Amsterdam plagiarism policy. I declare that this assignment is entirely my own work, all sources have been properly acknowledged, and that I have not previously submitted this work, or any version of it, for assessment in any other paper.

Yadira de Jong

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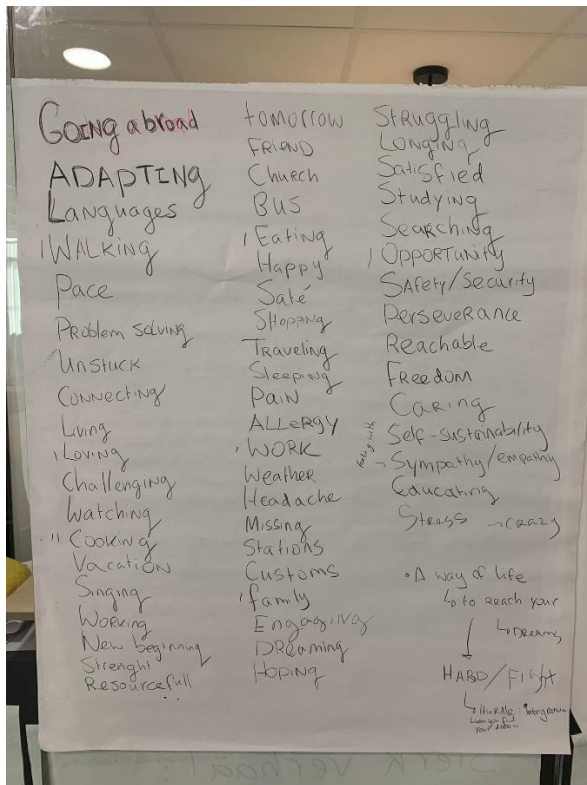
Abstract

In a global context of racial capitalism, many people are forced to sell their labor for a fraction of what a country like the Netherlands can offer. Consequently, people move through legal as well as illegal labor pathways to Europe in search of work. In this applied research project I map the 'mobility trajectories' (Schapendonk 2020) and experiences of these non-European workers – both legalized and illegalized – as they navigate their way to and in *Eurospace*. By focusing on the 'social navigations' (Vigh 2009) these workers perform, I unravel the intricacies of (im)mobilizing factors, aspirations, and imaginations in mobility trajectories and portray how these workers respond to and interact with these forces. As such I show how they move through the European (labor) migration system and how they move through and mobilize their 'affective circuits' (Cole and Groes 2016) to do so. Furthermore, by examining the ways in which workers make sense of their mobility experiences, I portray that movement is about more than just physical travel; it's about moving forward in life and constructing ways of becoming. Subsequently, I argue that claiming belonging through performing acts of citizenship (Isin 2008) and (re)producing a discourse of exclusionary politics are ways to ensure this growth. Additionally, this analysis of trajectories portrays that the lines between legality and illegality are blurred, rendering similarities in the experiences of 'labor migrants' and 'illegalized migrants.' As such this research offers academic insights into the power dynamics in a geopolitical context of (labor) migration and applicable insights into vulnerabilities in trajectories of non-European workers in the Netherlands.

Key words: Im/mobility trajectories; racial capitalism; social navigations; European labour migration system; affective circuits; belonging

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Introduction

"Struggling, adapting, pace…" While repeating it in three different languages (English, Spanish, and Dutch) I am writing down the words my participants have connected to the word 'migration'[1]. The assignment was to make pairs and listen to your partner tell you how they relate to 'migration' (or movement) and note down three words that capture their story. I hear "cooking, vacation, singing…" and while I am writing I wonder if everybody understood the assignment correctly. I could argue very well that these words are related to movement, but someone might have also been mistaken and listed their hobbies. "Living, loving, collecting…." I am thinking of the loved ones that were lost during movement, of the several people who started crying in my interviews when we spoke about family. Then, someone says "pain" quite loudly. I turn my head to see who it is, and it is one of the men I don't know. He has big eyes and an intense look, not necessarily sad or emotional, more the staring kind. I realize that he has not said a word so far. Not even in the previous chair dance we did together – in which many people burst out in laughter. So, the first word he said here today was 'pain'. That touches me. His words are followed by "weather" and "allergy." As it turns out most people just noted down their own words, instead of taking note of words related to the other's story. But it doesn't really matter, I tell myself. The list is done, and people connected their

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[1] 'Migration' and 'migrants' is in inverted commas do denaturalize and politicize its meaning

own words and their own meanings to migration. That is what counts. I ask them how this exercise was for them. "Very good," they respond. After which an explanation follows: "Some have similarities" – the crowd hums in agreement. "Although we are from different countries, we have the same thoughts and the same … Being a migrant we have like the same, the language, all of that, the climate, all that adapting." Then someone adds that change is stress[full]. My volunteer – present to assist in translating – jumps into the conversation and says the person she was listening to said that migrating is problem-solving, "(…) and for me it was more challenging, and she [her partner] said that is because you are not from a migrant background." She continued, "But also, even then, for you [her partner] it was also about getting unstuck. And that was nice to see, if there is no movement, you get stuck. You even used the word crazy, you get crazy, so there is a notion of movement, and for both of us it was also living." "Depressed …", someone adds. Then the volunteer comments, "It is not only physically moving places it is also within your life." "So maybe it is a way of life then?", I ask the group. Some nod in agreement, and then a Colombian man says it is also about motivation. "Motivation?", I ask. "Yes, because they say that in life, as I said, you have to *move* in order to reach your goals, I think, I think that's what it's all about, isn't it?"[2].

About a year ago I was introduced to FairWork, a Dutch anti-labor exploitation organization that analyzed an increasing trend of Indonesian workers entering the Netherlands 'illegally', after having worked on a single permit in Poland. Single permits are the contracts the EU uses for outsourcing 'practically skilled labor' – though the definition of this varies per country. This 'migration flow' is not an exceptional case, it is part of an increasing trend of an Asian workforce being recruited for low-paid jobs in Poland (La Strada International 2022). According to several reports these worker schemes often result in situations of human trafficking, violence, and exploitation up to the point of modern slavery (Mendoza et al. 2020). Furthermore, most are recruited for a certain period but end up illegalized in other EU countries.

Both in academia and wider society little is known about the trajectories of people who exit a single permit contract (Mendoza et al. 2020). Because of a perceived notion of extreme precarity and proneness to labor exploitation as illegalized persons, FairWork expressed an interest in research into this particular group of people – and the mechanisms that render

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[2] Translated from Spanish to English

them vulnerable. This thesis is the outcome of a study that started with this initial topic, these Indonesian labor workers, but grew to be bigger as 'labor migrants' are obviously not the only ones traveling to Europe in search of labor. Unlike labor migrants, most of them move through illegal or semi-legal pathways. Both these pathways are part of a system of 'racial capitalism' (Robinson 1983). That is, both are (partly) triggered by a system that forces people to sell their labor for a fraction of what they can get for it in Europe and are used, in turn, to create the 'labor army' on which the capitalist enterprise is dependent (Seiger et al. 2020, 13). Consequently, borders play a central role in constructing and maintaining this system that produces a "hyper-exploitable 'migrant' workforce" (Campbell 2022, 685). This makes a distinction between legal and illegal pathways, I argue, Eurocentric and arbitrary, as both labor 'migrants' and illegalized workers are subjected to this system.

Accordingly, in this study I researched a variety of non-European workers who traveled to the EU using illegal/semi-legal/legal pathways in search of labor. This research reveals how they navigate this system of global inequality. In doing so, I portray that the stringent regimes set out above are only part of social reality. That is, people navigate these systems ambiguously and creatively, creating room to maneuver to be able to construct a life worth living, to fulfill their dreams.

Moreover, what I will show in this thesis is that, as the participants in the vignette above concluded, there are similarities within this wide variety of people who move in very different ways through Europe. As such, they defy the categories the migration industry has laid out for them. This thesis is therefore not about migration, but about everything that the people in this meeting told me. It is about all these words and meanings, and about motivations and hardships that shape movement and mobility. But, most of all, as the last woman said and the title suggests, it is about people having to move to be able to reach their goals in life.

Consequently, in this thesis I aim to investigate how non-European workers navigate their mobility trajectories through *Eurospace* (Schapendonk 2020). I research this by examining im/mobility trajectories (Schapendonk et al. 2020), racial capitalism (Robinson 1983), and social navigations (Vigh 2009). Together these concepts, I argue, account for an integral understanding of the meaning of mobility in a global context of economic exploitation and racial hierarchies. My research is thus about the interaction of power and agency, about navigating the (non)ability to move, and about the experiences and aspirations that guide

these navigations – situated within a global theory of unequal power relations. This means it is also about "migratory agency in the subjective realm" (de Haas 2021, 17) through imaginaries and consequential notions of belonging. Furthermore, the environments my participants find themselves in (and must navigate) I conceptualize as the EU (labor) migration system and 'affective circuits' (Cole and Groes 2016).

As such, this research offers academic insights into the "geopolitics of transnational mobility and the human agency involved" and into the dynamics of the European migration industry (Ashtosh and Mountz 2012 in Schapendonk et al. 2020, 212; Amelina 2022). The goal of this research is to better understand the experiences of mobility in a (geopolitical) context in which movement is *not* self-evident (ibid) so that I can report back a practical understanding of how to improve the vulnerable position of these workers to FairWork.

Rethinking Migration and Mobility

Inspired by authors such as Joris Schapendonk (2020), Noel B. Salazar (2010), and Anna Amelina (2022), I reject a mobility and migration studies perspective. I do so for several reasons.

Firstly, mobility studies do not recognize stasis and motion as interconnected processes with agents and frictions (Salazar and Smart 2011; Salazar 2017). Mobility studies – and the "new mobilities paradigm" (Urry and Sheller 2006) – was the coming together of different academic fields centralizing on the notion of mobility. In doing so, it critiqued methodological nationalism – "the tendency to analyze migration from the perspective of the nation-state" (Cole and Groes 2016, 5) – and highlighted the connectedness of mobilities to past and present social processes of human movement, which are unbounded by territory. Nonetheless, according to Schiller and Salazar (2013), their emphasis on movement had a reverse impact. Influenced by globalization studies and a narrative on *flows,* transnational movement came to be seen as a *new* phenomenon, driven by new global processes. This dominant discourse emphasizes the positive notion of mobility as "(1) the ability to move, (2) the freedom of movement, and (3) the potential for positive change, rendering mobility a self-evident concept, central to modernity (Salazar 2017, 6). However, while people have become more mobile, they have also – paradoxically – become more immobilized. The notion of movement as freedom, as the basis for a modern cosmopolitanism, doesn't acknowledge this simultaneous mobilization and immobilization, how certain people are either stuck or forced

to move (Schiller and Salazar 2013). Secondly, and related to this, this narrative of flows is agent and frictionless while friction and motion are interconnected and interact with agents in mobility processes (ibid). Instead, it suggests technology-driven and borderless mobility for an elitist group of global nomads (Schapendonk 2020, 11, footnote 7).

Furthermore, I reject a migration studies perspective for two reasons. Firstly, following Schapendonk (2020) I do so because it leaves no room for multiple mobilities in its linear logics of migration. That is, 'migrants' mobilities are often viewed as a transition between an origin and destination – disregarding the fact that people do not necessarily stay in these destinations. Additionally, when there is attention to these in-between places they are usually framed as 'transit places', and mobility is termed as 'onward migration', portraying the persistence of this linear logics in movement in migration (Schapendonk 2020).

Secondly, I do not want to reproduce migration studies' normative, hence harmful categories (Amelina 2022). According to Amelina, academia – migration studies in particular – form part of the system that (re)produces the discourses, categories, and narratives in a European epistemology that construct 'the figure of the migrant'. She calls this the *doing of migration*. With this notion, Amelina points to the narratives and practices with which ideological differentiations are produced between 'migrants' and 'citizens', from a nation-state perspective (see also Dahinden 2016). It are these institutional, organizational, and face-to-face everyday practices that transform individuals into 'migrants' (2022, 2399). Thus, Amelina not only points to the compliance of academia (and others) in reproducing this system, but she also points at how these mechanisms are engrained in 'the every day.' Following this line of thought I will not use the term 'migrants' but use workers or movers instead, or put it into inverted commas to denaturalize and politicize its meaning.

How, then, to study mobilities? It should be an approach that overcomes binary thinking and recognizes migration and stasis as interconnected aspects of social life. It should also normalize various forms of mobility while acknowledging the significant impact of legal status and global racial categories on the possibility of movement. In doing so, it recognizes that it is the labor of those engaging in (so-called) illicit and subversive movements that enable the borderless capitalist lifestyle of others (Schiller and Salazar 2013). In the following section I (aspire to) set out such an approach by centering on mobility trajectories, racial capitalism, and social navigations.

My Approach: Racial Capitalism, Mobility Trajectories and Social Navigations

> Here I am acclimating.
>
> Here I am suffering.
>
> Here I am rich.
>
> I'm facing my foibles.
>
> Right now, is my journey about myself, the season that I am being impaired to be my own savior and my own safe place.
>
> Right now, I am being reminded that I am here.
>
> I am OK with my end.
>
> Here I am acclimating and mending, rebuilding all of the broken pieces.
>
> Here I am being kinder of my soul giving myself a love that was wasted.
>
> Here I am not rushing to fix my heart instead I am here doing with my own healing with my own and knowing your worth.

Figure 1: Poem by Jomar

Jomar was a victim of human trafficking and labor exploitation in Poland and lured to the Netherlands under false pretenses. I met him when he was trying to report these wrongdoings to the IND and awaiting their decision. He wrote this poem in that period. Poetry reminds him that amidst these "trials" he needs to strive, ''You know, like, this is my fight''. In the end, he believes, "everything will fall into place", "just don't be rushed." You should just shift direction, ''Yeah, you should find your direction even though you have those, you have those bad shifts in your life [Y: hitting you]. Yeah, hitting you like you need to look forward to what's the reason of why you're waking up.''

In Henrik Vigh's (2009) account of learning about social navigations in a West-African setting, he vividly depicts a remarkable moment. As he was discussing life possibilities amidst hardships his participants responded by gracefully swaying their upper bodies, as if being hit by intangible forces. They proclaimed that this rhythmic motion symbolized dynamism and perpetual movement. "(…) It was an embodiment of the concept [social navigations] itself", Vigh states (421). It portrayed the dynamics of navigating social forces not as static constraints, "but as engaging beings and bodies within the social environment in question." It pointed to navigating one's way through *the immediate* as *the imagined* (ibid, 425). Or, in Jomar's words, it is like "bad shifts hitting you." The agent, in turn, influences these environments through their navigations.

In my approach to mobility, I zoom in on these social navigations and in doing so I am specifically inspired by Joris Schapendonk's (2020) book *Finding ways to Eurospace*. In this book he follows the mobility trajectories (throughout different places and times) of West-African movers in Europe. In line with him, I look at movement by explaining its dynamics and operationalize this through the concept of 'im/mobility trajectories' and the 'social navigations' that take place in their *environments*, which I categorize as the (labor) migration system and 'affective circuits.' Affective circuits are the social formations of exchanges of goods, ideas, bodies and emotions (Cole and Groes 2016, 2). I add to this approach an analysis of racial capitalism and an analysis of grounding and belonging, but before coming to this I will explain this approach further.
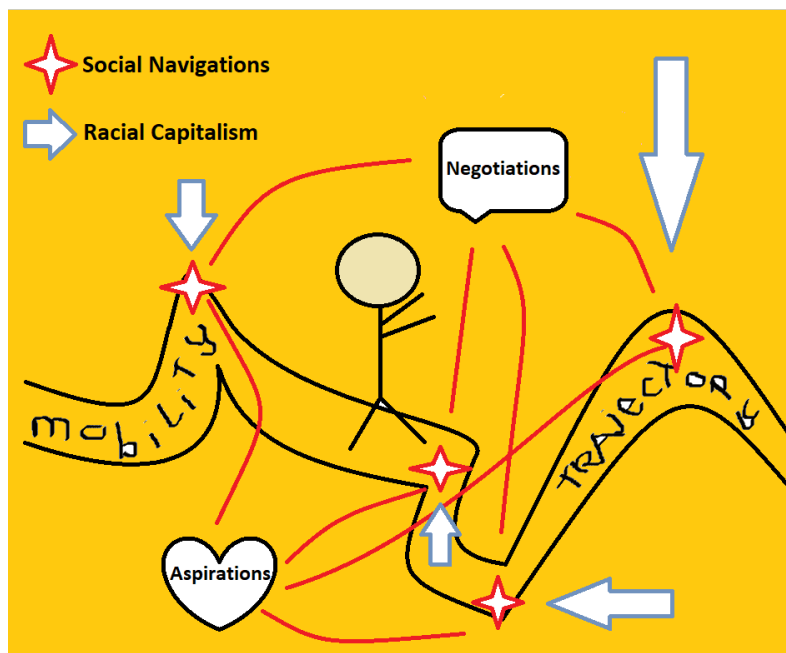
With trajectories I refer to the geographical moves people make. These are characterized as "open spatiotemporal processes with strong transformative dimensions" (Schapendonk et al 2020, 212). Consequently, this concept challenges the linear logics of migration and the binary categorization of departure/arrival and emphasizes the ambiguousness of trajectories. Instead of capturing them from the perspective of a beginning and an end, I thus look at trajectories as a *sequence* of movements (Schapendonk 2020).

The "bad shifts" that hit Jomar (and my other participants), I have operationalized as mechanisms of 'racial capitalism' (Robinson 1983). I.e., the racist ideology that rationalizes and normalizes a racial hierarchy in labor segmentation on which the capitalist enterprise is dependent (Walia 2021). These discourses are enforced through 'doings of migration*',* the institutional, organizational, and face-to-face everyday practices that transform individuals into 'migrants' (Amelina 2022, 2399). However, contrary to Walia (2021) who in her book *Border and Rule* does not zoom in on (re)negotiations with these systems, I portray how people create room to manouvre by navigating these forces according to their own aspirations and imaginaries. In Jomar's words, "the reason why you're waking up."

I define 'imaginaries' as "socially shared and transmitted (both within and between cultures) representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices" (Salazar 2011, 576). These imaginaries inform aspirations and guide navigations within mobility trajectories. In my data, they are also very connected to dreams. Basuki dreamed of studying in Europe and this guided his way to the Netherlands. When I met him, he was consistently asking me how he would be able to get into the library of Leiden University without being a student there. Laura dreamed

of becoming a painter and Jomar wanted to "set his size in life", as I will dive into in the coming chapters. In sum, imaginations and aspirations inform navigational capacities and in turn feed back into how labor mobility is structured (Seiger et al 2020). As such, aspirations and imaginaries allow me to expand "the notion of migratory agency into the subjective realm" (de Haas 2021, 17).

Concludingly, in my approach to 'movement' I examine mobility trajectories and zoom in on the social navigations that take place in them – which are shaped by personal aspirations, dreams, and goals, as well as immobilizing forces like racial capitalism. As such, in this thesis, I make visible an interaction between the subjective realm, discourses, and 'the system'. Jomar engaged with these forces "hitting him" by writing poetry and having faith in God and reminding himself of the larger goals he had set. He sees all the things that are happening to him also as a part of his personal journey, which will eventually lead to fulfilment. I have visualized this (theoretical) understanding and approach to mobility in the figures below.

Figure 1: Visual representation of theoretical operationalization.

Context: Racial Capitalism in Eurospace

Having to move to be able to reach your goals in life is, I argue, linked to a political and economical context of racial capitalism (Cedric Robinson 1983). While riding my bike to university one day, I was listening to the free audiobook *Utopia for Realists: and how we get there*, by Rutger Bregman and recognized my field site in his political analysis. Bregman argues that borders are the biggest form of discrimination in history, surpassing class-based inequality and discrimination within nations: a person experiencing homelessness living on benefits in the Netherlands belongs to the richest 8 percent of the worldwide population. Billions of people are forced to accept significantly lower wages compared to wealthier countries like the Netherlands. Citing economist Michael Clemens, Bregman concludes: the location bonus is the worst form of discrimination in our time. It is apartheid on a global scale (Bregman 2016, 161-183).

Capitalism, according to Robinson (1983), emerged in Europe engrained with racism. European subjects were racialized (gypsies, Irish, Jews, slaves), and victims of colonialist expansion and dispossession *within* Europe long before the feudalistic system erupted (Kelly 2017). Human mobility, then, could be seen as a response for neoliberalist demands, a way to create the 'labour army' on which the capitalist industry is dependent (Seiger et al. 2020, 13). This is a workforce of *legalized* 'labor migrants', as well as *illegalized* 'migrants', because as Nicholas De Genova argues, there is an "active process of inclusion through illegalization" (De Genova in Walia, 132). That is, border regimes render the cheap labor from illegalized people possible. A Eurocentric distinction between legal and illegal pathways fails to acknowledge that both 'migrant laborers' as illegalized workers are subjected to this system and is thus quite arbitrary. Hence, in my thesis I refer to these dual pathways and regimes as "the (labor) migration system."

However, in terms of labor migration there have been current developments that account for the context of some of my participants. Recently European countries, especially Poland, have been increasingly recruiting (mostly) Asian workers for low-paid jobs. To do so Poland has amended its immigration laws, making it easier for these workers to obtain work and residence permits and resulting in an increase of more than four times of workers from 2017 to 2018 (SchengenvisaNews 2022, January 26). This has led to an elicit business of recruitment agencies (mostly in Asia), resulting in human trafficking, violence, and exploitation (La Strada International 2022). These agencies play a significant role in the possibility to move,

indebting workers in the process as they charge high fees. Once workers arrive, they become dependent on their employers for their permits, making it difficult for them to leave abusive situations (Walia 2021). Even though a latest change in the single permit directive (voted in favour of on March 23, 2023, by the European committee) enables workers to change employer without losing their permit, this old dynamic will still be present in the narratives in this thesis.

Important to note is that even though the intention of these worker schemes is temporary migration, these workers pursue a dream of settlement in the EU (Mendoza et al. 2020). In following West-African movers across the European continent Schapendonk (2020) notes that these *movers* are not bounded to the logics of the nation-state but navigate the different countries as one *Eurospace*. Yet, little is known about what workers do and where they go when they leave their initial contract (Mendoza et al. 2020).

In conclusion, the Poland case "reflects a structural feature of the European labor markets: the continuous expansion of its labor frontier" (Mendoza et al. 2020, 3). Poland has shifted from being a migrant-sending to a migrant-receiving country but the racial capitalist order this builds on can be traced back to feudalist times. Additionally, it reflects a larger context. Namely, an 'apartheid on a global scale' that forces people to move and gives some the opportunity to do so legally through Poland while others face fortress Europe's' closed borders – even though many sectors of its economy rely on their undocumented labor (PICUM 2022).

Methodology

Originally, the focus of this research project was solely on Indonesian workers who had a single permit in Poland but ended up illegalized in the Netherlands instead. However, due to language barriers and limited access to this specific group, the research direction had to be adjusted. Subsequently, the focus shifted to single permit holders in the Netherlands, only to discover that such a category did not exist. Amidst this volatile but evolving research journey, I continued to interview individuals who had migrated to the Netherlands in search of employment and were currently working here, predominantly in undocumented circumstances, resulting in a research group of people from Indonesia (6), The Philippines (3) and Colombia (3). I got in contact with most of these participants through connections via FairWork and an organization and meeting place for illegalized people in The Hague, hereafter

named *La Fundación.* Thus, this research group is the result of unexpected developments. However, as I will portray below, this diverse range of individuals allowed for the exploration of new and compelling insights into the functioning of the European (labour) migration system, the fluctuating nature of legality and illegality, and the meaning of mobility.

As I was interested in a place-based examination of how people experience and make sense of their mobility trajectories I relied mostly on in-depth interviews (12) and narrative analysis to reconstruct these trajectories (Cortazzi 2001). Accordingly, in my chapters I centralize one or two narratives for an in-depth examination. For two interviews with Indonesian workers I relied on translators, of which one was from FairWork, the other was a research participant of mine. Due to the topic changes, not every narrative is included in full, but all participants are mentioned throughout the different chapters.

Aside from interviews I have performed participant observation as much as possible and whenever possible. I have accompanied two participants to church and one participant to the mosque. I have also gone to several workshops and meeting places for illegalized people. I have also assisted one of my participants at an art fair, walked and had beers with others. In these instances, I was able to foster rapport, rendering them very valuable.

Importantly, the nature of this applied research project and my research population causes ethical considerations. For all interviews I have gathered informed consent and because of the precarious identities of illegalized people anonymization was of utmost importance (as they too expressed).

Notwithstanding my considerations, some ethical dilemmas did occur. One of my participants was assisted by someone from FairWork for his IND procedures. In the meantime, my tutors at the partner organization told me that his request was probably going to be denied. What was I supposed to do with this information? Together with my tutors we decided that since he already had assistance, I should not intervene in the matter. Eventually the IND postponed their decision-making, making him wait longer and lose more money, before giving him the "no." A poignant situation. Another difficulty was that Indonesian people always wanted to know with how many others I had spoken, and their gender. I was usually evasive to answer these questions out of a protectiveness and a developed sense of 'the communal gaze' (Schapendonk 2020).

Additionally, incorporating anthropologies 1980 critique on knowledge production in anthropology (see also Clifford and Marcus 1986; Abu-Lughod 1991) and Amelina's 2022

critique on knowledge production in migration studies involves the acknowledging that analysing migration-related narratives and actions cannot be done from a neutral standpoint (Amelina 2022, 2408), rendering it important to reflect on my positionality, as well as that of my partner organization.

Firstly, my position as an 'outsider', a non-migrant, white researcher rendered it difficult for me to access the research population. Not in the very least because I did not speak Indonesian. This changed once I got in contact with Colombian women, who "felt they were accompanied by another Latina", due to my ability to speak Spanish and previous research experience in Chile. Furthermore, my positionality as a young Dutch woman sometimes rendered me a source of income or a wedding candidate, though this has never resulted in ethically questionable or uncomfortable situations. Lastly, even though I have tried to limit 'Northern knowledge production' by being reflexive about my position, questions, and emotions during the fieldwork process and by organizing an event with creative methods, it is important to recognize that this thesis was written *Under Western Eyes* (Mohanty 1984) by someone who doesn't share the experience of racism and migration, and this has implications on its outcomes.

In an effort to incorporate these critiques on knowledge production by doing research *with* and not *on* (Crang and Cook 2007, 28 in O Reilley 2012, 68) I followed a masterclass series in creative research methods at the Radboud University and organized a collaborative 'creative event' during the fieldwork period. The vignette I started the thesis with is a result of this day. Next to the list of words we had an introductory exercise and we made collages and paintings; these are however not incorporated in the thesis. The aim of the event was to gather data as well as developing a more ethically sound methodology by 'giving back' to my participants in terms of creative engagement and establish a self-other entanglement (Johnston 2022; Bergold and Thomas 2012). The applied nature has also its positive impacts on ethics: with my recommendations I aim to limit mere abstraction of information and 'give back' in advocacy efforts and/or policy reforms in accordance with the needs of my participants.

Lastly, the methodological nature of a trajectory approach, and the wide variety of people in my research group (from different countries, migrating through different pathways) rendered limitations regarding descriptions of place histories, and 'thick descriptions' of communities and localities (see also Schapendonk 2020).

A Navigational Guide

In the first part, this thesis describes how people interact with and within the environments, they move through. I have categorized these into (1) the EU (labor) migration system, and (2) 'affective circuits' (Cole and Groes 2016). Accordingly, in the first chapter I portray how people interact with the migration industry. I show how my participants are 'turned into migrants' by racialist capitalist discourses and the daily practices of *doings of migration* (Amelina 2020) as well as how these forces are met with agentic capacities and navigated according to personal aspirations. In the second chapter, I show how my participants 'move through affective circuits' (Schapendonk 2020). I show how these circuits can be mobilized but also how they require careful navigation. In line with Schapendonk (2020) I illustrate how the community gaze may be so demanding that some decide to break with it. This analysis portrays how these circuits are not bounded to specific localities, critiquing the bidirectional notion of movement present in the understanding of Cole and Groes (2016).

In the second part I demonstrate how navigating ways to ground and ways to grow are part of mobility trajectories. In this third chapter, I dive into what mobility means for my participants and argue that it is connected to belonging in the sense of 'ways of becoming' (Ilcan 2002). Furthermore, I show my participants actively claim such ways to become through 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008) and in the process reproduce the exclusionary politics they at the same time experience.

To make visible the *subjective realm* of dreams and imaginations in each chapter I centralize one or two narratives and portray their interactions with aforementioned (im)mobilizing forces and their corresponding social navigations. Thus, even though divided by themes, in each of the chapters these (inextricable) dimensions will be continuously present (as they also are in social life).

1: Moving through a (labor) migration industry.

I was in the train station with Laura and Irene and at a certain point they told me they had to go to the train ticket service, and they seemed a little nervous about it. They said they had to recharge their ticket (or one of them had to) and then we were talking about how expensive it is to ride the train. They asked me if I had to buy a ticket too. I said no because I have this personalized student pass. They responded by saying they would like to have their own pass too (it is much cheaper than to buy tickets), but that they were afraid if they would ask for one, they would have to show passports or a residence permit. They asked me if I knew if they would have to prove their residency here if they would order such a pass. I said I wasn't sure but believed not as I thought a photo is the only thing you must upload if you do it online. During this conversation they started talking a little softer and behaved a little fidgety and looked a little nervous. We were in the middle of the train station and it was a touchy subject.

This scene shows the everyday effects of a border governance strategy known as "territorial diffusion" (Walia 2021, 84). This strategy involves the internalization and externalization of border enforcement, utilizing biometric surveillance and disciplinary practices within the state while also outsourcing border control responsibilities beyond the state's borders. "Put another way, the border is elastic, and the magical line exist anywhere" (Ibid, 84). In this chapter I show how my participants navigate and respond to an obscure, constantly changing, (labor) migration industry, whose borders can suddenly become visible and rigid. People moving through Europe who have other than white facial features know this. The fear of seeing the police, of encountering this border control mechanism, is something that most participants recognize, albeit in different levels. Laura speaks of *temor* (angst, fear) seeing *la guardia civil* when she was in Spain the first time. I had asked her if she had ever felt stuck and she said,

> Yes, in Spain, let's say, in Spain I felt, I mean, being undocumented, you know that you are out there and the Guardia Civil comes and you see that they are going to ask for papers and you are like me, what do I do, yes, I mean the fear. That fear that you feel at that moment like I don't want to go back. And it happened to me several times that I saw them, and I had to get out of there, run, and I was like…

Laura experiences *temor* (fear, anxiety) of seeing the police. As a migrant you can adapt, but there are structures that make you live in constant fear, as Laura explains:

Yes, I mean, even here, you don't see it here as much as over there, yes, but anyway, you know when you see something happening, protests or something and they start like this, then you kind of get away from there. You also refrain from going to places to avoid problems. For example, you say, "Let's go and have a drink" and there's a problem and the police arrive, so all those things, you feel like you are free, but in a certain way you live in fear.

Vikal told me a similar story when we went to the mosque together. When we hung out together, he said that the other day he was serving tables in a restaurant and then the police came in and he froze. He couldn't suddenly run away because that would be very suspicious, so he served them. He then went to stand behind the counter and after a while, he was told that the police were back, and he just ran out from the back and never came back to the place. He never knew if they came back for him, or if they were even the same officers.

In this chapter I dive into their interactions with the (labor) migration system and portray the moments of friction, the hits and blows, and what the body and the being did in response to it. I show that it is not clearcut who, where, or what this system is, and that the illegal and legal intersect, I also show how my participants are turned into migrants by this system through 'doings of migration' (Amelina 2020) and how difficult it is to navigate oneself out of this subjected identity. On the other hand, I also portray how these forces are met with aspirations and agentic capacities. To illustrate this, I present Jomar's mobility trajectory in depth. I do so because the interaction with the labor migration system consists not out of 'stand-alone' moments in time, moments of friction, but out of a continuous subjected identity that comes to the fore in all aspects of life. It's a cloud that follows you, or a context you move in. I argue, that to grasp this it is important to portray one's entire narrative, and not just moments of friction.

Jomar's Trajectory

The dream: *"It's my dream before, way back when I'm still young"*

Jomar applied to work abroad shortly after what he calls "my very devastating year of all the years in my whole life.'' He is a Filipino man, about 30 years old and that year he lost his job, and he lost his father. It was during covid and Jomar was working for the Philippine airlines, so they had to let him go. He was "drowning" but did not contact his father about this as they were not that close. Then his father suddenly died. Around this time, he was briefly together with someone, but they split. At face value, he gives the impression that all these factors together mounted up to his decision to "try again to work abroad." But digging deeper it became apparent that he had *imagined* this for a long time already and had tried it twice before.

> It's my stair, stairways, or staircase going to my set size. It's about, it's a part of my plan, you know, goals in life. For each one of us I believe that we have goals in life to achieve, to have goals in life to yeah., to strife those. And working abroad, it's not my, you know, it's my dream before, way back when I'm still young. And the first country that I've applied is Japan. Yeah Japan, you know, like, I don't know, most people dream to go to Japan. I don't know. You like Japan? What's your comment about Japan? Like it's in terms of culture, food, nature, Japan is very evolved with that, they're very known with that.

Jomar telling me that ever since he was little, he had been dreaming of working abroad, that this was part of the path that he had laid out for himself, part of his 'goals in life' and a way to 'set his size' in the world, portrays how imaginaries and aspirations fuel mobility trajectories. Furthermore, in his description of Japan one can see the workings of imaginaries at play. Very few people move to a place they know absolutely nothing about, instead, they *imagine* (themselves in) these places (Salazar 2011). Jomar was able to do so as he was familiar with parts of the Japanese culture. It were collective images with which he could reconstruct his aspiration (Seiger et al 2020) of working in Japan.

Jomar tried applying to Japan and Canada but was in both cases rejected due to a lack of experience. This is how his Polish trajectory started. This application was successful and when Jomar received his work permit he was very happy but also shocked. "But I received,

actually, I'm graduate of industrial engineering in the Philippines and I was so shocked, like, when I received my working permit, it was a, I mean the description of my work there is a welder.'' He expressed that he was shocked because he had no experience in welding. "All of my certificates are, you know, more on the office managing." Any other job would have made more sense to him. "Any job they relate to my career or experience, but I'm so shocked I'm a welder, I don't know how to do those things." He complained about this to the recruiter - to whom he had to pay a total of about 5000 euros before flying to Poland. She basically told him not to worry and that it was some sort of arrangement.

Before he went, he asked his father to guide him. He told him in a prayer he was going abroad and said, "please guide me in this career, this path." While he was processing his papers he dreamt of his father and in this dream, he was submitting his documents and his father was right behind him. He cried when he woke up as he felt his father was accompanying him. I would say that his social navigations are constructed by his faith, not only in his father's guiding him but also in his faith in God and that God has a plan for him.

Alas, as his journey began to unfold it revealed a stark contrast to his expectations, and his euphoria dissolved into a profound disillusionment. Before he left, he had to sign a large document that stated that he had a free ticket, free accommodation and other benefits, but when he arrived in Poland he had to sign a new document in Polish, on which the information already "shrunk to one page." Furthermore, upon arrival the company took away his passport "for safekeeping.z" About this he said,

> And why are they talking about safety? (…) This is our personal thing, is our document and why would they, you know, hold this passport? So, in conclusion we realize that they hold our passports because they don't want to, I mean, they don't want to, maybe they are thinking that if we have the passport and we could go anywhere and we could, yeah, we could run away right and we're thinking about that. We're thinking about that because the saddest thing when we arrive in Poland our work is not welder actually – as stated in our contract it is a welder – but in fact when we arrived there we're not. We are construction laborer, cement mixer, the person digging the soil.

They were thus tricked into a job they did not sign up for, and their passports were illegally taken from them so they would be hesitant to run away. As Jomar indicated they were thinking of running away not in the least because this new job was very dangerous. They had to build

a weather forecasting radar without protection "And it's dangerous working there because, you know, the radiation." Furthermore, despite the contract stating that they would be paid at least the minimum wage of around 600 euros per month, their actual salary ended up being lower than that. Adding to the complexity, the company intentionally withheld pay slips, purposefully creating an atmosphere of obscurity and hindering employees from verifying their working hours and wages. Consequently, Jomar could only visibly see the deficit of 500 zloty (100 euros) after he resigned. Composing this resignation email required a lot of courage – bear in mind his passport was taken from him. Nevertheless, in assuming a leadership role amongst the Filipino workers, he took the initiative to articulate his concerns and wrote the company:

> (…) that if you don't give back our passport the Philippine Government will sue you. And also that, I told them like that also the European Union [laughs nervously]. It took me courage to make this letter and also I tagged the Philippine Embassy in Warsaw and yeah we took the action. Then the, I mean the Philippine Embassy replied and after that case, after that scenario, the company took action that they would meet us. After two days they would return our passports. So, when we received our passports, right away I made an urgent resignation letter for us to be made, like for us like we enter formally so we exit also formally.

It thus took action and pressuring to get their passports back and be able to resign. This is exemplified as the company is connected to a criminal circuit. Later in the interview he told me that they used a Polish acquaintance – a lawyer who does not want to be named for safety reasons – to send the company a message on their behalf: "They're [the lawyer] messaging the company that 'give back the passport to these Filipino workers or else I will report you to the Polish government', and the company replied to them that 'if you will not stop threatening us if you not stop chatting [talking to] us I will inform this group (mafia)'." This was why taking action required courage. Jomar felt like he was in prison, "Yeah, yeah, actually when we got out there like it's a bit like we are, you know, like we're in prison and we are set free and those emotions, those feelings and wow at last, after those sufferings." He talks about it in terms of it being a struggle and being imprisoned and set free. For this reason, he was very relieved when he was free from this place.

In conclusion, Jomar had imagined his period of working abroad before he embarked on this journey. Once he entered the 'labor migration system' he was, however, subjectified to the identity 'migrant worker' and his credentials (literally) did not matter anymore. Furthermore, once he got this identity he was subjected to exploitation and wrongdoings. Thus, through the *doings of migration* (Amelina 2020) he was turned into a migrant and had to deal with the exploitative connotations this identity entails (Walia 2021). Furthermore, his navigations are based on such immediate difficulties, as well as future perspectives.

Way out: *"All of them they look for their own, you know, safe place"*

However, once Jomar severed ties with his initial employer, his residence permit – which was linked to that specific employer – became invalid. In Poland there are multiple agencies and employers actively seeking these "migrant" workers who left their original employer. I have come across Facebook groups dedicated to Filipinos (and Indonesians) in Poland, where employers advertise job openings. This is also the moment his group of Filipino friends scattered, and all navigated the system in Poland through a different route. First, they transferred to another agency. "Luckily we met this Filipino agency based in Poland in Catovic and they accept us, they let us stay in their accommodation and they give me work." Then Jomar was left alone because his colleagues also looked for companies to take them in. Jomar started working in administration for a company with a Korean owner, but he did not have a work permit. The agency promised it would deliver one in three months, but this did not happen. Securing a new job often comes with the promise of a new permit, but unfortunately, Jomar never received this promised permit. I have also heard roomers that in sometimes it is possible to work without permits in Poland (illegalized). That this is the big difference between Poland and the Netherlands. Yet, for Jomar, not having one meant searching a new route.

Additionally, again in this company he had troubles with payment, he did not receive any pay slips and was paid less than agreed upon. After three months of working without a permit, the company was forced to let him go. The Filipino agency that connected him to this company also claimed half of its hourly wages. He used Facebook to navigate himself out of this situation.

So in that case, yeah, I was so devastated in that from my situation in the first company, the second company is the same thing, again a similar situation, so what I did is I keep

looking, scrolling on the Facebook and I saw this Facebook page and like (…) they're offering acquiring a work permit here in the Netherlands.

He contacted this person, and she gave him a direct phone number. This man pretended to be IND (Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service). Jomar showed me the pictures of work permits with IND stamps this man fabricated. He asked 1090 euros for the work permit and when Jomar arrived in the Netherlands he made a downpayment, but the man stopped responding. "He is not, you know, answering my calls and after one week I messaged him that 'Why not replying to me?' You know like it's not easy for me to came here is a very big risk for me (…)." When he finally replied Jomar had to send the money, but the bank account was on a different name and not under 'IND service', and the address was in Lithuania, so Jomar thought this was suspicious. The man then sent a new account registered under his own name, but the billing address was located in the city: Madrid, and country: the Netherlands, not making any sense at all. As a response, Jomar consulted a Filipino acquaintance in the Netherlands. They had never met, but she is married to a Dutch man, so the couple helped him out. They connected him to *La Fundación*, and with their help Jomar reported this fraudulent man and made a claim for a residence permit.

For Jomar, the situation was even more stressing as he had already lived through a difficult situation in Poland, "this time I was a victim of human trafficking in Poland so I'm very careful to who I'm sending my money because, you know, I work hard for that." This also made him take on this new situation with caution. In the Netherlands, human trafficking is defined as: "recruiting (for work), transporting or housing a person using force, coercion, deception, abuse of power or abusing a vulnerable position (such as with minors and refugees), with the aim of exploitation (taking away someone's income or not or not paying enough income)" (Comensha n.d.). Especially because the company took the workers' passports, I think Jomar can prove this. The issue is that it happened in Poland, so the Dutch government cannot grant Jomar access to this account. In response, I told Jomar that maybe he should report it in Poland. "I did that", he replied. After he left the first company, he went to a Polish lawyer who told him reporting to the police would turn on him because he did not have any papers (he had been working without in the Korean company), so he could be the one ending in jail. Thus, even though Jomar had tried to do everything officially, leaving his exploitative employer with

an official resignation letter and entering a new one, he was told by this lawyer that he could be imprisoned for his actions.

This narrative portrays the harmful, discriminatory, illegalizing mechanisms Europe's labor migration maze and how difficult it is to navigate this system correctly (legally). Jomar is, I would argue, a victim of this system, yet by law he is held accountable for having worked somewhere 'illegally' and for being in the Netherlands 'illegally' – on the latter I elaborate in the coming paragraph. Furthermore, I could argue that what is going on in Poland with the recruiting business of migrant workers that left their first employer is, in De Genova's terms, an "active process of inclusion through illegalization" (De Genova in Walia, 132). That is, through this scheme and people leaving their initial employers Poland is left with a lot of 'undocumented' labor, which they eagerly make use of.

The Netherlands: *"sometimes I cry without no reason"*

Contrary to others I have met, Jomar does not work (illegally) in The Netherlands because he was informed that doing so would immediately jeopardize his application for residency, leading to its denial. When Jomar talks about the Netherlands he says that he is "afraid" and that he has "anxiety from Poland." He says that he does not work here because he is "scared with the law", especially because he is a foreigner and does not know the law like "we"[3] do. He is also very careful with what he says on social media because of this. Being unemployed, he is now dependent on money from his family, instead of the other way around. He told me that this made him feel like he was "drowning" (again). His daily life feels overwhelming, because he has a lot of time for introspection, particularly since he spends much of it alone in his room. This solitude leads to deep contemplation and excessive thinking. "so, I'm thinking a lot like, you know, sometimes I sleep late and … to be honest, I sometimes I cry without no reason."

Although he did not use these words, he appears to be experiencing loneliness and feelings of depression. When he thinks about his situation, he wonders why this has happened to him.

Like those stress, those anxiety from Poland and I came here, it's the same thing like, I just questioned myself why? Why is myself suffering in this situation again? Why me?

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[3] Referring to me, the Dutch outsider researcher, and citizens like me.

Like, you know, the story is repeating itself like wherever I go. I mean the situation is coming back with me like it's in my backpack.

Jomar's experience with the (labor) migration system illustrates what it can mean to experience racial capitalism. He personalizes this experience and asks himself why it is him who is experiencing this. I would argue his experience does not have much to do with him, but with him being subjected to racial capitalism, with him being *turned into a migrant* through the *doings of migration*. As I have pointed out, from the moment he registered with an agent in the Philippines his credentials became irrelevant, and everywhere along his trajectory there have been people making use of his precarious position. This is the case because he had to move through systems that are dependent on this (Walia 2021). Nevertheless, even though he was not very confident about navigating Dutch society when I interviewed him, when I hung out with him a few weeks later he told me that he is now guiding other Filipinos, helping them to get used to the way life works in the Netherlands. Thus, in this short period of time, he did develop from "drowning" into being a (navigation) guide, pointing to his resilience and adaptability. Additionally, I want to point out that Jomar did move completely out of the structures that were set out for him (single permit contract) when he realized he was being exploited. As such navigating his own way towards fulfilling his dream of "setting his size abroad." Even though he experienced racial capitalism, he navigated this creatively and created room to maneuver. He left an exploitative situation and found another personal path.

Prospects and Promises

Jomar was not the only one I spoke to who had to deal with blows from the (labor) migration industry. A recurring difficulty, that blurs the lines between legality and illegality and has much harmful effects on workers (while also being a means to migrate without having to match the official criteria) is the lucrative business of agencies in transnational worker schemes.

My first encounter with the workings of agencies was through Manu, a kind-looking Indonesian, middle-aged man who also moved to Poland through a migrant worker scheme. Manu did not speak English, so I relied on a translator for our interview. This is already an interesting fact, given the English language requirements to go to Poland. It points to the illicitness of the agency business, which can sometimes work in favor of the travelers. Yet mostly they exploit the workers who want to move through them. Manu registered with an

agent in Jakarta in 2019. This agency promised that within 3 to 4 months he would be in Poland. He had to pay 20 million rupiahs (€ 1.218, -) and he borrowed this money. However, because of covid they did not send him, while some friends of his did go. In 2021 (still covid time), he finally got the work permit. When he got this news, it was April 2021, they asked him to pay the 20 million again. Because he was already waiting for more than two years, he decided to sell his rice-land. In Poland, Manu was disappointed because he did not earn as much as he had expected to, as the agency had promised. He was promised 15 mil rupiah (€ 938,-) per month, but he only got 5 (€ 313,-). "This was for his family" (wife and two kids), he emphasizes. He worked 8 hours a day in packages. Sometimes he could work 10 to 12 hours per day, the overtime is not paid. So, he got less than he was promised, and was not paid rightfully.

This is a recurring theme, Mentari and the brother of Raya, two other Indonesian participants who traveled through legal labor pathways to work in Poland, had similar experiences. Both had expected to earn more money in Poland. In his interview, Mentari said that the agency had "broken its promise", that the salary was not as they promised it to be. But when we were with the two of us Vikal, who was translating the interview for me, said to me that it is more a misunderstanding than broken promise. Contrary to what was expected Mentari could only work 5-8 hours a day, which was not enough to get the monthly amount he was promised by the agency. The brother of Raya had to wait a month to be able to work. However, when he finally got the opportunity, the amount of work available was minimal, resulting in him earning less than his initial expectations and the promises made by his agency.

Vikal himself, who was also one of my (key) participants, dealt with agencies differently. Vikal has an outgoing personality, makes a lot of jokes, laughs a lot, and gets around with his entrepreneurial skills. He comes from a relative steady socio-economical background in Indonesia compared to other participants. He worked in a bank all his life and left the country when he lost this job. He travelled from Indonesia to Poland, and subsequently to the Netherlands, but his trajectory and narrative are woven into all three chapters.

In our first conversation, he told me he already knew a lot about "human trafficking" when he was planning to go to Poland. When I asked him what he did about this he said that he just looked for a vacant position in Europe and because it was 2020 no embassy was issuing visas, only Poland. This is an example of how the continent is navigated as one Eurospace, not according to the logics and rules of its nation-states (Schapendonk 2020). It also reminded me

of the ironic example presented by Harsha Walia (2021). She highlights how the US distributed migrant farmworker visas in the midst of the pandemic while simultaneously halting all other immigration and refugee processing. She concludes that "Though the commodities migrant farmworkers produce are deemed essential, the workers themselves are underpaid and disposable, unprotected and deportable – revealing not a contradiction but rather a central function of border imperialist rule" (12). I view the case of Poland to be quite similar to this US dynamic. For Vikal, "The one and only problem is the visa, so I'm looking for the information on the Internet, Facebook just like that and I found oh this because of the Poland still having their open for the visa." Every port was closed, except labor migration to Poland. Vikal continued searching for information and found a number. He calls this person saying:

> 'Hey, can you help me about a possibility I can join your place in the Poland for working?' 'Oh yeah, yeah, but you must arrange this with some agency in Indonesia'. There is some agency. Not official agency from the government relative you know, some like the private businesses like. And 'OK, but I don't want the process of the agency. I want doing myself. Can you help me?' So ok they say 'Oh no, it's in the process is not like this. You must join to the company you must join to the agency because you can't do this by yourself', just like that. I still pushing them. So, [I continue] pushing them and 'OK I can give you a working permit from Poland'.

Vikal is the only one I have spoken to who, in his words, was 'doing some bargaining with them' and bargained his way out of having to pay the agency. In the end he paid only 25% of what people must pay when they move through an agency. Vikal says people get trapped like that and that instead he knew exactly what he was getting into, "I know that I involve [or info] myself, I get in myself into that, even trafficking, I know that, I realize that yeah. But the most point is the others is they don't realize that they get into the human trafficking." Interestingly, one can thus move around this system, navigate their way out of this lucrative business.

Furthermore, and noteworthy, Vikal told me that the only people who had to work for 12 hours a day were the 'labor migrants'. Polish people working in the same facility worked 'only' 8 hours, after which he said "What do you think? Is this discrimination or what?." To which I replied in agreement. I asked him if he had ideas on what could be done to improve the position of workers, the question that was relevant for my partner organization, he told me that the problem is that it is not a government-to-government structure.

The relationship about the Polish government and the Indonesian government for the worker is from private to private, (…) government to government, GTG. Because private to private is mean private to private to handle, they handle the process with private to private, business to business, just like that. So the control of the government very minimum. Yeah, if they change from government to government, they get fully control and the working hour just like more, more better for the working hours, just because I know (…) the regulation is the only 8 hour working maximum per day maximum, but they are the businessman, the corporate, the factory, the company, they had to push me for working 12 hours. Because the Polish also working for eight hours.

It's a profound analysis of the mechanisms of racial capitalism and exemplary for what happens to the marginalized people this system is built upon and dependent on (Walia 2021).

Concludingly, what this paragraph showed is that agencies make use of people in need, people that want or need to migrate and that it is not even legal[4] or necessary – as Vikal going around this system portrays. Agencies indebt workers and make false promises, leading to deceit and disbelief. Furthermore, Vikal being able to navigate his way around these structures was linked to him knowing "what he was getting into." This could be linked to him being from a relative steady socioeconomic background, and having the ability to *imagine* this, related to his *capacity to aspire* (Appadurai 2004). That is, like he said, he already knew he was getting into human trafficking before he went to Poland as he did research on this. This requires capacities: access to knowledge and research abilities, which are related to socioeconomic backgrounds.

Additionally, the experiences of these workers, especially Vikal, illustrate how the system racializes international workers. Companies push the marginalized groups, in this case the migrant workers, in an exploitative manner and based on a racialized hierarchy of labor. This is in accordance with Walia's analysis, who argues that "The state differentiates these

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[4] According to the ILO's (International Labor Organization) general principles of the Fair Recruitment Initiative workers cannot and should not be charged in any way for costs related to recruitment (ILO, 2019)

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workers as *migrant* workers, whose labor power is first captured by the border and then manipulated and exploited by the employer" (Walia 2021, 7).

Nevertheless, what Vikal's narrative also portrays is that amidst these illicit routes and labor circumstances, people form their own trajectories, which they do according to their own imaginaries and dreams. Vikal told me that he went to Poland but actually, his plan all along was going to the Netherlands. Not because he knew somebody here or had a network he could rely on, but because he had imagined going to the Netherlands and being successful here. He told me this when he explained why he left Poland. He said there is:

> No life for you because when (…) you reach your place, you only take a rest and waiting again for before you work tomorrow. Yeah, so I was like because you sleep for 8 hours and then the rest is just preparing yourself for working again every day, every day all the time everyday it's like every day.

Thus, he decided to move. However, there was more to this decision. It was already informed by previous aspirations and imaginaries. "It's too much. That's the basic reason. That's the basic reason that I, I cannot live like this. I have to move to Netherlands. But basically, when I leave Indonesia to the Europe the main, the main aim of me is the Netherlands." Notably, these imaginaries are shaped by networks, media, and cultural-historical ties, that are intertwined with colonial discourses of 'elsewhere' to be better (Salazar 2013). The historical colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia contributes to Vikal's ability to envision himself in the Netherlands and informs these images, despite his lack of a personal network here. Although Vikal had knowledge of his wife's relatives residing in the Netherlands, he had never met or spoken to them, highlighting the interconnectedness between the countries and the influence of image-forming connections. Likewise, Jomar's ability to imagine himself in Japan and discuss their culture and cuisine as being "very developed" may also be fuelled by close cultural-historical ties, stemming from a pre-colonial period in Filipino history.

Thus, even though this may look like an ad hoc decision, sprouted in the situation in Poland, Vikal's imaginaries and aspirations had already laid out a path towards the Netherlands. His trajectory was already aimed in this direction. Additionally, this narrative portrays the dynamic of navigating towards *the immediate* as well as *the imagined* when navigating a constantly changing environment (Vigh 2009, 425).

Lastly, this paragraph shows how imaginaries are also about envisioning 'the Wherewithal of life' (Jackson 2013), finding that what makes life worth living. Even when Poland lived up to its expectations, in terms of contracts, wages, hours, it being intense labor, and frankly, really boring, is also reason for moving further (as we will see with Raya too in the coming chapter). Just imagine yourself coming from a big city like Jakarta and then working in the middle of nowhere in a factory in Poland for 6 days a week, 12 hours a day, with 30 minutes breaks each day. Then, according to Vikal, "there is no life" left to live.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I discussed the interaction of the labor migration system with a few of my participants. I showed how people are immobilized by the system – with the worst possible consequences (like deportation). In this line of thought I follow Harsha Walia, who argues that "The manufactured vulnerability of migrant workers is both generated by and constitutive of racial capitalism; the architecture of labor migration is intended to guarantee capital accumulation and uphold racialized gendered citizenship" (2021, 137). That is, I portrayed how these workers are *migrantized* and exploited through the institutional and daily practices of *doings of migration* (Amelina 2020). The moment Jomar became a 'migrant worker' he lost his civil rights (his passport was taken by the company) and identity (as an educated manager). However, arguing against Walia, who in her book "refuses anthropological consumption" because it would portray "migrants" as vicitimed and violated (2), I showed how subjection to these systems is only part of the story. My participants navigate these systems creatively and with agency, according to their own aspirations. An employer can be just a moment in their trajectory (to the Netherlands for example).

Furthermore, specifically in the latter paragraph I showed how international labor relations are not solely shaped by current labour dynamics. They are also deeply influenced by historical colonial relations that inform and shape imaginations of people in search for labor in other places. In other cases, they also shape pathways (Latin American people can enter Spain without a visa), as will become apparent in the final chapter. In line with Schapendonk (2020) I thus portrayed how at times navigations are made that transcend the logic of the nation-state (navigating one Eurospace), yet additionally portrayed how sometimes particular nations are *imagined* and chosen (partly) due to colonial historical patterns.

Next to forces that 'migrantize' workers or movers, there are also people, places, and institutions that facilitate migration (Schapendonk 2020). I refer to these facilitators and their interconnected networks as 'affective circuits' (Cole and Groes 2010). These webs are another environment my participants move through and are central to the way they construct their mobility trajectories. As with the (labor) migration system, this web is to be navigated carefully as missteps can result in immobility or deceit. In the coming chapter I delve deeper into the ways my participants mobilize and navigate these circuits.

2: Navigating and Mobilizing Affective Circuits

In the last chapter I discussed the trajectory of Manu, but I have yet to explain why and how he ended up in the Netherlands. As mentioned, Manu was not earning what he expected to earn in Poland. Subsequently, he heard from friends that salary in The Netherlands was 5 to 6 times higher. His friend had successfully moved with the assistance of an Indonesian agent residing in the Netherlands. Following their example, he also sought the agent's help. This agent instructed him to take the bus to Den Haag, where she would meet him. Upon arrival, the agent requested a payment of 600 euros, with 300 designated for housing and another 300 for securing a job. She assured him that he would quickly find employment in a restaurant within a matter of days. However, she never lived up to this promise, leaving Manu with yet another debt. He is currently still paying off the debt caused by his agency and his family, who do not have their rice field anymore, are dependent on his money.

In this chapter, I dive into the affective circuits of my participants. Following Cole and Groes, (2016, 2) I define affective circuits as "the social formations that emerge from the sending, withholding, and receiving of goods, ideas, bodies, and emotions." Affective circuits are a useful tool to think about mobility and 'migration' as they provide an integrated analysis of 'sending' and 'receiving' poles, indicating that 'migration' is not a one-way phenomenon but entrenched with expectations circulating back to each end (Cole and Groes 2016, 5). As such, they also call attention to emotional aspects like jealousy, expectations of gift giving or experiencing a sense of belonging when new connections and exchanges are made. Because of this, the metaphor captures "a potential for conflict and disconnection" and "draws attention to multiple overlapping dimensions of political and social control exercised by different agents operating at different levels" (Cole and Groes 2016, 7-8). As the case of Manu portrays, these 'other than the system' circuits can require careful navigation. It was an Indonesian friend of his who connected him to another Indonesian 'agent' who in turn deceived him. Thus, contrary to most studies on migration – that view social ties as merely beneficial to mobility – this chapter shows how, just like 'the system', affective circuits can also function as mechanisms of control (Schapendonk 2020).

Nevertheless, I do agree with Schapendonk (2020, 57-58) that the notion of a "bidirectional movement" simplifies transnational life-worlds as these circuits are not bounded by specific localities, or a mere 'here' and 'there'. In my examination of affective

circuits I distinguish a few dimensions that my participants mobilize or have to navigate: friends, the mosque, the internet, skills taught by relatives, and love, marriage and the community gaze. These are divided in the sections, 'friends and faith', 'talent and technoscapes', and 'passion and partnership'. I use the trajectory of Raya as a red thread in this examination.

Friends and Faith

I met Raya in a café on the outskirts of the Hague. She is a middle-aged Indonesian woman who has a loud, enthusiastic, rather hoarse voice. She went to Poland on a single permit. However, was reliant on her affective circuits to be able to do so. She was educated as a high-school economics teacher, though in her own words was "very poor." In Indonesia, she worked at a company with Dutch and Indonesian people. That is how she met her very good friend Johan, who came to play a central role in her journey to (and in) the Netherlands,

> Yeah, because he [Johan], my best friend, when he is in Indonesia, one office with him. I tell you, half Dutch, half Indonesia in building (…). I am still relationship with [Johan] because we have media social like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp. I am always "how are you?" Yes, say hello and then [Johan] say "[Raya], you must try." "But I don't have money for buy ticket." "I will help you" and send me money 300, for go to Borneo. And then after that I, "I'm not sure I can go to Europe or not." Yeah, "you must have positive thinking" [Johan said] and then I get it. I get it. Only five people can take this position. Include me. And then after that. Yeah, good news [Johan], I can go to Poland. "Oh yeah, as soon as possible you can come to Netherlands. I pick up you, [Raya]."

In other words, Raya saw an agency on Facebook that offered work in Poland. Johan told her she had to try to go, but she told him she did not have the money, so he bought her the ticket to go (and also for the language test in Indonesia). Additionally, Raya specifically mentions something important, how she kept on being in touch with Johan through Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram during the periods they were separated. Once Raya arrived in Poland, she experienced a next hurdle: like many others, she had to work very long hours – 12 a day – which was too much for her.

R: Yeah, I'm not robot., yeah, I am not robot. And then [Johan] say, "better you go to my country", he say. "But I don't have money", I say. Yeah, I'm honest yeah?

Y: No, of course.

R: Yeah, I don't have money. "I can help you baby" he [Johan] say, "don't be worry, I pick up you." Then I am asking my brother how go to Nederland, and then they are fine look, look in the Google map and then he buy ticket, yeah?

Thus, Johan told her to come to the Netherlands and as she said she had no money, he offered to pay for the ticket again and picked her up. In other words, through Johan, Raya found her way to the Netherlands. Both her and her brother bought a bus ticket. Once arrived, she lived with Johan in Zaanbommel. Johan then suggested to them to go to The Hague to look for a job as it is an international city. "And then I don't have so many friend in here. My brother go to mosque because a lot of Indonesia in there *ja* [yes/right]."

Notably, a very important second part of Raya's affective circuit is mentioned: the mosque. Raya says she doesn't have many friends in here, so her brother went to the mosque as it is an Indonesian ethnicity bubble in Den Haag. Her first way of navigating this unknown terrain was thus by going to the mosque. She is not alone in this, all my Indonesian research participants made use of its connections in the Netherlands.

I once accompanied Vikal to this same mosque and had a conversation with the daughter of a prominent figure in the mosque. She told me that as a mosque they do a lot for 'migrants', like raising money when there is someone in need. When I visited it was during Iftar and she said she was there every day. I asked if she enjoyed this and she said, "Yeah because this way I don't have to cook", pointing *not* to the religious but very practical aspect of the mosque as an affective circuit. This thin line between practicality and religiosity was further emphasized when Vikal told me that people suddenly get very religious once they arrive in the Netherlands.

No, I get contact from Indonesian community from the mosque (…). Yeah, but suddenly people get so religious in here [laughs] because yeah I told them 'oh suddenly people get more religious here' because we live in Indonesia there's no community, but here the Muslims go to the mosque and the Christians go to the church [laughs]. Just like that.

Suddenly when people enter the Netherlands, they become very religious, because it is such an essential tool for navigating a mobility trajectory. Vikal also proudly told me that the mosque organizes trips for illegalized people, that he had celebrated new years even in France and had been to Spain. This portrays how the mosque can cause a very high and flexible mobilities, destabilizing the distinction between migration processes as a rigid movement from one place to the other and the flexible mobilities of (cosmopolitan) tourists, travelers, and businessmen (Schapendonk 2020, 41). For others, however, the Church and the Mosque represented more than a way to navigate a new environment, it represented belonging. On this, I will elaborate more in chapter 3.

Going back to Raya and her brother, they were not as lucky as some of my other participants. When her brother arrived at the Mosque, they told him there was no space for him and his sister. They told him to go to another place, in Wassenaar. When he arrived there he was asked "'why you not come back to your home?' 'I don't have home', my brother say. 'You can sleep in here' [they] say." He was thus not immediately welcomed but found a place to stay for the night, and, more importantly, got help afterwards. "(…) And then my brother sleeping there then get the *informasi* [information], you must go there for get the room. Yeah, then my brother lucky yeah finally have home." Thus, through these circuits, he was able to get a room for himself and his sister.

"After that, yeah. After that my brother called me 'You can come to Den Haag because it's not good you stay in [Johan] home. He is not your family, not your boyfriend. No, everything' 'yeah yeah, I understand'. And then [Johan] crying, yeah. 'Why you not stay here [Raya]?'." What happened next was that Raya had to navigate a way of convincing Johan she really had to go. "Yeah, and he crying and 'why you not stay here? You must wait [Raya]. I'm really looking job for you,' 'I know [Johan] I am thank you so much for you help me so much but it's not good I am stay at your home long time,' they say. Then [Johan] bring me with the car, go to the home."

Thus, Raya and her brother went through phases of immobility and mobility, related to the affective circuits of the mosque and her friend Johan. What this portrays is that mobility trajectories are relational. That is, they are not merely formed by an agent's autonomous power or individual decision-making but dependent on the networked relational logic of how rules, encounters, information, capitals, and peoples come together in a certain place at a certain time" (Schapendonk 2020, 53). Furthermore, thes narrative portrays how these

interactions are, in turn, dependent on the fluid geographies: of affective circuits: the trans-national communications, social ties, and money transfers that characterize our contemporary society (Schapendonk 2020, 54). Raya had to invest in her relationship with Johan through social media and made use of international money transfer networks to receive his assistance.

Furthermore, Raya's negotiations with Johan and her brother portrays how "By navigating these circuits, movers negotiate individual aspirations and social expectations synchronically" (Schapendonk 2020, 9). Raya could mobilize her affective circuits (Johan) to open new directions in her mobility process but had to negotiate this against the social expectations and rules surrounding a man and woman living together.

Talents and Technospheres

As Raya left Johan, she had to navigate a new manner of establishing a steady income.

> Yeah, and then for the job no people give me job no. I am looking [for] the job from Facebook Online and then also next door because my brother is smart *ja* [yes]? [laughs] He is smart *ja*? Online, and then put the advertising on the Facebook next door and then tomorrow. After that the people call 'Oh can you cleaning my home for hour' and after that I am full job and my brother full job.

Thus, by using the internet, and specifically Facebook, they were both able to get jobs. The internet as a tool for navigating, is a recurring theme. We have already seen it with Manu, who used Facebook to contact other Indonesian people that left Poland, and someone who used the internet a lot to give shape to his mobility trajectory is Vikal. As mentioned, Vikal had used the internet to navigate his way out of the grip of agencies. He also found his way to the Netherlands , coming from Poland, through the internet. This came to my attention when I embarrassingly – coming from my privileged positionality – told Vikal that I had ditched social media for a few weeks. To which he rightfully responded, "You can do that." Followed by, "For people like me, I had no choice, I had to. I had to friend with the internet because without internet I can't do anything here." Aside from making name tags and hanging them around in supermarkets every two weeks, asking if people needed help with cleaning, he used the internet to send his cv around and mail restaurant owners.

Yeah, that's right. (…) basically I can, I can survive in here from the Internet, like I told you before. The first time I come here in the Netherlands, the first time I researched for always everyday, taking the opportunity. I'm looking for the opportunities. (…) I'm looking for the Google map, just for the Indonesian restaurants and I send them e-mail from my, with my cv, and the good thing is 50% is response to me. That's why I told you I get interviewed with the owner. But most of them say your permit is from Poland is not here Netherlands, just like that.

Vikal navigated the Dutch working environment by using the internet, by researching each day for opportunities, and using his network, sending his resume to any interested person. Vikal was so successful in establishing relations through the internet (he also holds weekly meetings with expats from different parts of the world residing in the Netherlands) that he could be seen as a 'connection man'. In his research, Schapendonk (2020) notes that the role of 'connection men' is crucial for West African movers. I would argue that Vikal has sprouted into being a connection man. He is the one Indonesians message when they arrive in the Netherlands, and he is also the one restaurant owners contact when they need new workers. Important to note is that Manu, from the introductory vignette, also contacted such a person within his community, only this connection man led him to a fraudulent agent. This points to how connection men (or pretending agents) within communities must be navigated with care.

Raya was able to get a job due to a different set of skills, which she was able to develop through her affective circuits. She works in *schoonmaak* (cleaning), through the internet, and in massages. She learned how to do massages by her mom, a nurse, and established a little enterprise in her home. However, because of newly found affective circuit: her new "racist" neighbour, she had to move to a new home and move this business to doing it at other peoples homes.

Before I am do at home because I am wrong yeah, it's not allowed I know in the rule of Netherland because if I am doing business it means I must. I must asking for the government yeah?, I must go to certificate, I have the certificate or everything. But at my mummy home I am open, you know, for special massage, then the neighbour complain (…) And then they call (…) the boss, and then "you must go" he say. [laughs] I go from the home. That's why I am leaving him.

Y: Because the neighbour complained about the massage work?

R: Yeah, and also because the neighbour is jealous with my money. Because the neighbourhood. The neighbour mommy. You know, like racist.

The neighbour was Dutch and "He say 'you black skin. I don't like why you not go your country', he say." The neighbour contacted the police and Raya and her brother had to move to a new home. Now, Raya does not invite people into her home for massages anymore, as she is scared this might happen again.

Four observations I want to point out here. The first is the fact that affective circuits enable 'migrants' to develop skills that aid them in navigating uncertain terrains (Schapendonk 2020): like giving massages. Raya learned this from her mom and has now taught it to her brother so they can have a business in it. The second is how racial capitalist discourses echo through every layer of society and are met in the daily, mundane encounters, and not only in interactions with the (labor) migration 'system'. As such, affective circuits can have negative effects on mobility and may represent borders leading to financial, social, or emotional losses (Schapendonk 2020). The third is the emotive dimension of affective circuits (Cole and Groes 2016) that can make them result in such friction. The neighbour was jealous of Raya's business and decided to report her to the police. Lastly, connection men can play important roles in these transatlantic circuits as they can open new mobilities. However, as Manu's narrative portrays, it can also lead to debt and deceit, highlighting the need for careful navigation.

Passion and Partnership

In the end, Raya said that the problem in the Netherlands is that it is so difficult to get a work permit here. And that she feels there should be some special regulations for Indonesian people while referring to historical colonial relations, as "Dutch people steal everything from Indonesia." Her only option therefore seems to be marriage.

Impossible, yeah one option only marriage with Dutch. I mean resident in here. But I don't want, I just only for work. No marry. I don't want married fake, I don't want. So many people do like that I know, in here, they are you know like drama only for get paper. But I, for me, no no.

She does not want this as she does not "play like that." It is not her aspiration to become the wife of a Dutch man only for the residence permit. During my fieldwork, this route to

citizenship was discussed several times. The daughter of the man who runs the mosque, who I spoke about earlier, speaks perfectly Dutch as she was raised here from the age of fourteen. Now that she is eighteen, she no longer gets protection from the government, so she told me she is considering marrying a Dutch man. Especially because she feels very Dutch. The last Indonesian man she was dating made her send her live location all the time, so she broke it off with him. Analyn – a Filipino woman who worked as an au-pair for diplomats but was exploited, escaped, and then left without a permit – spoke to me about being in search of a Dutch man when she heard her IND procedures were rejected. Luckily for her, only a month later she had gotten her green card when the case was taken up in civil court. Additionally, the first time I met Raya she unexpectedly had invited her brother to the conversation, who asked me my age to which Raya responded "No, she's too young, she's too young!" and he later semi-jokingly asked if I knew any friends in Spain for him.

Nevertheless, navigating romantic relationships is in itself not easy throughout transnational affective circuits. Dewi, another Filipino woman working as an au-pair, does not have a partner and when I asked her if she wanted to get married, she said "I don't know" followed by:

> Maybe because it's not for me. It's. It's not so easy to find someone that is, like, faithful or something. Especially you are working abroad. And you, you, you. You find a guy from Philippines, It's very difficult. Yeah. Because you cannot trust. You cannot trust so much. You cannot trust so much. Because I have this episode in the Philippines that I was watching that mostly the, you know, like me, like a Filipino that I was working abroad. They define sometimes a guy in Facebook. You know, they are the in Philippines and the guy was in the Philippines and the lady she is abroad she was sending him money at like after a year or more than a year sometimes or sometimes it's not just a few months. They just like start asking money. And the lady was, you know, sending and sending and sending, and suddenly the guy disappeared then.

She concluded that she had been thinking about it but decided that she was better of without this kind of stress. "Better to be like this for myself." Her way of navigating these relationships was thus to shut it off, as she might be taken use of. An interesting theme comes to the front in terms of affective circuits and that is the image of the one working abroad as a possible source of capital, and that people can take advantage of this.

On the other hand, remittances might be expected by relatives, and not being able to deliver might be experienced as shameful. As Jomar told me, it was "sad" for him to be awaiting a decision of the IND being dependent on money from his family, instead of the other way around. "yeah, my daily needs and you know, like instead of working here so I don't have... I mean I don't have worked here... so I asked support from my family in the Philippines so instead I'm the one sending them support, they [are] the ones sending support to abroad, so you know, its sad (...)." Dewi's goal in life is linked to being able to establish such a consistent flow of cash to the Philippines. She told me she wants to earn enough money so that she can buy an apartment that she can make money of and help her family with.

The response of some people to this is to break with these ties entirely, like Dewi did, "Better to be like this for myself." Vikal also expressed that he was on a journey 'for himself', which had nothing to do with the family he left behind. He first told me he his wife had relatives in the Netherlands but he never visited them, which I thought was rather odd. I said "No?." To which he responded, "No because it's about me. It's not about them. It's about me. I just stand on my own feet, you know." When I was hanging out with him on another night, I learned that he had worked for a bank for 15 years and had given his retirement to his wife and left. Thus, everything he earns here is for himself. I can imagine this is why he was not interested in visiting relatives from his wife either. Vikal took it so such an extent he did not want to associate that much with other Indonesians in the Netherlands, as he "did not go abroad to meet Indonesian people." On our night out he also said that it was because most people are not from the countryside, and not from Jakarta. Rendering them a little more conservative than people from the big city. Jomar also hinted at this when we were on a walk together. He said that he preferred not to be around Filipino people too much because, then he whispered, "they gossip a lot."

Concludingly, in this paragraph I showed how in a current context of border control marriage is a 'hot topic' as it is often the only legal route to citizenship (Cole and Groes 2016). On the other hand, people who have already established a stable income as a non-European worker, like Dewi, might refrain from such relationships out of a fear of being used for money. Ultimately, the latter narrative of Vikal portrayed that people might be on a personal journey and that the communal gaze from the home country as well as country of residence that can pose considerable weight on the shoulders of non-European workers in Europe (Schapendonk 2020). This can result in people breaking with these ties, like Vikal and Jomar consider.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I divided dominant affective circuits and portrayed how my participants mobilized or navigated them, starting with friends (like Johan) and faith (the mosque). I introduced Raya and portrayed how she was dependent on an international affective circuit to be able to engage in border crossings. I also portrayed how this is entrenched with social expectations and how the mosque is a central tool for navigating the Dutch terrain, rendering some "suddenly religious."

I further portrayed how the internet, and specific skills played an essential role in navigating life in the Netherlands. I argued that some men function as connection men through these medias (like Vikal) but that even though this is within communities (in this case Indonesian) these connections still have to be navigated with care. Additionally, I showed that affective circuits help workers develop skills they use in navigations, like in Raya teaching her massage skills to her brother.

Moreover, and in line with Cole and Groes (2016) I showed how prevalent the topic of marriage is as a way of navigating a legal status in a context of rigid border regimes – even though some emphasize not being interested, like Raya. I additionally showed how love connections may also be made difficult by the fact these international workers may be seen as a possible source of income to people from home. This is connected to the communal gaze (Schapendonk 2020). Because of these expectations, some decide to completely break with these ties.

Concludingly, in this relational understanding of mobility trajectories I portrayed how they are not merely constructed by an individuals autonomous power or navigations but dependent how affective circuits come together (Schapendonk 2020, 53). Nevertheless, in these chapters one aspect of the emotive realm with affective circuits has not been very present: feeling at home. That is, affective circuits can also render a sense of belonging. On this notion I elaborate further in chapter 3: ways to ground and ways to grow.

3. Ways to Ground and Ways to Grow

Laura grabs her bag and starts looking for something it in. I wonder what it is. I have just asked her what she has learned from *La Fundación*. She comes out with her passport and says very seriously that they told her she doesn't need to give this away to the police when they ask for her papers. She holds the document firmly with two hands on each side and keeps it in front of her chest. Her expression is fierce, and a bit said, when she looks me straight in the eyes and says something along the lines of: This is mine. This is my document, and nobody can take this from me. Even though I have no papers this is *my* identity. I am not some government's toy. I can show the outside, but they cannot take it from me to look what's in.

In the previous chapters, I have highlighted how people navigate through two different environments: the labour migration system and affective circuits. In this chapter, I build on this analysis and highlight two other aspects in mobility trajectories: ways to ground and ways to grow. To do so I follow Antonsich's (2010) understanding of belonging, "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)" (645), and add that it is also about having perspectives (on grounding and growing) and that mobility is used to gain such belonging. Antonsich distinguishes five factors that influence place-belongingness – the first dimension: autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal. The second dimension, a politics of belonging, is connected to the notion of *longing*. According to Probyn, who originally introduced the concept, longing is not solely linked to migration and displacement but should be seen as a fundamental aspect of belonging itself. It can be defined as a yearning to transform into something or someone else (Probyn 1996, 5). Building upon her influential interpretation, the understanding of belonging has progressively shifted towards viewing it as a 'process of becoming', rather than a fixed state of being (Antonsich 2010).

In this chapter I will show that to be able to become, having perspectives on growth, is essential for a sense of belonging. I thus argue that, in this context, mobility is as much about 'ways of becoming' as it is about being (physically) mobile. Furthermore, I argue that to establish grounding and growth, my participants engage in 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008). Acts of citizenship are "those acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and

modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating new sites and scales of struggle" (Ibid, 39). Much like Laura does in the vignette above: she reclaims her identity and passport, refusing to hand it over to the police. In doing so, she claims her right to be here.

Grounding

I first met Laura and Irene on a field trip to *La Fundación.* I was there accompanying Vikal but got separated from him once inside. Inside there were groups of migrants divided into several language groups. This resulted in there being an Indonesian table, a Filipino table, a Spanish table (with only three Latin American women), and a table with several languages. I remember having a seat at the Indonesian table and hearing Spanish next to me and the attraction I felt to go and sit there (after trying to have established a conversation in English without success). I don't know how or why I eventually ended up at the table with the Latin American women (what excuse I thought of to make contact), but according to Laura, it was before I was asked to translate (to Spanish) for them. That might be why she thought something lured me to them. I have to admit, it did feel like a safe space, like coming home being able to converse in the language of my participants. For her, it felt like she was accompanied by another Latina. She told me this when I accompanied her to church a few weeks afterward, "You know, the first time we met I felt something special", she said, "I don't give my number easily or to everybody." This time, however, she felt that there was something special about our encounter, that we, that I, was special (to her). We had a special connection. Later that day, I learned that she thinks we were supposed to meet and that it was God that had made this happen.

Laura and Irene told me about the situation in Colombia that had made them move to the Netherlands. I got the picture when Laura explained to me a meme she saw lately.

A few days ago I saw a meme, you know what memes are? [Y: Yes], like 'today I felt so sad because I was talking to the man in the taxi and he told me that he was studying, the career he studied is the career I'm studying'. And you know, like I made a bad choice because it's, if the guy is a lawyer and he's driving a taxi, then this is what's waiting for me, yeah?

Laura's sister, Irene, has two kids, one has an MA degree in biology and the other is studying environmental engineering and they don't have jobs. "Believe me, there's not a day that goes by that you don't want to go back. If it wasn't for the situation that we, at the age that I am, I'm old, they don't give me work, they don't give me work because I'm old", Irene said. According to her, people migrate in search of something for themselves. It is the consequence of not having opportunities. Thus, people migrate in search of ways to grow, "We emigrate yes. We emigrate in search of opportunities. And that is happening a lot throughout Latin America. It is happening a lot. That's why people emigrate, because there are no opportunities (…)." So, here are two women who sought another labor pathway, but one which I did not categorize as labor migration because it is not part of the *labor* migration system. Why not? After all, "It's no secret that most people travel as tourists and then stay, right?."

Laura's dream was to live from her art, she is a painter, but because of the situation in Colombia, this was never possible. "So, since there was no work, one day I said to myself: I want to go somewhere else to work." That's why she went to Venezuela, to work as a *niñera,* babysitter/housekeeper for a family. "Literally one, I mean, when you want to go out, you know, you take risks without knowing." She got the papers and stayed with the family for six months, completely legal. Then, however, the family, who were *consulados* (consulates)*,* had to move to Spain.

> (…) so I was like, Spain [with a sigh and big eyes, in admiration] and yes, so I said no, this is my chance, yes. But to Spain, that required me to go illegally, yes, I mean, I entered as if I was going on holiday and I knew that I was staying because, let's say, legally they couldn't have me, they couldn't have papers for me or anything. So I came with them, yes.

This was her big chance to go to Spain, but as she says, it required her to be illegal. Importantly, her enthusiastic response to 'Spain' again points to imaginations fuelled by colonial historical relationships. "That is to say, as for us Latinos, Colombians, (…) Spain is like our *madre patria* [motherland]." She stayed in Spain for a year and then moved back to Colombia. The reason she went back was to take care of her kids, who were only 5, 7, and 9 at the time. However, "I went back and was always like 'I want to go back, I want to travel again'. "So I kept in touch with them, with the family, we always talked. Then 8 years went by and I always kept my hopes up." Notably, this flexible kind of movement, in her words "traveling", again points to

the notion of flexible mobilities not only being reserved for cosmopolitan, elitist movers. Furthermore, Laura always nurtured her wish to go traveling again, keeping up a good relationship with this family so that once she would be able to enter Spain again, they would provide her the opportunity to do so.

There are two analytical points to make with this dynamic. The first is what I have elaborated on in chapter 2; affective circuits being ports to mobility. The second is a recurring theme in Laura's conversations: that she holds onto her hopes and dreams. We have already passed two aspirations that have guided her navigations so far: being a painter and wanting to go traveling again. Furthermore, and most importantly, what she is navigating here is the European migration system.

> Imagine that when I came ... and I left, they told me 'you are illegal and you can't go back to Spain for another four years'. I arrived, well, at that time I said, well, it doesn't matter because I'm not going back yet, I have hopes of returning. And now after 9 years have passed, then I said well, and if I will be able to enter, when they told me if I wanted to come here to Holland with them, then I said, well, yes, I want to go to Holland.

Going to work for this family in the Netherlands "required her to go illegally, again showing a process of migrantization. For some these ports are locked, others are free to go. It was during the pandemic that she left to go to The Netherlands, by traveling through Spain (as she does not need a visa for Spain having a Latin American passport), realizing her dream of traveling.

Irene never had the dream of traveling. She merely came because of the lack of opportunity in Colombia and because her sister convinced her to. Furthermore, as did Laura, she came here to stay with a family. They both talk about how difficult it is to ground as a migrant and they talk about this being a process that is worst in the beginning, but in some ways is continuous and that – according to Laura – is similar for every migrant. "I think all migrants, whatever country they may come from, I think it's the same for all of us." She refers to having to navigate a way through a new society without friends or family, not being able to speak the language, and not understanding the cultures. "And that process of being away from family with no friends, it's hard it's hard", Laura said. Irene told me that at first, she was afraid to leave the house "Lost. In terms of, I mean when I arrived, I went out with [Laura], I was afraid to go out to the corner and get lost." Together, they would make videos of the ways

they walked to not get lost. This first process of adapting lasted, according to Laura, about three months,.

> They get scared, today it's difficult, you know it's difficult also the process of getting to one without knowing anyone. If you want to go out, you don't know where you are going. It takes a process; I say at least the first 3 months. You have to be very strong. You have to be very strong, very brave, I mean, believe me, sometimes people know you, s/he's gone (...), s/he's doing great' and it's like it's cool to know everything you go through? Right? But even so, if they, like they want to do it, but it scares them. So, it's like, oof, they're very brave, they're very determined to do that.

In this narrative of a "process" of grounding, and why this is difficult, Laura and Irene point to three of Antonsich's (2010) factors in place belongingness. They highlight the lack of (1) auto-biographical belonging – not knowing the Netherlands, (2) cultural belonging – not knowing the language, and relational belonging – lacking friends or family.

Additionally, for Irene it was even more difficult as she was less fortunate with the family she worked for and lived with; she was exploited (paid considerably under the minimum wage; €500,- for a 24/6 workload) and they manipulated her into staying with them, making her afraid to leave them by saying that she would get arrested. "let's say she told me you can't go out on the street because the police will catch you, you can, you can't do this. I mean, all the time it was like you went out and saw the police. It was like oh no." She felt incarcerated. "Locked up. That's, I mean (…), it was like everything was forbidden, it was like I could not go out because they would catch me and send me back. I mean, over there if they catch you they deport you and I don't know what And that's what they told me, but no, when I left the reality is different."

Irene's day off was Sunday and every Sunday she went to Church. It was the people there that told her to get away from this family, that they were exploiting her. It was also her church connections that made it possible to do so, as she could rent a room from one of them (practicalities of affective circuits). Dewi, another participant who resided and worked for a family in the Netherlands (legally) told me a similar story, she said her friend would get angry with her, saying "She's, like, always, like, knock, knock my head to wake up. Yeah. You have rights." People from the church also told Irene about the organization (*la Fundación*) that assists undocumented migrants, the one where I first met the sisters.

During this period of exploitation and *extorción,* (blackmailing) Irene says that she got sick, "I lived sick. But sick. Sick. In fact, I left there and after a few days I went to *la Fundación* again. They enrolled me. I was covered by the Health Law. I got sick, I was hospitalized." Thus, *la Fundación* helped her as an illegalized person to get the health care she needed, whereas the mother of the family would only give her paracetamol. Thus, Irene's church and the subsequent affective circuit of *La Fundación* were detrimental in being able to leave this abusive situation.

Beyond that, and important for this analysis of belonging, finding this family (as they call it) has changed their life, their emotional state, their well-being.

> Yes, it has suddenly become a little easier for us because we go to *La Fundación*, and they have welcomed us very well there. Oh, I love going there. We're in the church, and there are also pure, almost all of us are Colombians. So, you feel at home, that there is food, that there is something to eat, that we share, so it's very nice, suddenly we haven't felt that emptiness, but before I got to know the church, I did feel that emptiness, I was getting depressed and since I've been in the church my life has changed. In fact, before I went to church, I wanted to go back and every day I cried and said I wanted to go back. But then I went to church, and I felt that peace and I feel at home, and from there I don't want to, I don't want to go back. It's something so beautiful, it's like a transformation. Yes, it is something very beautiful.

Thus, for Irene (and Laura), getting to know the church and *La Fundación* were an essential part for this "transformation" in grounding in the Netherlands. Thus, in addition to affective circuits being an im/mobilizing force in mobility trajectories they are also essential to a 'feeling at home'. This points to the importance of the relational factor in Antonsich's (2010) analysis of place-belongingness: Irene specifically emphasizes feeling at home at church due to the many Colombians. She explains this by articulating experiencing a sense of sameness and equality.

> Suddenly it has been, like the environment it is today, let's say *La Fundación*, we are all equal there, and in the church as well, there are also Dutch people there, everybody comes together and we are all the same. So, suddenly this has been the environment that we are in. So, I feel at home. So much that I don't even want to go back.

Consequently, affective circuits are essential to 'feeling at home' (place-belongingness) and this is connected to the feelings of "we are all the same", and that "everyone is equal." This is where a politics of belonging comes in, if Irene feels that in a room with Dutch and Colombian people she is the same, it means that she is accepted as a part of that community. Furthermore, this sense of belonging resulted in Irene being able to ground so well, she now does not want to go back anymore. On the contrary, she has invited her husband to come and stay with her here. The plan is for him to experience the Netherlands for the three months of legal stay and then decide if he wants to reside here or not. However, they are also looking at other countries.

> Yes, yes, yes, because I said, "Oh, what do I do? Let me see that, what are you doing there? Why don't we do something together? We're seeing if we can do something here and if not, we'll look for somewhere else to go for this. I mean, that's the other thing that, that too, and you kind of lose the fear of going out. (…) So, it's like you know, you want to go out, you don't want to stay in one place.

In other words, she has grounded in such a way that she has lost the fear of going outside and feels free to move, free to travel. She wants to visit all the other countries in Europe, but first, her husband must come and adapt and see if he likes the Netherlands, if not they will move to another country. "I even tell my husband if you don't get used to it here, we can look at Belgium, we can look at Germany, we can look at Italy or France." She said if she would have grounded in Spain then she never would have left because of the language. But now, as she has adapted to a society where she does not know the language, she feels she can go anywhere: "That's what I'm saying, if we can do it here, that this language is not so difficult, you can do it somewhere else." Thus, being able to ground in a country where she does not speak the language has given Irene confidence and the motivation to discover other countries. Additionally, it renders a feeling of 'being free to move', of engaging in (much like cosmopolitan) flexible mobilities.

Concludingly, in this paragraph I illustrated how the trajectories of Irene and Laura are related to a lack of opportunity in Colombia and how they both have their own dreams and reasons for moving. The "traveling" type of moving that Laura engaged in, and the "holiday" type of movement Irene intends to do with her husband both point to the notion of "flexible mobilities", as such destabilizing the idea of "the migrant journey" (Schapendonk 2020, 41).

Furthermore, in their narratives of grounding Irene and Laura point to a "process" that is related to several factors of Antonsich's examination of place-belongingness. They articulate the absence of autobiographical, relational, and cultural belonging and show that the latter two can be established in this process. For them especially a relational belonging has rendered the feeling of being at home. I portrayed that this was connected to feelings of equality, of feeling that "we are all the same", which is connected to a politics of belonging. In the coming paragraph I delve in deeper into this second dimension of belonging, relating it to 'legal' belonging and belonging as a 'way of becoming' – aspects are related to a politics of exclusion.

Growing

Even though Irene experiences high and flexible mobilities, she still feels stuck. That is, she is very frustrated about not having the opportunity to get papers in the Netherlands. In other words, about not having a way to grow. "It's not easy. Yeah, of course, it's all a process. In fact, it's still difficult. It's hard because you want to do things like eh like legal." The worst part is that there is no future perspective when it comes to being able to develop.

> And it's impossible to do it because we don't have the opportunity. And also here, it's so difficult. Suddenly if we were in Spain yeah, over there it's easier everything. That's why everybody goes to Spain to do papers because it's much easier there. Here there is no possibility that I can study a method, that one has a process if you comply with the rules or that, that is the only thing that is missing.

Process here refers to a way to grow into citizenship, which there is none. Irene told me "we emigrate in search of opportunities" and opportunities to grow in the Netherlands are limited for her. "Because there's, there's not so many opportunities for us. In a big circle of power. I mean, we have the possibility to do so many jobs here. And all of a sudden you see that someone needs, but just because you don't have papers you can't do it. So the only thing you can do is cleaning. House cleaning.." In the big circle of power, borders that work according to racial capitalist and discriminative logics, illegalized workers in the Netherlands do not have that many opportunities.

Vikal also expressed this sentiment when I asked him if he had ever felt stuck. He said, "I just feel like I cannot more improve. Yeah, you know I cannot improve. Yeah, a lot of things on my mind 'I want to do this, I want to doing that' but it's limited by my condition, you know

that." He says that restaurants call him to come work for them but as soon as they learn he is undocumented they do not want him anymore; "They're asking me to join them, but they don't, they don't know about the undocumented people. So, they're asking me, they're so interesting with me, but once they asking about permit. Yeah, I think there is a lot of opportunity for me, a lot of opportunity." He sees a lot of opportunity for himself, but he cannot reach it as he is immobilized by not having the right papers. For him, being stuck means that he "cannot more improve." As with Irene, he does not refer to a physical immobility, but a limitation in growing as a person, in ways of becoming. Laura's feeling of "stuckness" is connected to the dream she mentioned above, to this image with which she emigrated and not having a perspective on being able to make it come true.

> But then one comes here with a purpose or at least mine. I say well, to come, to work, eh, to save money so that one day tomorrow I can go and set up my own business, because I had to look for something of my own because it is difficult there if there is no opportunity, one cannot save money, one cannot set up a business, that's it. So, it's not a bad thing to save money and manage to set this up, but you come with that expectation.

This lack of opportunity is connected to the political discourses that determine who belongs and who doesn't (politics of belonging) through formal citizenship. This is a discriminative discourse that 'migrants' continuously encounter. It is a dimension of the governmental territorial diffusion strategy I mentioned in chapter one, but it goes deeper than mere encounters with borders, with the police. Raya being sent away by her "racist neighbour" is also an example of this politics of belonging.

In Spain, Laura experienced so much discrimination coming from Colombia, that at a certain point she started saying that she was from Venezuela. "Because I felt so much pressure, that I said, 10 years ago, I gave in, I'm from Colombia. Ah coca", everyone, literally everyone would answer me "coca", and there was a moment when I started to say, 'No, I'm from Venezuela'." This discrimination starts already at the airports.

> But you also live it in airports, because what I'm telling you is that they see you come from Colombia: don't pass through here, they put you in another line to check everything. They put you through a scanner to make sure you don't have anything in your stomach. So, you also see, so it starts from there.

She later said, "You go and they see your brown passport and it's like, oh, s/he's Latino, over here. One more check. You know, it's like they discriminate against you because, like Colombia." Thus, she experiences racism and border control at the airport where she is subjectified to being a 'dangerous migrant other' (Amelina 2020). This 'dangerous migrant other' is (amongst others) created through a politics of belonging or, in Yuval-Davis words citing John Crowley, through "The dirty work of boundary making" (2006, 204). These mechanisms of migrantization and discrimination is why adapting is a process that does not last only three months but, in fact, is continuous. This identity is not something one can get rid of.

> So, for many reasons it is complicated, that is, I mean, I say, the inconclusiveness, the life of an immigrant is not easy, no, it is not easy at all. It is one of constant struggles and fears. And, well, you don't feel like anything is certain. Everything is uncertain... [break]. Yeah, so you know it is. It's like you live a life of fears of... uncertainty, it's like today what's going to happen? Tomorrow what's going to happen?

Thus "the inconclusiveness", politics that exclude 'the dangerous migrant other' makes the life of a 'migrant' very difficult. Concludingly, stuckness is about perspectives on growth and this is hindered by a politics of belonging that excludes Vikal, Laura, and Irene. This renders the "process of adaptation" Laura and Irene refer to as continuous. Though grounding may be possible, these *discriminatoire* structures cannot be avoided. A way to deal with this is to actively claim a right to be here, this can be done by creating a narrative of justice, and by achieving formal citizenship, I call these acts 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008). On this I elaborate further in the next paragraph.

Claiming and Dreaming

Laura now realizes she does not have to hide where she's from. "But now luckily I say no, I'm from Colombia and I don't have to deny where I'm from, right?." She says that whereas before, when she used to live in constant fear being the migrant that does not belong, she has been calmer now as she realizes that she has the right to belong.

> Then there are times when I go like this and the police come and I'm like, oh my God! Don't let them see me. Don't let them see me [both laugh]. So yes, because before I used to live in fear and all that, but now I've been calmer and I say, you know, I say, we

all have the right to be on the earth because the earth shouldn't have borders. But I know that there has to be order, there has to be an organisation because otherwise everything would be crazy. But you know. (...) the earth was made to be free, the earth belongs to everyone (...) Or sometimes I say, well, let's say Colombia was or is one of the countries where everyone can go. Yes? So it's like, why don't they let you go?

In this quote Laura explains how unfair, or unjust the system is and that in her narrative she has the right to belong because the earth should not have borders. She later said, however, that she does understand why the border system exists.

L: But well, we should all be free, have that right to go wherever you want, but hey, one understands that because of the orders and these, you have to do it. But

Y: But it's not justice

L: But it's not fair.

Laura understands the system yet points out how unequal it is. She calls the system *las ordenes* and justifies it because "there has to be an order." Creating a narrative of justice, one that says the earth should belong to everyone is a way for Laura to deal with the insecurity and discrimination of (a politics of) not belonging.

Laura has now registered herself in Spain – and Irene intends to do so too. Laura says that as a *Latina* she has a claim to citizenship after three years of registration.

But for [Colombians], they have like a certain ... I'm not sure if you can call it a right, that we can register, and it takes about 3 years to start a process to get papers. So, I'm, I recently went on my own. I said no, I want to, now, I don't want to go back because I've been there for two years, I've lost two years. So, I went, I registered. So I am also in the time where at any moment I have to go to Spain to continue my process there and in two, 3, years to get papers. It is a long process, but not impossible. Because that is my dream, to have papers and then I can be here legally. Yes? Once you register here you can look for a job with papers, but there is a lot of sacrifice behind it.

Thus, they are both navigating ways to grow, to claim citizenship. For Laura, this is a project of personal growth, a journey only for herself. She told me that even though she is very grateful for the family she worked for, as she is here thanks to them, now that two years have

passed and she wants to "live my own life, so I registered in Spain." I'm interested in that she says she already lost two years. In her narrative, it is these two years that she has lived for this family and lost the years for her own life. Now she is reclaiming that time by registering in Spain. The fact that there are pathways to citizenship, but there is a lot of suffering behind it points to the discriminative encounters and grounding processes they had and have to and navigate within this trajectory.

Additionally, what this piece portrays is that Laura and Irene are navigating 'the system' in similar ways as the participants that entered through a legal labor pathway and having similar experiences while doing so. Furthermore, I want to highlight that Laura emphasizes being on a personal journey and her route to citizenship is a way to (re)claim that journey, to (re)claim that growth. Mobility, then, is a means to do so and being mobile is connected to longing. This also points to the power of imaginaries. Imaginaries (intertwined with notions of belonging), "serve as a creative act that facilitates moving beyond existing structural imbalances of power and economic constraint" (Salazar 2011, 594). It is an embodied practice that can transfer mobile people to dynamic frictions, as well as immobile ones to moving worlds (ibid). As such, "Migratory mobilities are as much about these underlying imaginaries as they are about actual physical movements" (Seiger et al 2020, 18). If one cannot imagine themselves growing as a person in that place, as becoming a citizen in that place, they might feel they do not belong. In Yuval-Davis words, "identity as transitional, always produces itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong (Yuval-Davis 2011, 26)." Think also of the vignette I started this thesis with, one of the participants said migration is problem-solving, it is moving through life to establish growth.

Furthermore, and importantly, perspectives on growing are not merely linked to citizenship, it is also linked to dreams. Laura told me that the most important thing for migrants is thus holding on to their dreams. This is the way to not get stuck, to continue growing and becoming. For her, this is connected to pursuing her dream of becoming a painter. One Sunday I had assisted her all day while she was showing her paintings in La Fundación on a fair. Even though she had not sold one single painting that day, as we were walking home she told me that she was very happy. She was happy she had done this and had learned from it, because it was a big step for her (painting career). The first big step that she had taken. On that same day, I ran into Vikal, who asked me to look at his application for

scholarships, which turns out to be his way of continuing to grow. Laura captured it during my participatory event, when she said.

> Well, nothing, I would like to tell you my experience, that migrating from my country, you leave your family and you arrive in a, I mean a new country, you adapt, you become what you didn't learn, you learn many things in life, but you always have, we all have a dream, right? And despite the fact that suddenly I arrived to take care of children, to be a housekeeper, to take dogs out for a walk, I never leave my dream aside. And, however it may be, in one way or another, thank God, I have been able to do a part of my dream and not leave it aside, right? Which is what the painting is about, little by little I can see my way, but I will not leave it aside.

Laura dreams of becoming a painter, and to some extent, everything she is doing right now is a part of her trying to fulfill that dream. She consistently tells me that it is so important, being a migrant, to not let go of your dreams. In this manner she can continue growing, just like Vikal is trying by getting a scholarship. As such, all of them are navigating their way through the EU migration system to claim fuller rights, to claim citizenship.

Responsibilizing selves

Nevertheless, as Laura and Irene start to claim their right to be here, they also start to reproduce (racialized) narratives of a politics of belonging – the second aspect of belonging – that they have encountered themselves so many times. When I accompanied them to church, we entered an empty train and were looking for a place to sit yet the first one was a little dirty, with empty cans and bottles and traces of sticky juice or beer to the chairs and floor. I pointed it out, so Irene immediately said, "come we'll take another one." "We got plenty to chose from", Laura laughingly added. As we sat down, I said that I did not understand that people leave so much trash behind but as I said it, I saw the train did not have any trash cans, so almost immediately added "although I do understand because this train does not have trash cans." Then Laura asked me if I thought this was something new because when they first came here everything was so clean and neat and now they are seeing more and more of this. I said that it might have something to do with the coronavirus, that now more people are out on the streets than before. But they really felt like it was something new and that it had to do with migration. Irene said that it is since the war broke out and a lot of Ukrainian refugees came to
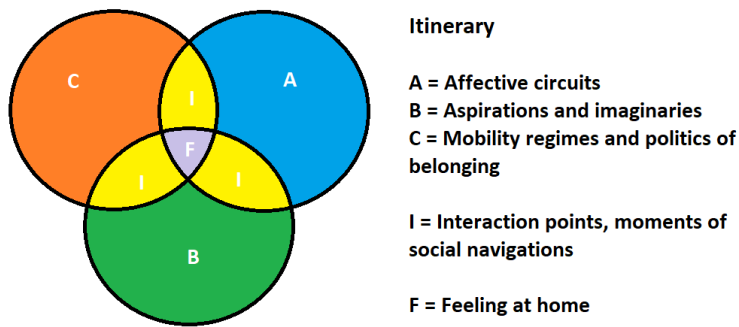
the Netherlands. But then they switched and started speaking about Moroccan people being out on the streets. Laura leaned towards me and said softly that it are Moroccan people that leave all this trash, also on the streets. I felt very awkward at that moment and repeated that it might be because two years ago people weren't allowed to go out, knowing that the Moroccan community has been in the Netherlands for a long time and trying to place this surprising, rather xenophobic, narrative about Ukrainian and Moroccan people. Then Laura said that she believes that when you come to a country you should adjust to its rules and that they thought it was very bad that other groups don't do that. In this conversation both were reproducing the same politics of belonging that had excluded them from society. In their narrative, they, however, were worthy of this belonging because they "adapt" (or behave).

Thus, in addition to a narrative that states it is unjust to exclude people as we are all citizens of the world, they also construct their own belonging in relation to a 'significant other' and engage in "the dirty work of boundary making" (Yuval-Davis 2006). This ambiguity startled me at the time, but also points to an effect of 'acts of citizenship'. That is, claiming rights involves "responsibilizing selves" (Isin 2008, 1), as claimants produce new ways of being subjects and becoming subjects with responsibilities. Or, in other words, "Acts constitute actors who claim and assert rights and obligations, enact themselves as activist citizens and, in the process, differentiate others as those who are not (strangers, outsiders, aliens)" (Isin 2008, 39). In Laura and Irene's narrative, within these "orientations of justice vs injustice, they (re)produce a dominant discourse of a politics of belonging that includes themselves but excludes significant others.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have portrayed that Laura and Irene have migrated (like the others in my thesis) because there were no more opportunities where they came from. I have showed how navigating the Netherlands is a process of grounding and growing which they say is similar for all migrants. I have analysed how this is connected to 'feeling at home' as well as a 'politics of belonging'. I have pointed out how affective relations are an essential aspect of being able to ground, to experience place-belongingness. I have visualized dynamic this in the figure below.

Itinerary

A = Affective circuits
B = Aspirations and imaginaries
C = Mobility regimes and politics of belonging

I = Interaction points, moments of social navigations

F = Feeling at home

Furthermore, I showed that with regards to the second dimension my participants express feeling stuck because there are no perspectives on growth. Attaining citizenship and fulfilling dreams are ways to deal with this. Aside from this I showed that in a quest for citizenship and as an effect of 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008), they construct their own narratives of a politics of belonging in which others may be excluded.

Final Thoughts and Applications

"Yes, because they say that in life, as I said, you have to move in order to reach your goals, I think, I think that's what it's all about, isn't it?"

I began this thesis with a vignette in which my participants answered the question what movement meant to them. The conversation evolved into the recognition of sameness amongst this wide variety of people. They proclaimed that even though they come from different backgrounds, they have similar experiences. In this research, I have examined these experiences by looking at mobility trajectories – with the aim of giving an answer to the question of what mobility means. What has my approach to mobility shown? What academical insights has it produced, and what are the implications of this for further research?

A first insight is related to the workings of the mechanisms of racial capitalism. Taking into consideration all perspectives and narratives portrayed in this thesis I would argue that movers (migrants) as well as workers (labor migrants) are subjected to this system, which renders their experiences in *Eurospace* similar. From the literature it is known that racial capitalism causes low wages and discriminative work environments, but what I have shown is how people are also 'pushed into illegality' by this system and how illicitness is part and parcel of these routes. This blurs the lines between legal, semilegal, and illegal labour pathways and for this reason experiences might be similar. Additionally, I showed how labour relations and *imaginations* are also shaped through historical colonial relations. They may navigate Europe as one *Eurospace* with the goal of remaining in a particular nation-state, like Vikal.

A second insight is how affective circuits relate to these mechanisms. I have shown that racial capitalist discourses are engrained in every day, that they work through affective relations through doings of migration. People are subjected to the identity of 'labor migrant' and this can cause friction in affective circuits because not in every circuit (labor) migrants are welcomed: like 'racist neighbors' getting angry because someone should 'get back where they came from'. In this manner, racial capitalism is linked to a politics of belonging. People who migrate in search of labor, in dominant Dutch discourse, do not belong (Schinkel 2010). Illegalized and labor 'migrants' are actively excluded from society, even though that same society is dependent on its labor (Walia 2021).

A third insight is related to how my participants navigate and grapple with these discourses. I have shown how in a grounding and growing process, people become part of this

system. That is, in a Foucauldian (1995) dynamic of power, I have made visible that my participants reproduce the exclusionary politics they are subjected to.

With regards to the meaning of mobility, I have portrayed how mobility is more than being physically mobile. For my participants moments of being mobile and immobile have altered each other and they refer to experiencing a feeling of stuckness when they do not experience opportunities or a way of becoming. I portrayed how my participants claim this belonging through acts of citizenship; by claiming their right to work and live here, by finding routes to citizenship, and by creating narratives that articulate their belonging. Mobility in the problem-solving sense of the word, is used to carve these routes and opportunities. It is like the participants in my vignette said, you *move* to reach your goals in life, and once you cannot move anymore you become stuck.

Taking up this meaning of immobility, I can argue that racial capitalism works highly immobilizing (not in the physical sense of the word). That is, it might lead one to Poland, but it does so through an exclusionary politics that marginalizes a person. It cannot lead to opportunities of growth exactly because it is based on the exploitation of people, so growth should be placed in perspective. This does not mean that my participants cannot navigate this system with agency, or clime up a socioeconomic ladder in their lives (like Raya did by earning a lot more in the Netherlands than in Indonesia). It means that while they do so, they will encounter this system that limits their possibilities consistently. Importantly, this analysis acknowledges simultaneous mobilization and immobilization, portraying the interconnectedness of stasis and mobility (Salazar 2013). Adding to this understanding, my analysis of the meaning of mobility acknowledges the possibility of being in-between stuckness and growth, of stasis and mobility. That is, mobility as problem-solving is also a way to create more movement, opportunities, and not necessarily moving between a phase of either stuckness or growth. As such I go beyond the binary distinction still present in many studies on movement (see also Salazar and Smart 2011; Salazar 2013; Salazar 2017).

Furthermore, by portraying the flexible mobilities my participants engaged in I pose a counternarrative to the notion of mobility as borderless movement for an elitist group and the linear logics of (temporary) residential relocation processes. Building on this non-linear notion of movement I want to emphasize that even though the trajectories of my participants came together in the Netherlands this is in not and ending state. Irene is deciding with her husband where to go next, Mentari is going back to his wife in Indonesia, Laura will process

her papers in Spain. Even mores so, according to Vikal, most Indonesians either move back to Indonesia or back to Poland, only very few stay and when they do its for a certain period. This is a very important connotation because I do not want my thesis to be used for the rhetoric articulated by the Dutch government that wants to close labor migration because of 'onward migration' of 'third country nationals' to the Netherlands and them becoming 'our' 'problem'. These trajectories are not linear and should not be viewed as such, they should be viewed in terms of sequences of movements to reach goals in life.

To FairWork I will report back parts of this analysis, with a specific importance on movement as a means to reach goals in life. Namely, next to advocacy work on policy changes, FairWork could mean something for my participants by providing them with opportunities on growth (not necessarily linked to citizenship). Basuki would like to have access to the library of Leiden University and Laura would like to be at more art galleries to get more experience. Being an illegalized worker is not their entire identity and finding work is often not their only dream. Assisting them in the fulfilment of these other identities and goals is, I think, very valuable. Furthermore, if people are not recognized in their entirety by these organizations, they only reproduce this 'migrantization' discourse.

Additionally, my recommendations for FairWork will be focussed on providing insights into the dynamics of personal dreams and imaginations that guide workers, and how important it is to acknowledge these and how they may mismatch with a worker scheme trajectory, and that people thus choose their own paths instead. I will also portray the dynamics with agencies, the working conditions in Poland so that they can be active in advocacy on these matters.

Another important insight for FairWork is that my participants were not necessarily in a more vulnerable or precarious position residing without papers in the Netherlands, than they were in Poland – as FairWork had expected. This is very much linked to affective circuits and being able to ground and grow. By portraying this, I want to highlight the resilience and adaptability of my participants. How they can establish a sense of belonging and find that what makes life worth living, even in trying times.

Limitations and Further Research
As mentioned in the methodology section, because I have focussed on trajectories, I have not been able to dive into historical contextual relationships between the different countries, or

their communities in the Netherlands. These aspects would be very interesting to consider for further research. Especially considering the functioning of affective circuits, a contextual approach of how within the Indonesian, Filipino, or Colombian community these relationships unfold would be valuable.

Also, as I have engaged in a place-based trajectory approach, for further research I would like to follow my participants along these routes. The advantage of a place-based approach is that I was able to make comparisons between people who had very different trajectories and came from very different places and found similarities between their experiences. It being a place-based approach was a way for me to connect the narratives together. On the other hand, after the fact reconstructions of trajectories may be not as rich in data and altered by human memory as when these trajectories unfold. Exactly in anthropology we recognize the importance of 'being there' and 'participant observations' and these have not been possible in this research in places other than the Netherlands.

What lasts me is mentioning notions of responsibility and justice. I have shown that trajectories are informed by colonial relationships and some of my participants have mentioned this point by questioning why the Netherlands does not welcome Indonesians, and why everyone can enter Colombia, but Colombians cannot leave. I do not have an answer to this question, but I would like to emphasize that how these people (and you and I) move through a racial capitalist world that systematically and continuously marginalizes certain parts and peoples of the world. Therefore, I want to call upon academics to reflect on this system and think about how it could be redesigned.

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