Independent refugee youth in waiting

Social navigations while in transit in Indonesia

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Publication date
2021

Citation for published version (APA):
Masardi, R. D. (2021). *Independent refugee youth in waiting: Social navigations while in transit in Indonesia*. [Thesis, externally prepared, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the social navigations of independent refugee youth as they maneuver uncertainties while waiting in transit in Indonesia. Undeterred by the potential for long periods of waiting in transit, a significant number of young refugees have made the solitary journey to apply for asylum protection with UNHCR Indonesia and to wait there for resettlement in a third country. This study aims to answer the question of how independent refugee youth exercise active waiting while transiting in Indonesia. In this thesis, the concept of social navigation is employed to underline the fact that young people's agency is always in constant negotiation with structural conditions and social circumstances. Discussions of young people's social navigations, particularly in asylum seeker or refugee communities, are essential to challenge the reproduction of the image of young asylum seekers as being in a state of "double limbo": between the status of refugee and undocumented migrant as "asylum seekers," and between childhood and adulthood as "young people" (see Galli 2017, 1656). This study does not only locate young people as mere "becoming" individuals; it also perceives them as complete "beings" who fully experience their current condition and are capable of making choices for themselves. I argue that despite the daily precarity and uncertainty they face while waiting in transit in Indonesia, the young people are able to navigate these unstable arenas and are able to negotiate with multi-layered actors. To highlight their capacity and ability to act, I employ the term "independent refugee youth" throughout this dissertation. A more detailed explanation regarding this term will be elaborated in the methodology section.

By focusing on independent refugee youth's social navigations, this study emphasizes that they continue to practice their agentive capacity while waiting in transit. To illustrate the diversity and complexity of young people's social navigations within the many forms of waiting, I outline their daily movements as they navigate four main arenas: refugee status determination and humanitarian assistance; livelihood and economic opportunities; social networks; and global youth culture. I argue that while they are "stuck in transit" in Indonesia (see Missbach 2015; Brekke and Brochmann 2014), young people also manage to keep exercising agency, not only by performing single linear maneuvers but also by engaging in multidirectional movements in multi-layered arenas and social environments.

In an attempt to advance the academic debate on the agency-vulnerability spectrum regarding youth, I elaborate on young people's representational strategies and highlight their usage of their own vulnerability as a part of their social navigations. In doing so, I attempt to answer the related question of why vulnerability is important for young people's social navigations in transit. In this dissertation, I illustrate young people's perspectives, as well as the structural conditions that make the "production of vulnerability" one of many crucial navigations needed not only to deal with the refugee and humanitarian regime, but also to survive in the economic, social, and cultural arenas in Indonesia.

I mainly employ the concept of social navigation (Vigh 2006) to analyze young people's daily movements, although I occasionally use terms such as "strategies and tactics" (de Certeau 1984) and "maneuvers." I do not, however, follow de Certeau's division, which locates "strategies" as being performed by "powerful" actors and "tactics" as being performed by the "powerless" (ibid). In an attempt to challenge the de Certeauan presumption regarding who has recourse to which mechanisms, who has power and who does not, in this dissertation I demonstrate that young people's movements are not only tactics to counteract a suffocating system or social environment, but are also sometimes premeditated strategies that would invite the system, or powerful actors in the system – in this case, the migration management regime in Indonesia – to respond. Social navigation serves as a useful concept, because it helps us to analyze the constant changes in young people's agency,

as well as to investigate the interface – which is always in flux – between individual agency and multi-layered social environments (Vigh 2006, 16).

By putting young people's multidirectional social navigations in the center of discussion, I attempt to make several contributions to the discussion of refugees transiting in Indonesia, which has been dominated by topics of international and regional migration policy, Indonesia's legal frameworks regarding refuges, and the structural challenges faced by the refugee population in the country. First, with regard to the study of Indonesia as a transit country, I argue that with its flexibility and informality, Indonesia is an enabling and relatively safe space for the refugee population to take shelter while waiting for the results of the refugee determination process and resettlement; particularly when compared to other transit countries in the Global North. Previous studies have largely looked at normative international structures such as the Australia–Indonesia bilateral relationship (Kneebone 2017; Green 2017; Paulsen 2016; Missbach 2018; Nethery and Gordyn 2014; Nethery, Rafferty-Brown, and Taylor 2012), international law and protection frameworks (Gleeson 2017; Tan 2016; Taylor and Rafferty-Brown 2010), refugees and asylum seekers in immigration detention centers (Missbach 2016; Morradi 2015; Nethery, Rafferty-Brown, and Taylor 2012), people smuggling (Missbach 2016; Morradi 2015; Nethery, Rafferty-Brown, and Taylor 2012), refugees' access to rights in Indonesia (Adiputera and Prabandari 2018; Rachmah and Pestalozzi 2016), Indonesia's border control policies (Missbach 2014), and the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) activities in Indonesia (Hirsch and Doig 2018). This dissertation will therefore enrich the ongoing discussion of Indonesia as a transit country for refugees, by presenting Indonesia as a fluid social terrain which, together with young people's multidirectional social navigations, has created a specific transit condition that is relatively safe and maneuverable. I attempt to go beyond existing approaches in order to present the refugee management system in Indonesia not only in terms of fixed normative structures that independent refugee youth must face and negotiate, but also to reveal how these structures are in fact mutable as they come into conversation with young refugees and their perspectives and actions.

Second, this study addresses an important gap in the scholarly literature about independent refugee youth's agentive movements in transit in Indonesia, an aspect that has been largely overlooked in previous studies. In recent years, some scholars have started to look at the coping mechanisms of refugees as they manage their lives in transit (see Zheng et al. 2018; Clark 2018; Sampson, Gifford, and Taylor 2016; Brown 2017; Lumenta, Ariefiansyah, and Nurhadist 2017; Missbach 2015). There are some studies on the condition of unaccompanied minors and young refugees in Indonesia (see Missbach and Tanu 2016; Masardi 2016; UNHCR et al. 2013), but it is largely discussed in a general manner, particularly with regard to their wellbeing and access to certain rights in Indonesia. In this dissertation, I zoom in on the phenomenon of young people's daily survival while in transit in Indonesia and give undivided attention to their point of view regarding how they make sense of their daily conditions. Through the extensive ethnographic data I gathered from Hazara, Oromia, Somali, Yemeni, and Sri Lankan young men and women in various sites and cities in Indonesia, I attempt to present a comprehensive and deep understanding of the young people's ideas, aspirations, and decisions that they have, that they develop, and which they take on while transiting in the country. The complex and multifaceted data presented in this dissertation, which explain the multidirectional movements from the youths' own perspectives, is one strength of this dissertation that I am confident will be enormously useful for future studies on young people's transit migration in Indonesia.

In the first sections of this introduction, I will outline my position regarding the themes of waiting, limbo and liminality, and agency and structure. I will then elaborate my ideas about social navigation, youths' mapmaking, the production of vulnerability, and strategies of representation. In the final sections, I will explain my methodology and outline the chapters.

ON WAITING: YOUNG PEOPLE'S METHODS AND THE CONTEXT OF TRANSIT

This section attempts to show that the discussion of young people's social navigations occurs against the backdrop of the discourse of

protracted waiting in a transit country. Here, I will illustrate that for independent refugee youth, the meaning of waiting is shifted from "the method of transit" to "the agonizing context." I will then illustrate how this dissertation aims to address an overlooked element in the discussion of transit: young people's active waiting in Indonesia.

The global discourse of waiting, particularly in the migration context of asylum seekers and refugees after Europe's so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015, has been inclining towards the idea that waiting is a technique of control by the powerful over the powerless; an act of exercising power (see Koshravi 2019, 417; Koshravi 2018; Rozakou 2021, 31). In a time of "wall fetishism," when human beings and also states are obsessed with building walls for bordering practices (Koshravi 2019), the academic gaze is being directed more on the bordering practices and techniques, and less on how the migrants or refugees themselves perceive and respond to the waiting that results from these bordering practices, including their attempts to reduce the duration of waiting. This dissertation thus attempts to shed light on this understudied phenomenon. It is indeed a pivotal moment to understand if and how refugees are still able to exercise any form of agentic actions under such great global constraints, including minimal chances of resettlement. The mission to delve into refugees' exercising of "active waiting" (see Appadurai 2013, 14) or "agency-in-waiting" (Brun 2015, 24) is thus more imperative than ever. In the midst of longer, stricter, and harsher border control practices, refugees' maneuvers are central to their survival, since those who do not maneuver will be left behind and will only leave the camp when the camp is closed down (see Rozakou 2021, 33). In this dissertation, young refugees' active waiting will be explained through the concept of social navigation (Vigh 2006).

The condition of protracted displacement and the lengthy process of asylum seeking has been frequently linked to the discourse on waiting (see Janeja and Bandak 2018; Khosravi 2019, 2014; Grabska 2019; Griffiths 2014; Conlon 2011; Hage 2009). In 2014, Shahram Khosravi elaborated that the condition of waiting – a common experience of marginalized and underprivileged groups – can invoke feelings of powerlessness, vulnerability, and domination, can produce a sense of dependency and subordination,

may stimulate a sense of waste, emptiness, and uselessness, can weaken the sense of social functioning, and may display conditions of liminality. On the other hand, Khosravi also acknowledges that "waiting can be an act too, a strategy of defiance by the migrants" (ibid, 1). More recently, Koshravi has started to see waiting more cynically, arguing that it is "an active violation toward migrants for robbing them of their time" (2021, 204; 2019, 419). This attitude is understandable given the current condition of border control, particularly in the European context. However, in 2021, Koshravi acknowledged that one way to avoid the potential pitfalls of scholars reproducing colonialist views when trying to understand migrant temporalities produced by the migration regime (see also Rozakou 2021, 25) is to "pay attention [to] how migrants conceptualize waiting in their own languages" (Koshravi 2021, 205). In this study, I did not specifically interrogate what young refugees understood of the term "waiting" according to their own linguistic perceptions. However, I did investigate how they perceive and maneuver the waiting technology and temporality in order to make the best of their situation.

Waiting as a result of bordering practices is often referred to as "forced waiting" (Koshravi 2021, 203). In the context of independent refugee youth transiting in Indonesia, particularly in 2016, I must argue that part of the waiting was voluntary, as it was part of their method of "playing the asylum seeking game." In this case, to completely say that the young people's waiting was forced would be to undermine their agency and intellect. From the perspective of the youth, waiting is framed as both method and context. In the case of asylum seekers transiting in Indonesia, both approaches of waiting are palpable. To a certain degree, the method of waiting for a couple of years is expected given that some youths travel strategically to Indonesia with the primary agenda of waiting; waiting for their refugee application to be processed and afterwards waiting for resettlement to a third country. In general, they are prepared to wait for three to four years in Indonesia, based on the information they receive from previous refugees who transited in Indonesia or from smugglers. Thus, waiting in Indonesia is part of their methods to ensure a safe and protected migration journey, until they can arrive in a country of resettlement.

On the other hand, the method of waiting in a transit country can soon become an agonizing condition or context. Although many arrive with the comprehension that they will have to wait, most discover sooner or later that this wait will be much longer than expected. Nevertheless, as part of understanding young people's perceptions of waiting, it is important to note that the experience of time rarely coincides with clock time (Bandak and Janeja 2018, 18). Unexpectedly long waiting times are experienced as frustrating, as if time itself is being prolonged (ibid). For refugees waiting in a transit country, one hour may feel like a day. In explaining Henri Bergson's (1988 [1896]) work on the distinction between two forms of time – time as an element of duration and the physicist's time – Bandak and Janeja note that "human perception never exists in empty space. It is a time already saturated with memories" (2018, 18).

In the discussion of experiential temporalities, there are several different qualities: there is "a long, slowing time of waiting (sticky time) […] complete stagnation (suspended time), a fast time rushing out of control (frenzied time) and tears in people's imagined time frames (temporal ruptures)" (Griffiths 2014, 1994). Young people's experiences of waiting in transit in Indonesia can be seen as a mixture of "sticky time," which must be dealt with daily, the occasional experience of "frenzied time," in the case of regulation changes for resettlement opportunities or funding discontinuities, and "temporal ruptures," when they might become suddenly panicked by a rejection to their asylum claim. Prolonged waiting can also be boring and repetitive, and can bring about a sense of stagnation or "stuckedness" (Hage 2009, 4). The frame of experiential temporalities is highly relevant for the context of transiting in Indonesia, as it helps us to understand that stagnation is a perception based on individual and collective experiences, a point of view towards certain conditions of waiting (Masardi 2020).

Reflecting on the concern of some scholars that academic discourses reproduce colonial ways of thinking that posit migrants' experiences of temporality as occurring in a different context to, though coeval with, the locals (Cabot 2019; Ramsay 2019; Rozakou 2021; Khosravi 2021), the study of transit migration in Indonesia will contribute to South–South global migration studies, where

refugees and host citizens are both from post-colonial societies, with all their respective limitations and precarities. Different from the European or US context, where non-European migrants are perceived as a needy and powerless population trying to get social and political protection from rich white nations, refugees transiting in Indonesia is a different phenomenon. The social environment in Indonesia is more fluid and maneuverable for transiting refugees (see chapter 2), where both groups – independent refugee youth and locals – see diverse potential for how they can gain something from and cooperate with one another (see chapter 6). Locals may experience both geographical and existential immobility (see Hage 2000; 2009) compared to refugee youth, and despite their status as citizens, they also face unemployment, a lack of social security, limited health insurance, and minimal access to sustainable housing, and thus an uncertain future. This study will reveal how independent refugee youth understand the local social and cultural terrain, as well as what kinds of relationships they need to build with locals as part of their active waiting in Indonesia. I support the idea of "de-migranticizing" (Dahinden 2016) by acknowledging that both groups have their own precarity coming from post-colonial societies, but I argue that it is important to zoom in on the conditions and movements of the refugee youth to understand the different obstacles, power structures, and opportunities they have as young asylum seekers to maneuver, while trying to get refugee status from the international regime that operates in Indonesia.

By highlighting young people's active waiting, as they find various creative ways to make waiting more fun and meaningful between the dire precarity and uncertainty of their future, I attempt to illustrate young people's capacity to "stick it out" and their "ability to snatch agency in the very midst of its lack" (Hage 2009, 4). In the case of refugee youth transiting in Indonesia, it is indeed the capacity to endure difficult situations that keeps alive their dreams of achieving resettlement in a safe country and of being legally recognized as lawful citizens elsewhere. In this dissertation, I look both at young people's endurance and also their attempts to make change. I will show that their hope "converts passive 'waiting for' into the active 'waiting to': waiting to make the next move in the queue" (Appadurai 2013, 14), and, in the young people's case, also to achieve their dreamed future. In active

Figure 1. An independent young man lighting candles when the electricity has gone out. I present this photo to illustrate the idea that despite the many difficulties of waiting, young people keep their bodies and minds active (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

waiting, I will also demonstrate how young migrants engage in both the "politics and poetics of waiting" (Bandak and Janeja 2018). Inspired by Clifford and Marcus' (1986) politics and poetics of writing, Bandak and Janeja formulate a politics of waiting in terms of "engagement with the structural and institutional conditions that compel people to wait," while a poetics of waiting involves the "existential affordances of being placed in temporal relations, gaps, and intervals where the outcome is uncertain" (ibid, 3). Throughout the empirical ethnographic chapters in this dissertation, young people's navigations while dealing with the structural challenges of transit migration, as well as their efforts to continue to actualize their potential, will be discussed.

The "active waiting to" (Appadurai 2013, 14) indicates the exercising of agentic action, which in Cathrine Brun's terminology is called "agency-in-waiting," which "denotes the capacity to act in the present, in everyday time, based on the experience of displacement from the subject's history and a critical reflection of the future possibilities framed as waiting and hope" (2015, 24).

Brun argues convincingly that protracted displacement must not be understood as static, but rather as fluid. Refugees or migrant populations waiting in transit countries or in countries of asylum should not be seen as a stagnant population or as passive spectators who are "stuck in traffic." Instead, one must perceive them as an active and dynamic population (see the illustration in Figure 1) that can "create knowledge about and give meaning to their own situation" (Horst 2006, 144).

Taking a closer look at independent refugee youths' active waiting does not only speak to the discussion on protracted waiting, but also to children and youth studies. I join scholars who locate youth as active agents (Halloway and Valentine 2000; James et al. 1998; Ensor 2010, 20), where youth are not depicted as passive victims but more as active survivors (Rousseau and Drapeau 2003, 78). In the so-called "new paradigm of childhood studies" (Prout and James 1990; James et al. 1998; Ensor 2010), childhood is also analyzed as socially, politically, economically, and culturally constructed, where children themselves are perceived as active agents in the processes affecting their lives. The participation of children and youth in migratory processes is often characterized by "the tension between structure and agency" (Hess and Shandy 2008, 767), and in this dissertation I outline the dynamics between young people's agency and the structures of the migration regime within the social environment in Indonesia. By focusing on young people's perspectives, I reveal the constant negotiation between their individual agency and their social environment, which is reflected in their social navigations (Vigh 2006). Within the navigations there are continual adjustments in terms of their expectations, strategies, and identifications, which affect the development of their personal identities (Auger-Voyer et al. 2014).

On Locating Youth beyond Limbo and Liminality

In this dissertation, I see the transit situation in Indonesia as "enabling freedom for initiative" (Oelgemöller 2011, 421, in Sampson, Gifford, and Taylor 2016, 1138), rather than as a state of limbo (see Ali, Briskman, and Fiske 2016; Brown 2017; Lumenta, Ariefiansyah, and Nurhadist 2017). Elsewhere, waiting in the refugee and asylum seeking context has been framed in terms of

stuckedness (Hage 2009), protractedness (UNHCR 2004; Loescher et al. 2008; Milner and Loescher 2011), and lives being put on hold (Brekke and Brochmann 2014); in contrast, I focus on how young refugees exercise their agentic maneuvers in a precarious situation. It is fundamental to resist the reproduction of the image of young asylum seekers being in a state of limbo, given that this group tends to be portrayed as double victims in this sense: as asylum seekers, in limbo between the status of refugee and undocumented migrant; and as young people, in limbo between childhood and adulthood (Galli 2017, 1656). It is time to fully regard young people as active survivors on their own terms. Instead of focusing on transit as a state of limbo, it is probably more productive to see it as a condition of liminality (Van Gennep 1977; Turner 1967), given that the latter "captures the simultaneous process of marginalization, control, and stasis on the one hand, and the transformation and flows, on the other hand" (Brun and Fabos 2015, 10). However, to analyze this phenomenon in the " liminality" frame also has its shortcomings.

Using the concept of liminality, with its focus on the idea of a passage, to frame refugees' and other irregular migrants' transit condition has been criticized for implying the logic of temporal linearity, where at the end "the subject is, or should be, reincorporated into a particular normative social structure" (Jacobsen and Karlsen 2021, 5). The one-directional temporal logic in the concept of liminality fortifies a logic that locates migration as a crisis as opposed to the normal social structure, which may "reduce the complexity of migrants' lives and reproduces instead a notion of a benevolent state as the redemptive endpoint to waiting" (Ramsay 2017; see also Drangsland 2021, 80). Besides, to analyze young people's condition as being solely in a liminal stage between childhood and adulthood is also problematic, given that it reinforces the perception that young people are incomplete adults who do not have the full capacity to give meaning to their situation.

To avoid this pitfall, I go beyond the discussion of liminality in framing the condition of independent refugee youth in transit and employ instead Uprichard's (2008) approach to locate young people as both "becoming and being," because it increases their agency. To see youth in a stage of being is to locate them as social actors in their own right, actively constructing conditions and experiences

as complete beings. On the other hand, acknowledging young people's temporality in terms of becoming is inevitable, since it allows us to understand their future experiences and appreciate their efforts and capacities to grow and metamorphose. I do not, furthermore, view young people's becoming only in terms of a liminal stage from childhood to adulthood; I also regard the relationship between their current condition and the many other things that they aspire to become. I demonstrate that it is often not the state of adulthood that they desire; rather, they are dreaming of other forms of youth.

On Equal Instability between Agency and Structures

The agency of independent refugee youth, as discussed in this dissertation, is located in constant interplay with the legal, social, and cultural systems of refugee management in Indonesia. Young people exercise their agency-in-waiting not only to wait for the resolution of their problems, but more importantly to make the most of the situation, and when possible to change or negotiate their structural conditions. This dissertation underlines that "just as agency can be an effect of action, so too can subject positions and the structures in which they are embedded be products of as well as bases for social analysis" (Coutin 2000, 13). The relationship between young people's agency vis-à-vis the system is dynamic, and while the relationship might not be characterized by equal power, the two are equally unstable, meaning that both can influence the other. Particularly in the context of the ambiguous refugee management regime in Indonesia (which I elaborate on in more depth in chapter 2), the existing structures are very flexible and highly negotiable. This means that there is ample space for youth to exercise their agency-in-waiting.

I will further show that the structures and social environments in Indonesia are not stagnant, since they shift through young people's negotiations; the stronger the young people push and negotiate, the more likely it is that the structures will alter their shape. In discussing the unstable arena later in this chapter, I will elaborate how the young people's agency is in interplay with the structure in the social environment. Given that the interface and interplay between the two is vital for this study, the concept of social navigation will be central to the analysis of young people's

movements while waiting in transit. The following section will elaborate more on social navigation and how it serves as a useful concept to theorize young people's active waiting in Indonesia.

SOCIAL NAVIGATION
IDENTIFYING YOUNG PEOPLE'S MANEUVERS

Utilizing the concept of social navigation is relevant for an examination of the dynamics of the maneuvers of independent refugee youth while transiting in Indonesia. The word "navigation" stems from the Latin *navigare*, which means "to sail" and "go by sea" (Vigh 2009, 428). Social navigation defines a specific form of movement, namely "the way we move in a moving environment," the "motion within motion" (Vigh 2006; 2009). Social navigation explains how agents "seek to move within the social terrain and are moved by the social terrain" (2006, 238). This concept is crucial in the study of a group of people in an environment that is characterized by constant processes of fluctuation rather than solidified structures.

In regard to the case of independent refugee youth in Indonesia, the social navigation concept is highly suitable, as the young people must deal with an unstable legal situation that leads to constant changes in their conditions. As a relatively new transit country, Indonesia, which is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, does not have specific national regulations to protect refugees and asylum seekers. Coupled with constant regulation changes in countries of resettlement and frequent budget cuts from donor countries, the insufficient legal instruments regulating the refugee population provide shaky ground for young people's social security in Indonesia. Consequently, opportunities to secure their economic circumstances and build social networks are always in flux.

Furthermore, in regard to translating young people's actions, social navigation allows us to overcome the dichotomy between the powerful and the powerless in Michel de Certeau's (1984) formulation of tactics and strategies (see also Vigh 2010, 155–156). Instead of following de Certeau in conceptualizing "strategy" as the larger scenario or platform that is prepared by powerful actors,

and "tactics" as the "art of the weak" in watching for opportunities, I argue that independent refugee youth – as supposedly weak actors in the asylum seeking process – can implement both strategies and tactics. Surely, young people may develop tactics, such as forms of resistance and "hidden transcripts" (see Scott's 1990 "weapons of the weak"). But on other occasions, young people also perform strategic actions by producing certain domains and forcing powerful actors to respond. I draw on works that locate refugees as "spectators" who are not only capable of observing the structures that affect their lives, but can also "resist, negotiate and enact a number of discourses and counter-discourses" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2010, 295 in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016, 460; see also Boal 1992). Throughout the analysis of the empirical ethnographic data, I will illustrate how their social navigations, together with the arenas in which they occur, co-shape and co-alter the course of their journeys and the shape of the arena.

Metaphorically, to frame it as part of the bigger picture of international migration discourse, the social navigations of independent refugee youth can also be understood as an attempt to respond to the discourse built by the state and other migration regimes, which often borrows war-like or game-like terminology. Previous scholars have discussed how states formulate immigration discourses that are entangled with discourses about the tactics of war. The Australian government, for example, when talking about refugees coming to the country, uses language such as "massing in Indonesia," "invasion," "gathering to our north," and "defense plan" (Pickering 2001, 174). Other scholars use a game analogy to discuss states' attempts to deal with migrants, such as "border games" (Andreas 2000), "cat and mouse games" (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2013), and "games of risk played out by Europe's border agency" (Andersson 2014, 54). Nevertheless, youth do not only respond to the discourse created by the migration structures, but may also jump beyond the boundaries of these structures to create their own discourses – to strengthen their chances of survival while in transit, and sometimes even to actualize their potential capacity and talents, as well as to establish their social position in global discourse. As an analogy to the fact that they are also calculating their next move in their social navigations while in transit in Indonesia, I present Figure 2.

Figure 2. A group of independent Hazara youth playing a strategy board game (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

Mapmaking within the Four Arenas

Independent refugee youth and other refugees often experience multiplicity, in terms of waiting for different things at the same time (see Hage 2018; Khosravi 2021, 203). Young people may wait for their refugee application to be processed, but they may also be waiting for an opportunity to earn an income to send to their parents back home, waiting for the day they will no longer be alone (either by reuniting with their family or by meeting someone who will become their husband or wife), and waiting for a chance through which they can actualize their potential. Given the multiple forms of waiting, it is to be expected that young people will exercise multilayered and multidirectional social navigations, but this topic has received very little attention in academic discourse.

In this dissertation, I attempt to fill this gap by examining young people's social navigations in four social environments or arenas that they choose to encounter in Indonesia. I use "arena" in terms of a "space of contestation" (Bourdieu 1993) between young people and the other actors in the respective fields. Among other social environments in Indonesia, youth calculate that these four arenas are the most important to deal with. First, all independent youth agree that refugee status determination and humanitarian assistance is the first and ultimate arena to navigate, as it is very

crucial for their asylum protection. Afterward, youth argue that negotiating with the arena of livelihood provision and economic opportunities is important, particularly when they do not succeed in accessing humanitarian assistance. Not all youth decide to maneuver this arena, but in general it is considered crucial to fulfill their basic daily needs; this arena is thus listed second. While they navigate these two arenas, the youth also simultaneously deal with the third arena of social network connections, given that building good relations as well as networks with local people will facilitate their navigations in other arenas, specially the economic and self-actualization arena. Lastly, more independent youth engage in the dynamics in the arena of self-actualization in the context of global youth culture.

While concurrently navigating other arenas, independent youth want to actualize their potential and obtain recognition by joining trends in global youth culture. The young people's "tentative mappings and a constant dialogue between changing plots, possibilities and practice" reflect how their maneuvers fit into the concept of navigation (Vigh 2009, 428-429). In practicing moving across a moving environment, the young people's mapmaking is "multiple and in constant becoming," where the map and movements are "constantly shaped and attuned to each other" (ibid, 429).

The constant becoming of the mapmaking and the movements shows the relationship between young people's agency and flexible social environments. It highlights the relevance of utilizing the concept of social navigation in understanding young people's agency in Indonesia. Vigh notes that

> social navigation is thus not another metaphor for agency, but rather designates the interface between agency and social forces, focusing our attention on the inseparability of act and environment (Ingold 2000: Chapter 13), knowledge and praxis (Scott 1998: Chapter 9), and – not least – agency and social forces (Vigh 2006, 14).

This note is important to show that I do not aim to romanticize the young people's agency in this dissertation. Rather, I try to demonstrate that agency is both a product of, but also has an

influence on, the social environment. When the structure or social environment is strict, agency is likely to be compromised. On the other hand, the constant practice of agency can also change the strictness of the structure or social environment. Nevertheless, I acknowledge all the difficulties faced by independent refugee youth and that not all young people have similar opportunities to exercise their agency.

Young People's Multidirectional Social Navigations

In elaborating on the intersection between migration, mobility, and childhood studies, Veale and Dona (2014) investigate the multidirectional and multi-temporal movements of young people in migration by capturing journeys that are short- and long-term, near and distant, circular, onward and return, and also the possibility of further mobility (ibid). The authors elaborate on multidirectional movements drawn from various cases of young people experiencing migration trajectories in diverse settings and locations across the world. In this dissertation, I use social navigation as an umbrella concept and address young people's actions using terms such as "multidirectional movements/moves," "maneuvers," "tactics," and "strategies" interchangeably. The emphasis on multidirectional movements is important given that youth must deal with multiple actors simultaneously and differently while in transit in Indonesia. I will analyze the small-scale and micro-mobility (namely moves and maneuvers) practiced by youth in their daily transit lives by considering their situation prior to the journey in their country of origin, as well as their hopes for their future in a potential country of resettlement.

The multidirectional nature of young people's movements will be illustrated as they constantly slide through the interconnected and layered arenas, while continuously changing the map and the direction of their movements. These multidirectional movements are performed not only to survive their current precarity, but also to pave a promising path to their future (cf. Vigh 2010). In this study, I elaborate on how social navigation is not only done to secure wellbeing in the waiting period, but also to prepare paths to and networks in the young people's eventual country of resettlement. Given the uncertainty regarding where they will end up, youths try to secure all possible future directions. Their

abilities to perform social navigations are, furthermore, influenced by many factors, such as their gender, age, religion, ethnic group, socio-economic class, and socio-cultural capital, as well as the transit site itself.

This study builds on previous research that looks at various tactics, strategies, and maneuvers in the context of migration. In analyzing young people's navigations within a local community, for example, tactics and strategies of tolerance (Spohnholz 2011), help-seeking (Williams 2006, 866), taking sanctuary (Walters 2002; Nyers 2003), and marrying locals (Johnson 2007) will be examined. In regard to maintaining their economic survival, youths may use social and kin networks, access public services, enter the labor market, or find other means of self-provisioning (see Jarvis 1999; Wallace 2002; William and Windebank 1999, in Datta et al. 2007, 406). Aside from engaging in individual tactics and strategies, young people's collective tactics, such as engaging in protests (Moulin and Nyers 2007), street demonstrations, and making delegation visits (Lowry and Nyers 2003; Wright 2003; Nyers 2006, in Shindo 2009) will also be investigated.

Production of Vulnerability
In this dissertation, I highlight a particular aspect of the social navigations of independent refugee youth, namely the "production of vulnerability," a term that I employ to show how youth centralize their minority or vulnerable status as victims (in terms of age, gender, health, sexuality), mostly to meet the expectations and preferences of aid providers and decision-makers (Ticktin 2005; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015; 2016, 461). This approach is neither new nor unique to youth, but the ways in which vulnerability is produced, and the forms it takes, are arguably specific to children and youth. This specificity is possible due to their bodily condition and the available policies that regularize their prioritization and the expedition of their claims.

This study situates vulnerability in line with Andersson, who sees "illegality as something that is not [only] produced but also productive" (2014, 274). Just like illegality, vulnerability is often seen to be "a 'problem' to be solved which demands 'solutions' such as in NGO projects, professional networks, activist campaigns, journalistic, and academic engagements that might otherwise

remain unfunded and ignored" (ibid). This "productivity of vulnerability" created by the refugee regime is something that young people are aware of. In the attempt to negotiate their positions and opportunities when dealing with an imperfect (and unstable) system, youth thus exploit it by producing vulnerabilities.

Young people's production of vulnerability is particularly a response to what they observe and learn from humanitarian agencies' expectations of youth, particularly children. Previous studies on children's tactics in aid applications often reveal that they "evoke sympathy by playing on notions of innocence and vulnerability associated with childhood" (Ansell 2005, 29). Furthermore, "children generate more support than youth, hence campaigns choose to represent their subjects as children rather than youth, even if they are in their mid-teens" (ibid). The image of the "ideal" child refugee – as passive, helpless, and vulnerable – is accepted by many aid and humanitarian organizations as a core value, and is reproduced by young people themselves. To conform with the ideal child refugee narrative, many young people "undergo an infantilizing and victimizing *rite of reverse passage*" (Galli 2017, 1653) by accentuating their childlike agency, which does not allow them to show their forward-moving identity towards adulthood.

In dealing with humanitarian organizations, accentuating vulnerabilities has been proven to be more effective than other attempts to claim rights (Ticktin 2006). The productivity of vulnerability has been discussed by previous scholars as a tactic to get refugee status approved or to obtain humanitarian assistance (see Ticktin 2006; O'Higgins 2012; Cabot 2013; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). Given the restricted resettlement quotas that only prioritize so-called vulnerable groups, benefiting from the productivity of vulnerability is a strategy that is mostly effective when navigating the arena dominated by powerful actors such as decision-makers and bureaucrats. In this dissertation, however, I aim to advance the current debate that highlights migrants' politics of vulnerability when dealing with refugee status determination and humanitarian aid, by elaborating on young people's deployment of the productivity of vulnerability as they dynamically navigate all of the arenas they encounter while in transit in Indonesia.

This study will therefore advance the academic debate on

the agency–vulnerability nexus, specifically regarding the phenomenon of youth in migration. I go beyond the position that vulnerability and agency are not mutually exclusive (see Ensor 2010; O'Higgins 2012), to emphasize that vulnerability may even strengthen young people's agentic actions by capitalizing and producing vulnerability. Coutin notes that "negotiating a political or legal system requires innovation and adjustment, knowing when to stay the course and when to try a new tack" (2000, 12). "Playing vulnerable" and "performing victimcy" (Utas 2005) are often misinterpreted as acts of becoming submissive and giving up one's power to control the situation. There is a working paradox of assertion through deference and control through performative submission (Johnson 2007, 602). However, I also echo Cabot's view in regard to using vulnerability as part of an agentic role:

> Whereas to the adjudicators he presented himself as a vulnerable person in need of protection, to me he highlighted his canniness, fluency regarding asylum law and its adjudicative demands, and his capacity to play with or even "game" the system. This does not make Mahmud any less a "real refugee" but, rather, underscores the intensive work that applicants put into becoming recognizable as such and how they shift and adapt their own self-presentations depending on the interactional context (2013, 456).

Reflecting on Cabot's approach, this study analyzes young people's social navigations in terms of producing vulnerability in unstable social environments. This study takes the discussion of the production of vulnerability to the next level; it investigates not only how vulnerability is accentuated in the context of refugee protection mechanisms, but also in other settings.

Representational Strategies

Representational strategies vary. Along with producing vulnerability, representational strategies have been intensively discussed as part of refugees' attempts to secure humanitarian, political, and legal support (Akram 2000; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; 2016) or to obtain legal status or documentation (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2013, 195). One form of representational strategy is the

"narrative strategy," which includes arranging biographical details (Beneduce 2015) or eliciting information (Datta et al. 2007) when facing officials or bureaucrats, as well as engaging in storytelling through online media (see Ewick and Sibley 1995, 206; Johnson 2007, 600) as youth build certain personas or images of themselves for the broader society. Mastering the art of the representational strategy is thus crucial, not only to negotiate one's way vis-à-vis decision-makers, but also to mitigate the stigma attached to the identity of being a refugee.

This dissertation will add to the study of representational strategies, which are applied not only to the context of refugee status determination but also to young people's navigations of stigma and challenges in other arenas. The stigma of being a refugee affects how young people's representational strategies are perceived by both society and decision-makers. Refugees' strategies are often perceived in terms of "manipulating the system" or they themselves are branded "cunning crooks," all of which worsens the stigma they face. It is important to point out here that representational strategies are commonly used in everyday life by ordinary citizens the world over, particularly when dealing with officials or decision-makers. It would be a misconception to perceive representational strategies as "normal" when they are practiced by "regular citizens" and as a form of "cheating" when they are practiced by refugees. Moreover, in situations where other resources are lacking, performing representational strategies to negotiate access to opportunities is arguably the most essential resource for refugees (Jansen 2008, 576). Rema Hammami calls such strategies "a testament to the ethic of getting through anything, by anything, and to anywhere despite all obstacles" (2004, 18). In this dissertation, I therefore recognize representational strategies as a form of entrepreneurship (Kumsa 2006), resistance (Schechter 2004), and identity politics or impression management (Jansen 2008).

The forms of representational strategies engaged in by the youth reflect their self-evaluation of the expectations and actions of the "officers behind the desk" or "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky 1980). It shows that "people are reactive to policy" (ibid, 9), which means that people's behavior is a reaction to the rules or code of conduct (as part of the policy) that are enforced by officers. In this

case, independent youth comprehend that eligibility practices – in this case, the evaluation of refugee status and humanitarian aid – are persistently haunted by epistemic anxiety (Cabot 2013, 454). Epistemic anxiety offers "pervasive uncertainties that manifest in an endemic climate of mistrust and which, for workers, reflect the epistemological problem of how to know, really, about those whom they must judge" (ibid). This aligns with a "culture of disbelief" that is developed by officers and bureaucrats, given that they have been "trained to disbelieve" through techniques to "identify the lies and investigate inconsistencies" (Jubany 2011, 81-82). Conscious of the fact that evaluators will certainly judge an applicant's eligibility based on a culture of disbelief, it is an agentic move to perform a representational strategy. Here, independent refugee youth become "cynical performers" given that their audiences "would not allow them to be sincere" (Goffman 1956, 10-11).

The perception of the use of representational strategies by refugees as "cheating" is therefore "less obscure and more a normality, particularly given the overall climate of corruption and the creation of the resettlement dream" (Jansen 2008, 576-577). In the case of transit refugees in Indonesia, where national legal mechanisms for refugee protection are almost absent, where international refugee management can operate only at very limited capacity, and where Indonesian citizens themselves also have to negotiate on a day-to-day basis to get by, it is highly relevant to problematize the discourse of "cheating refugees" and to discuss their acts as agentic movements while navigating a difficult situation. By looking at the use of representational strategies in all four arenas outlined above, this dissertation paints a balanced picture of representational strategies as being a normal part of everyday life, and not an act performed exclusively by refugees. Thus, I call for the discourse of the "cheating refugee" to be terminated.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question of how independent refugee youth exercise active waiting while transiting in Indonesia, I

had to collect all possibilities of the young people's movements, both physical and ideological, while in Indonesia. Given the complexity of the social, cultural, and economic backgrounds of my research participants, as well as the diverse sites and locations in which they were waiting in Indonesia, I chose to conduct a multi-sited ethnography with assorted triangulation methods (such as participant observation, observation, semi-structured interviews, and photography workshops), applied in different sites as appropriate. To produce a comprehensive picture of their agentic action, I also collected secondary data from Indonesian online newspapers about activities by/for and representation of young refugees in Indonesia.

During fieldwork, I was assisted by my husband Henri Ismail, who is a social documentary photographer. The division of roles, as ethnographer and visual researcher, was productive, as I was able to focus on "the young people's stories" while Henri Ismail, with his sensitive eye, contributed a lot by identifying and interpreting the visual data regarding the youth and their surroundings. Given that my research focuses on young people's daily movements, involving dynamic activities in complex settings, having a photographer around to capture key moments or situations was very convenient and made a nice complement to my fieldnotes. The benefits of employing visual methods in this research will be elaborated further in the next section. Aside from a clear division of roles, the gender balance in the teamwork also made it easier to approach both male and female youths, families, and the refugee community in general, as well as local people. In this contemporary research setting, there was no "culturally shaped shyness at work," as we did not find it problematic to converge the personal and the professional (see Gottlieb 1995, 21). In fact, the informality of "bringing personal business to the workplace" often eased tensions between us as researchers and our interlocutors. Given that we conducted our research in refugee communities that generally have "normative expectations of marital relations," our conduct as wife/husband actually facilitated us in acquiring meaningful ethnographic knowledge (Stolz et al. 2020, 19). The benefit of "being an understandable social person" (ibid) continued when I got pregnant mid-way through the fieldwork. Being a parent in the field has been discussed as heightening "a reflexive awareness

of the relational dimensions of ethnographic knowledge" (ibid, 18). Apparently, being a researcher–mom has advantages, as I was perceived as less of a threat by my interlocutors, and I received gentle gestures of care from them. With this formation, I comprehend that the fieldwork was productively conducted.

Following Young People through Multi-Sited Ethnography

My interlocutors were young people, mainly from the Hazara ethnic group born in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. In addition, I also encountered youth from Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Sri Lanka, as well as Rohingya youth from Myanmar (who arrived in Indonesia before 2015).[1] To capture young people's multidirectional moves, I decided to follow their mobility based both on their physical mobility as well as on the story of their journey. Conducting multi–sited ethnography (see Marcus 1995) was thus a necessity, considering the nature of young people's mobility from one city or site to another.

Following the young people's logics and the routes of their journeys, I ended up conducting research in four cities in Indonesia: Cisarua, Jakarta, Medan, and Pekanbaru, as illustrated in Figure 3. I did six months of ethnography in Cisarua and more than six months in Jakarta. Based on what I learned from the youths, I knew that Medan and Pekanbaru (both on Sumatra island) were their main arrival points in Indonesia. Thus, I spent two weeks in Medan and one week in Pekanbaru to gain an understanding of why certain youths continued their journeys to Jakarta while others chose to stay. In each city, I conducted research in different sites as needed, such as in immigration detention centers (IDCs), immigration offices, makeshift detention facilities, IOM community housing facilities, shelters for minors run by the Church World Service (CWS), the IOM, the Department of Social Affairs (DSA), and local boarding houses.

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[1] Regarding Rohingya youth, I do not include those who arrived in Indonesia during the Bay of Bengal incident in 2015 in this dissertation, because they followed a different asylum seeking process and resettlement procedure to the rest of the refugee population in Indonesia. Given that the arena and social terrain that they encountered in Indonesia was very specific and that their resettlement was guaranteed, they did not share the same degree of instability as other independent refugee youth.

Figure 3. Research locations of the multi-sited ethnography (source: author).

Participant Observation

I conducted full participant observation with the Hazara community for six months in Cisarua. I stayed with a Hazara family from Joghuri, Afghanistan for a month and then moved to the rented house of an independent young man from Quetta, Pakistan when Henri Ismail joined my fieldwork. I volunteered in Cisarua Refugee Learning Center as a Bahasa Indonesia teacher. During my stay in Cisarua, I joined dozens of cultural gatherings, visited some young neighbors, attended futsal sport centers and gym centers, and occasionally went to have picnics with refugee communities, including youths.

Through the participant observation, I was able to gain insight into many social and cultural aspects of the self–settled refugee community, particularly the Hazara community in Cisarua. I met hundreds of Hazara youth and learned about their logics and how they view the world and their futures. As I lived in the community, I came to comprehend their habits and how they make connections. More importantly, I learned a lot about how they conduct individual as well as collective navigations to survive their transit in Indonesia.

Observation

I attempted to carry out participant observation in one shelter for minors run by CWS in Jakarta, but I was not allowed to spend the night in the center. Therefore, I did regular observations from 10 AM to 5 PM every day, joining in the young people's daily activities. To learn about the conditions of independent refugee youth under the care of other organizations, I visited accommodations provided by Buddha Tzu Chi, a shelter of the RPSA (Safe House for Children) run by the MSA, a school for refugees provided by CWS and Dompet Duafa (an Indonesian Muslim humanitarian organization), and the Roshan Learning Center. Since a few refugee children can access formal education in Jakarta, I also visited two state elementary schools that admit young refugees.

The observations in the shelters and other institutions allowed me to grasp young people's daily routines and their interactions with other young refugees, social workers, and other actors. By being present in the shelters every day, I was able to analyze the young people's opportunities and challenges when conducting social navigations. Given that I could not observe their activities after office hours, I complemented the data with interviews.

Interviews

I conducted 129 semi-structured, in-depth, individual interviews with independent refugee youth in four cities, of which 35 were audio recorded. Given the limited time I had in Medan and Pekanbaru, I also conducted six semi-structured group interviews with a total of 57 youth: one with 12 independent young women in Medan; three with a total of 25 independent young men in Medan; and two with a total of 20 independent young men in Pekanbaru.

The interviewees included independent Hazara youth, young people from Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, Sri Lanka, and Iran, and Rohingya youth from Myanmar. Most interviews were conducted in English, though occasionally they were held in the interviewee's ethnic language and translation was done by a trusted friend; as an exception, with the Rohingya youth I spoke in Bahasa Indonesia. I initially planned to employ personal translators, but there was a serious trust issue among independent refugee youth related to

Figure 4. Interviewing a Hazara young woman in the most comfortable setting for her. Interview was conducted in English (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

translators from their own ethnic groups; the youths preferred to have a friend translate for them, so I accommodated their preference. In general, the youths I interviewed could speak English well enough for a conversation (see Figure 4), and if they encountered difficulties they could ask their friends. I acknowledge that many things might have been lost in translation, but I filled the gaps by cross-checking my findings with the data from observations as well as from the other interviews.

Aside from interviewing refugee youth, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with families and elders in the refugee communities, social workers from various international and local organizations that work with refugees, officials in relevant ministries, lawyers, and immigration officers. To understand refugee youths' relationships with locals, I conducted 15 interviews with local officials such as village heads, the district head in Cisarua, a police officer at the district level (Polsek Cisarua), officers at community health facilities (*Puskesmas*), religious leaders (an Islamic cleric, a Catholic priest, a bishop), and multiple informal chats with community leaders, landlords, neighbors, shopkeepers, and bus drivers. To gain a comprehensive perspective, I also interviewed some academics and experts on refugee issues in Indonesia. I recorded 39 interviews with officials.

Data from the in-depth interviews turned out to be very valuable, because it allowed me to understand young people's perspectives

and their stories of their journeys, from the decision to transit in Indonesia to their tactics and strategies to survive once there. Through my interviews with other actors, I also comprehended how local people and humanitarian officers perceive young refugees and how they counter young people's tactics through negotiation.

Visual Methods

I held three photography workshops with my husband Henri Ismail: two in Cisarua with 19 self-settled refugee youth and one in Jakarta with six youths staying in CWS shelters. As part of the workshops, the youths conducted photo life histories, which enabled the exchange of additional perspectives beyond what could be captured through interviews and observations.

In Cisarua, the workshops were held in cooperation with the Refugee Learning Nest (RLN) and the Refugee Women Supporting Group, where all interlocutors were of Hazara descent. Both groups were comprised of a mix of male and female participants. The discussions during these workshops were fascinating, because the photographs unfolded so many stories about various important aspects of their lives that were otherwise not observable and would not necessarily be talked about on a daily basis, such as their social classes back home or the enormous transformations they underwent from their previous situation in their country of origin to their current situation in Cisarua. At the end of the Cisarua workshops, Henri Ismail selected photographs from 10 youths, all male, and displayed them as part of a panel program at the 6th International Symposium of Journal of Anthropology Indonesia (ISJAI) at the University of Indonesia, Depok in 2016 (see Figure 5). To advertise the photo exhibition, some youths make posters and flyers with their own photographs to inform wider public (see Figure 6).

In Jakarta, the workshop participants were from mixed backgrounds: some were of Hazara descent, while others came from Yemen and Sri Lanka (see Figure 7). This workshop was not as successful as the two in Cisarua, seemingly due to tensions between the youths, who were staying in different shelters and were from different ethnic groups. We decided to conclude the workshop after the third meeting.

Figure 5. A Hazara young man presenting his photos during the exhibition (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2016).

Figure 6.
Flyer for the photo exhibition at the University of Indonesia, Depok, designed by a Hazara young man (poster credit: Kazim 2016).

Figure 7. One session of the photography workshop in a shelter in Jakarta
(photo credit: Zardar 2016).

Reflecting on the process of and findings derived from the visual methods, I was surprised that it allowed us to learn many more things from the young people than I expected. The photo presentations and discussions brought clear illustrations that helped me understand the backgrounds, ideas, and worldviews of the self-settled youth in a depth that I was not expecting. The photography workshops allowed the youth to capture their ideas in photos and then make a presentation about them, which helped them to tell and correct their stories more easily. The pictures also offered a medium for the young people to express their emotions. For Henri Ismail and I, as visual ethnographers, the method helped us to better understand the young people's social and cultural backgrounds, and thus we were able to get a fuller picture of their identity as persons, not only as refugees.

Henri Ismail and I were able to peek into the young people's living situations in their country of origin and previous transit country (or countries) when they made their presentations about their life history. Through their use of self-portraits, we could analyze how they wanted to represent themselves to different audiences. We also learned a lot about their analytical perceptions of their Indonesian neighbors, which reflected their deep

understanding of local people's social, cultural, and environmental situation. From the photography exhibition in the University of Indonesia, we noted how the young refugees wanted to present themselves to Indonesian locals and how they wanted locals to see the refugee community in Indonesia. Perhaps surprisingly, no one took on a self-victimizing tone in their photo stories. Most young people talked about their initiatives to help others in the refugee community and some even expressed their concerns regarding the waste management system in Bogor, which caused localized flooding in the area. Thus while this method was particularly useful to investigate the youths' social navigations in the arena of self-actualization, it also brought significant insight into their agentic actions in other arenas as well.

The visual method is probably the most unique method used in this research, not only because it offered space for interaction and collaboration between Henri Ismail and I as researchers and the independent youth as participants, but because it involved the use of a tool and technology that are attractive to young people. Their desire to learn new things about operating photographic technology motivated the youth to engage in the workshop. Aside from that, the fact that almost all mobile phones these days are now equipped with cameras facilitates young people's familiarity with capturing pictures, taking selfies, and being photographed by other people they know. The easy editing features in smartphones also contribute to the development of a sense of what photography is for youth. Most of them perceived photography as fun and sophisticated, and some were already putting an ideological viewpoint onto the pictures they produced. In a more general setting, a camera is a double-edged sword for a researcher trying to build rapport with participants, who can really resist the presence of the camera or can really welcome it. In the refugee community setting in Indonesia, I had expected that it could be problematic and potentially very sensitive to bring a camera into my daily research. However, it turned out that there was almost no resistance from the community, including the youth, to the fact that we were always accompanied by cameras, particularly of course after we got to know them personally.

Henri Ismail added the reflection that having a camera to capture pictures of the shared moments between us and the

Figure 8. At the end of fieldwork, we printed some pictures that we had taken of the youth to present as a gift. The young people really appreciated this small gesture (photo credit: Henri Ismail 2017).

participants was often appreciated by the young people, since we could leave a "memorable souvenir" after we had moved on from the fieldwork (see Figure 8) and started to produce writings or other supportive means through which we could "pay back" those who had participated in our research.

Online News Analysis

I collected news about refugees (or migrants) transiting in Indonesia from online news sources (national and local) from all across Indonesia, for the period 2006 to 2016. I was assisted by Wahyu Kuncoro, a scholar in anthropology who also focuses on the issue of migration, in this effort. Through this method, I traced the development of the representation of independent refugee youth in the national media. This data helped me to understand Indonesia's position as a transit country and the specific social context, which was particularly helpful in analyzing young

people's navigations in the area of social connection.

Independent Refugee Youth: Notes on Key Terms

I refer to my interlocutors primarily as "independent refugee youth." My aim when using this term is to do justice to them as persons with full agency and capacities. I aim to avoid the stigma attached to the terms "unaccompanied minor," "separated children," and "single males," which are often used by international organizations. The term unaccompanied minor, for instance, is heavily associated with a strategy referred to as "anchor children," which implies that the whole migratory journey is planned by the children's families with the aim of family reunification in the resettlement country. This stigma has been proven inaccurate in many cases, and in this dissertation I attempt to show the diverse motives guiding young people's journeys, which can be a mix of voluntary and involuntary drives. Regarding my choice for the term independent refugee youth, I explain this in detail below.

Independent. I chose the word ***independent*** to illustrate the solitary nature of these youths' journeys, as my interlocutors travelled without their parents or a guardian to Indonesia, and to highlight their capability to make decisions along their migratory journey. By using this word, I also indicate that my interlocutors were, as they themselves reported, both legally and culturally unmarried when they arrived in Indonesia. By focusing on independence, however, I do not intend to suggest that they solved all of their problems by themselves. As they usually met or made friends or peers along the journey, it is important to acknowledge that peer groups, as well as the larger ethnic community and their relatives back home, play a significant role in assisting young people to navigate their transit in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the solitary nature of their pathways still needs to be highlighted, given that it adds greater complexity and challenges compared to those who travel with a guardian.

Refugee. The term ***refugee*** is the trickiest one. In the thesis, I employ it as the term that my interlocutors used to describe themselves; rather than "forced migrants," "survival migrants" (Betts 2013), or "transit migrants" (Missbach 2015). The young people, whether their refugee status had been approved or not, always represented and addressed themselves as refugees. Putting a

label onto someone (or onto ourselves) is a political choice (Malkki 1995), and I see how the "self-claim" of being a refugee was a significant part of my interlocutors' struggle for recognition and a part of their maneuvering to create opportunities for their future.

Youth. I also refer to the social category of **youth**, which may include boys and girls in their early teens up to men and women in their forties (Vigh 2010, 148). Given that there is a gap between the cultural expectations and social possibilities of being regarded as youth (ibid), I tried to be accommodating in terms of age and include interlocutors mostly from the age of 14 up to 30 years old. I did meet a person as young as 8, but independent refugees under 10 years are rare. Moreover, when combined with the category of "independent," the oldest person I met was in fact 24 (those who were older than that were already married). I do not make an analytical distinction between "children" and "youth," and use the terms "youth" and "young people" interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

ACCESS, ETHICS, AND TRUST

Conducting research with a young population whose legal existence is ambiguous in Indonesia required extra attention. Besides establishing personal contacts with the refugee community, I secured a research permit from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and more importantly from the Directorate General of Immigration (DGI) in Jakarta. Obtaining a research permit from the DGI allowed me to conduct research in IDCs and immigration offices in Indonesia, as well as to smoothly approach the head of the DGI as well as other officers working there. Given that one of the IOM's functions is to support the DGI in managing the refugee population in Indonesia, the research permit also allowed me to conduct observations and interviews with refugee youths staying in IOM accommodation. To access youths staying in special shelters for minors, I managed to obtain permission from UNHCR Indonesia. I must acknowledge that my existing contacts with the UNHCR, established when I conducted previous research on "Mapping and Analysing the Protection Situation of UASC in

Indonesia"[2] in 2012 – a commissioned research for the UNHCR – facilitated my gaining their approval. With their consent I was able to conduct research in two shelters for minors run by CWS, the UNHCR's implementing partner.

The letter permit from the Ministry of Internal Affairs helped me to efficiently communicate with officials from the ministerial to the village level, and to secure my interaction with refugee youths who were self-settled in urban and rural settings. Although securing a bureaucratic permit is certainly not the most important thing, obtaining the legal document allowed me not only to gather a lot of data but also to prevent any potential harm coming to the youths if any officers questioned their interactions with me. Gaining permits from officials did not mean that my research was compromised in terms of bureaucratic or political interests; it did allow me to waive initial bureaucratic rejection, but none of the bureaucrats interfered in the way I did my research. When I encountered some limitations, I negotiated my way in order to be able to do research that was convenient both for my interlocutors and for myself.

I take the ethical issues raised when conducting research with a young population seriously. Given that most of my participants had travelled without their parents or a guardian to Indonesia, I prioritized their own declaration of consent, even though I had already obtained an institutional permit. All research interactions were conducted in the most convenient situation for the youths, in the location of their choice. Some preferred to do unrecorded interviews, while others insisted that I record and quote them verbatim. Some wanted to be interviewed in their room accompanied by their friends, while others preferred to talk in a café far from the gaze of their neighbors. Some were not comfortable at all with the idea of an interview and invited me instead to observe their daily activities. All of the data that I collected during fieldwork has been carefully handled. It has been treated as highly confidential and I stored it on a secure password-

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[2] The research was commissioned by the UNHCR and undertaken by the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand, ECPAT International, The Research and Education for Peace, University Sains Malaysia and the Centre for Southeast Asia Social Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. See https://www.refworld.org/docid/538840d14.html.

protected hard disk that I used only for this research.

The sensitivity of the topics also touched upon the issue of trust between the youths and myself as a researcher. The youths themselves understandably had good reason not to trust an Indonesian researcher who came into their accommodation to observe them and record their activities, and who asked many questions about their strategies for getting by. "Trust was fragile, constantly assessed and could be suspended at any moment" (Andrikopolous 2017, 33). I fully understand that some of the information they gave me was a part of their representational strategies. I took their statements at face value until I found other evidence that proved otherwise. After all, I was not looking for a "fixed and isomorphic" truth (Kirmayer 2003, 167), as I found that focusing on their "experiential truth" (ibid) and self–representation was most useful for my analysis.

To respect the trust they showed in me, I tried to make sure that their participation in my research would not cause any harm to them and their interests. Initially, I was worried that the disclosure of their navigation practices might be used by other parties to agitate against the existence of the refugee population in Indonesia. As I developed a deeper understanding of the whole situation, I became confident that the risk was minimal. Firstly, in regard to the youths' navigations at the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, officers there are generally accustomed to young people's strategies and perceive them as "understandable." Although these officers' anticipation of maneuvering, including the use of representational strategies, may reflect a culture of disbelief, I was relieved to observe that they generally perceived such maneuvering relatively lightly and took it as a daily negotiation that must be carefully addressed.

Secondly, given the fluid and unstable mechanisms that related to the refugee population in Indonesia, the forms of social navigation also shifted. My research was, furthermore, conducted before Presidential Decree No 125/ 2016 Concerning the Handling of Foreign Refugees. Since the writing of this dissertation, therefore, there have been some improvements in certain aspects that may lead to new forms of navigation or mean that old ones might no longer be found. Furthermore, since the completion of my empirical research, while many of my interlocutors are still waiting

in uncertainty, several have moved on to a different stage: some are already resettled in third countries, while a few have undergone assisted voluntary repatriation. The constant changes in the young people's situations, as well as in the arenas with which they must interact, created dynamic streams that were unpredictable and not easily identified.

Thirdly, I have protected my interlocutors' identities by using pseudonyms for almost all of them, with the exception of those who had already established themselves as refugee focal points and specifically requested that I use their real names. To make it more challenging to recognize my interlocutors, I have used two or three pseudonyms for one person in a few cases throughout my dissertation. By doing so, I aim to protect the youths' privacy within close refugee communities, as well as to prevent any potential harm from bureaucrats or local society if they are identified.

CHAPTERS

The first empirical chapter is chapter 2: "Transit in Indonesia: An Enabling Waiting Spot." This chapter discusses Indonesia's attraction as a transit country from the perspective of independent refugee youth. Indonesia's deliberate practices of non-recording will also be discussed as a contributing factor to creating a fluid and flexible social terrain that offers an enabling space for independent refugee youth to exercise a certain degree of freedom of movement while in transit.

Chapter 3, "Age, Solitary Movement, and Narratives," focuses on the discussion of the categorizations and stigmas around independent refugee youth and their conditions of travel. I attempt to debunk the over-generalizing logics of institutional categorizations by demonstrating the variety of conditions and motivations of different youths who are all labeled under one institutional category. I also elaborate on two kinds of narratives employed by youths: "refugee narratives" and "youthful narratives." I will illustrate that while both narratives are prevalent in the migration context, the two are not respected equally.

In chapter 4, "Disbelieving and Playing Roles," youths' social navigations to obtain refugee status, to secure humanitarian

assistance, and to heighten their chances of being resettled are discussed. I illustrate how youths deal with what they perceive to be the most important arena, namely the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations. The production of vulnerability -particularly in terms of age and gender- is one of their most important navigations, together with representational strategies and "victimcy" (see Utas 2005). Furthermore, I highlight how youths effected shifts in the structure itself through their constant negotiations.

In chapter 5, "Making the Ends Meet," I discuss livelihood strategies and other navigations to generate income. According to young people, the economic arena is the second most important field to navigate in Indonesia, particularly in order to survive immediate precarity. I will elaborate on how youths maneuver the definition of "working", and negotiate as well as interpret Indonesia's employment regulations regarding what is lawful and what is not. In this chapter, I show how youth navigate the economic intersectionality between state and international governance, between formal and informal sectors, and between national and transnational economy (Betts et al. 2017, 9) by discussing their three maneuvers: doing money management; broadening social connections; and engaging in income generating activities, including transnational business.

The discussion of young people's tactics and strategies in chapter 6, "Being Good to Acquaintances, Opening the Heart to Friends," focuses on their attempts to have a harmonious relationship with regular citizens in transit in Indonesia. Here, youths must deal with Indonesia's social and cultural norms, which are less strict compared to dealing with the legal framework. In this chapter, I discuss local social and cultural norms from young people's perspectives, placing several aspects under consideration, such as personal relationships, language skills, and religious practices. In this chapter, I demonstrate youths' navigations by emphasizing their representational strategies that focus on their similarity to locals and mimic an "acceptable identity" in Indonesia.

In chapter 7, "Keep Moving Forward," I shed light on young people's maneuvers to actualize their potential and gain public recognition. Their multidirectional movements are unpacked through several activities, such as doing sports and making music, in

their choice of fashion, and via online self–representation through social media. By centralizing their activities, I argue that the youth project that is characteristic of social navigation not only survives their current insecure conditions, but also prepares them for future opportunities (cf. Vigh 2010). In this most "open" arena, youths show more agentic self–representation to claim their space in the global world, although they do also still utilize the productivity of vulnerability. If young people's navigations in previous arenas can be considered a part of the "politics of waiting," then this chapter speaks of the "poetics of waiting" (Bandak and Janeja 2018).

In the concluding chapter, I underline the overall argument of this dissertation, which is that despite the uncertainty of waiting in transit in Indonesia, independent refugee youth manage to navigate the shaky conditions through their multidirectional movements. The study of young people's navigations show that they continue to exercise their agency while in transit. The chapter also invites readers to revisit some theoretical concepts in the study of transit migration and offers some potential research topics for future study.