Abstract

At the end of 2018 there were 70.8 million refugees worldwide (CBS, 2019; Vluchtelingenwerk, 2018). Almost twenty-one million people have fled their country and more than forty-one million people are displaced internally (CBS, 2019; Vluchtelingenwerk, 2018). 52% of all the refugees worldwide is under the age of eighteen (CBS, 2019; Vluchtelingenwerk, 2018). The numbers are overwhelming, but behind every number there is a human being, a human being with a unique and personal story.

Being able to move is one of the most taken for granted actions in our modern world. While we ride our bikes and cars we never think about the refugees that are waiting in Ter Apel or the refugees that are stuck in small plastic boats crossing the ocean. Being on the move is a privilege, but we have not acknowledged this in a very long time. Mobility as a Western concept focuses mainly on being on the move. “The movement of entities from an origin to a destination along a specific trajectory that can be described in terms of space and time”. (Kaufman, Bergman, & Joye, 2004, p. 746)

This thesis highlights the experience of refugees before, during and after their journey towards Europe. By highlighting those experiences, I argue that a significant part of those experiences is not solely about being on the move. Being immobile, not able to move, plays a significant role in the journey of refugees. In Western social sciences mobility and immobility have been treated as mere opposites. This dialectical way of thinking neglects the role of immobility during movement.

I argue that the contemporary Western concept of mobility falls short in understanding the movement of refugees, because their journey encompasses far more than just the spatial or geographic movement. Their journey is characterized by stasis, waiting, eventless-ness, stuckedness and immobility along the way. Far too long mobility has been solely about movement, neglecting the people that are experiencing immobility while on the move. Mobility and immobility are not mere opposites. What the following stories exhibit is that mobility and immobility can be experienced simultaneously and are not dialectical in any sense. Therefore we need to treat the two concepts as an intertwined process that can be experienced while on the move.
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This was by far the hardest thing, university and school related, that I have gone through. There were times I wished I had never even began this Master in the first place. Sometimes I even thought that it made no sense to even think this would have an impact in the “world out there”. But this amazing journey has been worth it, I have learned so much about myself, I got in contact with amazing people and conducted a study I am very proud of. During this year I had an amazing support from my inner circle. First of all I want to thank my “Japie” for her unconditional love and support. For all the encouraging words in moments of real struggle. For all the coffee she made me in night hours when I was struggling to find the right words. For her energy that kept me going when my own was running low. You have no idea how important you have been in this process! I want to thank my mom, dad and my “little” brother for supporting me throughout the four years of studying at the VU. Thank you for supporting the choices that I have made along the way.
# Table of contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5
Theoretical framework ................................................................................................. 9
  Mobility ....................................................................................................................... 9
  Immobility ................................................................................................................ 12
Social Navigation ......................................................................................................... 14
Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 16
Methodology ................................................................................................................ 17
Research methods ....................................................................................................... 18
  Biographical interviews ............................................................................................ 19
  ‘Life stories’ ............................................................................................................... 21
  Participant observation & informal conversations .................................................. 23
  Analyses of laws and legislation concerning refugees and their mobility/immobility .. 24
Chapter 1: The beginning of a journey ....................................................................... 25
  Syria .......................................................................................................................... 25
  Fleeing Syria ........................................................................................................... 27
  Eritrea ....................................................................................................................... 28
  Fleeing Eritrea .......................................................................................................... 29
  Social navigation ...................................................................................................... 31
Chapter 2: The immobile journey ............................................................................. 33
  From Syria to Europe ............................................................................................... 33
  From Eritrea to Europe ............................................................................................ 37
  Mobility and immobility .......................................................................................... 40
Chapter 3: A journey that never ends ...................................................................... 42
  Ter Apel .................................................................................................................... 42
  AZC .......................................................................................................................... 43
  Never ending journey ............................................................................................. 47
  Governmentality ...................................................................................................... 49
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 51
Notes of an engaged anthropologist .......................................................................... 53
Bibliography ............................................................................................................... 55
Appendixes .................................................................................................................. 57
  Figure 1: Data table Interviews ............................................................................ 57
  Figure 2: Data table Participant observation .......................................................... 61
Introduction

“We went from Turkey to Greece by boat. We had to pay people in order to get a ticket for a boat. In total we were with almost fifty people I think. We thought it would be a big boat, but it was in fact a plastic inflatable boat. The boat itself had room for a maximum of 25-30 people, which was not enough for the entire group. We had no choice! It was going on this boat or God knows what would have happened to me.. In the middle of the night we boarded the inflatable boat. The situation on the boat was unreal, fifty people on a little inflatable boat, in the middle of the ocean, scared as hell! There were whole families on this boat with small children and elderly. You could see the panic and anxiety on their faces, thinking that this boat would not make it to Greece. If this boat would sink or would get punctured along the way, that would be the end for us. One of the grown up men was stirring the outboard motor in the direction that one of the smugglers had pointed in, this was very hard because it was pitch black out there. We did not know how long it would take to arrive in Greece and we did not even now we were heading in the right direction. We had a few bottles of water with us that we passed around the group for hydration. With every passing minute, the group became more anxious. People were crying, praying for a positive outcome and even having heated debates on what to do. After a couple of hours, I think it was a couple of hours but it felt like 2 years, it was getting cold and people became agitated. People were starting to cramp up due to sitting in the same position for too long, people became hungry and thirsty and they were becoming more negative due to the hopelessness of our situation. After some time the sun began rising and it was one the most beautiful sightings I have ever seen. The contrast between what mother nature was showing me and my hopeless situation on this boat, could not have been any bigger. It gave me a lot of energy to see the sun rising, it reminded me of the fact that life itself is beautiful and that I was moving towards a life I had been dreaming about! But, if we wanted to reach our destination, it had to be done the hard way!”

- Mira, 19/03/2019

At the time of her journey, Mira was a 14 year old girl trying to reach the life she had always been dreaming about. When I met Mira, 4 years after her horrendous journey, she was an 18 year old girl living in the Netherlands. She was enjoying herself, living the life she always wanted. She was free! Her journey was life changing, something that is deeply rooted in her daily life. The images of what she had gone through are always present. She had found “‘life’”, but lost a part of herself along the way. She reached her destination, but it was definitely done the hard way. Her journey was the hardest things she ever went through.

In Western thought journeys are about mobility, movement, being mobile and having the resources to go from one place to another (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004;
Cresswell, 2010; Vigh, 2009). Mobility as we know it, is characterised by a linear process from an origin to a destination, that we can describe in terms of space and time. But can we consider Mira’s journey in those terms? Is fleeing your country an asset or a resource (*motility*)? Can we consider the movement Mira in terms of mobility, a simple movement from an origin to a destination through space and time? Can we consider Mira’s journey as a linear process?

This 14 year old girl made a long and life-changing journey from Iran to Europe. She has travelled more than 5000 kilometres to find safety. Her story shows us that not every movement across this globe has the same experience and can be captured with the concept mobility. Mira felt immobile during her journey, not able to move freely and to choose where to go. She even experienced stuckedness, waiting for the next step in her journey. Her journey is everything but a linear process that can be described in terms of space and time. The concept mobility is often associated with spatial or geographic mobility and the ever-growing connectedness of our world, but the above story shows us that mobility in everyday life is far more complex and needs more than just a simple explanation of the increased connectedness of our world.

Mira’s story is incredible, unique and personal, but it does not stand isolated. Her story fits perfectly into a global framework of migration and mobility. There are millions of stories around the world that are shockingly similar to Mira’s. Such stories shows us that the contemporary Western concept of mobility falls short in understanding the movement of refugees, because their journey encompasses far more than just the spatial or geographic movement. My critique on the contemporary use of the concept mobility is that many features of a journey, such as stuckedness, being immobile and power dynamics, are not captured with the concept mobility. By only looking at the spatial and geographic movement of an entity, we fail to understand the experiences along the way (Creswell, 2010; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Mira’s story questions the linear assumptions of the concept mobility and tries to show the experiences during her movement instead of just the spatial distance of the motion.

This thesis will focus itself on the experiences of the concept mobility by refugees. By focusing on their experiences before, during and after their journeys towards Europe, I want to show that mobility encompasses far more than just the spatial and geographical movement of entities. My research question is; How have refugees experienced their own mobility and immobility before, during and after their journey towards Europe? In my research I have divided this research question in the following sub-questions;

- How have refugees experienced their mobility and immobility *before* their journey?

  *This sub question will deal with the specific circumstances that lead people to flee their own*
homes. Based on the concept social navigation (Vigh, 2009), I will argue that movement can be a mode of survival to deal with changing circumstances.

- How have refugees experienced their mobility and immobility during their journey towards Europe?
  
  This sub question highlights the experiences refugees have during their journey towards Europe. I will argue that mobility is not a linear process and encompasses far more than just the spatial and geographic movement of entities, which many authors overlook (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004).

- How have refugees experienced their mobility and immobility after their journey?
  
  Once the refugees have arrived in the Netherlands, or other European countries, a new journey commences. I will show that the Dutch asylum process is highlighted by power dynamics that influences the mobility and immobility of refugees. Based on the concept governmentality (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014), I will argue that the state monopolises the legitimate means of movement.

By applying mobility and immobility in a static and dialectical way (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004; Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014), we fail to understand the experiences refugees have during their journey towards Europe. There have been attempts to show that the two concepts are closely related (Cresswell, 2010), but those attempts fail to overcome the binary opposition. By documenting and analysing ‘travel stories’ from refugees, I have attempted to overcome this binary opposition and treat mobility and immobility in a more fluid and interchangeable way, arguing that they can be present and felt simultaneously. In addition to the academic relevance, a better understanding of the movement of refugees and their experiences during and after their journey would also benefit our understanding of their needs and how we can support them in securing those needs.

Following this introduction I will shortly elaborate on the theoretical notions related to mobility and immobility in my theoretical framework. I will show that mobility and immobility in anthropological thought, are treated as opposites and in a dialectical way (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004; Adey, 2006; Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). I will discuss the methods that have been used in the methodology section. In total I had eighteen informants, in the methodology section the reader will meet five of my informants that have a prominent role in the chapters to come.

In chapter one I will elaborate on the situations in both Syria and Eritrea. I will discuss the reason behind fleeing the country and the mode of survival refugees felt in dealing with the specific
circumstances. The concept social navigation (Vigh, 2009) will have a prominent role in this chapter. Chapter two will highlight the journey itself. What do people experience during their journey in search for ‘life’? Many authors apply and treat mobility and immobility as a binary opposition (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004; Adey, 2006; Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014) by highlighting the experiences along the way, this chapter will show that mobility and immobility are not static concepts. I will argue, by showing travel stories, that mobility and immobility are not dialectical and can be present simultaneously.

The journey does not end when refugees arrive in European countries and apply for asylum. In chapter three I will discuss the experiences refugees have in the Dutch asylum process. The argument in chapter three is that mobility and the power over movement is subject to power dynamics. Based on the concept governmentality, will show that the state mopolises the legitimate means of movement (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). I will conclude this thesis with a conclusion of what has been stated throughout.
Theoretical framework

In the society we live in “all the world seems to be on the move”. (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Ideas, persons and goods have never travelled with the speed they are travelling at this very moment. Almost every online store has the slogan: ordered before 22:00h, delivered tomorrow! We can take a plane to the other side of the world and arrive there the same day. Ideas and information also travel with enormous speed. Within a few seconds I know the result of a soccer match without me being present in the stadium. Mobility is all around us and most of the times we do not even realise it, it has become part of us. In this chapter I will touch upon some concepts related to mobility and immobility that will give a better understanding of the movement of refugees.

I will first discuss mobility (Kaufman, Bergman, & Joye, 2004, p. 746) and the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010) and make the connection with the closely related concept motility (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004, p. 750). Following the discussion on mobility, I will shift my attention towards immobility (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). The third concept I will discuss is social navigation (Vigh, 2009). I will conclude this section with an overall conclusion on my theoretical standpoint.

Mobility

In Western thought the concept mobility has a positive connotation, it reminds us of freedom and being able to move from one place to another. Not surprisingly the Oxford dictionary defines mobility as; “The ability to move or be moved freely and easily” (Oxford dictionary, 2018). If we consider this definition for a moment, we can see that it consists of three parts. The first part is about the ability of entities. So persons, ideas and goods must have the ability to move in order to be mobile. The second part is that entities must be able to move or that they can be moved. Here we see that it is about things that maybe are not able to move themselves but are able to be moved by others, like goods and information. The third part is about the movement of entities being free and easy. But is this the case for every movement in this world? Is every entity able to move or be moved freely and easily?

Mobility can also be seen in different terms. Spatial mobility refers to a geographic displacement of entities; “The movement of entities from an origin to a destination along a specific trajectory that can be described in terms of space and time”. (Kaufman, Bergman, & Joye, 2004, p. 746) In this sense everything that moves can be considered as being mobile. If we use this approach mobility becomes a linear process. You move from one place to another through space and time. Nevertheless, this definition fails to understand the movement of a lot of people around the world. Mobility in everyday life is not that simple and linear. Being mobile or experiencing mobility
is not just moving from one place to another along a specific trajectory that can be described in terms of space and time, it consists of more dynamics. It fails to understand the immobility of very moveable entities, refugees for example. Although refugees made a long journey along a specific trajectory that we can describe in terms of space and time, they did not do this freely and easily. During their journey many refugees experience stasis, waiting and even stuckedness. After their journey to Europe many refugees become immobile again, they are unable to move from one place to another and are stuck in their migration trajectory. Very moveable entities, in this case refugees, experience immobility. Experiencing immobility while on the move is a big part of the stories of many refugees.

Many authors studying mobility have shown in recent years that mobility itself is closely related to social structures and immobility. “There are new places and technologies that enhance the mobility of some peoples and places and heighten the immobility of others” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 207). The new mobility paradigms argues that mobility and control over mobility are not the same for everyone. This new mobility paradigm has a more holistic approach towards mobility. “Putting social relations into travel and connecting different forms of transport with complex patterns of social experience” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 208). Where mobility was a very fixed and static concept and the act of movement was given, in the new mobilities paradigm the concept becomes more fluid and can have various outcomes (Cresswell, 2010, p. 18-19). Although the more holistic approach opens up new forms of mobility and immobility, the concept of mobility itself is formulated as being a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 211).

Cresswell (2010), one of the main authors in discussing the new mobilities paradigm, breaks down mobility into six different aspects of moving, showing that mobility as a resource is differentially accessed. The motive force is the first aspect. This aspect focuses on why a person or a thing moves. Here there is a distinction made between being compelled to move or choosing to move (Cresswell, 2010, p. 22). The second aspect considers the speed of the movement, the velocity. Speed is seen as something exclusive, a luxury. Although the demand for speed is increasingly associated with exclusivity, it is not always the high velocity that are the valued ones. The slow food and slow culture movements are an example of this. But there is clearly an hierarchy when considering the speed of movement (Cresswell, 2010, p. 23).

The rhythm of a movement is the third aspect of mobility. It examines the rhythm of movement as a form of measurement. Everyday commuting to work is seen as a regular movement or correct mobility, whereas a strange rhythm of movement such as journeys at irregular intervals can mark someone as suspicious (Cresswell, 2010, p. 24). The focus of the fourth aspect is on the routes that entities take when they are on the move. Mobility is channelled, we have made specific routes through and across different routes. Some areas are connected and some areas are
disconnected from these routes. So the distance of a route has become less important and the connectivity has increased in importance; “it facilitates speed for some while ensuring the slowness of those who are bypassed”. (Cresswell, 2010, p. 25) The experience of mobility is the fifth aspect Cresswell (2010) distinguishes. How does a particular form of movement feel? For some moving is hard work while for others movement is about luxury (Cresswell, 2010, p. 25). Flying first or second class in the same airplane can be an immensely different experience.

The first five aspects focus primarily at being on the move. The last aspect examines the question; how and when does our movement stop? The process of stopping, or friction, is something that we need to pay attention to in order to get a full understanding of mobility. An example of friction is racial profiling. “Black people in major cities across the West are still far more likely to be stopped by police” (Cresswell, 2010, p. 26). By breaking down the concept of mobility into six aspects, Cresswell highlights the hierarchical nature of being mobile and conceptualises this as the politics of mobility. The outcome of this approach is that mobility is not the same for everyone. Although this approach highlights the hierarchical nature of the concept mobility and immobility, it still treats them in a dialectical way.

Although the new mobilities paradigm gives us a better understanding of the social, political and power dimension of mobility, it nevertheless fails to fully understand the movement of refugees. If mobility is seen as a resource refugees have a good amount of ‘mobile resources’ because they have made a journey along a specific trajectory that we can describe in terms of space and time (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004). But this does not tell the whole story. If being mobile is seen as a resource, moving or being on the move becomes a positive instrument in social hierarchies. But can we consider the movement of refugees, who fled their countries for multiple reasons, as something positive and something that will enhance their status in social hierarchies?

Another concept closely related to movement is motility. The concept motility can be defined as; “the capacity of entities (eg. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographic space, or as the way in which entities access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances” (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004, p. 750). Motility is about the access to different forms and degrees of mobility, the competence to identify and use the access, and appropriation of certain actions and choices (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004, p. 750). This definition is almost identical to the capital theories of Bourdieu. The France sociologist sees capital as the actual or potential resources an actor can have. This focus on the concept of capital is instrumental and individualistic. It only examines the individual human capital, implying that there is a level playing field for competition based on such skills (Portes, 1998). Loury (1977) shows that not everyone has the same actual or potential resource and that there is no level playing field; “equality of opportunity is an ideal that cannot be achieved” (Loury in Portes, 1998. p. 4). When we speak of
motility/mobility as a resource in the Bourdieuan thought, consequences are that the level of capital differs from person to person, thus mobility for some means immobility for others (Portes, 1998, p. 1).

This concept shows us that there are some serious dynamics of power at work. Being mobile and having access to mobility is suddenly seen as a capital. An asset that people can use in for them an appropriate way. Structural, cultural and political dimensions are incorporated into the act of movement. Nevertheless, also this concept falls short in understanding the mobility refugees. Firstly, the concept only highlights the positive side of movement and mobility, “*the concepts focuses attention on the positive consequences, while putting aside its less attractive features*” (Portes, 1998. p. 2). Secondly it does not take the context into account. When the focus lies on the positive consequences and does not take the context and the specific circumstances into account, refugees possess, according to motility, a huge capital. How can we consider persons that has fled their country, to have a good amount of mobile capital (motility)? In the situation of refugees it is not just about the movement itself, but about the question of why they moved in the first place and how they have experienced their journey. There are so much more dynamics at work, such as political and contextual dynamics, that we need to understand in order to explain their movement.

**Immobility**

Adey (2006) argues that in recent years there has been a shift in studying mobility. “*There is an increasing move underway to begin viewing things that have previously been assumed bounded, fixed, stable and permanent, in terms of flows and fluids - in terms of movement*” (Adey, 2006, p. 78). The argument here is that everything is mobile and moving, even buildings like an airport are seen in terms of fluidity and flows. Adey examines how airports change over time. Airports are in a constant state of transforming, a constant state of becoming, which is can be seen as a process of mobility. But if everything, even things that previously been assumed bounded and permanent, is mobile, the consequences are that we see the whole world as a mass of unintelligible gloop. (Adey, 2006)

To fully understand the concept of mobility, we have to realize that mobility is a highly differentiated and relational activity in the sense that moving is done in very different ways by a variety of people and that it gains meaning through how it is ingrained in societies, cultures, politics and histories (Adey, 2006). So we relate to mobility in different ways. This highlights that there is a difference in mobility and how people experience this. Here we see the relational character between mobility and immobility. What mobility is for one can be immobility for someone else. It is therefore possible that someone that is moving can still feel and experience immobility. Adey (2006) and Urry (2003) argue that everything that is mobile must need something stable or permanent to generate
mobility and movement; “Movement is possible only through particular periods of rest. Things must
stop in order to prepare for later movement” (Adey, 2006, p. 89). This is what they call the
mobility/moorings dialect.

Here we can see a clear parallel with the journey many refugees. Mobility and immobility are
closely related, although many of them made an incredible long journey, in the process many
refugees felt very immobile. Periods of moving are succeeded by long periods of waiting and being
stuck. Mobility and immobility are therefore not a binary opposition but an intertwined process in
which both can be simultaneously experienced. Governments and institutions play a significant role
in this feeling of stuckedness. Fassin (2011) shows that the transnational circulation of people has
become increasingly restricted. States control these restrictions and in the process make people
experience immobility.

The control of states and institutions and their actions to control a population is called
governmentality. Governmentality are all the actions and procedures used by the state to
intentionally and deliberately slow down the migrants during their journey. The state monopolises
the legitimate means of movement through their actions and procedures and make refugees feel
immobile even though they are on the move. “Waiting, insecurity, and eventual refusal have come to
characterize border experiences for those without the economic, social and cultural capital needed
to deploy “flexible citizenship” in a world on the move” (Andersson, 2014, p. 796).

By deliberate and intentional slowing down refugees and migrants, Andersson (2011) argues
that the power over the management of time is a tactic or a technique for the state in the migration
trajectory of refugees. Thick dossiers, potential switches in policies and the event-lessness in
migration camps are just some of the strategies used by the state as a tactic to generate a sense of
uncertainty, shame, depression and anxiety among the migrants. (Andersson, 2014) By managing
time and delaying their migratory experience, refugees are stuck and experience immobility on the
borders of many European countries. In a way the state is colonising the future of refugees because
there expectations about the future are taken away from them and put on hold. The speed of their
journey soon withers into stasis and “stuckedness” when on the brink of their promised far-ahead
future. (Andersson, 2014)
Social Navigation

The concepts that I have described above look at the actual movement or moments of being stuck of actors, but they do not take the context and specific circumstances into account that make actors move or experience immobility. There are specific circumstances that lead people to flee their own country. Most refugees are trying to escape, or have already escaped, the confining structures of a society. A concept that takes the socio-political context of the movement into account is social navigation. Social navigation is helpful as a concept when “looking at how people move in uncertain circumstances [...] the way agents act in difficult situations, move under the influence of multiple forces or seek to escape confining structures” (Vigh, 2009, p. 419). Like the above quote suggests, social navigation it is a metaphor for illuminating social practice in specific circumstances (Vigh, 2009 p. 419).

Navigation comes from the word ‘to sail’ and means to go by sea. The word itself is important because it implies practicing a form of movement in a moving environment. The sea is always changing and moving, to sail is therefore a practice of moving in a fluid and changeable matter, in other words; motion in motion (Vigh, 2009, p. 420). If navigation means to go by sea, it is counterposed to moving across fixed, solidified and hardened landscapes. When we consider those fixed landscapes for a moment, Vigh (2009) argues that also these landscapes are changeable and fluid. The environment around us is much like the movement of the sea; “we move in social environments of actors, actants, individuals and institutions, that engage and move us as we move along” (Vigh, 2009, p. 420). Social navigation as a practice highlights the interactivity between agency, social forces, change and movement. This gives us an alternative perspective on mobility in the sense that we as actors are not the only thing that moves.

Social navigation can be seen as a flexible and adaptive practice. People in difficult situations, uncertainty and conflict spend a great deal of time discussing how global, regional and local influences will have an impact on their lives and how they can survive these specific circumstances. In practice, social navigation, is the reading of and adapting to uncertain and changeable socio-political environments, in which one’s present position and position in the future must be taken into account. “When navigating we seek to act in an through immediate changeable circumstances as well as move toward positions in the yet to come – articulated in unison as hopes and dreams” (Vigh, 2009, p. 426). Vigh (2009) shows us that social navigation as such is the practice of plotting and manoeuvring our way towards an advantageous direction in the future within fluid and changeable circumstances and contexts.

The concept of social navigation is not restricted to areas of uncertainty, social flux or political turmoil and volatility. Our social world around us is always in motion, wherever someone is
located on this globe. Although the concept becomes increasingly visible in unstable, changeable and volatile social and political circumstances, it does not emerge from it. “We all navigate, but the intensity and visibility of our navigational efforts depend on the speed and/or opacity of social change and our ability to control oncoming movement” (Vigh, 2009, p. 430).

Besides the movement of actors, social navigation acknowledges the fact that our social context around us also keeps moving. We move within an already moving context. Refugees act, adjust and attune their strategies and tactics in relation to the movement of the surroundings. The motion of the context leads to the movement and mobility of refugees. Many people around the world have made a journey because they wanted to escape the confining structures of a specific society. They adjusted their strategies to the fluid and changeable socio-political environment and plotted their way towards a more advantageous position, in many cases a journey towards Europe. In this sense being mobile is not a resource or a capital but a way of dealing with the social context, specific circumstances and the structures around us. This concept gives a better understanding of the movement and mobility of refugees. But the ‘journey’ of many refugees does not solely include being on the move or being mobile. In the next sections I will argue that in a lot of moments during their ‘journey’ refugees are stuck, not able to move and stripped from their mobility.
Conclusion

In the above I have argued that both concepts of mobility and motility falls short in understanding the movement and mobility of refugees. When mobility is conceptualised as a resource, refugees have a good amount of ‘mobile resources’ because they have made a journey along a specific trajectory that we can describe in terms of space and time. (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004) Motility sees moving and being mobile as an capital; the capacity of entities (eg. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographic space, or as the way in which entities access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances” (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye. 2004. p. 750). But this does not tell the story of the journey of many refugees because we cannot consider people that have fled their country, to have a good amount of mobile capital (motility).

Social navigation sees moving and being mobile as a reaction to the changeable and already moving surroundings. Refugees act, adjust and attune their strategies and tactics in relation to the movement of the surroundings. They adjusted their strategies to the fluid and changeable socio-political environment and plotted their way towards a more advantageous position, in many cases a journey towards Europe. Although social navigation comes close in understanding the mobility of refugees it has neglected one key factor of many journeys of refugees; the experience of immobility.

The journey of refugees is not solely about moving and being mobile, a large part of the journey consists of feeling and experiencing immobility, stasis, waiting and event-lessness. The stories of many refugees show us that mobility and immobility are not a binary opposition but can be experienced simultaneously while being on the move. We have to treat mobility and immobility in a more fluid way in order to understand the experiences of many movements around the world.
Methodology

“Ethnography is a practice that: evolves in design as the study progresses; involves direct and sustained contact with human beings, in the context of their daily lives, over a prolonged period of time; draws on a family of methods, usually including participant observation and conversation (interviews); respects the complexity of the social world; and therefore tells rich, sensitive and credible stories” (O’Reily, 2012, pp 11).

In this chapter I will elaborate on the methods that have been used during my fieldwork. I will discuss each method, their benefits, their pitfalls and I will reflect upon those methods that I have used.

In my last meeting with my supervisor, Lenie Brouwer, she argued that doing fieldwork in your own surroundings can be very difficult because of the habits, customs and your habitue in those surroundings. Doing fieldwork in your own surroundings require a certain mode or technique of doing research. Where in unfamiliar and foreign surroundings require a certain mode or technique of doing research. Where in unfamiliar and foreign surroundings, everything you see, touch or feel is data, this is not the case in familiar surroundings. In the last case you, as a researcher, need to find the data and breach your everyday routine. Often simple observations, feelings or reflections get overlooked. In the first month of the research period I was struggling with this and often regretted the decision to not go abroad. This feeling did not get any better when the endless bureaucracy of the COA (Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers) finally, after almost four months, decided that doing research in one of the asylum seekers centre was not of their interest.

During this time of struggle, I found comfort in reading. Before the fieldwork period commenced I started reading the book by Rodaan al Galidi – “Hoe ik talent voor het leven kreeg”. I finished this book in the second week of the fieldwork period. This book is a biography and a roman. It tells the story of Semmier, a refugee from Iraq, how he managed to get to Europe, what he has endured during this journey and how he has experienced the Dutch society and all its processes and procedures. The story is harsh, emotional, funny and almost unimaginable for many European citizens. I would like to share the end of the book with you;

“I walked from the AZC to the station and thought to myself: What do I have to do now? After nine years of stagnation and doing nothing in that building? Surprised I looked at the world around me. From the moment I did not belong to that building anymore, it felt like I had been trapped inside a sealed basement. The world was not getting bigger, instead it felt more dangerous and less reliable than it had been in that building.

Physically and mentally I had changed. The social services, the reception and the IND all knew Semmier. But I did not know him. I had to get to know him in order to move on with my life.
A young Dutch mother was pushing a buggy with twins forward. She was heading in the direction of the station. It was a beautiful and hopeful sign, those first minutes released from the AZC building. The lady was carrying a handbag and a suitcase. I asked if she needed any help and she nodded. At the station she looked at the schedule of the train;

“Fuck” she said irritated. “15 minutes delay”. I laughed out loud. She looked at me with a questioning look.

“I just had some delays as well, nine years! In that building.” While I said this I pointed to the orange department of the AZC, that was nearly visible. The lady smiled at me. If I had not carried her bag to the station, she would have thought I was crazy..

Maybe I was crazy.”


After spending 7 years walking around all over the world with no passport, Semmier is trapped inside the grey buildings of an AZC for another nine years. Nine years in which he felt like being trapped in a basement. He had changed and he did not even knew himself anymore. After nine years of hibernation he was finally free in a dangerous and unreliable world. Rodaan Al Galidi has written a novel that is unimaginable for many European citizens, but touches reality for many refugees that seek asylum in the same countries.

It is a beautiful insight into the lived experiences of a refugee, the processes and procedures the Dutch government installed for refugees and into how the confinement of an AZC (Asielzoekers Centrum) has an impact on people’s lives. For me this was the first time I was exposed to such a story and it was also an indication of the emotional talks I was going to experience during my interviews and informal talks. This book underlined the fact that this is a very sensitive, emotional and sometimes traumatising topic and that it had to be dealt with in the right way. This book gave me the right baggage, knowledge and empathy to deal with this topic and to not harm people in the process.

Research methods

Karen O’Reily argues that ethnography pays attention to wider structures and to the thoughts and feelings of agents, within the context of daily life and individual action, is an ideal approach to research the practices of social life. Blasco and Wardle (2007) state that “Narratives of the immediate function as the building blocks of anthropological arguments” (Blasco and Wardle, 2007, p.89). But which methods are used to develop rich, sensitive and credible stories? How do anthropologists obtain narratives of the immediate to tell a story about the practices of social life?

During my fieldwork I have used the following methods;
• Biographical interviews.
• ‘Life stories’.
• Participant observation & informal conversations.
• Analyses of laws and legislation concerning refugees and their mobility/immobility.

Biographical interviews

“Interviews can take all sort of shapes; opportunistic chats, questions that arise on the spur of the moment, one to one in depth interviews, group interviews, and all sort of ways of asking questions and learning about the daily life of people” (O’Reily, 2012, pp 117). Karen O’Reily (2012) argues that ethnographic interviews are unstructured and have open-ended questions that touch upon the topics of the research. Where normal interview differ from the ethnographic interviews is that ethnographic interviews are guided conversations rather than interrogations. “Most of the time they take place in the field as part of the ongoing development of trustful, ethical, sensitive relationships. Ethnographic interviewing is thus an engaged, reflexive, collaborative and time-consuming method” (O’Reily, 2012, pp 127).

During my fieldwork I used semi-structured interviews. I identified three topics which were used in every interview. The first topic was the life the refugees had in their country of origin, which developments made them to make a journey towards Europe? The second topic concerned the journey itself. What did they experience during those moments of mobility/immobility and how did they cope with certain situations and developments along the way. The life in the Netherlands was the final topic, which focused on the Dutch system and their “journey” they have to make in the Netherlands itself.

The interviews were more like a guided conversation instead of a full on interview/interrogation. Those guided conversation focused on a specific part of their lives or an event, in this case the journey those refugees made towards Europe. Karen O’reily (2012) calls this oral histories which “focus their attention on a time period, event, theme, or part of life” (O’Reily, 2012, pp 128). Those type of conversations also have a clear link with biographies or life stories. The sensitive subject, the trustful relationship between me and the refugees, the emotional and breathtaking accounts of their experiences, the reflexive and engaging element for me as a researcher, the openness of the refugees in sharing such emotional and personal experiences and their willingness to be part in this research, is everything that makes anthropology such a beautiful field of study. These conversations will stick with me forever.

In total I had 18 interviews and I spoke with fourteen refugees with various backgrounds. Nine of the informants were from Syria and were between twenty and thirty five years old. From those nine Syrian people, six of them were male and three were female. Almost all informants from
this background were students at various universities across the Netherlands. Except two, one who was in the process of finding work and a young couple who were staying in an asylum seekers centre (in Dutch AZC). The Syrians informants all had an Christian background and were highly religious, which was one of the main reasons to leave Syria and make the journey towards Europe. Four of the remaining informants had an Eritrean (Tigray region) background, were all male and Christians and were between eighteen and fifty five years old. The Tigrinya (language) background, their age, their religion and their gender are very important factors in explaining the stories and the mobility of those Eritrean males.

The last informant was an eighteen year old, Iranian female. Her story was totally different from all the other stories, but it makes her perspective also very interesting. If we expand this comparative analysis of the informants, we can say that there was a difference in class between the informants with a Syrian background and the informants with a Eritrean background. All informants with a Syrian background were in the process of getting a high degree or had already obtained this. Furthermore many of those students had jobs or were doing charity work beside their studies. The Eritrean informants all had trouble with the Dutch language, finding work and the Dutch system as a whole for numerous reasons.

I also interviewed social workers from Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad. I had weekly talks with Sara Dros, a legal specialist, and interviewed her twice. The insights into the Dutch asylum process and the laws and legislations that come with this process, were useful in analysing the feeling of stuckedness by refugees. I also held a group-interview with two of her colleagues. Those interviews were designed to see my data from another perspective, the perspective of a social worker.

The interviews itself were also highly diverse in their settings. Nine of the interviews were done at WelzijnLelystad in a meeting room at the office of this organisation. For many of them this is a comfortable place because they have regular appointments there with their supervisors. During those interviews the designated supervisors of the informant was always present. At first I thought this would be a hindrance for the openness of the informants, but on the contrary all informants were more comfortable to talk with their supervisor present.

During two of those nine interviews I used an interpreter. In both cases the language that was spoken was Tigrinya. This was the first time that I made use of an interpreter to interview someone. It was a very interesting experience and it made it harder to get data in those circumstances. The remainder nine interviews were done in the informants homes, which was a deliberate choice because I wanted to make the informants comfortable. Apart from the two interviews that were done in Tigrinya, all other interviews were done in Dutch, English or a mixture of French/English. (See figure 1 in the appendix for a full overview of all the informants backgrounds)

The conversations were really fruitful in obtaining data and getting a nice overview of
experiences refugees had during their journey. Although the conversations were fruitful and gave me a lot of insights, there were some tough and tricky aspects during those conversations. Due to the fact that the conversations were about sensitive and emotional experiences it was sometimes hard to deal with the emotions that occurred during the interviews. What are the right follow-up questions when someone is very emotional reminiscing about their experiences? How do you console and comfort someone that you have met only once or twice?

Those occurrences were the hardest moments during my fieldwork. It sometimes even made me reconsider the subject as a whole, was I hurting and damaging those people by recollecting their experiences during those conversations? But then I thought about something that I always said at the beginning of every interview I had, which helped in establishing an open and trustful relationship between me and the refugees: “I know this is a sensitive and sometimes emotional topic, if there are any questions, subjects or stories that you do not want to share with me than I respect that completely. If you at any point during this interview want to stop or pause this conversation please tell me. If I make you uncomfortable in any way please tell me.” (Opening interviews during fieldwork, Sven van den Hengel, 2019)

‘Life stories’
I would like you to meet five of my informants. These refugees will have a prominent position in the following empirical chapters. By giving their citations and stories some background and context, I try to produce a more vivid argument.

Mansend
Mansend is a 23 year old student from Amsterdam. He is living in Amsterdam all by himself, his brother and sister have made the journey to other parts of Europe and his parents are still in Syria. Mansend began his journey on September the 7th 2014 in Aleppo. What he thought to be a 15 days trip changed in into a horrendous journey that took him 5 days shy of 5 months. His journey is incredible and takes him through the country side of Syria, Lebanon, a boat trip to Greece and a nervous plane ride towards his future. 3 years after fleeing his country, he is enjoying the Dutch student lifestyle. His openness and willingness to adapt to circumstances have led to an integration success. He is in the second year of his bachelor studies and speaks Dutch perfectly, works as a volunteer at a big NGO and has recently met his girlfriend Raghkel. Mansend thinks about life as being a survival game, something that is a huge theme in his journey:

“I see it as survival! You thinks that it is impossible to happen in the Netherlands, but I thought the same about Syria. We had everything in my country, stability, good economy, we were highly
developed. Syria was not a developing country. All of sudden it changed, and you have to change with it to survive, wouldn’t you do the same?’’

- Mansend, 08/03/2019

Hanous
Hanous is a 38 year old Eritrean male living in Lelystad. Since August 2018 Hanous and his wife and two children obtained housing in Lelystad. His journey started in 2011, when he decided that the overall situation in Eritrea was getting difficult to support his family. The decision was a hard one, leaving his country would make him an enemy of the state, he could never return. Following a six year journey that got him through Ethiopia, Sudan, the Sahara, a boat trip towards Italy and various train stints through Europe, he arrived in the Netherlands in October 2017. The common thread in his story is the love for his family. All that keeps him going are his wife and two children;

“In our country, in our culture, I, as a man, have to support my family. This is my one and only task, if I fail to do so, I will fail in life. It was leaving Eritrea or fail at my most important task”.

- Hanous, 26/02/2019

Raghkel
Raghkel is a 18 year old student from Amsterdam. In 2014 her parents decided that Raghkel had no future in a country like Syria, which was in a severe armed conflict since 2011. After her finals at high school, a very important moment in the life of young Syrians, they left the country for a well-deserved summer holiday to Turkey. They never thought that this would be the last time they would see Syria. After experiencing stuckedness in Turkey and Egypt, her father decided to leave for Europe. Following an asylum process of 8 months, her father applied for a family reunion. Raghkel and her mother soon joined him in the Netherlands. In September 2018 she started her bachelor study in Amsterdam and has now obtained a little place for herself. She spends a great deal of time studying and exploring Amsterdam with her boyfriend Mansend. As an only child, Raghkel’s study and future was the most important factor in deciding to come to the Netherlands.

“My father literally said to me that he had no future anymore, the best he could do was giving me a better future. That was the most important thing for my parents; my future!’’

- Raghkel, 08/03/2019

Basshem & Jumia
Basshem and Jumia are your everyday modern Western couple. Nothing about their appearance would suggest that they had fled Syria. If Basshem and Jumia told me that they were Spanish or
Italian, I would have believed them without hesitation. However, Basshem and his wife Jumia, both in their thirties, fled Syria and went to Turkey. They lived and worked there for multiple years before Basshem’s working permit was not prolonged by the Turkish government. Because of Basshem’s background in Development studies and his work for several NGO’s, he was invited to an workshop in Germany. After this visit to central Europe, the couple decided to apply for a visa. When this application was accepted and they had arrived in the Netherlands, Basshem and Jumia applied for asylum in Ter Apel. This couple reminded of the fact that we are all so much alike, we all have dreams and things we want to achieve. Basshem and Jumia have been placed in an AZC since February, 1.5 months prior to our meeting. They were full of energy and had a strong willingness to be active. The grey surroundings and experiences of waiting and stuckness in an AZC are taking its toll on this couple.

“Sometimes it is hard not to focus on the hard things, you know? It costs a lot of negative energy. We can’t do anything in here and it is hard to focus on the good things!”

- Basshem and Jumia, 20/03/2019

Participant observation & informal conversations

“Participant observation is an embodied activity; and a reflexive practice that must acknowledge our own role in the practice and unfolding of daily life” (O’Reily, 2012, . 99). According to O’Reily (2012) participant observation is participating and observing the daily life in an unfamiliar setting for a period of time. Participant observation involves multiple actions and practices; making notes, asking questions, collecting data, drawing up lists, and all other forms of being active in research. (O’Reily, 2012) Taking fieldnotes is a very important part of ethnography. All relevant information from the field for a research is written down. Intellectual and personal fieldnotes will aid reflexivity.

During my fieldwork I had a lot of informal conversations and moments of participant observation, which helped me to get in contact with refugees, gave me the perspective of social workers or helped me to understand the emotional and sensitive parts of this research subject. The notes which I made following informal conversations or participant observations were especially very fruitful because they had a reflexive character. One of my most memorable moments during my fieldwork was being able to visit a refugee in an asylum seekers centre and being able to feel, see, experience and immerse myself in their daily life. To this very day, I get chills when rereading my fieldnotes from that particular moment. (See figure 2 in the appendix for more information on participant observation)
Analyses of laws and legislation concerning refugees and their mobility/immobility.

During my fieldwork I came in contact with WelzijnLelystad, an organisation that helps refugees with many forms of integration, such as independence, participation and emancipation of groups and individuals in Dutch society. My contact person within this organisation happened to be a legal professional that gave refugees legal assistance in their procedures. My many informal conversations with her gave me a better understanding of the procedures, the laws and legislations that are in place in Dutch society concerning refugees. After getting a better understanding of the procedures refugees need to go through in order to obtain housing, I started to analyse those procedures and how they influenced the mobility/immobility of refugees.

Analysing the procedures, laws and legislations gave me a better understanding of the power dynamics that are big part of mobility and immobility. Who has the power over the means of movement?
Chapter 1: The beginning of a journey

In this chapter I will elaborate on my first sub-question; How have refugees experienced their mobility and immobility before their journey? I will look at the reason behind the movement of refugees and the contextual conditions that led to fleeing their country. With the help of Vigh’s (2009) concept social navigation I will show why refugees take the step towards their movement. By using social navigation as a concept, I argue that movement can be a mode of survival, a way of dealing with the changing and moving circumstances. I will give a short historical and contextual update on Syria and Eritrea respectively. After which, I will shift my attention towards the reasons behind fleeing the country and making the journey towards Europe.

Syria

Syria is a country in Western Asia or also referred to as the transcontinental region Middle East. The country has borders with Lebanon in the southwest, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south and Israel to the southwest. Syria has a dense history and has been part of the major empires such as the Egyptian, Persian and Roman empires. Since 1970 the country is led by an authoritative regime, first by Hafez al-Assad from 1970 till 2000 and then by his son Bashar al-Assad from June 2000 onwards. The tensions between Syria and the west kept rising under the reign of Bashar al-Assad, as the West tightened its economic sanctions. During those times Syria developed as a country and life itself was pleasant. Civilisation flourished and the Syrians were enjoying a modern lifestyle:

“I had a wonderful life in Syria before the war. I lived with my Parents in Damascus, a beautiful city. I never thought about leaving Syria before the war. We had a beautiful country, with beautiful people. We had everything you have now”.

- Tafinis, 19/02/2019

In late 2010 many Arab countries in the Middle East began protesting against their governments, better known as the Arab Spring. In March 2011 these protests shifted towards Syria and grew stronger across the middle east. They escalated to an armed conflict after protests calling for Assad’s removal were violently suppressed by his authoritarian regime. Those protests, now evolved to armed rebellions, grew out of discontent with the oppressive regime, low living standards and the overall Syrian government. As a result of the Arab Spring in Syria, a number of self-proclaimed political entities have emerged on Syrian territory. All this unrest began on March 15 2011 in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo.
The war is being fought by several groups: the Syrian Armed Forces and its international allies, a loose alliance of mostly Sunni opposition rebel groups (including the Free Syrian Army), Salafi jihadist groups (including al-Nusra Front), the mixed Kurdish-Arab Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), with a number of countries in the region and beyond being either directly involved or providing support to one or another faction (such as Iran, Russia, Turkey, the United States, and many others). All those different factions and its allies fighting each other, make mapping the war very difficult.

As a result of this, the situation in Syria is chaotic and extremely dangerous. At this very moment, Syria is ranked last on the Global Peace Index, making it the most violent country in the world due to this armed conflict. Although many news sites argue that life continues normally for most of its citizens, many people in Syria have fled the country because of the war. Assessment of the numbers of displaced people and refugees are difficult due to the chaotic context, but estimates are that as a result of the war 5.9 million Syrians have fled the country and 6.1 million people are displaced internally (CNN, 9 April 2019).

The war that started in 2011 sparked a refugee flow from Syria to Europe in the following years. In 2015 this refugee flow peaked out of Syria peaked, almost thirty thousand Syrian refugees applied for asylum in the Netherlands only (CBS, Asiel en Integratie, 2019). Although many Syrians have left the country as a result of the ongoing war in Syria, many people stayed put;

“At one moment you kind of get used to the war, the situations, the sounds and the feelings associated with it. I have experienced bombings, kidnappings, shootings in the street and seriously injured people in my own neighbourhood. I do not remember how this happened, but people in Syria really adjusted quickly to the war. It is almost a biological thing, you just move on with your life and try to move within the war. Just like in the Netherlands, before 2012 there was no migration discourse and now it is one of the hottest topics in the Dutch society. This is something that evolves automatically. It is a human quality to adjust and to adapt to changing situations. You adapt to the situations that are presented to you to just survive, wouldn’t you do the same?”

- Mansend, 08/02/2019

Adjusting to the everyday circumstances felt like a normal thing to do. Mansend told me that if he wanted to survive the war, he had to adjust and get used to the situations.
Fleeing Syria

“I lived in a safe and beautiful country, I had everything I could ask myself. The next day I open my eyes and life has changed drastically because of the war”.

- Tafinis, 19/02/2019

As a result of the war and the turmoil in Syria, many lives changed dramatically. During this time both Tafinis and Mansend lived in Syria, in Damascus and Aleppo respectively. Tafinis showed me, as stated in the above quote, that his life in Damascus changed considerably due to the war. The contrast between the life before war and the life during the war was so immense that it even felt as like it happened over night. Damascus, the capital city of Syria, and Aleppo were targeted fiercely by the rebel groups, making daily life harsh. For children and students, going to school was almost impossible;

“There was no electricity, no water, we had almost nothing to eat. Aleppo was under siege for almost four months. It was getting closer and closer, and heavier to. Everyday there were bombngs, snipers that took down civilians, kidnapings to reinforce the army. The situation was really bad and we had the feeling that it would not change anytime soon. Without school, work or safety, there was just no prospect for the future for me”.

- Mansend, 08/02/2019

For Raghkel the situation was not that different. After a specific event during her finals, her father decided that she had no future in Syria and sent his family to Turkey.

“During the war I had my finals. I was 15 and this was a huge moment in my country. Those tests would determine which study I could choose on the university. During the war the school was closed, so my dad hired two teachers. They would teach me during schooldays in my own home. When the finals approached the school had found a suitable spot for the tests. During the last test, in a gym, my mom and dad waited outside of the building for me to finish the test. All of a sudden there was gunfire all around the building, bombs were falling and alarms were going off. It was so scary. Luckily the people responsible for it did not enter the gym. Afterwards I heard that my mom and dad had sheltered in a nearby building, worrying about my faith. After this final my dad decided that we had to move

- Raghkel, 08/03/2019
Living in this everyday fear was as bad as it sounds for Syrian families, but it gets worse. During the war the Syrian government reinforced its conscription or obligatory military service for all Syrian males. Every Syrian male at 18 years or older, who was not an only child or had delayed the conscription due to studying (which was made almost impossible due to the war), was obliged to report for military service. If this obligation was not honoured your family was seen as an enemy of the state. For many families across Syria this was a frightening thought. They had seen what those factions did to each other during the war and now they had to send their own sons away to join the fighting for the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Mansend was one those people, he had to join the Assad forces or he would be an enemy of the state. But even if people had an certificate for postponing their conscription, life was not easy or without any threats;

“My father had a colleague that had a son that was the same age as me [19]. He had postponed his military service because he was studying at the university of Aleppo. During the war he was one of the few people that kept going to the university. During his daily walking trip to school he was kidnapped at one of the checkpoints stations and put in military service despite his certificate of postponing the service. Before this event my father would not discuss my desire to get away from Syria, but after this happened my father recognized that Syria was not safe anymore, we had to leave the country as soon as possible”.

- Mansend, 08/02/2019

Even with a legitimate document or certificate from the government, Syrian males felt the ongoing threat of being kidnapped at checkpoints in every city. For many families taking the step to escape Syria, or sending their sons on a trip to Europe felt as a lesser risk than to stay and see their sons either getting killed or fighting someone else’s war. The overall situation in Syria after March 2011 was fairly poor. The reinforced conscription, the everyday bombings, the fear of being either kidnapped by the regime or killed by snipers from the rebel groups, no water, electricity or food and just an overall sense of fear, anxiety and distress, made life in Syria; “a living hell”. (Mansend, 08/02/2019) Many Syrian families decided to leave the country and search for safety.

Eritrea
Eritrea is a country in the Horn of Africa. It is bordered by Sudan in the west, Ethiopia in the south, and Djibouti in the southeast. Eritrea also has an extensive coastline on the eastern parts of the country along the red sea. According to the Eritrean government there are nine recognized ethnic
groups, of which Tigrinya is the largest and makes up almost 55% of the population. Besides the many ethnic backgrounds, Eritrea is also multilingual country. Tigrinya and English are the most common used languages in education, however other major national languages include Afar, Arabic, Beja, Bilen, Kunama, Nara, Saho and Tigre.

Since its independence in 1993, after a 30 year war with Ethiopia, there have not been held any elections. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) is the only legal party in Eritrea, this makes the country a one-party or a sovereign state. This one-party state has been under severe accusations of most Western countries in recent years. Arbitrary arrests and detentions, detaining an unknown number of people without charge for political activism, no freedom of speech and press and racism against minorities, have been some of the numerous accusations. According to Human Rights Watch and many other Human Rights organisations, the government's human rights record is considered among the worst in the world.

In recent years many Eritrean families took the risk of leaving the country and embark on a journey towards a better future. Global estimates are that 486,200 Eritrean people are on the move, which is almost 10% of the whole population. In 2018 3.539 Eritrean people did a request for asylum in the Netherlands (IND, October 2018).

**Fleeing Eritrea**

“In 2010 all the big troubles started for me. After being in military service for 8 years, which they said would be a maximum of 18 months, I refused to extend it any further. I had no job, no money, big problems with the military administration and the fear of being detained as an enemy of the state [a conscientious objector].”

- Hanous, 26/02/2019

As stated above, 10% of the whole Eritrean population is on the move. What are the reasons behind this migration? In the above quote, Hanous presents numerous threats in the contemporary Eritrean society which lead to a general migration discourse. The conscription is a huge obstacle in the lives of almost all Eritrean males. In theory every male at the age of 18 is obligated to join the military forces for a maximum of 18 months. At least, that is what the Eritrean law prescribe in theory. In practice those 18 months can be prolonged indefinite. Hanous’ military service had been prolonged for 8 years, a decision to which an appeal is useless. The military service itself is an 60 hour work week on several bases and camps across Eritrea for a meagre 500$ a month, which is not enough to feed a family of five . After 18 months of severe training at one of the bases, the prolonged conscription
means being deployed anywhere in the country and continue working a 60 hour workweek, away from the family. As Tesfako puts it;

“Many families live without the man of the household because he is in the military. This work does not give you a lot of money, but you cannot quit because this is dangerous. The only option for a better life is to leave Eritrea and work abroad to provide for the family back home”. 

- Tesfako, 27/02/2019

In Eritrea culture the family is the essential element in daily life. Hanous had to provide for his family as the man of the household. His duty was to work, earn enough money and to provide his children and wife with food, clothes and housing;

“We have a very different culture from you Europeans. People think about themselves here, first me and then we look at other people. In our country, in our culture it is totally different. I, as the man of the household, have to think about my children and wife first. I have to provide for them. That is my most important duty of all. I have to do this no matter what”. 

- Hanous, 26/02/2019

Providing for the family is hard in a country like Eritrea when you are a conscientious objector of the military service. Besides the fact that the punishment for refusal is severe and Eritrean males often fear their own detention, many struggle to find work and earn enough money to provide for their family. Due to refusal of the military, obtaining a working permit is impossible. Illegal work is the only option, an option that entails a low salary, no certainty, exploitation and overall bad circumstances.

If the man of the household is away on military duty, the wife is in charge of all the household duties.

“My wife had to do everything at home. The upbringing of the kids, cooking, taking them to school, cleaning, making clothes, she had to do everything. I could not support here in anyway during those 8 years”. 

- Hanous, 26/02/2019

During eight years of military service, Hanous could not support his wife and children at home. Every month he made sure that his pay check would arrive at their home in Asmara but he could not physically help her out with all the duties. The pay check was a small consolation for the situation this family was in.

The one-party regime, the very tight conscription, the in practice indefinite extension of the
obligatory military service, the severe punishment for conscientious objectors, the low salaries, the low living standards, separated families and the ongoing fear of being detained as an enemy of the state are the reasons many Eritrean males are making the journey towards Europe, towards a better life for their families. As Hanous stated;

“The idea of moving away is to give your family a better life with the money I earn abroad”.

- Hanous, 26/02/2019

Social navigation
Mobility as a concept looks at the movement of actors (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004) but neglects the moving environment in which the movement takes place and the reason why people move. Cresswell (2010) attempts to breakdown the concept mobility into six different aspects. The first aspect is the motive force behind a specific movement, in this case fleeing your country. He makes the distinction between being compelled to move or freely choose to move (Cresswell, 2010), and in the process make a distinction between the pure forms of agency (choosing to) and structure (being compelled to). In many of the above cases the motive force of the movement was not as black and white as Cresswell (2010) argues it to be.

Most refugees are trying to escape, or have already escaped, the confining structures of a society. Whether it is the war in Syria or the severe conscription in Eritrea, those people try to give themselves a shot at a better future. People in difficult situations, uncertainty and conflict spend a great deal of time discussing how global, regional and local influences will have an impact on their lives and how they can survive these specific circumstances (Vigh, 2009). Vigh (2009) shows us that social navigation is the practice of plotting and manoeuvring our way towards an advantageous direction in the future within fluid and changeable circumstances and contexts. “When navigating we seek to act in an through immediate changeable circumstances as well as move toward positions in the yet to come – articulated in unison as hopes and dreams” (Vigh, 2009, p. 426). Like Mansend’s dad in Aleppo, who after a kidnapping of an acquaintance with the same age as his son, decided that this was to close for comfort and sent his son on a 5000 kilometre journey. In practice, social navigation, is the reading of and adapting to uncertain and changeable socio-political environments, in which one’s present position and position in the future must be taken into account (Vigh, 2009).

Refugees act, adjust and attune their strategies and tactics in relation to the movement of the surroundings. The motion of the context leads to the movement and mobility of refugees. This can be seen in both the Syrian and Eritrean stories. For both Mansend and Raghkel the war in Syria changed their lives considerably. Although Mansend argued that he got used to the war as a mode of
survival, he fled Syria when he knew that the war was getting to close and studying became almost impossible. For Raghkel the situation was not that different. After a specific event during her finals, her father decided that she had no future in Syria and sent his family to Turkey. Also in Eritrea, which at first sight appears as a more stable environment in comparison to the war circumstances in Syria, people look at how they can manoeuvre themselves towards a more advantageous position. Hanous was not able to provide for his family, his number one duty as a Eritrean male. The only option for him and his family to have a shot at a better life, was for him to leave their home in Asmara and make the long and dangerous journey towards Europe.

Whereas mobility has the movement of the actors as its focus (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004), social navigation focuses on both the movement of the actors and the movement of the changing environment (Vigh, 2009). By applying social navigation to the movement of refugees we can fully understand their actions. Many of my informants stated that fleeing their country was a deliberate choice but also was largely due to the specific circumstances at that time. Their movement was a mode of survival, a deliberate choice, fuelled by the changing and oppressive environments, something that could not be fully understand by focusing solely on the movement of the actors.

The above stories acknowledge the fact that the movement of refugees is not done smoothly and completely free. The changing circumstances led them to flee their homes and begin their search for something better. In this sense being mobile is not a resource, but a way of dealing with the social context, specific circumstances and the structures around us. Fleeing your country can be seen as a flexible and adaptive practice, a mode of survival. All refugees had to weigh the circumstances and had to adapt according to them, to arrive at a more favourable position. Whatever the outcome, many Syrians and Eritreans chose to flee their countries because they saw no other option available at that specific moment. Many left in a spur of the moment, not prepared for what was waiting for them along the way. This was the first complicated decision many made, more were soon to follow.
Chapter 2: The immobile journey

In this chapter I will discuss the second sub-question; how have refugees experienced their mobility and immobility during their journey towards Europe? I will highlight the experiences refugees had during their journey towards a better life. I will reach back to my data from the interviews. The stories people told me will be the backbone of this chapter. I will intertwine theory and empirical data to argue that mobility and immobility are not dialectical and do not need to be treated as mere opposites. Using the definition for mobility from the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004) I argue that mobility and immobility can be present simultaneously, an argument that will be strengthened by my empirical data. Because the stories are somewhat different from each other, I will divide the Syrian and Eritrean stories from each other. By showing two “travel” stories in a vignette style, I want to highlight the experiences these refugees had along the way.

From Syria to Europe
On a typical Dutch, rainy day in February, I met with Mansend. He welcomed me in his apartment, which he obtained in 2016 by the municipality of Amsterdam, and we started talking about the journey he has made since fleeing Syria on the 7th of September back in 2014. The interview with Mansend was the first of this study. His openheartedness and jovial character made me comfortable on the one hand, but stood in stark contrast with the seriousness of our topic. Mansend told me that as a defence mechanism he had distanced himself from his story, it did not feel like his own anymore. This way he could tell me the story of what he had endured during his journey with a certain emotional detachment. His story is unique but represents a lot of the hardships refugees endure on their way to a better future. This is Mansend’s story:

After a son of my dad’s friend was kidnapped by a rebel group, my dad and I decided that it was time to leave for me. My father gave me six days to prepare for the trip, days he used to sell a part of his company so he could give me some money to make the journey. After three years of being in a war, the Syrian currency had dropped significantly. Converted to Euros, he only got 9000 Euros for almost half his company and some old jewellery. Following 6 days of talking to people and gathering information on the journey I was about to embark on, I had assembled nine people.

On September the 7th 2014 I left Aleppo with four people, the other 4 would join us along the way. I said goodbye to my father, but I could not bear to watch my mom breakdown as I would say my farewell to her. So I left without seeing or speaking to her. With two backpacks and one fanny
pack for my money and documents, I got on the bus to Lebanon. Normally the bus to Lebanon would take approximately 4 to 5 hours. However, due to all the checkpoints that were placed along the way, our bus ride took 16 hours. During those checkpoints they would check my Syrian identification card and my certificate of postponing the military service. Along the way many Syrian males were detained if they did not have the right documents.

When we arrived in Beirut, we took the first flight to Istanbul in Turkey. With my Syrian identification documents I could cross both the Lebanese and Turkish borders, something that is not possible anymore. Following the first wave of Syrian refugees, many countries in the Middle East have changed their border policies regarding refugees. During my six days of preparing for this trip, I heard that in Istanbul there was a huge public square for smugglers and real estate agents. Following our arrival in Istanbul, we decided to check out Aksaray. At this huge public square many agents were active, searching for people they could help. It did not take long before we rented an apartment for three days. The apartment itself was a very basic accommodation, just like a 2 or 3 star hotel. We used the remaining three days to get in contact with smugglers and to search for the best offers. At the third day we chose a smuggler that had promised us a private boat to Greece, for 3500 euro a person. The money had to be paid to a real estate office, a third party. If we would arrive in Greece, the money would be transferred to the smuggler. The third party would charge 50 Euro as a service fee, so in total we would pay 3550 Euros a person for a boat trip towards Greece.

However, it was not possible to get from Istanbul to Greece by boat, so we had to move. The smuggler had arranged airline tickets towards Marmaris, a Turkish seaside area. We stayed three days in a hotel in Marmaris. At the third day the smuggler called us at 10 P.M., we had to be ready to move in 30 minutes. It was 30 minutes of pure stress and chaos. We were nervous for the ensuing boat trip. We were picked up by a Turkish man in a van. We could not communicate with him because he did not speak any English. During the 40 minute drive in this van, we were becoming more anxious by the minute. Was this the guy who would take us to the boat? We were afraid that he would kidnap us or take our money. In the dead of the night, we stopped in the middle of nowhere. He showed us the way towards the coastline, where our boat would be waiting. After a little hike we finally arrived at our meeting point. The boat itself was a small sloop with a small cabin and did not look particularly suitable for our group, which had expanded to 11 people along the way. We had been sailing for 90 minutes when the captain of the boat informed us that we had left the Turkish sea and were now in Greek territory. For me personally this was a huge relieve, I knew this was the beginning of a new part of the journey, but within a week I had arrived in Europe and left the dangerous Middle East behind me. 15 minutes later my euphoria made way for chaos and anxiety.

The captain ordered us to leave the boat at a place which was definitely not the coastline the smuggler had said the boat would drop us. Instead of nice Greek beaches, the captain ordered us to
leave the boat at a rocky formation. It would be a dangerous climb if we wanted to reach the Greek shores. We tried everything but the captain would not take us any further, we had to leave the boat or he would return to Marmaris. There we were, 11 people stuck on a rocky formation in Greek territory, not knowing what to do next. Luckily one of us had a cell phone with reception, so we could check our location and search for telephone numbers of Greek refugee organisations. We phoned the Greek coast guards and gave them our location. We raised the odds of them picking us up by lying about the size of our group. After 5 hours of waiting in wet, cold and completely dark conditions, at 7 A.M. the Greek coast guard finally arrived at our location. Due to the rocky formation it was not possible for this bigger boat from the Greek coast guard to pick us up. So after a sleepless night we had to hike our way to the shore, which was a hike of almost 6 hours.

When we arrived at the shore, the boat picked us up and brought us to a little Greek island called Sienna. At this little island we stayed in an police station for three days, after which we were granted a Ghartia. This is a Greek document that would allow refugees to stay in Greece for 6 months. This document was abolished very soon after the first wave of Syrian refugees with the Turkish deal. When we got this document we could travel within Greece, so we decided to move towards Athens to increase our changes of leaving Greece. In Athens I met with an acquaintance, who helped us getting into a hotel. We thought we would be leaving Greece in the near future, but those hopes faded soon. The situation in Athens was as follows; you would pay a smuggler upfront an amount of money. This money would be paid to a real estate office, which also charges a service fee, and when you would arrive in another European country the money would be transferred to the smuggler. The smuggler would try to buy fake ID’s, passports and plain tickets and do everything in his power to smuggle you out of Greece. The amount of attempts was indefinite, the smuggler would continue his work until you had left the country. I paid 3500 Euros and a service fee for this arrangement. Every attempt was done on your own, groups would attract more attention than just one person.

After my first failed attempt, with a Dutch ID and a plane ticket towards Amsterdam, the smuggler told me that my Syrian appearance and the fact that it was not peak season could be a huge hindrance. Due to my Ghartia I could not be detained by the police longer than three days after each attempt. My second attempt was with a Danish passport and flight towards Denmark. Also this time I was caught by police during my check in at the airport. My third attempt was a flight to Romania with a Romanian passport with the name Vlad Také. Due to my appearance I really thought this would be the best option. However, also this attempt failed miserably. Following my third attempt I was becoming more depressed by the minute. I was the last one of the whole group to leave Greece. There I was, on my own in a Greece hotel, waiting for a smuggler to give me a plane ticket and fake documents. It was driving me nuts that I had no influence on the outcome of my own
journey. After spending Christmas in Athens I thought to myself; I have to take matters in my own hands! Together with a friend that I met during Christmas, I bought a fake ID from Greece and a plane ticket towards Madrid. On December the 28th we both stood in line for our luggage check-in, which was heavily guarded by the Greek police. By appearance they would take people out of the que and interrogate them. I saw that two police officers had spotted me, my friend quickly responded by saying something in Greek to me. The two police officers walked by and did not pay attention to us anymore.

After the luggage check-in we went through customs without any problem. We decided that is was best to lock ourselves in one of the toilet cubicles and wait for our flight. 90 minutes I had spent in that toilet cubicle, thinking about what I was doing, making me more nervous with every breath. I had never been this close to leaving Greece and would not screw this one up! To increase the changes of one us exactly leaving, we parted in the que for boarding the plane. He was 20 or 30 people in front of me and was escorted out of the que when they double checked his ID card and confronted him with the fact that it was fake. My moment was drawing nearer and I was starting to quiver from nervousness. I was starting to doubt every step I took since the moment I left my home in Aleppo. Then it was my moment.. I stepped towards the lady and she greeted me in English. She was Spanish so communication was done in English, which was an advantage for me because I did not speak any Greek. When she checked my ID she said; “Sir you can fly by this! It is fake.”. I did not know how to react.. My answer would have felt like ages for her. I stuttered that it was not fake. My answer was not convincing as she ordered me to stay next to her, giving the fake documents back to me.

When she finished the line of boarding passengers, she ordered me to come with her. Without shutting the gate she quickly paced away from her work station. Due to her walking speed I was falling behind very quickly, something that she did not notice at all. In an instinctive impulse I turned around and sprinted towards the gate, hoping she would not notice my bizarre act. When I reach the gate I turn around and saw that she had vanished in the crowd. I enter the gate and shut the door behind me. I walk through a tunnel and enter the airplane as two flight attendants welcome me onboard. I quickly proceed towards my seat.. 26C. I have never felt more nervous, anxious, tense and nauseous than the next 15 minutes. I prayed the entire time for the airplane to take off. I wanted to be off the ground.. When the airplane started taxiing to the runway I could not be relieved at all, I was still afraid that they would somehow get me off the plane. When the airplane finally started speeding up the runway and I felt it coming off from the ground, I started crying! 4 months after my departure I finally managed to get into the “real” Europe, the emotions I felt were indescribable. I knew that traveling from Madrid to the Netherlands would not be that difficult.
I celebrated new year’s eve in Madrid, having contact with my mom and dad via FaceTime. On the 2nd of January I took a plane to Amsterdam, with a fake Dutch ID. I can’t remember anything from that last flight, I could not see straight anymore. When we landed in Amsterdam I felt absolutely nothing, I was empty, all the emotion were spilled during my trip. In my dreams it would take me approximately 15 days to enter the Netherlands, in reality it took me almost 5 months.

- Mansend, 08/02/2019

From Eritrea to Europe
Hanous was the first refugee from Eritrea that I interviewed. He felt very comfortable during the interview, which was established due to his mentor accompanying us during the interview. Hanous, who speaks Dutch, English and Tigrinya, eventually also served as a translator later on in my study. What struck me during my conversation with him and his mentor, was that his family was the most important factor in every decision he has made along the way. The love for his family and his perseverance are unprecedented. His story highlights many factors and hardships that Eritrean males have to face in their lives. This is Hanous’ story:

Because of all of these problems I left Eritrea, I could not handle it anymore. I had to leave! I walked for two days from Asmara to the Ethiopian border, where I was received by the Ethiopian military just across the border. I was treated nicely at this first centre. I got a transfer to Endabaguna for my first interview. After my interview I was sent to Adi Harush, the biggest refugee camp in Ethiopia, also known as the “waiting” camp. I waited there for 6 months. It was one of the hardest moments of my life. Every day it was 40 degrees, you were sweating all day. The camp itself was in very bad condition. There were no showers, no lavatories and not even good sleeping places. I had no family, I was all by myself, waiting for the next step. I could not leave the refugee camp without permission or the right documents. So there I was, waiting in a dirty and old refugee camp for my next move. Staying at the camp wasn’t an option. I had to leave if I wanted a better life for me and my family!

During the morning, when there was a guard switch, I fled from the refugee camp. I had to go to Addis Abeba, the capital city of Ethiopia. The road was extremely dangerous, many Eritrean refugees had died on this road. Crocodiles, black lions and baboons were often sighted during my walking trip to Addis Abeba. I followed a river so I could stay hydrated during my walk. It took me 20 days to arrive in the capital city of Ethiopia. In the small towns on the road to Addis Abeba I could get some food from the local markets. On my second day in the capital I came across an acquaintance from Asmara, my home town. I was so lucky to meet him. I had worked for him in Eritrea in a garage, fixing cars. He had now started a business in Ethiopia and was earning some good cash. After telling him my story he took me in and hired me to work in his shop. I worked as a car mechanic during the day and in my “sleeping” hours at the garage I was a guard for the building. The salary was okay, but
it was not enough to take care of my family.

I worked three years at the garage, making long and heavy days for a salary that people in Europe would laugh about. After three years I learned a bit of Amharic, and I could think about my next step. After consulting with my friend we came to the conclusion that going to Sudan was my best option. Walking to the Sudanese border was relatively straightforward. I could get some food and water in the smaller towns along the way. The Sudanese border was closed, so many refugees were waiting for it to open and pass the border.

I came in contact with some smugglers, who arranged nightly shifts of smuggling refugees across the border. For 10,000 Ethiopian Birr [almost 350 euros] I arranged the crossing of the Sudanese border and a trip towards Khartoum by SUV. The Ethiopian smugglers stay in contact with the Sudanese military and with a safe house just across the border. This night was one of the hardest moments in my life. Everything was black, you saw nothing. The smugglers knew exactly where to go and which route to take to arrive at the safe house. I was terrified during this night. The walk itself was just 1 kilometre, but it felt like one hundred. It lasted maybe 20 minutes but it felt like I had spent the whole night walking in clammy and sticky bush area.

When we arrived at the safe house I was separated from the people that had only payed for crossing the border. After a couple of hours more refugees from multiple countries came into the same room. We waited, for what exactly we did not know. At one moment, one of the guards approached us aggressively, he wanted us to stand up and follow him. People that were sleeping or did not react fast enough were hit with a stick. With 32 people we were squeezed in the tailgate of the SUV, cramped together, not able to move or to switch your position and posture. It took the SUV eight hours to arrive in Khartoum. The car itself was driving extremely hard on very heavy and tough terrain, one mistake and everyone would be severely injured or dead. Those 8 hours were very difficult. I was scared that the driver would make a mistake, I could not move, every muscle in my body was cramping up and the bouncy terrain gave me a lot of bruises.

In Khartoum we were offered to stay at the huge mansion of the driver, which at first sight was a very noble gesture. But if we wanted to leave the mansion we had to pay the driver for using his facilities, something that he did not tell us before. Luckily I had some money left from working in Ethiopia, I could pay the man, but there were a lot of people who could not afford it. Those people were harassed and tortured for mere fun.

Following two months of living in Khartoum as a homeless person, I found a man who wanted to bring me to Tripoli in exchange for money. We would have to cross the Sahara on our way to the shore of Libya, something that I was very anxious about. Many stories of refugees ended in the Sahara, this huge area of sand, heat and absolutely nothing. The two of us walked towards the border of Egypt, there we hired a SUV that was suitable for crossing the Sahara. At one point we
were at the tripoint of Sudan, Libya and Egypt. This was a very tricky point of the journey. At those borders many refugees were taken into custody and send back to their own countries. We had to walk through water and pull the car across small rivers. Sometimes we had to hide in bush areas in order to evade patrols from the military and police. After crossing the border with Libya the desert became more extreme. Often we had to stop in order to clean the SUV from all the sand, otherwise it would not bring us to our destination. The heat, the exhaustion, the thirst and the hunger were unimaginable. The conditions were so hard, I would not have survived one day longer in it. Back in civilisation we were received by multiple organisations that gave water and food to refugees. My friend brought me to Tripoli, the city where refugees can get an illegal boat trip to Italy. During my stay in Tripoli the smugglers were anxious to arrange boat trip due to the civil war at that time. Many rebel groups fought a war against the government of Gaddafi [Gaddafi was already dead at that moment].

Waiting for the boat trip felt extremely pointless, there was nothing. After ten days one of the smugglers wanted to risk it. With a group of 88 people, we were put into a big Scania truck. We needed to stand in the back of the loading space, which was then sealed off with rocks. It took us two hours to arrive at the coastline. Two hours in a panic like state with no sunlight, almost no air and no room to move. Around midnight we were ordered to get out of the truck and move towards a boat. The boat had two storeys, the lower one accommodated the engine and all the men and at the upper floor all the women and children were situated. I was on the one hand very relieved to leave Libya and move towards Europe, but on the other hand, the boat trip was terrible.

I was situated in the engine room of the boat with 30 or 40 other men. It was so hot, the air was toxic, we had no room to move and many men were seasick along the way. After 11 hours of sailing to Italy, we finally were picked up by the Italian coast guards. I knew that staying in Italy was not an option if I wanted to provide for my family. Countries like Germany and the Netherlands treat refugees way better, you really have a shot at a better life in those places. Following a moment of chaos when we got on shore in Italy, I managed to escape the refugee camp. Outside the camp there were a lot of people that were smuggling escaped refugees to train stations. I approached one of those man and had earned a one-way ticket to the Milan station.

At the Milan station there was an organisation based in a catholic church, where refugees could get water, food and a place to sleep. You could only be there for a maximum of two weeks. Following two weeks of good meals and resting, I took the train towards Amsterdam. The journey by train was thrilling, I knew that there would be patrols by train operators and I knew I had to be resourceful in order to not get caught. During those patrols I locked myself in toilets, lay in luggage racks with something covering myself and stepped out of the front of the train at intermediate stations and stepped in at the end. When I arrived at Amsterdam I immediately reported myself to
the police. They gave me day ticket for the train towards Ter Apel. I finally managed to get in to the Netherlands, following a 5 year journey!

- Hanous, 26/02/2019

**Mobility and immobility**

Mansend and Hanous have made a long and exhausting journey to the Netherlands. They have endured a lot of dangerous and terrible moments along the way. Those stories tell us that mobility, being mobile or movement is not a linear process, like many authors argue (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004). They both have travelled from one place to another along a specific trajectory that can be described in space and time, which is the static definition of spatial mobility by Kaufman, Bergman and Joye (2004), but those stories reveal that mobility is not always straightforward, simple and linear (Kaufman, Bergman, & Joye, 2004, p. 746). Their stories are not just about leaving Syria and Eritrea and arriving in the Netherlands after five years or five months, it is about their experiences along the way. By defining Mansend’s and Hanous’ journey in a static way as straightforward, simple and linear, like the definition of spatial mobility instructs us to do, we fail to understand their actions and experiences along the way.

During both journeys, Mansend and Hanous needed to adapt their strategies to the circumstances of that particular moment in time. Mansend took matters into his owns by buying a plane ticket to Madrid himself. He had no faith anymore in the smuggler that was working for him so he decided to try it himself. Hanous knew that he had to escape the refugee camp in Italy before they would take fingerprints. In a moment of chaos he fled the camp and tried to move towards a more advantageous position. In both stories the adaptive and flexible aspects of moving is being highlighted by showing that their movement is indirect and intermittent along the way. Thus mobility is not a static concept of leaving and arriving (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004), but an active, adaptive and flexible activity that can be experienced in various ways (Vigh, 2009). Being on the move and moments of being immobile overlap each other and are even intertwined on numerous occasions.

Although refugees made a long journey along a specific trajectory that we can describe in terms of space and time, they did not do this completely free and easily. During their journey many refugees experience immobility, stasis, waiting and even stuckedness (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). Not moving, being stuck, eventless days, waiting and immobility are an extensive part of the above stories. Both Hanous and Mansend had long periods of doing absolutely nothing and were powerless to do anything about it. Their story shows us that mobility and immobility are not only closely related like Sheller and Urry (2006) argue, many of them made an incredible long journey and in the process many refugees felt very immobile. Periods of moving are succeeded by long periods of
waiting and being stuck. Mobility and immobility are therefore not a binary opposition like many authors suggest but an intertwined process in which both can be simultaneously experienced.

Hanous, for example, felt very immobile during his movement to Khartoum. During an eight hour trip in an SUV from the Sudanese border to Khartoum, Hanous experienced immobility during a moment of movement. He was cramped inside a SUV’s tailgate with thirty two other men, not able to move a muscle. Following his arrival in Khartoum, Hanous became a homeless person for two months. Hanous was roaming the streets of the capital city of Sudan for two months all the while he was completely stuck in his migration trajectory. While roaming the streets of Khartoum and waiting for an opportunity to arise, he felt completely stuck and was powerless for two months. Additionally, Hanous’ case does not stand alone, also Mansend experienced the above during his journey. Following a relatively smooth journey to Athens, Mansend was stuck in the capital city of Greece. Mansend spend 15 days alone in a hotel room waiting for his smuggler to present him a ticket towards his future. He had no influence whatsoever on the outcome of his own journey, he felt stuck while he was moving towards a better life.

The definitions of spatial mobility by Kaufman, Bergman & Joyce (2004) and the treatment of the concept mobility in the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010) neglect that power dynamics play a significant role in the above experiences. Fassin (2011) shows that the transnational circulation of people has become increasingly restricted. He argues that governments and states control the power over movement (Fassin, 2011). But what the above stories exhibit is that not only the state can control the movement of refugees. The subordinate position of refugees towards smugglers gives rise to a power struggle over movement. Hanous and Mansend were both dependent on the work of smugglers, paying large amounts of money in exchange for their movement. Most of the time they were not in control over their own movement or immobility.

Both Hanous’ and Mansend’s stories are not isolated cases, many refugees experience immobility, stasis, waiting and even stuckedness during their journeys towards Europe (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). What those stories exhibit is that mobility and immobility can be experienced simultaneously and are not dialectical in any sense. Therefore we need to treat the two concepts as an intertwined process that can be experienced while on the move. Instead of looking at moments of moving and moments of resting separately, we need to shift the focus to their conjunction and their entanglement.

But the journey of refugees does not stop here. Following the arrival in the Netherlands, a new process and “journey” begins for the refugees. Also this process is highlighted by experiences of immobility, waiting, stasis and the feeling of being stuck.
Chapter 3: A journey that never ends

This chapter will highlight “the journey” refugees have to take in the Dutch society. The following sub-question will be prominent in this chapter: how have refugees experienced their mobility and immobility after their journey? I will touch upon the procedures and laws that are in place when a refugee enters the Netherlands. There will be a conjunction of theory and data, that will be intertwined through this chapter. By using governmentality (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014) as a concept, I will argue that waiting and refugees having a subordinate position are not just features of the Dutch asylum process, but features of the overall treatment of refugees. By using governmentality as a concept, the power dynamics between the state and the refugees become clearly visible. I will discuss the asylum process as it was designed in theory by the Dutch government and how this process is experienced by refugees in practice. I will conclude this chapter with a short theoretical conclusion.

Ter Apel
Following their arrival, refugees have to report themselves in Ter Apel to begin their asylum procedure. At the process admission location (in Dutch the process opvanglocatie or POL) the refugees are given a six day rest period to prepare themselves fully for the process to come. Those “resting” days are filled with appointments other required activities. Refugees must attend a medical examination, in which a doctor will examine them physically and mentally. Also a meeting with an assigned lawyer is scheduled during this resting and preparing period. The last stage of this period is a meeting with a social worker from a nongovernmental organisation (NGO) called Vluchtelingenwerk. The social worker will explain the coming procedures and what they can expect during this process. In theory those days are intended to let the refugees acclimatize to the surroundings and to start their asylum process in a healthy and energetic way. Due to the busy schedule and a lot of external stimuli, in practice those days are experienced as busy and absorb a lot of energy. After six days of various appointments and preparing themselves for the asylum process, the refugee switches into what is called the general asylum procedure.

The next eight days are very important for the refugees, there is a lot at stake because those days will determine their future. During the first day there will be the “first” hearing. This hearing is an interview with the Dutch immigration and naturalisation services (in Dutch IND), in which they will discuss and determine his or her identity, nationality and the route that has been travelled. The second day is used to talk to a lawyer and discuss this “first” hearing. The lawyer will try to prepare the refugee for the “second” or “further” hearing on day three, in which they will discuss the reason of fleeing the country of origin. The lawyer or a social worker from Vluchtelingenwerk can be present...
during this interview to assist the refugees. Following those two hearings, day 4 is intended to discuss both hearings with the lawyer and if necessary complement the IND with further information or details. In the next four days the IND will examine both hearings and the information that has been given. The IND strives to communicate the outcome in the next four days of the general asylum process. In practice the IND falls short in achieving this goal on many occasions. Due to the big number of refugees coming in, the small amount of IND employees and the shortage of required documents in the countries of origin, making a considered and well-thought decision within four days is impossible.

There can be two potential outcomes after four days of examining the information. The first outcome is that the IND has sufficient information on a particular case and a decision can be made. This decision can be either refusal or acceptance of a residence permit, which is a residence permit fixed for five years. When the application is refused by the IND, a refugee has three options. They can either appeal to the decision made by the IND, cooperate with a voluntary return or leave ter Apel within twenty eight days and take a place in the illegal circuit. If the application is accepted by the IND the refugee will get a transfer to an asylum seekers centre (in Dutch AZC). In this AZC they will wait for eventual housing within a Dutch municipality. The refugees do not have a say in which of the AZC’s or in which municipality they will be placed. The second outcome is that the IND does not have sufficient information to make a decision. From all the applications the IND receives, the majority is not completed within the 8 days and the decision is postponed. Refugees that receive this outcome will get a transfer to an AZC and enter the extended asylum process. The refugee will be assisted by social workers from multiple organisations to retrieve documents and all sort of evidence from their country of origin, to present the IND with sufficient information on their case.

In some cases there is no need for a general asylum procedure. Migrants from countries that are rendered as “safe” by the Dutch government, have to leave the Netherlands within 7 days. Due to the Dublin agreement, refugees that have already been registered in another EU country have to leave the country as soon as possible. The IND strives to complete those cases within seven days after their application. Family reunion is another case, in which family members are transferred to an AZC after their second hearing. Due to a lot of legal obstacles the average time of completion of a family reunion application is over two years, all the while they wait in an AZC.

AZC
The extended asylum procedure is characterized by uncertainty, stasis and waiting. After an transfer to one of the AZC’s in the Netherlands, the waiting commences. During my research I came in contact with a Syrian couple, Basshem and Jumia. They had arrived in the Netherlands 1,5 months before I
met with them. It was ironic that I was meeting them in an AZC, when my request at the COA, the Dutch organisation that is in control over the AZC’s, was denied due to the fact that they thought a research on mobility inside an AZC was not in their interest.

At a sunny Wednesday I took the train towards a medium sized city. After my train ride I decided to walk towards the AZC, after all how far could it be?!. The weather was nice and I would save myself five euro by not taking the bus. On my way to the AZC, I walked through a nice a busy city centre. Many restaurants and terraces were open for business, which gave a convivial appearance to the surroundings. After walking away from the city centre for approximately 30 minutes, the city centre and its surrounding neighbourhoods made way for an industrial area. The contrast between the cosy city centre and the deserted and lifeless industrial district, was tremendous.

Walking away from the industrial buildings I found myself surrounded by five big farms. On a two lane road there were three farms at the right side of the road and two at the left side. At the far left side of the road there was a big enclosed area. This fenced community was the asylum seekers centre, at which I had an appointment with Basshem. During the time of my arrival, Basshem was having his weekly Dutch language lesson. I was early for our appointment, so I decided to look around for myself. It was ironic that in the months leading up to this research my application for visiting an AZC was refused by the COA. Yet, here I was, standing in an AZC, meeting up with a refugee and talk about his journey and his life inside this AZC.

At the only gate of the fenced AZC there was a huge barrier to stop cars from entering the grounds. I saw that all the building on the premises did not have any colour. Grey was everything I saw, it made me sad to think that this was all the people would see for the coming months. I passed the barrier and walked towards a small building with a “reception” sign on it. I walked in and saw a queue in front of a desk, a desk with one person behind it. I waited in the queue for about twelve minutes, all the while I heard a lot of languages, but none of them was Dutch. All the communication was done in either English, Arabic languages or with signs. When it was my turn I walked towards the desk, where the social worker greeted me in English. I quickly turned to Dutch and told him the reason of my visit. The man replied that Basshem and I should return when his language lesson had ended because he needed a document from Basshem to make my visit complete. So I had waited in line for twelve minutes and was not one step closer to officially visiting the AZC. This was just the beginning of the bureaucracy “prison” refugees are subject to.

Following my first experience with the bureaucracy of an AZC, I decided to walk around the place. I wanted to see, feel and experience the place. At the left of the reception building there was one of the bigger one story buildings, which hosted a school. The school had a little fenced playground just outside the building, where many children were playing. I saw a lot of happy faces
and the sound of child laughter filled the air. After examining the school area some more I came to
the conclusion that this was in fact a kindergarten. Parents could leave their children in a safe and
supervised area, while they could do an activity.

At the right of the reception there were two buildings. The first building was a one story
building that looked like a restaurant. The building was very dark on the inside, indicating that it had
not opened yet. Many people were standing at the door of this building, holding folders full of
documents. Presumably, they were waiting for the restaurant building to open. Behind the
restaurant building, there was a fourteen story apartment building. The grey multi-story dwelling
looked old, dirty and somewhat depressing. Not many people were roaming the terrain and it made
me feel a little bit lonely. Behind the reception building there were four more identical flats, of which
one was used as an study area, Basshem told me later. The other three buildings accommodated
living areas for the refugees. It struck me that regardless the nice weather that day, not many people
were enjoying it with an outside activity.

After 45 minutes of wandering around in astonishment in this grey detention centre,
Basshem’s Dutch language lesson had come to an end. I waited on a bench just outside of the
reception for him. Following Basshem and I meeting, I waited another fifteen minutes in the queue
at the reception. This waiting was pointless because when it was our turn the social worker knew
Basshem and said it was fine.. We had waited for fifteen minutes only to hear that it was not
necessary.. The documented he needed in the first place was not necessary the second time..

Basshem took me with him towards his room. Basshem lived on the fourth floor of a grey
flat, which was the building on the grounds that was furthest from the gate. Basshem and Jumia had
been in the Netherlands since 29th of January 2019 and were situated in this AZC since the 3rd of
February. They had left Syria in 2014 and spend 4 years in Turkey. After the working permit of
Basshem was not prolonged by the Turkish government, they applied for a visa to come to the
Netherlands. After they had received the visa, they applied for asylum in ter Apel following their
journey by plane towards Amsterdam. Due to their approval of their visa, their procedure was
accelerated by the IND and they were transferred to an AZC. They had lived in this AZC for 1,5
months.

They were full of energy, wanting to do something. They wanted to do voluntary work, learn
the language, they were both looking for information on where to completer their masters and they
wanted to have children. The contrast between their energy and the energy of the place was unreal.
The place itself shouted a passive, inert, concrete boundedness. Basshem and Jumia on the other
hand were in the prime of their lives. They had been married for three years, were on the brink of
starting a family, wanted to complete their studies, wanted to develop themselves, wanted to
volunteer, wanted to work, wanted to learn Dutch and they wanted to meet Dutch people. But
despite their energy and willingness to be active, they were stuck in a grey concrete enclosed area.

Their room was small, it had one bed, a closet and a small camping table with two folded chairs. The surface area of the room would have been around 10 square meters. With the furniture in it there was almost no room to walk, you would have to navigate yourself through the room. During our interview Jumia was seated on the bed because there was no room for another chair. The room itself was grey, everything had a different shade of grey, but it all had shouted the same; melancholia! The room had one window, which could not be opened. Basshem told me that there were a lot of suicides from the upper floors due to the windows, so they had decided to close them all. The room itself had the appearance of a prison cell without bars. They had to share the kitchen and bathroom facilities with six other rooms, which accommodated fifteen people in total. Getting a shower in the morning was horrible, Jumia told me. Also making their supper was an everyday challenge for this couple. Basshem told me that he was happy that he had a roof above his head and that he could sleep in a normal bed, but the overall experience of the AZC was very difficult for this young and outgoing couple.

Aside from the 2,5 hour Dutch language lesson, which was held once a week on Wednesday, and doing groceries at a local supermarket, this couple had nothing to do. They were stuck, they felt stuck and they were aching to be active again. They had a step by step manual for the future, they both wanted to finalize their masters in development and HR management respectively. Furthermore, they wanted to work on their career, help people and do something back to the society and this world. The third aspect of their manual for the future was having a family. Having a child was a dream for this couple, it even was one of the biggest reasons to leave Turkey and apply for a Visa. They thought that having children in the Netherlands was far more advantageous due to the stability of this country. Although they had a step by step manual for their future, the confining structures of the AZC and the Dutch system as a whole, made this couple experience stuckedness. Jumia and Basshem had to put their lives on hold to go through the Dutch asylum process. They had been stationed in this AZC for 1,5 months and they were already aching to do something. They were getting sick of doing absolutely nothing. The Dutch language lesson was one of the few things that helped them through the week. Basshem defined his feelings as follows:

“"The process is one of the most respective processes around the world. I have seen camps, this is not a camp, it is a five star hotel. It is a huge loosing of time, for me it is like that. I started my career in Syria in development and then in Turkey.. now I need to start over again. We cannot do anything, I cannot achieve anything, I have to wait. This feeling is so hard. Time is running through and we are not, we are searching for something to develop ourselves. Learning the language, voluntary work, anything to make us do something."”

- Basshem, 20-03-2019
Basshem’s and Jumia’s case is not an isolated one, many refugees experience the same feelings regarding the asylum process and their residence in one of the AZC’s. Mansend for example thought about it as a hibernation period; “You are doing nothing, it is like hibernation. You just eat, sleep and go to the bathroom, all the while you are waiting for a letter from COA for housing”. (Mansend, 08-02-2019) Even the social workers from many NGO’s that help refugees after they obtained housing, are sceptical towards this certain part of the journey that refugees make. One of the social workers said the following:

“Boredom, boredom, boredom! You want to learn the language, but you are prohibited from going to school. You want to work, but you do not have insurance so companies will not hire you. Also the endless transfers is a severe attack on their lives. They have to start over again and again. It brings with it so much frustration and negative energy. They have no goal, they can’t do anything there. If you are fortunate enough this process only takes one year, but there are cases in which the IND takes 7 or 8 years to finalize the process”.

- Social worker Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad, 14-03-2019

Basshem and Jumia were on the brink of their promised far-ahead future. Their step by step manual for their dream future and their willingness to be active, was an indication of it. After 1,5 month of staying in an AZC, they were full of energy and their dream was fully alive. However, what impact would stasis, waiting, uncertainty and insecurity for the coming period have on the future dreams of Basshem and Jumia? At this very moment their future and dreams had been put on hold by the state and their asylum process and it would not come to a close anytime soon.

Never ending journey
“The difference is enormous between the period in an AZC and the period of obtaining housing. All of a sudden the refugees have obligations and duties regarding the state. They need to follow a integration course, they are obliged to apply in order to receive a settlement, they need to apply for the health care insurance, etc. From absolutely nothing they need to become hyper active again”.

- Social worker Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad, 14-03-2019

A part of the journey inside the Netherlands is the integration process of refugees. Following the obtainment of housing in a Dutch municipality, the mobility of refugees is considerably improved. The stasis and waiting in an AZC makes way for the integration process in Dutch society. During the
integration process the NGO Vluchtelingenwerk is responsible for assisting refugees in their everyday lives to improve their self-reliance. Helping them with everyday matters like where to do groceries, but also legal assistance in family reunion or application for a undetermined residence permit, Vluchtelingenwerk tries to assist refugees in every aspect of life.

Mobility is closely linked to self-reliance, by improving the self-reliance of a refugee their mobility is also enhanced. By getting comfortable with our society’s structures and the processes within it, simultaneously the mobility of refugees is improved. As a social worker from Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad stated in the above quote, this is a very time and energy absorbing period for the refugees. The contrast between the stasis and waiting in an AZC and the need to be active in the integration process is immense. But becoming active in a process that is so foreign to your own, is strikingly difficult. Even with the help of organisations like Vluchtelingenwerk many refugees struggle with the confining structures of our society, something that many social workers can imagine;

“I can imagine that it would be hard. You have made a horrible journey towards Europe, you have left your home and family behind, you have seen horrendous things along the way, maybe even escaped death multiple times and then all of a sudden they have to live their life in a certain way, prescribed by a foreign government. The structures and rules that are in place in our society are so different from what they know, it takes time and a lot of energy to get accustomed to it.”

- Social worker Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad, 14-03-2019

According to the social workers of Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad this long-lasting process can only be a success with an immense willpower to adapt to our society. In this sense the journey that many refugees embark on when they leave their country of origin, is not finished when they arrive in the Netherlands. Even the stasis and stuckedness in the asylum procedure and the activeness of the integration process in Dutch society are part of the journey that refugees make in search for a better life. One of the social workers defined the journey refugees make as follows;

“We can define the journey they make as a search or quest, a search for stability and safety. A search for a better life. A search for a future or a dream. But this search or quest is highlighted by experiences of unsafety, waiting, danger, anxiety, dependency, struggles and racism. Even in the integration process these feelings and experiences can be found. Whether the quest or search is ever completed remains to be seen. The journey they make feels like a never ending journey!”

- Social worker Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad, 14-03-2019
Governmentality
The journey for refugees does not end when they arrive in the Netherlands. For them the asylum procedure is an ongoing process that is part of the journey towards a better life. Also in the Dutch asylum process we can see that mobility and immobility are more than just closely related and can be present and experienced simultaneously. Periods of moving are succeeded by long periods of waiting and being stuck. In recent years many authors have elaborated on the significant role governments and institutions play in experiencing stuckedness. Fassin (2011) shows that the transnational circulation of people (migration) has become increasingly restricted by governments and institutions. All the actions and procedures used by the state to intentionally and deliberately slow down the migrants during their journey or migration trajectory, is called governmentality.

The state monopolises the legitimate means of movement through their actions and procedures and make refugees feel immobile even though they are on the move. “Waiting, insecurity, and eventual refusal have come to characterize border experiences for those without the economic, social and cultural capital needed to deploy “flexible citizenship” in a world on the move” (Andersson, 2014, p. 796). Thick dossiers, potential switches in policies and the event-lessness in migration camps are just some of the strategies used by the state as a tactic to generate a sense of stuckedness, uncertainty, shame, depression and anxiety among the migrants. (Andersson, 2014)

Basshem and Jumia feel the uncertainty and stuckedness of the situation they are in. After only one and a half months of being situated in an AZC, they are getting demoralized by their hopeless situation and questioning the step they had taken. But their case is not an isolated one. Making the migrant wait is not only a feature of the Dutch asylum process, but a feature of the overall treatment of refugees across the globe. Many refugees across the globe are stuck in despair in one of the many migration camps. They are stuck because of laws, treaties, rules and legislations that have a direct impact on their situations.

As I have shown in the above stories from refugees, many of them do not have the power to change their time in an AZC. A Dutch language lesson is all they can do when they have arrived in one of the grey waiting centres in Dutch society. Andersson (2014) argues that the power over the management of time is a tactic or a technique for the state in the migration trajectory of refugees. By managing time and delaying their migratory experience, refugees are stuck and experience immobility on the borders of many European countries (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). In a way the state is colonising the future of refugees because there expectations about the future are taken away from them and put on hold. The speed of their journey soon withers into stasis and “stuckedness” when on the brink of their promised far-ahead future (Andersson, 2014).

The power dynamics of mobility and immobility are clearly visible in the above story. Basshem and Jumia did not have the power to change their situation, all the while the state and the
asylum process is controlling their movement, feelings and overall situation. What their story exhibits is that mobility is not a static and linear process. Their story goes beyond an explanation of the spatial and geographical movement that can be described in space and time (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004). To fully understand the experiences of this Syrian couple, we have to acknowledge the fact that mobility and immobility have an highly hierarchical nature (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010). The power dynamics that are deeply rooted in the overall treatment of the movement of refugees, meant that the dreams of Basshem and Jumia’s future were further away than ever before.
Conclusion

The above stories show that fleeing your country of origin, in search for a better life, is not solely about being on the move. Semmier, Mansend, Hanous, Raghkel, Bashem & Jumia and many others have experienced a lot more than just movement. The experience during the movement is far more important than the distance covered through space and time (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004). Whereas mobility has the linear movement of the actors as its focus (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010; Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004), social navigation focuses on both the movement of the actors and the movement of the changing environment (Vigh, 2009). As a mode of survival, to overcome the changing environments of their contexts, many refugees decided to leave their homes and search for ‘life’ (Vigh, 2009). Those stories show us that social navigation as such is the practice of plotting and manoeuvring our way towards an advantageous direction in the future within fluid and changeable circumstances and contexts. Specific circumstances led people to flee the confining structures of their society.

The journey towards their far-ahead future was anything but smooth and simple. The linear process that many definitions on mobility (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010) indicate in the Western social sciences do not correspond with the experiences many refugees endure along the way. By defining those journeys as straightforward, simple and linear, like the definition of spatial mobility instructs us to do (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004), we fail to understand their actions and experiences along the way. During their journey many refugees experience immobility, stasis, waiting and even stuckness. Not moving, being stuck, eventless days, waiting and immobility are an extensive part of the above stories. Their story shows us that mobility and immobility are not only closely related (Sheller & Urry, 2006) but can be present and felt simultaneously. Although many of them made an incredible long journey, in the process many refugees felt very immobile.

Furthermore, even after arrival in the Netherlands, during the Dutch asylum process, refugees often experience the same feelings. Hibernation and stagnation are some of the words used to characterize the procedures. In recent years many authors have elaborated on the significant role governments and institutions play in experiencing immobility (Fassin, 2011). There are many actions and procedures used by the state to intentionally and deliberately slow down the migrants during their journey or migration trajectory (Fassin, 2011; Andersson, 2014). The state monopolises the legitimate means of movement through their actions and procedures and make refugees feel immobile even though they are on the move. Thick dossiers, potential switches in policies and the event-lessness in migration camps are just some of the strategies used by the state as a tactic to
generate a sense of stuckedness, uncertainty, shame, depression and anxiety among the migrants. (Andersson, 2014)

The definitions of spatial mobility by Kaufman, Bergman & Joye (2004) and the treatment of the concept mobility in the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010) neglect that power dynamics play a significant role in the above experiences. Fassin (2011) shows that the transnational circulation of people has become increasingly restricted. He argues that governments and states control the power over movement (Fassin, 2011). But what the above stories exhibit is that not only the state can control the movement of refugees. The subordinate position of refugees towards smugglers gives rise to a power struggle over movement. Many, if not all, refugees are dependent on the work of smugglers, paying large amounts of money in exchange for their movement. Most of the time they are not in control over their own movement or immobility.

Such stories shows us that the contemporary Western concept of mobility falls short in understanding the movement of refugees, because their journey encompasses far more than just the spatial or geographic movement. Far too long mobility in social sciences (Kaufman, Bergman & Joye, 2004; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010) has been solely about movement, neglecting the people that are experiencing immobility while on the move. Mobility and immobility are not mere opposites. What those stories exhibit is that mobility and immobility can be experienced simultaneously and are not dialectical in any sense. Therefore we need to treat the two concepts as an intertwined process that can be experienced while on the move. Instead of looking at moments of moving and moments of resting separately, we need to shift the focus to their conjunction and their entanglement. Refugees made an immobile journey, let’s do justice to that!
Notes of an engaged anthropologist

In the above I have argued that mobility and immobility are not mere opposites and have to be treated as an intertwined process. By highlighting the experiences refugees have during their journey towards Europe in search for ‘life’, I tried to show that their journey is not solely about being on the move. Waiting, stasis and eventlessness are characteristics of the journey they make. To make the step beyond the intellectual world, I want to look at recommendations for national and international policies and recommendations for further research.

The Dutch asylum process is a process that is experienced by refugees as a hibernation or a delay. A significant percentage of the applications for Dutch asylum end up in the prolonged asylum process, in which the refugee will get a transfer to one of the AZC’s in the Netherlands. The life in an AZC is very though, many refugees indicate that daily life is characterized by waiting for approval from the IND. Waiting, waiting and waiting for a letter in the mail is all they can do. By highlighting the experiences of refugees in the above stories, I have shown that the impact this period can have on refugee’s life is severe.

By acknowledging the argument that mobility and immobility are closely related and as a consequence treat the two concepts as an intertwined process, we can identify some pitfalls in the Dutch asylum process. The length of the overall process has some severe negative consequences for refugees. They literally shut down their lives for an undetermined amount of time, during the asylum process, just waiting for an external party to decide over their future. A recommendation for the IND and the Dutch government would be to speed up the asylum process. This way the lives of refugees are affected less by the daily life in an AZC. The undetermined amount of time a process can take in Dutch society generate a sense of stuckedness, uncertainty, shame, depression and anxiety among the migrants.

A recommendation for international policies would be to facilitate people with a safe journey towards a safe country. Many refugees experience hazardous moments when on the move. Extortion, death, prostitution, illegal activities and mistreatment by smuggles are just some of the things refugees experience along the way. If international organisations and governments facilitate a safe journey towards a safe place, the journey in itself will not be as stressful as it is experienced now.
My study does not provide us with all the answers. It also raises some questions that can be a recommendation for further research:

- How big is the role of national governments in deliberately slowing down migrants in their migration trajectory?
- As far as I know, there are is not that much attention towards the effects on people’s mental health when they experience the above. What are the effects, in terms of mental health, of the Dutch asylum process and the overall experiences of the journey towards the Netherlands?
- How do the refugees that are stuck in multiple camps in Europe (Italy and Greece) and countries in Africa (Sudan and Ethiopia) and the Middle East (Turkey and Israel) experience their mobility/immobility?
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Tuesday April 30th 2019


Saturday May 11th 2019

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Monday June 3rd 2019
### Appendixes

**Figure 1: Data table Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Family members</th>
<th>Daily life</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Place, date and duration of the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanous</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eritrean, Asmara</td>
<td>His wife and two children have been brought to the Netherlands with a family reunion.</td>
<td>Has been working for almost 2 years now.</td>
<td>Has travelled through Ethiopia, Sudan, Sahara, Libya, boat to Italy and by train to the Netherlands.</td>
<td>Lelystad, Welzijn Lelystad, 26/02/2019. [51;55]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tesfako</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eritrean, unknown</td>
<td>Has a wife (46) and five children (7, 13, 16, 18, 21)</td>
<td>Is in school learning the Dutch language</td>
<td>Has travelled through Sudan and the Sahara towards Israel. Has come to the Netherlands with a family reunion arrangement.</td>
<td>Lelystad, Welzijn Lelystad, 27/02/2019. [54;00]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerian</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eritrean, Asmara</td>
<td>Has a wife (33) and two children (7 &amp; 10)</td>
<td>Has travelled from Eritrea to Ethiopia and Sudan. Than back to Ethiopia to the Dutch Embassy. Has come to the Netherlands with a family reunion arrangement.</td>
<td>Lelystad, Welzijn Lelystad, 07/03/2019. [49;00]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mira</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Iranian, unknown</td>
<td>Has a mother and</td>
<td>Is going to school in September</td>
<td>Was 14 when making the journey</td>
<td>Lelystad, Welzijn Lelystad,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghavin</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eritrean, unknown</td>
<td>Has a mother, father and brother living in the Netherlands. Has work. Was 14 when making his journey (AMV). Has travelled from Eritrea to Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and Europe.</td>
<td>19/03/2019. [44;00]</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tafinis</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian, Damascus</td>
<td>Father and mother still in Syria. In process of finding work. From Syria to Lebanon and then Egypt. From Egypt with a boat to Italy and then by train to the Netherlands.</td>
<td>Lelystad, Welzijn Lelystad, 25/03/2019. [1:04;00]</td>
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<td>Sara Dros</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dutch, Almere</td>
<td>Working as legal specialist at Welzijn Lelystad</td>
<td>Lelystad, Welzijn Lelystad, 6/2/19 19/02/19 26/02/19 27/02/19 7/3/19 11/03/2019 14/03/2019 19/03/2019 25/03/2019 15/04/2019, ± 1 hour.</td>
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<td>Colleague group</td>
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<td>Female (x3)</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Social workers at Welzijn Lelystad</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nationality, City</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mansend</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian, Aleppo</td>
<td>A brother and sister living in Europe, parents still in Syria.</td>
<td>Student at the VU</td>
<td>Has travelled from Syria to Lebanon, Turkey and by boat to Greece. Than towards the Netherlands.</td>
<td>14/03/2019. [1:00;41]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raghkel</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Syrian, Aleppo</td>
<td>Has a mother and father living in the Netherlands.</td>
<td>Student at the VU</td>
<td>Has travelled from Turkey to Egypt. Has come to the Netherlands with a family reunion arrangement</td>
<td>Amsterdam, 08/03/2019. [51;09]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basshem</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian, Aleppo</td>
<td>Brother in Germany and parents in Syria.</td>
<td>In an AZC</td>
<td>Lived in Turkey for three years before coming to the Netherlands with a visa.</td>
<td>AZC, 20/03/2019. [1:42;53]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Syrian, Aleppo</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>In AZC</td>
<td>Lived in Turkey for three years before coming to the Netherlands with a visa.</td>
<td>AZC, 20/03/2019. [1:42;53]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delila</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Has a mother and two sisters in the Netherlands and a father in Syria.</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Has come to the Netherlands with a family reunion arrangement</td>
<td>Gouda, 09/03/2019. [1:00;00]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beshan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Traveled through Lebanon and by boat to Greece. And</td>
<td>Rotterdam, 28/03/2019. [1:08;01]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
then towards the Netherlands by train.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Status in Belgium</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adasis</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Student in Belgium</td>
<td>Travelled to Belgium with a family reunion arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Student in Belgium</td>
<td>Travelled to Belgium with a family reunion arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eetclub de krakeling</td>
<td>Monday 07/01/2019</td>
<td>Talked to people and observed them while they were having dinner. No one was willing to speak with me about their journey.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buurtcentrum Atolplaza</td>
<td>Thursday 10/01/2019</td>
<td>Observed people that entered this centrum. Tried to talk to people in the waiting area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eetclub de krakeling</td>
<td>Monday 14/01/2019</td>
<td>Talked to people and observed them while they were having dinner. No one was willing to speak with me about their journey.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buurtcentrum Atolplaza</td>
<td>Friday 18/01/2019</td>
<td>Observed people that entered this centrum. Tried to talk to people in the waiting area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huis voor taal</td>
<td>Tuesday 08/01/2019</td>
<td>Observed in the library at Huis voor taal, a Dutch organisation that helps people with learning the Dutch language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huis voor taal</td>
<td>Wednesday 16/01/2019</td>
<td>Tried to talk to people that entered Huis voor taal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZC observation</td>
<td>Wednesday 20/03/2019</td>
<td>Before my interview with Basshem and Jumia I had the time to experience and feel the AZC for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vluchtelingenwerk Lelystad</td>
<td>Wednesday 6/2/19,</td>
<td>Spoke to numerous social workers and observed their activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday 19/02/19,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday 26/02/19,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday 27/02/19,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday 7/3/19,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 11/03/2019,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday 14/03/2019,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday 19/03/2019,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday 25/03/2019,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday 15/04/2019,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>