Tracing mobilities regimes: The regulation of drug smuggling and labour migration at two airports in the Netherlands and Indonesia

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Citation for published version (APA):

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Chapter 5

Protecting ‘foreign revenue heroes’

Terminal 4 and the arrival of returning migrant workers at Soekarno-Hatta Airport

Protecting ‘foreign revenue heroes’

Introduction

On 18 March 2008, the Indonesian government opened a new building for returning Indonesian migrant workers on the outskirts of Soekarno-Hatta airport. The building is popularly called ‘Terminal 4’, because the airport has three other terminals. Indonesia exports domestic workers, factory workers, and construction workers to Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Middle East. Since 1986 Indonesian migrant workers who return home to Indonesia have been subjected to a separate mobilities regime through which the government seeks to offer the migrants ‘protection’ [perlindungan] from extortion and ‘services’ [pelayanan] during their return to their home villages (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008). The opening of ‘Terminal 4’ is the latest major development in the regulation of these return journeys.

The existence of a special building for returning migrant workers seems to be unique. Of course special stations for immigrants have existed throughout history, but their workings are different. From 1892 to 1954, immigrants to the United States arrived on steamships via the Ellis Island Immigration Station at the mouth of the Hudson River, where they were medically examined before being allowed entry (Kraut 1994). Similarly, Angel Island in California served as an immigration station for Asian immigrants (Cresswell 2006, pp. 180, 188). But whereas travellers at these US immigration stations sought entry into a foreign country, migrant workers in the Indonesian case seek re-entry to their home country. Rather than a space to regulate immigration and examine newcomers, the special migrant building at Soekarno-Hatta Airport is part of a set of measures taken by the Indonesian government to regulate labour migration of its own citizens. Channelling migrant workers through a designated area makes it possible to keep track of the number of overseas labourers and the problems they may have faced while working abroad. To my knowledge, none of the other labour-exporting countries in Asia (especially Bangladesh, the Philippines, India) has a similar building. The Philippines does have a special procedure for returning migrant workers. At the Manila airport in the Philippines, during the Christmas season migrants literally walk over a ‘red carpet’ and are greeted by the president, as a way of stressing that labour migration is very valuable to the economy (Oishi 2005, p. 84). The Indonesian government’s concern with the return journeys of migrant workers, however, goes much further than just welcoming them back. Over the years, a mobilities regime has emerged that

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56 The Sri Lankan government in 2010 launched a program to increase security at Bandaranaike International Airport in order to protect returning migrant workers who, like Indonesian migrant workers, faced extortion at the airport and on their way home (Lankapuvath, 17-01-2010).
is based on differentiating migrant workers from regular travellers. How these differences are created and the consequences of these differences is of central concern in this chapter.

This chapter discusses how the entire return journey of Indonesian migrant workers is regulated, from the moment the migrant disembarks at Soekarno-Hatta Airport until she reaches her home village. This chapter looks at technologies used to classify, examine, and control migrant mobilities at the airport and in the special building, and examines how by categorizing the migrants in space and processing the migrants in a separate lane and a special building, the Indonesian government aspires to create an orderly and ‘safe’ return process. I focus in particular on regulatory technologies that work at the micro level of the gendered and classed bodies of migrant workers and at the meso level of their movements. Similar to what I did in Chapter 3, I examine what effects these regulatory technologies have on travellers. What kind of traveller, or mobile subject, is produced?

The emergence of ‘return services’ for Indonesian migrant workers

Compared to other Asian countries, Indonesia was a relative latecomer to the market for labour export (Hugo 1995). Since the 1980s, however, the Indonesian government has introduced a range of measures aimed at promoting, regulating, and protecting migrant workers (Silvey 2007). This has resulted in a large increase in the official number of overseas workers (Hugo 1995). Whereas in 1994 175,178 migrant workers left Indonesia to work overseas, the number grew to 380,690 in 2004, and 696,746 in 2007 (BNP2TKI 2008a). Between 2004 and 2007 total remittances per year grew from USD 1.88 billion to USD 5.84 billion (BNP2TKI 2008b). According to government figures, there are currently 6 million Indonesians working abroad.

High levels of unemployment in Indonesia make it attractive for people to work abroad and send their salaries home. Most migrant workers are low-skilled workers in sectors in which the destination countries are facing labour shortages, such as domestic services, agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and the service sector (IOM 2010). Female domestic workers make up the majority of workers. In 2007, for example, 78% of the total number of 696,746 migrants who went abroad legally were female (BNP2TKI 2008a). The main destinations for Indonesian migrant workers are Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (IOM 2010).

57 These are official government figures, so the numbers only include formal migration and remittances.
Soekarno-Hatta Airport is one of the main gateways through which migrant workers leave and re-enter Indonesia. Around 1,000 migrant workers arrive there each day. For more than two decades now, returning migrant workers have been subjected to extortion, not only at the airport but also on their way home, because it is well known that they are often carrying home the salary they earned abroad, usually in the form of cheques or cash. Extortion practices take place when drivers offer the migrants transport from the airport to their homes at a higher price, when money changers use false exchange rates, and when criminals rob migrants during their journeys. In the Indonesian media the dangers of the return journey were a recurring topic, including stories about whole busloads of migrants being kidnapped or simply disappearing. The Indonesian government, partly spurred by public pressure, introduced special measures to tackle this violence against migrants at the airport and during their journeys home (Wahyudi 2002 in Silvey 2007). In 1999, the government established a special terminal for migrant workers – Terminal 3 – and in 2008 the new and bigger building nicknamed Terminal 4 was opened. The legitimization for implementing special procedures for returning Indonesian migrant workers can be read in the preface of the latest regulation on ‘the return of Indonesian migrant workers from overseas in the environment of Soekarno-Hatta airport’:

[The] return of Indonesian migrant workers always includes the risk that inhumane treatment takes place, starting at the moment [the workers] arrive and put their feet on Tanah Air [our motherland] as foreign revenue heroes. The image of the migrant workers is that they bring home a lot of money, but that their ability to protect themselves is low. This makes them susceptible to fraud, looked down upon, and subject to cruel deeds by irresponsible people (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008 [my own translation]).

By using this phrasing, the mobility of migrant workers is problematized in a particular way: the Indonesian government calls the workers ‘foreign revenue heroes’ because they are valuable to the Indonesian economy, but at the same time considers these heroes vulnerable. The migrant workers are often young people from rural parts of Java, Sumatra, or Lombok and belong to Indonesia’s lower classes. Female migrants in particular are seen as inexperienced travellers who are exposed to dangers. The government hereby frames migrant mobility as different from the mobility of regular travellers: for migrants, being on the move is an opportunity, but carries risks. The risks include bad treatment not only
abroad, but also on the way home. The government sees it as their responsibility to offer what they call ‘return services’ for Indonesian migrant workers, with the aim that ‘each phase of the return process, from leaving the airplane until arriving at the home village, can be experienced as safe and comfortable by migrants coming home from abroad’ (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008 [my own translation]). The words ‘safe’ (aman) and ‘comfortable’ or ‘pleasant’ (nyaman) appear frequently in regulatory documents, and the aim to create safety and comfort for migrant workers serves to legitimize the mobilities regime.

I) Technologies to regulate migrant mobilities

When an airplane arrives at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, the authorities do not know whether it has migrant workers on board. Therefore, they first need to separate migrant workers from regular passengers in the restricted area of the airport’s arrivals hall. How do migrant workers get picked out and what happens inside the special migrant building? What categories of migrant workers are made, what methods of classifying and examining migrants are used, and what are some of the consequences these categories – for example those of successful migrants and problematic migrants – bring with them? This section follows migrant workers during the first phase of the return process, from their arrival at Soekarno-Hatta’s international Terminal 2, via the special migrant lane, to the special migrant building where they will be registered, categorized, receive medical or administrative help if needed, and can buy a transport ticket to their home villages.

Arrivals: technologies of classification in Soekarno-Hatta international terminal

At Soekarno-Hatta Airport, two flights from Singapore and Abu Dhabi have just landed. At the baggage claim in international arrivals hall 2D, special government officials for migrant workers get ready. Both flights are carrying returning migrant workers: on board the Abu Dhabi flight up to 80% of the passengers are returning migrant workers. Anisa is one of

58 Chapter 2 showed how regular travellers too may sometimes have unpleasant experiences at Soekarno-Hatta Airport when services are forced upon them, but the uneducated, mostly female migrant workers are considered to be particularly vulnerable to abuse in and around the airport.

59 This part of the terminal is accessible only to passengers and to people with a valid airport pass.

60 This chapter uses the term ‘officials’ to refer to these government employees. Chapter 6 elaborates on the different public and private actors that are involved in arranging the migrants’ journeys and in regulating the return process.
them. After two years of working in Saudi Arabia, she is now going home to her village in Java. Her journey started a day earlier in Jeddah and included a four-hour transfer in Abu Dhabi. Anisa moves through the immigration check, where her special migrant worker passport is inspected. In the baggage claim area, she waits for her friends – two young women who sat next to her in the airplane and who have been working as domestic workers in Jeddah too. One of them is still wearing a chador, but Anisa changed into trousers and a tunic at the restroom at Abu Dhabi Airport. Anisa and her friends pick up their baggage from the baggage belt. Anisa’s suitcases contain 50 kilos of baggage: food and presents for her family and a huge doll for her little daughter. As the women move to the queues for the Customs check, a woman in a black-and-yellow shirt looks at them and points to the right. ‘Over there,’ she says. Anisa turns right and walks in the direction of the special migrant lane.

At the baggage claim area in Soekarno-Hatta Airport’s international arrivals terminal 2, migrant workers are separated in this way from other travellers. Whereas regular travellers pick up their baggage and move through Customs, migrant workers are directed to the other end of the terminal, where a big yellow-and-black signpost reads: ‘Special lane for Indonesian migrant workers’ (jalan khusus TKI). A subterminal, like 2D, where Anisa arrived, usually has six government officials working in the baggage claim area. These officials do not have their own desks or space, but simply mix among the passengers. They position themselves strategically on an imaginary line between the baggage belt and the Customs check. Three officials face the baggage belts, so they can identify migrants as they wait for their baggage. Once the migrants move towards the Customs check, these officials will direct them to go to the separate migrant lane instead. The other three officials face the queues for the Customs check and make sure no migrants have slipped through that first selection. But how do the government officials know who is a migrant worker and who is not? What technologies of classification are used?

Stereotyping and self-sorting

There is no official list of criteria of migrant workers, as is the case with the swallow criteria at Schiphol Airport described in Chapter 3, and the selection of migrants takes place first and foremost on the basis of appearance. Similar to the swallow criteria, however, travellers do not know how officials select migrant workers, and the criteria are sometimes contradictory. Most officials explained they are simply experienced in identifying female

61 TKI is an abbreviation for Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, or Indonesian migrant workers.
migrant workers: they know how to recognize migrants by certain characteristics. Clothing provides a clue. Officials look for women dressed in Arab clothes, like Anisa’s friend who was still wearing a chador. Women wearing ‘cheap clothes’ might be migrants; on the other hand, ‘successful migrant workers’ may wear clothes that ‘look expensive’. Some officials said they recognized migrant workers by their face or their expression: they look tired, stressed, or sad. Baggage is another marker. ‘Successful migrants’ bring a lot of baggage – national carrier Garuda allows migrants to bring 10 kg more than regular passengers – whereas ‘migrants with problems’ often return without any baggage at all. In addition, the baggage trolleys that most workers use to carry their loads of baggage enable directing the migrants to the migrant lane. Migrant workers, like regular passengers, can take and push these trolleys themselves, but there will always be porters at the baggage claim who, hoping to get a tip, actively look for female migrant workers who need somebody to lift the baggage and push the trolley. The porter then pushes the trolley towards the special lane and the migrant simply follows. Migrants who push their own trolley may encounter an official who, without saying a word, grabs the trolley and gives it a turn in the direction of the lane – a simple and effective technique. Anisa and her new friends may also have been recognized because they formed a small group (rombongan). Female migrant workers often group together during transfer and arrival, eager to chat about their experiences abroad, or having found out they come from the same part of Java.

Whereas women who have worked in the Middle East may stand out because of their clothes, those who have been working in the Asia-Pacific region usually do not. ‘Workers from Hong Kong or Taiwan are sometimes hard to recognize,’ a female government official admitted. ‘They closely resemble regular passengers. We have to ask them to show their passports to make sure.’ Migrant worker passports have fewer pages than regular passports (making it a cheaper passport), and a work permit stamp inside. Some passports even have a sticker from the recruitment agency on the cover, so the official doesn’t even need to open the passport to recognize it as a migrant worker passport. It is important to note that the selection of migrant workers in the baggage hall takes place after the migrant workers have already passed the immigration desk, where their passports are checked as a routine procedure. Immigration officials, however, do not play a role in identifying migrant workers and sending them to the special lane, because that would lead to queues at the immigration desk. Moreover, sorting out migrant workers on the basis of their appearance, baggage, and behaviour is an easy job in the baggage hall. And, as another official explained, in case you were unsure, you could always ask a traveller whether she had travelled for work or
pleasure, or where she was from. A migrant worker would respond by telling the name of her home village or region. ‘If she says “Indramayu”\(^{62}\), then I know [she is a migrant worker].’

In this way, government officials, helped by porters, actively look for and approach migrant workers, but sometimes the baggage claim hall is very crowded. When three or four flights arrive in the space of 30 minutes, it can be quite chaotic and the officials are unable to approach each individual migrant. Still, most migrant workers end up in the special migrant terminal. This is because they self-sort (Salter 2007, 2005) to the migrant lane. Mark Salter sees the airport as a place where people are self-disciplined and where ‘travellers sort themselves into categories of belonging’ as part of rites de passages at the border (Salter 2005, p. 44). Back in their home villages, several migrants recounted that they didn’t remember at all how they ended up in the special terminal, and some said they just followed the group, or a friend who knew the way because she had been abroad before. Although it would be quite simple to slip through the officials’ surveillance, hardly anyone saw this as a possibility. Most workers said they knew their route and procedure would be different. They considered it impossible to enter the arrivals hall together with regular passengers, for example because they saw guards at the doors who they thought would stop them\(^{63}\).

The fact that migrant workers in their daily work are used to following orders and that they seldom travel independently may add to their compliant attitude. Contrary to the sorting of potential drug smugglers in Chapter 3, the sorting of migrant workers therefore hardly ever causes open conflicts, because the migrants ‘know their place’ and follow, whether this means following friends, porters, signboards or orders. In this way, some 1,000 migrant workers per day are sorted or self-sort to the migrant lane.

In addition to the stereotyping and self-sorting, another prominent feature of the classification process is that it disproportionately targets women, so that male migrant workers usually slip through. Although officially, male migrant workers should be treated the same as female migrant workers – the directive (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008) makes no distinction between male and female workers – officials were less focused on sorting out male migrant workers. The main reason for this inequality is that officials work with gendered stereotypes. Officials explained that male migrants are less prone to danger and better able to take care of themselves. Practical reasons play a role too: male migrants are harder to recognize by their appearance and behaviour only, because during their arrival they usually walk alone and do not group together with other migrant workers.

\(^{62}\) Indramayu is a region of Java that is one of the major sources of migrant workers.

\(^{63}\) In fact these ‘guards’ are Customs officials, who play no role in selecting migrant workers.
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Their clothing is more similar to that of regular travellers. Most male migrant workers therefore move through Customs and end up in the regular arrivals hall.

Classification ‘failures’

It may not come as a surprise that the technologies of classification discussed above are fallible. Regular travellers may be taken for migrant workers, and some migrant workers may ‘slip through’. A female Indonesian traveller may be approached by officials who think she is a migrant worker. Looking tired, wearing a headscarf, and travelling on your own as a woman are seen as reasons why some regular travellers are misclassified as migrants. Most people who are taken for migrant workers feel humiliated. A female traveller explained it feels like ‘becoming lower class’. Regular travellers are usually quick to tell the official that he has made a mistake, and some travellers will get angry. Such reactions by regular passengers show that this (self-)sorting process in the baggage claim hall is closely linked to class differences in Indonesian society.

Because there are only six officials at work to pick out migrants in the rather chaotic and busy baggage claim hall, some migrant workers accidentally join the Customs queue and end up in the regular arrivals hall. But there are also migrant workers who intentionally try to avoid a detour to the special migrant terminal because they want to go home by themselves. Yuni, a 19-year-old woman who had been working in Singapore, concealed her status as a migrant worker. In the baggage claim area she noticed officials calling migrant workers to move to the migrant lane. Yuni joined the Customs queue and tried to hide herself by standing between tall people, but she was nevertheless approached by an official. ‘Then I lied. I pointed to a tall woman at the front of the queue and told the official I was her babysitter and had been travelling with her to Singapore.’ The tall woman had almost finished the Customs procedures, so Yuni would need to hurry to join her employer. The official was convinced. In his home village in West Java, Santo recalled how a week earlier he and his fellow travellers managed to overrule an official. Santo was deported from Saudi Arabia because his work permit had expired. On board the airplane with an upper deck completely filled with Indonesian deportees, the group had decided that going to the special migrant terminal would be a waste of time and money. In the baggage claim hall, their group of 120 men and women quickly outnumbered the officials. ‘People were already openly yelling and pushing so we could get out. The officials were forced to let us go out, they couldn’t do anything,’ Santo recounted. Most migrants, however, see Yuni’s and Santo’s behaviour as courageous, but not as something they themselves would dare to do.
There are many stories about migrants paying money to get out via the regular exit, and some migrants reported that they were approached by brokers (cleaners, porters, guards) offering their help. Still, most migrants end up in the special building. One woman recounted that she had heard stories about the high price of tickets to take the compulsory government minibuses to the home villages and she looked for a way to go home by regular bus. Inside the restroom at Soekarno-Hatta Airport she asked the cleaner how she could go home by herself. The cleaner responded that she had to follow the procedures and go home by government bus from the migrant terminal. After hiding for a while in the toilets, the woman recounted, she realized it was already getting dark and decided to put her plans aside.

The first selection thus relies mainly on stereotypes of female migrant workers. If there is still doubt, markers such as the special passport or answers to questions from officials will reveal whether somebody is a migrant worker or not. The classification process is also characterized by self-sorting and compliance. It is hardly a site of open contestation: for the most part, migrant workers simply follow directions and move through the migrant lane and end up in the special building. Even though it could be argued that migrants comply because they want to use the government’s services, many had heard stories about extortion by porters, officials, and drivers and said they preferred to go home by themselves if they had the choice.

Sitting, queuing, and waiting: regulating movement at the level of the body

The special migrant lane, where the official sent Anisa, is a corridor leading to the very end of Terminal 2. Because of its remote location, regular travellers will not notice this space. At the entrance of the lane a banner reads: ‘Welcome home, foreign revenue heroes’ (selamat datang pahlawan devisa). The walls of the lane are painted with images of walking Indonesians: some in modern business suits and others in traditional dress. Text boxes read ‘welcome’ in standard Indonesian and in regional languages. The lane ends in a waiting room, a simple room with some chairs, which is nevertheless called a ‘lounge’ in the government directive, to add to the impression that the migrants get a ‘red-carpet welcome’. Here the migrants wait for transport by bus to the special building.

Inside the bus, and also in other spaces such as the special migrant building, the movement of migrants is regulated at the micro level of the body. To understand the particular meaning that is ascribed to migrant mobilities, these ways of regulating bodily movement are important. They include sitting, queuing, and waiting, as well as rules on
carrying baggage to and from the bus. In addition, tools such as baggage trolleys help to orchestrate the movements of migrants and to create order as migrants enter and leave the terminal.

Sitting down, for example, becomes a bodily movement with a special meaning. When Anisa enters the bus that will take her to the special building, the seats are all occupied and she has to stand in the large empty space between the seats. In the meantime porters carry baggage to the bus and store the suitcases at the back. Just before the bus leaves, an official enters the jam-packed bus to count the migrants – 41 in total – and hands a note to the driver. He tells the migrants who are standing in the aisle to sit down on the floor and requests them to stay seated during the ride to the terminal, ‘for safety reasons’.

This is not the only time when migrants are requested to sit down. Inside the special migrant building, in one of the offices where ‘migrants with problems’ have to report, an official told a group of women who had just entered the room to sit down:

“If you stand like that] they might think you are an important person! Go sit down. When there is an official present here, you have to sit down. People have to enter this room one by one, and then go and sit down.

In another setting, the departures hall, sitting on the floor marks people as migrants. Regular travellers will recognize migrant workers waiting for departure because migrants usually sit on the floor or squat (jongkok, a particular way of squatting), something a regular traveller would not usually do. An owner of a recruitment agency for migrant workers explained the cultural connotations of sitting on the floor. Preparing his workers for their departure, he instructs them to sit on benches when they are at the airport: ‘When they sit on the floor they are like poor people. We don’t want that.’ In these examples sitting down, whether or not it is compelled, is associated with migrants’ subordinate position.

As we follow the migrants on their way to the special migrant building, more politics of bodily movement becomes visible. After a 20-minute ride along the outskirts of the airport, when the bus stops at the special building, two new government officials enter the bus. Before the migrants are allowed to leave the bus, the first official counts them again and the second official prepares them for their return process. He informs them that they will need to be registered before they can buy a ticket home, and instructs them to deposit their

64 I didn’t have a chair to sit on either, but on his way out of the bus, the official assured me: ‘You don’t need to sit on the floor.’
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money in the government bank office inside the building. ‘Take only the money you need for your journey,’ he warns them. ‘Don’t bring a lot of money, to prevent theft, loss or other things that might happen. Understand?’ The instructions in the bus thus not only inform the migrants about what they will have to do inside the building, but also ‘prepare’ them for the dangers they will face during their journey home (see also Silvey 2007). Here, a particular meaning is ascribed to mobility: migrants are in danger when they travel. The message is: for a vulnerable traveller it is better to have the government take care of her belongings and her money.

While the migrant workers get instructions in the bus, government officials inside the building prepare for the new flow of migrant workers. Two officials take trolleys and make two lines of trolleys to the left and the right of the entrance door. When the migrants enter the terminal, the first thing they see is the lines of trolleys, and each migrant has to pick one line. Then, one by one, porters take the migrants’ baggage out of the bus and bring it into the terminal. The migrants have to let the porter know which are their pieces of baggage and the porter places them on the right trolley. A migrant worker is to stand behind her trolley until she has received all her baggage. If she moves to the front of the trolley to approach a porter, a security guard with a stick will summon her to move back. These trolleys thus play an important part in creating an orderly process inside the building by regulating the movement of migrant workers and their baggage.

After migrants and baggage are reunited, officials register them and sort them into ‘successful migrants’ and ‘migrants with problems’. As the migrants queue at the registration desk, the officials again are preoccupied with creating an orderly process. A group of women gather at the desk, waving their passports in order to be registered. Quickly an official approaches them, and points out that they have to queue: ‘You went to school, right? If you’ve ever gone to school, you know you go and stand behind each other, right?’ he says. Again, such small remarks and instructions remind the migrants of their subordinate status.

Although the entrance and exit of the building are guarded, inside the large building migrants are relatively free to move, sit, and wait wherever they want. Security personnel ensure that certain spaces remain orderly. For example, those waiting are not allowed to walk in the spaces where new migrants are arriving, or close to the exit where people are queuing for departure by government bus to their home villages. It is not just migrants, however, whose movement is regulated. The personnel of the money change counters are also restricted in their movement. Close to the entrance they call at migrants from a distance, trying to convince them to exchange their foreign currency for Indonesian rupiahs,
because they are not allowed to leave their counter and approach the migrants personally. According to officials, this rule is meant to prevent them from forcing migrants to exchange their money.

**Regulatory technologies inside the special migrant building**

The special migrant building where migrant workers gather is a large, open, and well-lit two-story building. The building is laid out in such a way that from entrance to exit, the migrants move via lines of desks – first registration, then ticketing – to a waiting area with chairs where they wait for transport home. On the sides are small rooms for special services. These include a reporting room for migrants with problems, a small health clinic, a prayer room, and a canteen. On the second floor there are several dormitories, and offices for the heads of the different services. These spaces demonstrate the government’s concern with migrants’ well-being and health: medical care, psychological counselling, a place to sleep, eat, and pray, all is taken care of.

Inside the special building a second categorization takes place in order to identify those migrants who are in need of extra care: the separation of successful migrants and migrants with problems. How does this classification work, what is the logic behind these categories, and what effects do they produce?

**Classifying successful migrants and migrants with problems**

Inside the building, migrants first have to go to the registration desk, where they have to provide information about themselves. In this way, the government can acquire data about the number of returning migrants and their condition. The information migrants provide at the registration desk will be used to make a personal electronic file, which is accessible from all computers in the various sections of the terminal. At the registration desk, government officials enter each migrant’s personal data, and the reason for return. The reason for return determines the category in which a migrant falls: somebody who has ended his or her contract, somebody on leave, or somebody with problems. The majority of people at the registration desk are people who are returning from abroad because they have finished their contract. These people are labelled as successful migrants or migrants without problems. A small second category are people who have returned to Indonesia on leave for a short

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65 Data consist of at least eight items: Name, Number and date of passport, Address (village, sub-district, regency/city, province), Recruitment agency, Receiving country, Departure date and return date, Airline and flight number, Reason for return (end of contract, on leave, with problems).
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period and will return abroad to finish their contract. A third category consists of migrants who ‘have problems’ or who are ill. The directive defining these three categories describes problems as being problems experienced abroad or during the journey. Problems abroad include being underpaid or not paid at all, poor working conditions, and physical, mental, or sexual abuse abroad. As a result of the registration process, the migrants will be split into two groups: most migrants can proceed to the ticketing counter to buy a ticket to their home village, but the approximately 10% of migrants who are classified as having problems will enter a different process. In a period of seven months, for example, a total of 191,146 migrant workers arrived, of which 18,637 were classified as having problems (BNP2TKI 2008c).

How do people end up in a certain category? What technologies of classification are used here and what does it mean to ‘have problems’? Looking at the work of government employee Retno, a woman in her early thirties, provides some answers. Retno has the task of registering migrants and sending migrants with problems to a separate room. She has been at her desk since 8:30 in the morning and will only go home at 8:30 the next day. These employees are on duty 24 hours, because migrants may arrive anytime during the day or night. Retno doesn’t look formal: she is wearing a yellow-and-black polo shirt imprinted on the back with ‘serving and protecting Indonesian migrant workers without levies!!!’ (‘melayani dan melindungi TKI tanpa pungutan!!!’). When a migrant approaches the registration desk, Retno will ask her for her passport. First, Retno will look at the departure and return dates in the passport. If a migrant has been abroad for less than the regular two years, she is assumed to ‘have problems’. Retno will ask a few questions to find out what the problem is and asks the migrant whether she has any money. If Retno thinks the problem is serious enough, she will send the migrant to the reporting room for a follow-up interview. All other migrants will be registered as ‘end of contract’. For them, Retno will find the person’s home address on the last page of the passport where the labour recruitment agency has printed it, and add this to the migrant’s online file. These migrants can then proceed to the ticket counter to buy a minibus ticket, airplane ticket, or (occasionally) ferry ticket home.

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66 Because the majority of migrant workers in the special building are women, I hereafter refer to a migrant worker as ‘she’.
Migrants with problems are labelled *bermasalah*. The word *bermasalah* in Indonesian can mean ‘having a problem’ as well as ‘being a problem’. Being classified as a *bermasalah* has the connotation of failure: these migrants have been unable to achieve the expected success abroad. In addition to the official term *bermasalah* this group was also referred to by the word *muskilah*, a word of Arabic origin, which officials explained as meaning ‘a complicated problem’. Migrants who have been deported also have their own label: *tarkil*, an Arabic word for deportation; and this term is actually used by officials in the terminal to address this group, easily distinguishable because their emergency passports are a different colour and those passports issued in Saudi Arabia carry a stamp reading *tarkil*. According to government officials who work in the building, it was no coincidence Arabic words for ‘problems’ and ‘deportation’ are used, since ‘many people in Saudi Arabia experience problems’.

Migrants with problems are sent to a separate room for reporting, called the complaint room (*pengaduan*), where they will be interviewed more extensively. This interview is meant to get more information from the migrants and also to check if they have insurance. A staff member interviews the migrant, registers the information in the migrant’s online file, and prints it on paper for the migrant to take with her. There is space for a problem description of around five lines. On the basis of this description, another section, the Return Services Unit (*SPK Satuan Pelayanan Kepulangan*), will determine whether a migrant qualifies for free services.

Inside the small reporting room, there are not enough chairs for everyone and people can hardly enter and exit the crowded room. The interviews, which may discuss private and sensitive topics, such as abuse and rape, take place within hearing distance of many people. Still, the atmosphere in the room is friendly and staff and migrants both make small jokes, for example about how often a migrant was beaten by her employer. In Chapter 3 the issue of privacy and ‘confessing’ also came up in the case of the anti-drug-smuggling checks at Schiphol Airport (via scans and sharing of passenger data that passengers are unaware of) and the differences are interesting. Whereas in that case classification practices are increasingly hidden from travellers, in Terminal 4 migrants’ problems become public all

67 The second task of the staff in the reporting room is to determine whether a migrant has insurance. When this is the case, it is common practice that an advocacy organization in the terminal will further arrange the migrant’s claim. The migrant signs a letter of authorization that allows the advocacy organization to make a copy of the migrant’s passport (or even take the passport) and take care of the process. This practice has been criticized by NGOs who say the insurance money hardly ever reaches the migrant.
Protecting ‘foreign revenue heroes’

the time: they are printed on paper and openly talked about. In order to qualify for free services, or in other words to be taken care of, migrants with problems have no choice but to report to Indonesian authorities their bad experiences abroad.

*Room for manoeuvre? Reclassification and consequences of rigid categories*

How rigid is the classification of migrant workers? As Bowker and Star (1999) have argued, some categories have ‘harder boundaries’ than others. In a case study of classification under apartheid, Bowker and Star describe the difficult process experienced by people who tried to be reclassified. Although apartheid may be an extreme case of a rigid classification system, it raises interesting questions about the ethics and politics of attaching categories to people. The categories of ‘having problems’ and ‘contract ended’ may at first sight seem quite ‘hard’ because they are based on dates in the migrant’s passport. Some migrants, however, were able to switch their status. Two young women who had been deported from Saudi Arabia (which clearly showed because they had emergency passports) told the official at the registration desk that they didn’t want to report their problems, so the official registered the two as ‘end of contract’. Out of sight of the official, the women confessed to me they were afraid that reporting their problems would get them into trouble. Since they had no valid passport, they feared they were now illegal in Indonesia too, despite the fact that they were Indonesian citizens, and thought it better to not report their ‘problems’. Rachel Silvey, who has done research on ‘Terminal 3’, the predecessor of the current migrant terminal, also noted that both officials and migrants changed categories to serve the interest of either the officials or the migrants (2007, p. 237). I too saw officials helping migrants by changing data. A migrant who is registered as ‘end of contract’ and therefore ‘successful’, for example, but who does not have any money, will get stuck in the process because she is unable to buy a transport ticket. Officials often send these migrants back to the registration desk to have their status changed. This shows that there is room for manoeuvre for staff to change data in the files. In addition, officials sometimes give advice. A small case in the reporting room provides a good example. When a migrant told the staff she had asked to be deported, the official advised her not to use that phrasing again, but to simply say she was deported, which would increase her chances of getting a free transport ticket. Staff have the room here to act as ‘agents of discretion’ (Salter 2006, p. 182; see also Heyman 2001; Gilboy 1991)

Solidarity among migrants can also help a migrant with problems to go home as a regular migrant. Although around 10% of the migrants in the terminal have had bad experiences abroad, and I saw several migrants break down or cry, most migrants are happy to be going
home and the atmosphere among the migrants is generally friendly and positive. Most migrants with problems don’t have the money to buy a transport ticket and therefore need to be interviewed in the complaint room to see if they qualify for a free ticket home. Some of them, however, circumvent this long procedure by borrowing money from friends. Often a migrant with problems is helped by others who are from the same home region. One migrant worker explained that, having been ‘successful’ abroad, she saw it as her duty to help fellow migrant workers who had not been that lucky, and let them ‘share in my success’. The final section of this chapter shows that it is this image of sharing your success that is used by drivers to extort migrants on their way home.

Notwithstanding these possibilities for reclassification, the government’s aim of protection and transparency may sometimes clash with the interests of individuals. One type of data the migrants have to provide is particularly hard to change: the home address. The government minibuses will take each migrant to the home address that is printed in his or her passport. This address is written on the last page of the passport, together with information from the recruitment agency. If a migrant wants to return to a different address, for whatever reason, she has to report that and provide evidence that either her husband or her parents live at that address. The authorities argue this rule assures them the migrant will arrive home safely, and not be ‘recycled’ via Jakarta or a local broker, which means the migrant is immediately sent abroad again for a new work period. The building’s dormitories have become a temporary home for some migrants because they get stuck in the terminal. Betty, for example, was deported from Macau and had just spent her third night in the terminal when I met her. She was stranded because she refused to return to the address in her passport: her parents’ house. In fact, she wanted to return abroad or go to Jakarta. Betty believed she had failed abroad and felt ashamed (malu\(^68\)) to go home, but the officials told her she has no choice. Betty had no earnings, and possessed nothing apart from the dress she wore. A roommate had given her clean underwear and a towel, and Betty’s own underwear hung drying on the bunk bed. Some of her roommates had been in the terminal for three weeks. What happened to Betty is one of the strongest examples of the way authorities see migrant workers: migrant workers belong to others (their parents, husband, employer, agency, or the officials in the terminal) and should not be allowed to ‘just go anywhere’.  

\(^68\) Because she told me she ‘went to the casino every night to eat, and slept everywhere’, I got the impression she had worked as a prostitute and that that was what she felt ashamed about.
II) The production of safety

The special building for processing returning migrants was opened in 2008 as the successor of the notorious ‘Terminal 3’, which had the image of being a place full of corruption and extortion. The government wants the new ‘Terminal 4’ to be associated with transparency, accountability, efficiency, and safety. This final part of the chapter discusses the attempts to achieve this goal, but also analyses why the safety of migrants needs to be renegotiated, in particular during the journeys to the home villages by government minibus.

Producing good care: transparency, efficiency, and safety in the migrant terminal

An important way in which transparency, efficiency and safety are produced is through law, particularly in the text of the regulatory documents in which each step of the return process is described in detail. For each step, the government directive explicitly states what is not allowed. For example it is forbidden for staff to ‘demand a fee for loading and unloading baggage’, or to ‘act impolitely’ (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008). The detailed description of behaviour and acts that are not allowed shows the aspiration to ban such practices and make staff accountable for their behaviour, but it also indicates that in practice there is always the risk that people charged with taking care of migrant workers are involved in improper acts.

Second, inside the building, texts on notes and banners assure migrants that they will be taken good care of, but at the same time stress their vulnerability. At different places in the terminal small informal notes printed on paper remind employees and migrants of practices that are not allowed. On the door to the reporting room a note reads: ‘Attention: Indonesian migrant workers do not need to pay for getting their passports’ (perhatian: pengambilan passport oleh TKI tidak dipungut biaya). A similar message can be read on the T-shirts Retno and the other officials wear, which declare they will serve and protect migrant workers without extorting them. Both the government and the transport companies association declare the migrant’s money will be safe:

After you have bought a ticket there are no extra costs whatsoever to get to your home village. (Setelah anda membeli tiket tidak ada lagi biaya tambahan apapun sampai ke kampung halaman.)
And express the following appeal:

Let’s say no to illegal fees. (Katakan tidak bagi pungli.)

These notes and banners inform migrants, but at the same time they seem to be intended as a reminder to staff to behave correctly. As Silvey (2007, p. 275) notes about similar banners in the previous migrant terminal, ‘There are no such reminders for the staff hung on banners at the “regular” terminal. The banner underscores the social distance between returning workers and the “regular” passengers, emphasising their vulnerability and their need for protection.’ While some banners explicitly welcome the migrants as successful people (‘Welcome home, foreign revenue heroes’ (Selamat datang pahlawan devisa)), other banners implicitly warn migrants about the problems they may face during their return journey and carry the message that there is no guarantee the journey will be problem free (see also Silvey 2007 and 2008).

At several places in the terminal, charts and lists are posted that display an image of transparency and efficiency. Close to the building’s entrance, a huge board with a flow chart explains the sequence of the different steps of the return process. The flow chart gives the impression that the return process is organized in a logical and transparent way – although migrants hardly ever look at it for information. The ticket counter clearly displays the fares for transport by minibus. The prices are fixed in accordance with the distance, and the fares for the different destinations are posted. The list seems to assure its readers that everybody pays the same price for the same distance. This is backed up by the directive about the return process that explicitly states that it is forbidden for staff to ‘collect ticket fees higher than the determined fares’.

A third way to produce transparency and ‘good care’ is by counting migrants and their luggage and by the signing of forms. Migrant are counted when they are transported from the airport to the special building, and their baggage too is counted. Employees at the ticket counter note the number of pieces of baggage on the ticket to make sure nothing gets lost along the way. A few years before, the amount of money migrants brought home was noted too, but instead of increasing migrants’ safety, it turned out to increase their danger. On the way home in the minibus, drivers or criminals at roadside restaurants confiscated these notes to see which migrants were worth harassing and demanding money from. Some of the government measures may even evoke an image of migrants as valuable parcels. Each
migrant gets a ‘migrant worker receipt notice’ (*Berita Acara Serah Terima TKI*) which needs to be signed by a family member when the migrant arrives home. The driver brings the signed forms back to the building as proof that all the migrants were ‘delivered’ to their home address.

Having finished the procedures in the special building, migrants wait for transport home by government minibus. A computer system is meant to ensure that transport to the different areas is arranged in an efficient way and that each of the 29 different transport companies gets a fair share. After buying a ticket, migrants proceed to the waiting area, and in the meantime a computer system groups together migrants with similar destinations and creates a passenger list for each bus. One minibus will transport ten migrant workers – nine regular migrants and one *bermasalah* – who are all from the same region. Officially, the waiting time after buying a ticket should not exceed two hours, but in practice most migrants wait longer – four hours is no exception for a trip to West Java, and people going to Sumatra or East Java may need to spend a night in the building. Nobody knows how long it will take before there are enough people to fill a minibus. Afraid to miss the announcement of their bus ride, most migrants don’t want to go to the dormitories so they stay in the waiting area downstairs and sometimes sleep on the benches there.
When a minibus is ready to leave, an official with a microphone reads the passenger list aloud. After five hours of waiting, Anisa hears her name called. Out of happiness she makes a little jump into the air. Then she pushes her trolley forwards to the exit, where on the other side of the door the minibus to her home town in Indramayu is waiting. An official instructs her to put her trolley on her left side, while a second official compares the names of the people in the queue with those on his list. Finally, the migrants can enter the minibus, but they are not allowed to push their own trolleys. Before Anisa gets on board the minibus, the official gives her a small card with contact details of a special complaints phone number she can call if something happens on the way home. Above the exit door a banner paid for by the association of businesses in the terminal reads:

Have a nice journey, foreign revenue heroes. Have a safe trip to your home villages. (Selamat jalan pahlawan devisa. Selamat sampai kampung halaman.)

Renegotiating safety en route: the journey to the home villages

In this final section we leave Soekarno-Hatta Airport to follow migrant workers on their way home in minibuses. Looking at this part of the return journey shows us some of the problematic consequences of making visible flows of migrants and treating them differently from other travellers.

The bus journeys to the home villages have always had the reputation of being unsafe. In 2002, a former policewoman at Soekarno-Hatta Airport wrote her MA thesis about the return process and concluded that a criminal organization was at work. She uncovered a network that had contacts both inside and outside Terminal 3 that included transport companies and roadside restaurants, souvenir shops, and money changers along the road (Wahyudi 2002). Stops at roadside restaurants were particularly dangerous immobilities in the migrants’ journeys. Some roadside restaurants served as illegal money-changing places with false exchange rates, where women were forced to exchange their foreign currency for rupiah (idem).

The new government measures of 2008 are an attempt to put a halt to such practices. These measures aim to make visible the flows of migrants between the airport and their home villages. The government directive requires transport companies to transport migrants in special dark-blue Isuzu Elf minibuses with dark windows. The name and registration number of the company must be printed on the bus and each bus needs to have stickers on the front and rear windows stating that the bus transports migrant workers. There
are only a few registered roadside restaurants where these buses are allowed to stop. At each stop, the driver and restaurant owner need to count the migrants, and sign a form when the migrants leave and re-enter the minibuses to make sure nobody goes missing (Peraturan 01/KA/SU/I/2008). The directive also requires minibuses to have GPS on board in order to track routes, although in practice the transport companies do not follow this rule. Notwithstanding the strict regulations on paper, the bus journeys remain an unpleasant experience for migrants, costing them extra money – almost as much as the bus ticket they bought in the terminal.

Tracking migrant workers during their bus journeys home reveals that the safety and comfort of the journey have to be renegotiated en route. Even though the migrants already have a bus ticket, this ticket is no guarantee for a safe and comfortable journey as the government promises; on the contrary, during the journey the migrants have to pay for their ‘safety’. Many of the minibuses leave in the late afternoon or evening, and arrive at the home villages early in the morning. Each bus has a particular region as its destination, but because many women are from remote villages, reaching all the houses takes much longer than travelling by public transport would take. During the journey, the driver makes one or two stops at roadside restaurants. Migrant workers report that there are usually no other customers in the restaurants, except for other groups of migrant workers, and that the food and drinks are expensive. At many of these restaurants, souvenir shops or petty traders sell products from the Middle East. Although it seems the roadside restaurants no longer serve as illegal money-changing places, sometimes a new driver or a so-called companion (kenek) who will later play a role in extorting money from the migrants enters the bus here.

All migrants’ accounts are similar: when a woman is the next one to be dropped off at her home, the driver asks her to come and sit at the front next to him or his companion ‘to give directions on how to get there’. Yeni explained what happens then:

When I sat [at the front], the driver asked me for money. He spoke in a soft voice; maybe he was afraid my friends would hear it? He said: ‘How much will you give me, sister?’ I said I didn’t know. Then he asked for 150,000 [rupiahs, about 13 euros]. ‘Sister, he said, I am a deprived man. How much will you give me?’

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69 Rp 150,000 equals 12.70 euros. A study by Bank Indonesia (2009) found migrant domestic workers’ wages to range between Rp 1 million and Rp 2 million per month (EUR 85 and EUR 169) (EUR 1 = IDR 11,820 on 27 June 2012).
Other drivers asked the women to have pity on them by claiming that they never receive any salary. Most negotiations start off in a relatively friendly fashion and the drivers demand money in a sophisticated way:

He did not ask it in a direct way but in a polite way. Seikhlasnya [voluntarily] only [he said], because he had brought me all the way home. [...] Yes, I gave it to him seikhlasnya, because Alhamdulillah [Thank God], I had arrived home safely.

By using the word seikhlasnya⁷⁰, these drivers appeal to a woman’s feelings and her sense of (religious) duty to be a good person by letting others share in her economic success. With Susi this approach worked:

We feel ashamed to give only a little. Everybody understands that when you come home from abroad, you have a lot of money, right? If you give only a little, you are afraid he will ask for more. It’s better to give a little more, so you don’t get any comments.

By asking for a voluntary gift, the driver also prevents women feeling they are being extorted and reporting the driver to the authorities. If a woman refuses to pay, the driver may say all her friends did pay, and that she is a stingy person. Drivers often bluff about the amount of money they have received, trying to convince a woman to pay at least as much as her friends did. Rani, however, recounted how she and her fellow passengers noticed what was going on and had secretly made an agreement that each of them would only pay 100,000 rupiahs (about 8.50 euros). Sometimes women were also requested to pay for their bermasalah fellow travellers who did not have any money themselves. The driver tells the woman to have pity on the bermasalah, otherwise he will need to stop the bus and drop off the bermasalah immediately. Another strategy is to ask for money for fuel or for uang rokok. Uang rokok literally means cigarette money, but actually is a tip, which in this case equalled the price of 20 packets of cigarettes.

Most of the women, however, do not give money that easily. These women explained that although the driver or his companion, by referring to ikhlas, seemed to be asking only for a gift, he in fact forced them to pay. The women then started to resist.

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⁷⁰ Ikhlās generally means doing something good without any conditions or without any expectation in return. It is generally taught in Islam that human beings should not expect anything in return when they do good things for others.
I said to him, Why do I need to pay the driver? I already bought a ticket at the airport for the journey home. He was persistent: ‘Sister, you don’t understand about safety,’ he said. No, I said, I do understand. It’s just that I already bought a ticket. The officials at the airport also said I shouldn’t pay extra money.

When women refer to the instructions they got at the airport, the driver usually responds that government officials don’t know the situation along the road. The journey home is risky, the driver will argue, and he is the one who bears the heavy responsibility for the migrants to arrive home safely. If a woman keeps resisting, the driver may warn her that there are criminals and drunks along the road – it is often dark outside – and threaten to drop her off immediately. One driver frightened the women by requesting them to switch off their mobile phones and to close the curtains. He then confiscated their passports to see which of them had been ‘successful abroad’.

Whereas some women quickly chose to pay in order to ‘avoid trouble’, several women tried to postpone paying money by saying they had transferred all their money and that their wallets were empty. In these cases, however, upon arrival home, the husband or a parent still paid the driver several hundred thousand rupiahs. Family members of bermasalah migrants too in the end paid the driver for transport, although migrants with problems are supposed to travel on a free ticket. The tactics drivers use to get ‘tips’ from migrant workers thus range from gentle talk to threats, and it turns out that a distinction between voluntary tips and forced payments is not always easy to make. None of the women who were interviewed managed to avoid paying money. This does not mean that the women are powerless victims. Many have tactics to try to avoid paying too large a sum of money. Some, however, kept to the story that they gave the money voluntarily, seikhasnya.

Why are the drivers so successful in their extortion practices? Susi tried to explain why she thinks she was so susceptible to the driver’s arguments that there were a lot of dangers along the road:

If you have just arrived from abroad, your mind is empty. That means you just go along with whatever they say. Maybe it’s because you are done working there […], you get back here and you are silent right away. […] When your mind is empty you will think: that person is right, it’s right what he says.
The intimidation of women during the bus journeys, however, is also connected to the regulatory technologies used at the airport. The public areas of the airport are framed as a hostile environment, and the procedures at the airport and in the special building reinforce the women’s subordinate status (see also Silvey 2007). In the terminal, a vulnerable and incapable mobile subject is produced, and this makes it easier for the driver to extort the women. Inside the buses, the women are dependent on the driver to take them home. It is the driver himself who extorts the women, but by presenting the environment outside the bus as a hostile environment, he can still claim he is taking care of their safety. Moreover, visibly marking the buses as migrant transport and registering the roadside restaurants makes these vehicles and places visible not just to government officials who do random checks along the routes, but also to criminals. Lastly, women may pay up simply to avoid trouble and delays. Having worked abroad for such a long time, the women are eager to go home. The return journey may not be a pleasant experience, but the women do not care that much. As many said: ‘The most important thing is that I arrive home safely.’

III) Conclusions

Over the past two decades, increasing numbers of Indonesians have left the country to work temporarily as migrant workers in Asia or the Middle East in order to improve the lives of their families back home. Soekarno-Hatta Airport is an important node in these circuits of transnational labour migration from Indonesia. The return of approximately 1,000 migrant workers per day via this airport, however, also attracts extortionists, who, encouraged by the common belief that migrant workers are bringing home large sums of cash money and are easy targets for extortion, try to get a share in the migrants’ success abroad. Public concern over the extortion of migrant workers grew, and this legitimized the creation of a mobilities regime in which the Indonesian government supervises the return journeys of migrant workers from the moment they disembark the airplane at Soekarno-Hatta Airport until they reach their home villages.

Similar to my approach in Chapter 3, I argued that examining the technologies of classifying, examining and controlling mobilities is an interesting vantage point for studying the regulation of the return journeys as a mobilities regime. Yet the types of technologies

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71 The next chapter explains that this does not mean the driver keeps the money himself. It is very likely that he will hand over the money to others.
used, the particular ways of classifying, examining, and controlling mobilities, as well as the mobile subject that is produced, differ from the anti-drug-smuggling case. When migrant workers arrive in the baggage hall together with other passengers, they are filtered out by officials who rely mainly on stereotypes. While Chapter 3 showed how people ‘automatically cooperate’ in digital profiling based on passenger data, in this chapter the self-sorting of migrant workers to the migrant terminal revealed that migrant workers similarly are not always aware of technologies of classification they are subjected to, and also that there is less open contestation than in the Netherlands, where travellers may argue with officials, or even go to court to protest. Inside the migrant terminal, officials attempt to find out which migrants ‘have problems’ and therefore qualify for free services; they do this by conducting interviews, and, if necessary, by having the migrants physically examined by a doctor. Where in the case of anti-drug-smuggling checks, ‘making visible’ problematic mobilities entailed inspecting travellers and their baggage to detect drugs, ‘making visible’ in this chapter entails identifying and watching over migrants.

While this mobilities regime is based on the intention to provide care and safety, it at the same time produces a mobile subject who is vulnerable and not capable of going home on her own. The complete return journey is supervised by a government team in a paternalistic way: migrant workers are registered, transported, and counted, and those who have problems can visit a doctor or psychologist in the terminal, can be taken to the hospital, assisted with insurance claims, or provided with free transport tickets. The government also sees to migrants’ needs for food and sleep by equipping the terminal with restaurants and dormitories. Such regulatory technologies make the mobility of these migrants different from that of regular travellers. Technologies that work at the micro level of the body and movement reinforce the existing subordinate status of female migrant workers, and the mobility of migrant workers is controlled in such a way that they have little say in deciding or choosing where, when, and how they travel. Yet this chapter also discussed how both officials and migrant workers have room for manoeuvre in classification practices and that migrant workers who feel confident enough can try to leave the baggage hall via the regular exit. The effects of producing a particular mobile subject, and of reinforcing

72 Rachel Silvey describes the role of the state during the return process as paternalistic (Silvey 2007), and shows how the state similarly seeks to protect labour migrants abroad in a paternalistic way (Silvey 2004). She even argues that NGOs ‘have rallied the Indonesian state’s own paternalism behind their cause, casting the state as the set of actors and institutions that must protect the nation’s citizens—and particularly women—abroad, and thereby protect its national status and pride’ (idem, p. 260). Although I acknowledge the paternalistic character of efforts to protect migrant workers, in the next chapter I will propose a different term than paternalism that allows me to describe the particular mode of regulating the movement of migrant workers, rather than the role of the state as such.
existing stereotypes, are manifested when migrant workers leave the terminal to go home by minibus. During the final part of the journey home, it becomes clear that visibly setting the migrants apart and channelling them through a separate process not only protects the migrants on their journey home, but also facilitates extortion. En route to the villages, the migrants’ safety that the government intends to produce can no longer be taken for granted and needs to be renegotiated.

The words safety (keamanan), comfort (kenyamanan), protection (perlindungan), and services (pelayanan) feature prominently in directives and on banners, which points to a mode of regulating mobilities that is different from blocking malafide mobilities while enabling bonafide mobilities. Yet such protective modes of regulating mobilities are rarely discussed in the literature on airports and borders. The next chapter will further help us to understand why the government is so preoccupied with presenting itself as taking good care of migrants. The chapter examines how and why different actors want to have a part in regulating the return journeys, either by taking on the role of the ‘good shepherd’ in the sense of being a legitimate provider of services for migrants, or by finding opportunities for extortion. In addition, while this chapter discussed the journeys to the home villages to illustrate some of the (unintended) effects of regulating migrant mobilities, the next chapter examines how regulatory practices have gradually come to extend to spaces and times beyond arrival at the airport.