



We Are Here
The Embodiment of an Imagination

We Are Here: The Embodiment of an Imagination

Bachelor thesis

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Picture on front page: demonstration Bed, Bath, Bread, May 29, 2015. Retrieved from:
<https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/photos/pb.423445664355669.-2207520000.1435179881./956283857738511/?type=3&theater>

To those who go dimly
in shadows of the ceaseless flow of celebrated people
beneath the lonely night amid the gloom

*“You are
How I am
And no-one else
A helpful friend indeed.*

*You are
Who I am
And no-one else
A friend indeed*

There are no borders. Here my home, is yours. Let us practice selflessness and look beyond ourselves to the Other. Because the Other is who we have always been.”

(Song at Museumplein demonstration, Rozemijn Aalpoel, February 7, 2015)

Acknowledgements

To use participant observation as a main method as an anthropologist in the field has been something abstract to me for a long time. When I started my period of ethnographic fieldwork on the second of February until the thirteenth of April of this year, however, the concept became more alive and tangible than ever before. By hanging out with my informants and just being there I felt like a true anthropologist. But what is an anthropologist without his or her informants? Firstly, I would like to warmly thank all the members and supporters of We Are Here for welcoming and accepting me. I was delighted by their great hospitality; a hospitality of a nature I never encountered before. Secondly, I would like to thank my informants for answering questions and taking time to make me understand and show me the complexity of their everyday lives. Thirdly, I would like to specifically thank Mary for being my guide, my advisor, my light in the darkness and above all my friend. Fourthly, I want to specifically thank Mufti, Hasim, Anesu, Jamilah, Zorona, Elinora, Barkhado, Stap Verder and Vrouwen Tegen Uitzetting for letting me hang out with them and enabling me to understand. Fifthly, I would like to thank Femke van der Heide and Colin Langenberg for giving me feedback and correcting my English. Sixthly, I would like to thank Christa von Reth for our conversations that enabled me to keep entering the field with a critical view. Seventhly, I would like to thank Gerdien Steenbeek. Without your guidance and your course on anthropology itself I would have never been the anthropologist who I am now. Eighthly, I would like to thank everyone whom I have forgotten to thank now. Ninthly, I would like to thank all my family and friends for accepting that I was absent so often. Last but not least, I would like to thank my supervisor Fabiola Jara Gomez. Without her critical view, feedback, input and trust in me this thesis would not have been the same product as it is now.

Foreword

Firstly, I want this document to be openly accessible to everyone as I want the world to know about what is going on in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Inspired by the anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes I would like to argue that the power of anthropology is to understand everyone; to see and listen to anyone we encounter on this planet as humans with our eyes and ears that are most of all trying to understand. Our primary focus is not see the devil but the human being in people. This anthropological wisdom, this approach of life, has continuously crossed my own road towards becoming an anthropologist. On my first day of fieldwork my key informant and best friend in the field once again reminded me of this importance. One day she would be a great anthropologist.

“One of the most important lessons in life is to learn to picture life through the eyes of the Other. Imagine that you are the Other who you are seeing. How would you like yourself to behave if you were the Other? If everyone was able to step in another one’s shoes, the world would be a better place. So look at yourself as if you are the Other, Rozy.” (Conversation with Mary, Rozemijn Aalpoel, February 2, 2015).

She would be a great anthropologist one day, if only she had the right to have access to education. But she does not, because she is not allowed to due to her not having papers. As anthropologists it is our job to make eachother uncomfortable by telling stories that are usually kept quiet. But as many anthropologists know, anthropology is also the bastard child of colonialism. To collect knowledge to control populations was the core business of anthropology once. Although we left these intentions behind us long ago we did continue to collect knowledge. By telling peoples’ stories and narratives we also spread knowledge and knowledge is a dangerous good. Knowledge, as Foucault argues, can and will be used to legitimize one’s actions and has been intimately associated with the rise of the nation-state.

Secondly, I would like to make something very clear. During the court case which I describe in the third chapter of this thesis, I came to know that interviews with individuals and newspaper articles have been used to illustrate that the individual and collective narratives of the We Are Here movement can vary. The court case has thus illustrated that data similar to mine can be used against the movement to impede its road towards configurations of its imagined future. Consequently, I would like to sincerely apologize in advance if this document will ever be used against the movement. It was never my intention to contribute to your not having access to a home. It was never my intention to contribute to your not having

access to what in your eyes is adequate shelter. It was never my intention to contribute to your not having a life full of dignity, respect and humanity which you all deserve.

However, as this is a bachelor thesis the fate of this document has from the start been bound to end up invisibly hidden in the university's archives. Although the stories in this thesis are full of courageous acts that took place in the most insecure circumstances to maintain the imagination of a possible future, the story of the thesis itself will probably be inglorious, unknown and above all hidden like the stories of its main characters. Nevertheless, one other important thing I have learned in my period of ethnographic fieldwork is that human beings can have a strength of character in them that is greater than anyone can imagine.

“Sometimes things happen and you lose your focus. Sometimes you even forget about your future and your dreams. You need to overcome these challenges. What does not kill you, makes you stronger. I have learned one thing in life. It is that you can never stop a human being. You can draw borders, but he will cross. The sea can be dangerous and drown people, but people will still swim (Conversation with Anesu, Rozemijn Aalpoel, March 20, 2015)”.

This paper is to all lovable ‘full’ human-beings in Amsterdam that have inspired, helped and empowered me to write my thesis. Hopefully this thesis might contribute a tiny beam of light to We Are Here's wish to enlighten its situation.

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Introduction

Stories of an imagination

This is a research into a movement named We Are Here¹ in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The movement consists of sans-papiers: a sans-papiers is a person who has no paperwork for staying legally in a country's territory. On the move sans-papiers constantly come across borders: national borders, borders which include and exclude people from social facilities, borders which inhibit people from moving about on the streets. Movement will therefore be central in this thesis, as movement appears crucial to our understanding of when one is considered to be a fulfilled, right-bearing human being (Andersson 2014).

Whereas the members of WAH are restricted in their movement, the world and its people are on the move (Andersson 2014:4, Appadurai 1996). Due to time-space compression people are more easily able to cross borders, to travel, to move (Appadurai 1996). Evans states that borders have become part and parcel of the modern nation state and are "*an almost universal activity of the modern state to regulate the movement of the people across its national boundaries*" (Stolcke 1995:9). Border politics and regulation of human movement across national borders are both a power expression and part of the sovereignty of the modern nation state (Sharma and Gupta 2008). It is taken for granted that a state's sovereignty is and should be territorially based (Sharma and Gupta 2008:7, Gupta and Ferguson 2014) and consequently there is a restriction in the free flow of people between national territories.

This restriction is illustrated by the selectively permeable character of borders. Due to this characteristic of borders some people are labeled as praised travelers such as expats, tourists or highly skilled migrants, whilst others are labeled as unwanted travelers such as paperless refugees (Andersson 2014:4). Those labeled as unwanted and unpraised face challenges in and restrictions on movement. Although many unwanted travelers are successfully excluded from the entrance to nation-states, some still succeed in traversing national borders. As a result these excluded people are physically present in nation-states, but are simultaneously restricted from legal access to their communities. These people do not receive protection provided by nation-states and do not belong to any state as they embody a social construction of being an apolitical human body. As Foucault argues, there are no acts of power without acts of resistance. WAH embodies an actor that reacts to the border and biopolitical regimes of the state that regulate human movement and human rights.

¹ I will refer to the We Are Here movement as WAH.

Most members of WAH are sans-papiers and excluded from political life and citizenship in The Netherlands. In this thesis I will tell a small part of the ongoing story of WAH. By telling WAH's story I attempt to do justice to the vision they communicate. Highlighting three major events I will emphasize what I consider to be the prime narrative of WAH during my three months of research: the political Bed, Bath and Bread agreement.² This agreement is interwoven with what will become the central theme of this thesis: WAH's notions of citizenship as articulated in their demands. While conducting my research the primary questions to better understand WAH's notions of citizenship were the following three. Firstly: what are their notions of citizenship and its borders? Secondly: what is the driving force behind the demonstrations and campaigns of WAH? Thirdly: in what ways are their notions of citizenship concretely expressed during demonstrations and campaigns?

This research will provide an analysis of an actor who is able to create space to contest the boundaries of citizenship and the sole position of the state to define who is included and excluded from its political community. Moreover, by following Foucault's notions on power this thesis aims at analyzing an actor that embodies and portrays that the state is not the only actor that can express power.

Methodology

For three months I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the dark corners of society to witness people living a marginal life just outside the inclusiveness of citizenship. I was present in the former Vluchtgebouw (Refuge Building) and in the former Vluchtgarage (Refuge Garage), two of the squatted buildings of WAH, and during many of the activities that WAH organized for its members and supporters. My main technique for collecting data was participant observation. According to Scheper-Hughes (2014), while doing ethnographic fieldwork one is not only a spectator, but also a witness. Inspired by her statement I entered the field as an engaged witness; *“a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who will ‘take sides’ and make judgments”* (Scheper-Hughes 2014:417). I offered the members of WAH my mind, my body, my conversations and my presence and as a result I experienced a small part of the ongoing story they are writing. As a result, the analyses of events are constantly being conducted by and with my informants in the field. Ingold described this as follows: *“we, as anthropologists, see in the field—and how we see and understand it— depends on the people*

² Due to this agreement refugees have only the right to have access to night shelter and its facilities from seven in the evening until the early morning. During daytime they have to spend their time on the street, notwithstanding weatherly circumstances.

we meet, on the information that they share with us and on the events that we experience together” (Fibiger 2010:30). It is the task of the ethnographer to collect various viewpoints, listen to them, and to unravel them.

Inspired by the Manchester School I will use three events. These three events seem plateaus of intensity to me: *“moments in which the intransigencies and irresolvable tensions ingrained in social and personal life (the two being inseparable) boiled to the surface and became, if only momentarily, part of public awareness for the participants as well as for the anthropologist”* (Kapferer 2010:3). The events will be presented in chronological order, as time turns out to be an important concept also in the lives of the members of WAH. With these events I seek to describe what the WAH movement was like at a specific moment in time and place. The events I chose serve a specific purpose: they show how WAH attempts to influence those ideas that exclude people from citizenship as imposed by the state. Moreover, the movement tries to realize its configurations of its imagined future: it tries to open new possibilities in the construction of social actualities.

By focusing on three events, I follow the theory of Kapferer (2000) who has started an exploration of using the event as a *“singularity in which critical dimensions can be conceived as opening to new potentialities in the formation of social realities”* (Kapferer 2000:1-2). In other words, this methodological turn towards the event would describe the event as a continuous process of the becoming of the social reality: which in this thesis is the imagined future of WAH. The methodological shift towards the event started in the Manchester School. The events the Manchester School used were often atypical and an interruption revealing the dimensions and potentialities of the event’s realities. This use of atypical events was pursued because the atypicality would reveal tensions, both political and social, that lie at the core of everyday life. Breaking the calm of everyday life plays a major role in enlightening social and political relations. Consequently, these events should neither be seen as a pattern of everyday life, nor as the exception to it (Kapferer 2000:3).

What counts as an event, however, is highly problematic as the event-approach of the Manchester School does not intend to use events as a means to present societies writ small. Using events of conflict and crisis is a fruitful way to avoid the event from becoming merely illustrative to or representative of the social field. It is the structure of the event as being dynamic and thoroughly situationally specific that makes the event overcome the idea of being a mere illustration and representation (Kapferer 2000:14). The event will thus always be likely to have these dimensions of illustration and representation, but will also transcend them.

Chapter one emphasizes the situation in which the WAH movement operates. The Dutch migration policy, illegality as a social construct, WAH, The Vluchtgebouw and the district in which the Vluchtgebouw is situated are all mentioned. Chapter two discusses the Bed, Bath Bread demonstration on the seventh of January, 2015 to show how demonstrations are an expression of power. Moreover, both the driving force behind the demonstration against the Bed, Bath and Bread agreement and WAH's concrete notions of citizenship become evident. Chapter three uses the court case on the eviction of the Vluchtgarage on the seventeenth of March, 2015 to demonstrate that due to geographical movement a person can lose his or her right to have access to a political community. The fourth chapter describes the eviction of the Vluchtgarage on the thirteenth of April, 2015 to emphasize that the government can no longer ignore the political influence of its sans-papiers. Moreover, it provides an analysis of two civil initiatives that respond to the government's expressions of power.

Protest march, April 13, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/photos/pb.423445664355669.-2207520000.1435179881./948342655199298/?type=3&theater>



Chapter 1 Context

Mapping the situation

The twenty-first century has been full of flows of people that fled their countries of origin due to war, political conflicts, and economic circumstances. These flows have also reached The Netherlands³. This chapter provides an overview of the situational context in which the members of WAH operate. First, some light is shed on the Dutch migration policy. Second, illegality in The Netherlands is defined. Third, WAH is introduced. Fourth, a description of the Vluchtgebouw is provided. Last, the district in which the Vluchtgebouw is situated is mapped.

Migration policy of The Netherlands in short

“It is not going to be easier to get access to The Netherlands, except for those who are considered desirable [citizens] by the government” (Rijksoverheid 2008:2).

The Dutch migration policy has a so-called selectively welcoming character. Those who are considered to be able to deliver a positive contribution to the international economic position of The Netherlands are welcomed, if not invited to come to The Netherlands, whereas those who are not considered as such are not. In this selective entrance policy both the needs of the Dutch society and migrants’ contribution to the Dutch society play a key role (Rijksoverheid 2008:2). Although it pursues selectivity the Dutch government must fulfill its international humanitarian obligations. Since 2000 a distinction is made between ‘regular’ requests and ‘asylum’ requests for a residence permit. Regular requests for a residence permit include those based on reasons such as work, study or culture. Asylum requests are those based on the circumstances in the countries of origin of the applicants. There are two main categories within the asylum requests.

The first is called A-ground. People fit in the A-ground category when they match the ‘classic’ definition of a refugee as laid down by the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Geneva 1951. The term refugee, according to this definition, shall be applied to any person who “[...] [has] *a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of*

³ In attachment II both the global trends in refugee flows and the top-10 nationalities of asylum applicants in the Netherlands can be seen.

the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it⁴". The second category is the B-ground. People who fit into this category have a plausible chance of being tortured when they return to their country of origin. The B-ground is about what would happen in the future if someone would return⁵.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service in The Netherlands determines in which category an asylum seeker belongs and decides whether someone gets a residence permit. People whose request for a residence permit was rejected have to voluntarily leave the country within a certain number of hours. When people do not leave the country they are labeled as being 'illegally' in Dutch territories.

Illegality

The Illegalennota 2004 (Policy on Illegality) describes illegality as follows: "*residence in the Netherlands by those who do not have a valid residence permit and therefore have the duty to leave the country*" (Kromhout et al 2008:11). Since the early nineties laws have been introduced to hamper staying illegally in Dutch territory. These laws restrict people who are considered illegal from having access to work, shelter and healthcare. During one of the demonstrations of WAH a public speaker described these restrictions in her own terms. There is a policy "*in which people take for granted that as long as you make people unhappy and as long as you make sure that people consider their staying here as extremely terrible, they will go away. But that is not true!*" (Speaker at Museumplein demonstration, Rozemijn Aalpoel, February 7, 2015). Despite the circumstances many people stay illegally in The Netherlands; according to the website of the national police around 100,000 people⁶.

Organizational features of WAH

Amsterdam, 2012. In the spring of 2012 a group of refugees who did not get a residence permit organized themselves and started to operate under the name of We Are Here. After their requests for residence permits had been rejected, they were put on the streets with the request to voluntarily leave the country. Consequently the members of WAH are considered as staying illegally in the Netherlands.

⁴ Verdrag betreffende de status van vluchtelingen, Genève, 28-07-1951: (geldend op 09-06-2015). Retrieved from http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0001002/geldigheidsdatum_09-06-2015

⁵ Norma Fötsch, Nederlands Vreemdelingenrecht – in kort bestek. April, 11 2015.

⁶ Illegaliteit/Vreemdelingen. Retrieved from <https://www.politie.nl/themas/illegaliteit-vreemdelingen.html>

“We are two hundred refugees who were once forced to leave our countries of origin due to war, suppression and hunger. We have gone through the Dutch asylum procedures, but our requests for protection have been rejected. The Dutch government tried to deport us, but they failed. We are no longer recognized as civilians in our country of origin, our countries of origin do not provide us an entry permit which is needed to return, we are too vulnerable or our return will lead to torture or even to our death⁷”.

In 2012 a group of mainly hidden individuals became a collective, a movement that organized itself along the lines of several organizational features. The sans-papiers all have in common that they cannot stay, but cannot leave the country either. One of their organizational features is the movement’s inclusive policy of membership which is in contrast with the state’s exclusive policy of membership.

Moreover, to organize themselves they formulated common demands. By means of protest and campaigns the movement tries to change the Dutch asylum policy which in their opinion causes their situation. They wish to shed light on the situation of those who cannot leave The Netherlands, but cannot stay either. One of the goals of WAH is to *“demand a structural solution for anyone who finds himself in a similar situation as [theirs]”⁸*. A structural solution in the view of many members of WAH equals having a normal life. What a normal life is, is described to me by an inhabitant of the Vluchtgarage.

“When you [he speaks directly to me, Rozemijn] go back from this group, you go to home. You find home, a room, a house, you take a hot shower. But where we live, we do not have heaters and it is very cold sometimes and you see, we do not have privacy. So that is what I mean, that is the normal life that we need. [...] Having papers means you have a normal life, when you have citizenship, you have a normal life. So yes, that is what we are trying to reach. We try to get papers because we have the right to have papers” (Interview Hasim, Rozemijn Aalpoel, March 19, 2015).

This definition of a structural solution, however, implies an incompatible contradiction. The structural solution of many members of WAH is to get papers whereas the solution of the state tends to be to send them back to their countries of origin.

⁷ Visie. Retrieved from <http://www.devluchtkerk.nl/over-ons/visie>

⁸ Visie. Retrieved from <http://www.devluchtkerk.nl/over-ons/visie>

Description of the Vluchtgebouw

Another organizational feature of the WAH movement is their creation of shelter since shelter for sans-papiers is not provided by the state. During my period of ethnographic fieldwork I mainly conducted research in the Vluchtgebouw. The Vluchtgebouw is situated in Amsterdam Nieuw-West. It served as a 'data center' for a multimedia company before it was inhabited by members of WAH in August, 2014. The privately owned building was vacant for several years. The WAH movement squatted the building after a long stay in the Vluchthaven which ended in July, 2014. The owner of the building agreed with the occupation by WAH and offered them cold water and electricity. By February 2015, when I began my fieldwork, seventy people were staying at the Vluchtgebouw on a permanent basis.

This is a two-store building without interior divisions or housing facilities other than toilets, water taps, and one rudimentary kitchen space on the second floor. The inhabitants have managed to transform these open spaces into living places. There is a laundry machine for communal use, probably a gift from volunteers. There are enough mattresses and blankets distributed among the dwellers; these were donated by supporters. To heat the rooms people use electric heaters. A small room with a drainage has been habilitated as the only 'shower' in the whole building shared by all the inhabitants. To bathe with hot water people use the electric stove in the kitchen. On the first floor are toilets for women and for men. The hallway that connects all the rooms is dark, because there are no lights. The front door of the building is missing and hence any stranger could enter the building. On the first floor is a large white area which is used to store bikes and dry laundry which later was transformed by supporters into a living room for all inhabitants. The room is equipped with benches and chairs and the walls are colorfully painted with flowers and slogans. Next to the large living room is a classroom with many sheets with Dutch texts on its walls. A volunteer gives Dutch lessons here every Sunday.

Remarkably the living space is distributed along gender and ethnic lines and within these places, people use colored drapes and curtains attached to the ceiling to form individual or collective compartments. A few rooms are situated next to the large white area where bikes are stored and these serve as bedrooms for men. Moreover, next to the large white room is a curtained-off area where Francophone people live. There are rooms for women on the first floor. The rooms offer varying amounts of space. The room for Somalian women is big enough to have ten beds and a large brown carpet in the middle of the beds. Eight women live in this room. The room is split up into three sections by means of curtains. There is a small area where a table and some deserted mattresses stand and there is another curtained-off area

where more women live. The women cook on an electric stove with two burners. The other two rooms for women on the ground floor are smaller. Opposite to the women's rooms is a small room where a Chinese man is living on his own.

The men live on the second floor. There is a medium-sized room next to the stairs. Drapes divide the space into three smaller compartments which are big enough to have a bed, a small couch and some chairs for visitors. The space next to this room is very large and accounts for almost all the space on the second floor. This is the living room of Somalian and Sudanese men. There are two couches, lots of chairs, a television with a PlayStation and in the back there is another curtained-off area. Behind the curtains several mattresses lay on the floor which serve as more beds. Next to this room is an area that used to serve as the dining area for employees of the multimedia company. It is a large empty room, with an old, barely usable kitchen. Two electric stoves still work, but that is all what is left of the kitchen. The sinks are dirty and clogged.

Due to the large number of people living in the Vluchtgebouw the occupants had to be creative to transform the building into a home. Curtains have been used to divide rooms into smaller sections to create privacy. There are also a few communal facilities, like the toilets, the shower, heating water stove, the storage for the bikes and the place to dry the laundry. Moreover, each room is inhabited by a certain gender and nationality. This gendered and ethnic spatial distribution should be understood within the social logic of the status of the sans-papiers, their fragmented family lives and their asylum stories in public facilities. People, however, appreciate these spatial divisions because they are able to talk their own language and to follow their own, shared, domestic habits and daily rhythms. There is, for example, a room for Somalian women, a room for Eritrean women and a room for Sudanese men.

There is also a more formal organizational structure in the Vluchtgebouw⁹ which has to be understood in terms of the specific necessities of the WAH movement. Each room - or gender and nationality - has a spokesperson. The spokespersons have a meeting every week to organize life within and outside the walls of the Vluchtgebouw. They also organize the people in their buildings when there are activities. The spokespersons are also responsible for the

⁹ I speak of the Vluchtgebouw, because this is the place where I mainly conducted my research. Two chapters, however, are devoted to the Vluchtgarage; one of the other buildings where members of the WAH movement live. I have met and interviewed several inhabitants of the Vluchtgarage. The Vluchtgarage itself served as a garage for cars and consists of four floors. The organizational structure in the building is similar to the organizational structure in the Vluchtgebouw. The facilities in the building are similar as well, but are more scarce. The Vluchtgarage counts around 120 male inhabitants. The rooms are larger than in the Vluchtgebouw, but there are more people living in the rooms. Moreover, it is situated in a district at the edge of the city of Amsterdam.

distribution of food. WAH is primarily dependent on donations and the money of a philanthropist. The philanthropist of WAH makes sure that the spokespersons are able to spend and divide the money she gives. With that money some of the spokespersons buy groceries for every inhabitant of the Vluchtgebouw at the supermarket weekly.

Mapping Amsterdam Nieuw-West

The Vluchtgebouw is situated in a district of Amsterdam named Nieuw-West. Amsterdam Nieuw-West is one of the largest districts of Amsterdam, counting around 140,000 inhabitants and is characterized by gentrification processes. Many different population groups inhabit the district. The members of WAH moved into a district characterized by dynamics of urban renewal and stagnation due to the effects of the last financial crisis¹⁰.

Within the district Amsterdam Nieuw-West participation among its inhabitants is stimulated and pursued. In seven community centers in Amsterdam Nieuw-West people are committed to realize this participation. Those community centers are named 'Huis van de Wijk' i.e. House of the District. However, when I tried to arrange an interview with the director of the House of the District situated in the same street as the Vluchtgebouw, he denied the presence of the Vluchtgebouw and the recently squatted other building of WAH right next to it. This will lead to my unproven hypothesis that there is no participation pursued between the legal inhabitants of Amsterdam Nieuw-West and its sans-papiers inhabitants.

The WAH movement operates in this context and endeavors to bring a radical change into their situation. They are aware that their ability to articulate their demands depends on their being an organized body. As a collective they are able to create the space in which their demands, claims and rights can be performed. Therefore the organizational features of WAH play a key role in their personal as well as their political existence. As an organized body the sans-papiers of WAH no longer fit into the social-construction of illegality sustained by the Dutch state which produces the illegality through mechanisms of individuation and fragmentation of the human body. The state produces bodies stripped of rights and political agencies. Through WAH's home and collectivity making WAH becomes a political body, a community enacting political agency in resistance. One of the tools WAH uses to articulate its demands are demonstrations. The next chapter will thoroughly look into one of the demonstrations I have participated in and observed during my extended period of fieldwork.

¹⁰ Jansen, J, Zanen van K, Migchelbrink, F. (2012, June). Demografische en Ruimtelijke Analyse Nieuw-West. Retrieved from <http://nieuwwest.amsterdam.nl>

Demonstration Bed, Bath, Bread. February 7, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/photos/a.914112538622310.1073741948.423445664355669/914114145288816/?type=3&theater>



Chapter 2 Towards Visibility

The event: Bed, Bath and Bread demonstration. February 7, 2015.

The ‘Bed, Bath, Bread’ demonstration was a large, organized demonstration that took place on a large square in Amsterdam named Museumplein on the seventh of February, 2015. This event asks for a detailed analysis when looked at from the perspective of being a total event following the Manchester School’s notions of a ‘total event’. The demonstration provides a privileged insight into the expressions and exercises of power by the members of WAH. The protesters wrote ‘I am here’ on their hand palms which became emblematic for this particular demonstration. To understand how this text in the hands of the protesters worked as an exercise of their collective agency and effected a radical public critique of their political and social exclusion by the Dutch government, I will follow Casquete’s (2006) analysis on the power of demonstrations. By loosely following his steps to describe the development of the event from the beginning to the end, I will show that the performance becomes an act of power. Following Krøijer’s (2010) analysis on contemporary protests the demonstration in this analysis is conceived as a ‘performative ritual’. This performative ritual consists of a preparation and organization stage, symbolic tools, a stage in which actors take on their roles, and the final stage in which their demands and ideals not only become visible, but also become reality for a short moment in time. The stages of the performative ritual lead to this end stage in which a liminal threshold is created in which the group achieved to migrate from invisibility towards visibility in the public space.

The demonstration is analyzed because it is used as a tool to become visible in the public space and to perform collectivity as a form of resistance against the subjectivation and individualization of illegality. Moreover the demonstration is used as a means to rebuild WAH’s political agency through both the power of their political voices and the power of their organizational work.

Sans-papiers as a social construction

It is a cold, rainy and grey day in early February. Grey beams of light bravely enter the Somali women’s room on the first floor of the Vluchtgebouw. Morning has broken and the earth awakens. Blackbirds have spoken and everyday life starts again. Crumbs of bread that are still spread across the floor are evidence of the generous hospitality from the festive night before. This cold and rainy day is a day of protest, slogans and visibility.

Everyone in the room is still invisible under blankets, hidden in a faraway land where only dreams exist, far away from reality and what is about to happen. Jamilah is the first person that wakes up. “Good morning, how are you, did you sleep well?” are the first things she asks me when she notices that I am awake. The first preparations for today are made. “Did you prepare your speech for the demonstration this afternoon already?”, I ask Jamilah. Jamilah is the spokesperson of the Somalian women and she fulfills an organizational role within the WAH community. “No, I still have no idea what I will say!” she replies. She crosses the wall made of curtains with a piece of paper and a pen in her hands, ready to start writing her speech.

Slowly everyone wakes up. Mary also wakes up. Just like Jamilah she also did not write her speech yet. “I will feel the atmosphere among the people on Museumplein” she says, “and then I will decide what to say. I am looking forward to it!” The women’s most beautiful clothes come out of their hiding places. Everyone is excited and filled with energy. Noticing that I look at the women in amazement, the other guest who sits next to me at the breakfast table, Zorana, says “their home is their dignity”. If one is to lose every right, the right to shelter, work, food, clothing, education, healthcare and other social facilities, human dignity and respect are two remaining phenomena that are cherished, protected and defended. Bags filled with lipsticks and eyeshadow appear and all women are made beautifully visible. Consequently, in full womanly glory the ladies make themselves ready to show their faces, bodies and ideas to the rest of the world during the demonstration that afternoon. Due to the demonstration they will leave the Vluchtgebouw and enter the public space where they will be seen and heard; where they will be visible.

The Somalian women of the WAH group are sans-papiers and are therefore stripped of the rights that make someone a legal citizen. Without access to legal shelter, food, clothing, education, work, health-care and other social facilities sans-papiers live their lives. This way of being is a social construction of the government. The state reduces undesired travelers who are physically present in the nation-state into single, metaphorically naked bodies: ideally bodies without any political influence or agency. Agency is for those with access to the political, from which sans-papiers are restrained. Those who are excluded from political life and agency ought to be non-operating bodies, hidden and invisible.

WAH is a movement and a collective body of sans-papiers and supporters that resists this social construction of the government. By means of protest and demonstrations WAH occupies small pieces of public space at certain moments in time. As a result, they make both

clear and visible that they are there even though they are stripped of their political being. It is impossible for the government to ignore the presence of the movement, because every time the movement asks for permission to have a demonstration in a public space or becomes a social body in a public space, the government is obligated to reply. Moreover, the government must recruit police to control and regulate WAH's movements in the public space. As a result the government is unable to deny the possibility of the group having political influence. WAH performs their presence and collectivity frequently and this creates a tension, or even a contradiction: although the movement organizes itself outside the boundaries of the law, it does exist and it does influence public space and therefore its presence and influence cannot be ignored by the authorities.

Preparation and organization: communitas

It is almost midday and Jamilah runs around the building to gather everyone at the missing front door, because this is her task as one of the building's spokespersons. A red bus appears in the distance surrounded by grey: grey roads, grey skies, grey buildings. Packed in thick jackets and warm clothes many occupants of the Vluchtgebouw gather around the front door. "Yes we can go!" Jamilah shouts. So we head to the bus. There we go, around forty paperless people and a few supporters are in the bus heading towards another building to reunite with all the other members of WAH.

In the other building they are still preparing for the march to the Museumplein. People run through the building with black markers in their hands in search of hands with the appearance of empty sheets of paper. On those empty hands they write 'I am here'. More supporters arrive. Coffee and tea are cheerfully distributed among them. Large banners with slogans and messages made by the sans-papiers the foregoing days lay on the tables. The protesters grab white sheets with slogans and wrap themselves in them. Consequently most slogans are printed on their bodies. "We need shelter for 24 hours and a more humane asylum procedure" is the sign which unites the messages on all other signs. 'No human is illegal' and 'shelter for refugee women' are frequently used as well. While people wrap themselves in sheets that carry messages, a song called 'We Are Here' from Alicia Keys is played in the background, heightening spirits through its melody and lyrics. The lyrics are very accurate and applicable to the situation: "We are here, we are here for all of us, that is why we are here". Then the clock strikes two. While women are singing along and dancing it is time to move towards the Museumplein. At this moment everybody's hands, both refugees' and supporters', show the words 'I am here' and many bodies are wrapped in slogans and

messages. The bodies of the people are made similar and the spirits are high. Some carry large banners while they head towards the street.

People go onto the streets for several reasons. In academic literature, demonstrations are described as collective gatherings in public spaces where movements exert “*political, social and/or cultural influence on authorities, public opinion and participants through the disciplined and peaceful expression of an opinion or demand*” (Casquete 2006:47). Moreover, demonstrations can be used as a means for a parallel society to express itself before an opposing political and/or social environment. In order for a demonstration to have some impact, however, Casquete (2006) stresses several inescapable preconditions. Examples of these requirements are commitment and a sense of community. Group solidarity is one of the key ingredients to establish this sense of commitment (Casquete 2006:45). Furthermore, other prerequisites are frequency and ceremonial and ritual behaviors, or standardized practices (Casquete 2006, Death 2010).

The creation of group solidarity among WAH members often happens during demonstrations. In these demonstrations the sense of community is rendered both strong and visible. As is shown in the description of the event above, the audience and supporters are already invited to gather before the actual demonstration starts, often in a different location than where the demonstration itself takes place. This enables organizers to have some time to distribute signs and to create some community feelings by playing music, drinking tea and coffee together and dispersing signs. An informal setting is created in which anyone - supporter, refugee and media – can feel equal. They are equalized by becoming similar looking bodies hence the wrapping in the same kind of sheets and carrying the same kind of slogans. The happy music on the background in the room contributes to the sense of familiarity and corporality. When people chant the same words and move and dance with similar looking bodies, the differences between sans-papiers and citizens diminish. Consequently, people are directly related to each other without ‘political’ mediation. Whenever there is no music, people shout their slogans and sentences to create a good atmosphere before a demonstration starts. Anyone who is familiar with WAH knows these slogans, because they are always used. ‘*Oh la la, oh le le, solidarité avec les sans-papiers*’, ‘*no man, no woman, no human is illegal*’, ‘*no borders, no nation, stop deportation*’ are examples of these repeated slogans. By means of these slogans and informal settings an equal community is established before the demonstration starts. Creating a sensed unity– called *communitas* in literature (Turner 1969) – is necessary to eventually reach a liminal phase.

Communitas starts here, as the sans-papiers transform their identity into something shared and contested. This brings us to the other points made by academics on the preconditions for an impactful demonstration.

Other important characteristics for a movement to be able to have impactful demonstrations are the creation of an Other and frequency (Casquete 2006, Foucault 1982, Death 2010). The creation of an Other is the fixation of boundaries between certain groups or ideologies. The identification of an Other creates feelings of bonding and solidarity among group members. Frequency is important, because it fuels “*the morphology of meaning based on familiarity generated by the repeated exposure to the ritual performance*” (Casquete 2006:54). WAH often organizes demonstrations. During the period I conducted my fieldwork, there were at least five demonstrations. Besides the demonstrations they organized several activities in which the same information as presented in demonstrations was shared with those who were attending. The creation of common knowledge, familiar practices and using the same narratives frequently occur during demonstrations. Ceremonial behavior and ritual practices, or standardized practices, are also important and are discussed in the next section.

Standardized and frequent discursive practices

It is cold outside and rain falls. The skies give away that the rain could turn into snow soon. The long march towards Museumplein starts and everyone goes forwards underneath the grey and restless skies. From behind windows people gaze at the procession of sans-papiers and supporters. In front of the procession is a large banner with colorful hands saying ‘We are here 24/7’. Many hands are in the air, quietly saying ‘I am here’ as everybody moves forwards.

Suddenly loud drum-beats fill the silent air and are carried to everyone’s ears, pushed by the wind through the air. Meanwhile accompanied by brave, supporting and urgent sounds of drums the written signs that are carried by both refugees and supporters find their way to the audience’s eyes on the sidewalks of the road and behind the windows. Harmoniously, visible and loudly the procession moves forwards.

In the city center the group is continuously guided by police officers dressed in blue and yellow. Authorities follow and guide the march wherever it goes. At every corner of the street the traffic is stopped by the authorities that ensure the march will reach Museumplein without causing any trouble, without disturbing public order. The group’s slogans attract a lot of spectators who curiously watch the march passing them by. From the houses’ windows smartphones appear to take pictures and videos of the passing march.

Noisily and colorfully visible the group approaches Museumplein. While crossing a bridge the extent of the procession becomes visible. In front and behind me a large row of united people is moving happily and slowly. The row does not stretch as far as the eye can see, but is big enough to make it impossible to go unnoticed. Looking to the left a sign saying 'We need normal life' crosses my sight. Far in front of me there is a sign saying 'We fight for our rights'. From the rear loud shouting is turned into spoken words that almost sound like a song. "Oh la la,, oh le le, solidarité avec les sans-papiers". Slowly these almost song-like words transform into a somewhat more aggressive phrase: "No man, no woman, no human is illegal!".

After an hour the march almost comes to an end as Museumplein is within sight. Before reaching Museumplein the procession goes through an indoor passage in which people shout loudly. When we reach the end, the brightness of the daylight is all around us. Slowly, but purposefully the procession moves forwards on Museumplein. The rain continues to fall, the ground is wet and cold. A stage stands on Museumplein, surrounded by people who seem to be supporters of WAH and wait in excitement for what is going to happen. Those people were waiting in the rain and cold for the march to arrive at Museumplein. The cold procession of colorfully dressed refugees and supporters joins the stage and mixes with the supporters that were already there. People with markers are crisscrossing the crowd to write 'I am here' on all empty hands to fix the now broken unity of hands. More hands now silently say 'I am here'. Then a woman in a red jacket enters the stage, ready to give her speech. It becomes quiet and all heads and hands are turned towards the stage as if it were one single body.

Standardized practices and behaving according to a master framework are important to make one's demands clear. The structure of a demonstration of WAH is often the same. First WAH requests supporters to arrive early to show solidarity and join the group. Second, there is often a march from the place where people arrived earlier to the place where the demonstration takes place. Last, the actual demonstration takes place.

During this march slogans are repeated many times. As I wrote before, examples are 'Oh la la, oh le le, solidarité avec les sans-papiers', 'No man, no woman, no human is illegal', 'No borders, no nation, stop deportation'. The routes for protest marches are often long. Casquete (2006:55) states that this is often done to let demonstrators "enjoy more time to lengthen their liturgical performance". By repeating one's demands, they become well known under both supporters, the audience and the authorities. To perform demonstrations in

a predictable manner enables supporters that are physically not present to imagine themselves as a part of it. Consequently, the persons that were and that were not present during the demonstration or protest march will know the repeated slogans and messages that were carried out. This is of importance, because it contributes to carrying out and spreading demands among the audience, the supporters and the government. The repeated slogans and symbols not only create clarity regarding the demands, but they also create a possibility to change people's perceptions (Casquete 2006) as is explained by an inhabitant of the Vluchtgarage named Mufti.

“And now, the person [the audience or spectator of a demonstration] is going back home changing his mind. Look, we [sans-papiers] can still do something and this is what the protest is for, so that people change their perception of the WAH movement. [...] Because, usually people don't see undocumented be active like that. Because, people who do not have documents do not even have a word to say. Nothing” [according to the stereotypes] (Interview with Mufti, Rozemijn Aalpoel, March 26, 2015).

Liminal space

When these conditions and techniques are practiced and performed, Kapferer states that a liminal phase will be created in which *“rituals and social drama can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs”* (Krøijer 2010:140). During the cold and rainy demonstration the area reserved for the demonstration on Museumplein became a space where models of alternative societies were presented. In this space the demands, goals and formulations of WAH were articulated and spread. The key characteristic that makes the event have a liminal stage is that the group was able to create the possibility to articulate demands in the public space and to become visible and heard. Otherwise, the group is mainly hidden and unheard in the public space.

While all the heads on Museumplein are still turned towards the stage, the philanthropist of the group starts to give her speech in which she formulates the main demands of WAH. The shrinking volume of the physical audience and the shivering rain do not seem to withhold her from articulating it. The space at Museumplein was not only meant to articulate one's demands by means of discourse, but also by means of rightfulness. The effect of her speech, however, seems to be limited to the particular audience that was present during that particular moment in time and space. And therefore the effect of her speech is perhaps even limited to the movement itself.

“We Are Here!” she starts, “We are here, because it has been two and a half years already that WAH has been struggling to obtain a righteous asylum policy. We fight for this on all possible levels. [...] It is a shame! We must have a different asylum policy. It is clear that the current policy does not work. Moreover, it is clear that this policy breaks people and that people see their lives go by for years in a row, because they are in limbo. And exactly this is the problem: they are not able to go back [to their countries of origin]. The people of WAH take action for the fact that there will be recognition of their inability to return to their countries of origin. It is not a matter of non-willingness to return, it is a matter of not being able to return. There must be recognition of their inability to return, recognition of them having no paperwork, recognition of non-cooperating embassies, recognition of their inability to return because their countries of origin are at war, recognition of fear of prosecution after they return. Recognition needs to be increased.

This increasing recognition also entails today’s demonstration topic: adequate shelter. The European committee for social human rights demanded adequate shelter [...] for everyone. Consequently the Council for the Judiciary has confirmed this as well: there must be adequate shelter. Adequate shelter means 24 hours! [audience is screaming]. This also implies that the shelter must be a normal place. It must not be situated at the border of the city in the most inhospitable place of Amsterdam only accessible for twelve hours a day! [...] A normal shelter means that people can work there on their futures, notwithstanding the geographical location of this future. [...] Signing for a voluntarily return to one’s country of origin must not be a precondition to have access to the shelter. That is a shame!” (Speech at Demonstration Bed, Bath, Bread. February 7, 2015).

In the created liminal space, people felt free to openly express their visions and goals. The propagation of one’s statements is an important element in demonstrations. Casquete (2006:47) argues that persuasion is the weapon of a social movement. By means of the signs, slogans and speeches during the protest march and the demonstration on the seventh of February, the WAH movement is saying to its audience that the current asylum policy needs to be changed to create normal lives for sans-papiers, which includes adequate shelter. This becomes not only clear through the given speeches, but also through the signs with slogans on everyone’s bodies and in everyone’s hands. The creation of a space in which ritual practices, speeches and other techniques can be performed is in itself an act and expression of power. To create such a space, contradictorily, does imply permission of the authority at which the demonstration is aimed. Power, as Foucault argues, is a relational phenomenon.

An act of resistance like a demonstration is not only a form of resistance against a certain action or ideology, but is also used as a strategy of the authorities to legitimize and reinvent their certain action or ideology (Death 2010:241). It is not my intention to state that a demonstration in essence is not a performed act of resistance against particular power expressions from opposing parties, but it is my intention to overcome the classic binary of power and resistance (Death 2010:235). Foucault (1982) argues that power is action upon action, relational and cannot be possessed. Foucault states that governments operate through technologies of the self to create subjects which are governed like “*the liberal citizen, the infirm, the delinquent, the poor, the dangerous and the terrorist*” (Death 2010:241). Categories like the anarchist individuals, the nation, the cosmopolitan citizens, the working class, and in this case the sans-papiers have all been imagined and performed by means of marching, demonstrating and resisting (Casquete 2006, Death 2010). A category like sans-papiers is made by the government and legitimized by the government’s actions. This is discussed briefly in this chapter: the authorities follow and manage the demonstration and the authorities allow the demonstration within the limits of the public space made available, in this case on Museumplein.

In the next chapters this becomes more evident as in chapter three the government refuses to provide more than a twelve hour shelter and decides to evict one of the squatted houses. In chapter four the government responds with violence as a reaction to the evident bodily unity that arises during another march. Demonstrations do make an attainable changeover from imagination to visualization (Casquete 2006:56). Moments of protest bring to life new identities, subjectivities and collectivities.

Bodily synchronicity

When all the speeches are given a photographer comes on stage. He starts asking everyone to come closer to the stage. And to come closer, and yet, to come even closer. Bodies move and are pressed against each other until everyone stands as close to the stage as they can. They even seem content to stand so close to each other, because the wind was now restricted in making the individual bodies cold due to their becoming a single body. The cold decreased and the wind seemed to be on the wane. The photographer closely watches the scene and when he considers the crowd to be close enough, he asks everyone to raise their hand with the words ‘I am here’ on it. For a moment both supporter and refugee stand close to each other, intermingled, with one hand in the air. From the stage one can see many hands that all silently say ‘I am here’. When the photographer says the picture is taken successfully,

everyone moves again to create some space. The moment ended. With this picture the demonstration had come to an end. The brave grey beams of light, however, still continue to rain down to earth among everyone who leaves Museumplein.

Protests not only bring new identities, subjectivities and collectivities to life, but also contribute to the realization of a movement's goals by bodily and symbolic visualizations. Symbols, "*share the property of condensing ideologies and of encouraging interpretive unanimity among spectators, that is, providing at first sight an approximate idea of the message their performers attempt to advance in public opinion*" (Casquete 2006:46). The use of hands on which 'I am here' was written exemplifies this. The hands implied a unity among both citizens and non-citizens that were present at that single moment in time and space, because every hand had the same message written on it. When the photographer on stage asked the audience to come closer, to become a bodily unit, the hands were most powerful. The audience appeared one unit for a short moment. This short moment of bodily unity is described thoroughly in literature (Krøijer 2010, Death 2010). Through the moment of physical closeness a bodily synchronicity arose. Consequently a moment of belonging to the same moment in time occurred and the hands became an exercise of collective agency.

This feeling of belonging to the same moment in time – the 'we' feeling – often occurs in demonstrations when bodies are confined in small spaces or when people walk in rows with their arms locked together. This bodily belonging to the same moment in time can have an influence on the course of time, and therefore on the course of the imagined future since one ingredient for the creation of a future is time. Krøijer (2010) describes these moments as active time, in which the ideals and goals of a movement for a short moment in time become real and in which the bodily group becomes something other than the here and now. Although the moment for the picture was not a moment of stress, anxiety, fear or anger, as it was at the event Krøijer (2010) describes in her article, the moment of WAH still was a moment of unity and bodily belonging to a greater whole which differed from the here and now. At the beginning of this chapter I spoke of a demonstration as being a ritual due to its different phases and its liminal phase. In the liminal phase time is often presumed to pass linearly towards the future; "*a single shared clock time*" (Krøijer 2010:148). The ritual – the demonstration – in this sense would also follow the linear time schedule. Moments like the united hands in the air, however, seem to be transcending the linearity of time. For a few seconds, the imagined future seemed to exist, to be reality, right there on the Museumplein: WAH embodied and performed its message.

Embodying liminality

Although demonstrations may be a tool to experience the imagined future in the here and now, they are still no guarantee for the future to become reality. Time must tick forward to know the shape of the future, whether it ticks linearly or not. As described above, the imagined, immediate future of WAH is to have adequate, twenty-four-hour shelter, which in the eyes of some members of WAH amounts to imagined civil and human rights. This goal is clearly performed during the speeches on stage and became clearly visible on the signs that everyone carried.

Organization has been a crucial feature. By means of an organized demonstration the community rebuilt their political agency in which they were able to articulate goals, demands and to carry out messages. The gathering of sans-papiers in the Vluchtgebouw, the signs that were dispersed, the people who wrote 'I am here' on everybody's hand palms, the frequently repeated messages, the route of the protest march towards Museumplein, and the stage on Museumplein were all organizational acts and all contributed to the articulation of goals, demands and messages. They all contributed to the liminal state of being visible in the public space. Moreover, these acts enabled the performance of collectivity as a form of resistance against the subjectivation and individualization of illegality.

However, carrying out messages had not been all that WAH accomplished during the demonstration. Their protest contested the Othering or exclusion itself on the basis of national borders. This exclusion based on notions of borders made the sans-papiers into non-citizens. The protests and demonstrations of WAH made visible the mechanisms which transformed them into invisible non-persons. The future WAH imagines is not only about obtaining citizenship, but also about recovering their loss of humanity and membership of a political community.

The demonstration, the ritual, had a certain development in stages which are all described above. The ritual was a movement towards visibility; starting that morning when the hands were painted, ending in front of the stage at Museumplein. It became clear that during the moment of bodily unity when everyone raised their hands a collective body had been created. In this bodily collectivity not only the goals and desired rights of WAH were articulated, but they were actually performed and embodied. WAH is here and their being and becoming a single political body at certain moments in time cannot be ignored by the authorities.

The opposing authority, however, thinks differently about the rights and demands of WAH at that moment, the seventh of February. Moreover, the Dutch government seems to

imagine that the sans-papiers will leave the country and that no more others will enter the country. As is mentioned above, the opposing authority or ideology can also use demonstrations and demands to legitimize its own configurations of the future. This will become clear in the following chapter. This chapter describes the court case in which the inhabitants of the Vluchtgarage, one of the squatted buildings of WAH, hear that their shelter will be evicted on the thirteenth of April, 2015. As time ticks forward the story of WAH continues.

Waiting for the court case. March 17, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/photos/pb.423445664355669.-2207520000.1435179881./933361236697440/?type=3&theater>



Chapter 3 Excluded from Inclusion

The event: Court case, March 17, 2015.

One month after the demonstration on Museumplein WAH's story continues. This chapter describes the event of the court case that took place on the seventeenth of March, 2015. After this court case it would be decided whether the Vluchtgarage would be evicted or not. The event invites further analysis and raises certain questions. How is the court case an expression of power? What are the underlying debates on which the court's arguments are based? How is the verdict an outcome of border politics and biopolitics? How is the verdict intertwined with universal human rights? I will argue that the movement of a human body in the present state of the international and transnational relationships can either take away or give access to shelter, food, work, school and education. Once a person crosses a national border without the right paperwork, the border will appear everywhere where this person moves.

Therefore I argue that the movement of a human body influences people's perceptions and experiences of when one is perceived as a full, right-bearing human being. In other words, the abstract concept of citizenship will be made tangible and will be applied to the daily life of the sans-papiers of WAH.

Bed, Bath, Bread

*“An indication of the content: summary proceedings. The state is legitimized to evict the Vluchtgarage. The provision as offered by Amsterdam City Council (Bed, Bath, Bread) to rejected asylum seekers is adequate”.*¹¹

It is early in the morning and the sun shines brightly above the IJ, a large lake and former bay in Amsterdam, now known as Amsterdam's waterfront. On a small island, connected to the mainland by a bridge, the court building rises high and static above the water. This is the place where the decision will be made. Will the lawyers of WAH be victorious once again? Or will they fail to postpone the eviction of the Vluchtgarage this time? In the distance, next to the water, a red bus appears surrounded by blue skies and blue waters. The bus carries the Vluchtgarage's inhabitants towards the court. The court case, however, will be in Dutch. Consequently, the major part of the group is unable to understand what will be said.

¹¹ ECLI:NL:GHAMS:2015:1121. March 31, 2015. Retrieved from <http://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:GHAMS:2015:1121>

When the group has passed the security staff at the entrance of the court it is time to go to the courtroom. Crossing marble floors with marble walls the group reaches the court room. The massive marble floors and walls underline a contrast between the authorities and the shelter of its visitors. After the court room is filled with a large group of refugees, supporters and several representatives of Amsterdam City Council, the court case begins. The lawyer representing the state finished his plea in Dutch after fifty minutes. The lawyers representing WAH also presented a complicated argument in Dutch. Two weeks after the court case, the verdict would be sent to the respondents.

This is the last attempt for WAH's lawyers to convince the judge that the members of WAH need adequate shelter and therefore may not be evicted. WAH's lawyer won the previous court case resulting in postponement of the eviction of the Vluchtgarage. The underlying debate of the court case, however, is not the eviction of the Vluchtgarage in particular. The court case on the eviction of the Vluchtgarage is merely a specific outcome of a larger debate. This larger debate is on whether the government must provide people with food, clothing and shelter after their requests for residence permits are officially rejected and they are told to voluntarily leave the country¹². The Bed, Bath, Bread discussion is a part of this larger debate. To deprive someone of food, shelter and clothing is against the European Social Charter; an international treaty that guarantees civil, political, social and economic human rights to the people in its member states.

Before presenting the court case's verdict I will first explain the Bed, Bath, Bread agreement. Bed, Bath and Bread is about providing people with a place to sleep, sanitary facilities and food. To have access to these provisions there are a few preconditions. First, a person must sign an official document that he or she is willing to cooperate with returning to their own country. Second, a person must accept that they will only have access to the facility for a number of months. Third, a person must agree on the twelve hour availability per day. Moreover, if someone is not willing to sign for returning or when it appears impossible to return someone, he or she will still be put on the street.¹³ To put someone on the street is against the European Social Charter. Jamilah, the spokesperson of the Somalian women,

¹²Rechter over Vluchtgarage: Bewoners zijn niet kwetsbaar. Interview with Paul Ruppel (lawyer We Are Here) Radio 6, March 31, 2015 Retrieved from <http://www.amsterdamfm.nl/rechter-over-vluchtgarage-bewoners-zijn-niet-kwetsbaar/>

¹³Maat, B. Bed-Bad-Brood: Wat is er nou eigenlijk afgesproken? April 23, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/04/23/bed-bad-brood-wat-is-er-nou-eigenlijk-afgesproken-en-vanwaar-de-kritiek/>

makes clear in her speech at Museumplein that WAH does not perceive the Bed, Bath, Bread facility as a structural solution for their problem.

“We are glad with this step forward [the offer to make use of the Bed, Bath, Bread facility], but where are we heading? We have no money, we can be arrested, we can be imprisoned, we are not allowed to work, we are not allowed to go to school, we are not allowed to stay indoors, we can only walk the streets half of the day until it is evening. Bed, Bath, Bread is only a half solution. It is a solution that does not fit. It is a left shoe. Do we have to be glad with a left shoe? Or do we have to say we also need a right shoe to be able to walk?” (Speech at Demonstration by Jamilah, Rozemijn Aalpoel, February 7, 2015).

The structural solution for the WAH group is to have a ‘normal’ life with dignity and respect; a life with papers; a life in which they can move as fulfilled, right-bearing human beings. The state, however, has a different view on a structural solution. A structural solution for the state would be the return of the sans-papiers to their countries of origin. The presence of the sans-papiers in the nation-state would be merely a provisional problem. These differences in structural solutions imply an incompatible contradiction as is also mentioned in the first chapter. The structural solution of many members of WAH is to receive papers whereas the structural solution of the state tends to be to return them to their countries of origin.

The debate still has no final agreement and therefore continues and overshadows the court case. A short, freely translated summary of the court case’s verdict is provided in the next section.

The court case’s verdict

“[...] Preliminary judgement of the court serves the interests of the respondents [City of Amsterdam] to make way for its legitimate interests. The temporarily stay in the Vluchtgarage must end to give way to the legitimate desire of the City of Amsterdam to give further shape to the renovation plans for K-neighborhood in the district of Amsterdam Zuid-Oost. From the beginning the respondents [members of WAH] stay illicitly in the garage and thus commit a criminal offense. Furthermore it is by no means certain (if not excluded) that staying in this property could be legalized. Consequently, it is not immediately clear why the State should refrain from an eviction of the garage; an eviction which the State is legally permitted to carry out.

Respondents [members of WAH] state that they can demand shelter according to article 8 EVRM [see attachment III]. Adequate shelter would be missing due to the loss of their only place of shelter, the Vluchtgarage. Preliminary judgement of the court states, however, that according to article 8 EVRM the only persons entitled to shelter are those who are considered vulnerable as a result of medical and/or other special factors.

The fact that the asylum procedures of these refugees were rejected – and therefore deny the refugees access to social services and so on – does not simply make them vulnerable persons due to medical and/or other special factors; no matter how distressing their specific situation is.

Furthermore, the Court does not turn a blind eye towards the fact that this does mean a breach of article 13 paragraph 4 and article 31 paragraph 2, which are construed by the ECSR. Those articles are breached when “necessary emergency and social assistance” are withheld from a non-legal person within the national boundaries of a country of a contracting party of the ECSR. Those articles, however, are not binding for Member States [of the Council of Europe].

[...] From the eleventh of November the Municipality of Amsterdam will provide a shelter [the Bed, Bath and Bread facility] [...] in which people will have access to the most basic elementary needs. Circumstances that call for shelter with more provisions than the basic elementary needs are not mentioned. Besides, it can be questioned if this shelter can be seen as required by law. The shelter now offers open access to the respondents [members of WAH] and includes even more provisions than the shelters for homeless persons.

[...] The claims of the respondent [WAH] must be rejected. The garage will be evicted and the members of WAH will have a week after the delivery of this judgement to voluntarily leave the property [...].¹⁴

Conceptual framework

After the refugees have passed the national borders of The Netherlands, other institutions will decide whether they will receive a residence permit. If not, the refugees will be facing borders everywhere they go. Most members of the WAH group have been denied legal access to citizenship, they have no other option than to stay in The Netherlands and therefore they have no access to social services. Social services does not only include access to work or school,

¹⁴ ECLI:NL:GHAMS:201 ECLI:NL:GHAMS:2015:1121. March 17, 2015. Retrieved from <http://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:GHAMS:2015:1121>

but also access to shelter, food and clothing. Only when sans-papiers are considered vulnerable due to medical and/or other special factors they will get access to shelter. Before making a critical analysis of the arguments as provided by the state and WAH, first the academic theories on how people become excluded from political life as a result of movement will be outlined.

The world is on the move. As explained in the introduction the flow of people consists of a celebrated stream and an unwanted stream. Haunting the world of the rich these unwanted migrants move around the planet, unknown and yet provoking fear. Their movements are covered under a veil of suspicion (Andersson 2014). These people are the “*absolute Others to the dream of a mobile world: those who cannot – or should not – move*” (Andersson 2014:4). Also in The Netherlands images of the migrant Other who ridicules border politics and squats houses are often seen in the news. The desired and undesired travelers thus show an unevenness in the pattern of moving in a globalized world; moreover, they enlighten the role of movement in our understanding of when one is considered as a fulfilled, right-bearing human-being (Andersson 2014).

The nation-state is conceived as a social body that needs to be protected from diseases. There is a so-called ongoing racism of nationalities in the flow of migration. According to Foucault, racism is a schism within society that is stimulated by “*the biopolitical idea [of the nation-state] as an ongoing and always incomplete cleansing of the social body*” (Lemke, Casper and Moore 2011:45). Society must therefore be defended against biological dangers and biological purity is pursued. These diseases are living persons; travelers made of flesh and blood. Lying and dangerous diseases who are crossing the borders. How often were the people of WAH told that they are not from the country where they were born and therefore considered as dangerous and impure? How often were they not able to prove these judgements wrong, because of their lack of papers? Floating on an ocean of bureaucratic papers, governments determine whether someone may pass the border as a legal visitor of the Dutch nation-state. Politics at the border govern, regulate and determine who will get access to the nation-state and who will not; politics at the border decide whether a person is metaphorically considered as a healthy addition or as an unwanted disease with regard to the national body.

Border politics are closely related to biopolitics. Biopolitics aim at regulating and administrating life processes on the level of populations and are the strategy to govern individuals. They are based on the notion of specific political knowledge such as statistics,

demography, epidemiology and biology. This knowledge enables states to govern individuals by means of exclusion, normalization and correction (Lemke, Casper and Moore 2011:5). Inclusion of human beings in political society can only happen if others are excluded and denied full legal status (Lemke, Casper and Moore 2011:53-54).

After the court case I met Mufti at the front door of the court. Mufti is an inhabitant of the Vluchtgarage and is denied full legal access to the Netherlands. He takes his camera everywhere to film and create an inside perspective of sans-papiers in The Netherlands.

“Immigration” he says during an interview *“is a natural phenomenon, just like rainfall. Just as we are sitting down now, it rains. And from where comes this rain? From heaven. That means the rain immigrated. This rain is not supposed to be there, in heaven; it is supposed to come down, to fall. So the rain has immigrated from the heavens to the earth. Which is natural. So immigration is part of us, of human beings. Immigration is natural. For you to stop or to deny people from immigrating, that is to deny them their basic human rights”* (Interview with Mufti, Rozemijn Aalpoel, March 26, 2015).

If the world is on the move, then its people are on the move as well. As Mufti says, like raindrops from heaven people spread across the world. Those raindrops are also part of the ocean on which governments bureaucratically float. Still some drops of the ocean are not considered part of it, even though they are all surrounded by it. Sans-papiers are the living embodiment of those unrecognized raindrops in the bureaucratic ocean. Sans-papiers live inside the borders of the nation-state, but live outside the borders that provide the nation-state's protection. Giorgio Agamben illustrates this with an equation to a depoliticized body; a homo sacer (Khosravi 2008:321).

Agamben states that a distinction is made between natural being – zoé – and the legal existence of an individual – bios (Lemke, Casper, Moore 2011:54). Being zoé equals life being stripped of its political and social qualities. It illustrates the hidden foundation of sovereignty (Ticktin 2011:14, Lemke, Casper and Moore 2011:54). In Roman times a homo sacer was a person who could be killed without punishment, because he did not exist within the legal political world. This is exactly the state of the sans-papiers. Sans-papiers live outside the borders of the political world, but inside the borders of a nation-state. They thus seem to live a bare life, zoé.

“For me, not having a document does not mean that I cannot think. A document is just a piece of paper. And a piece of paper cannot think for itself. But human beings can think to make a paper” (Interview with Mufti, Rozemijn Aalpoel, March 26, 2015).

The human being, according to Mufti, not only creates papers, but also creates the paper’s influence. In current political systems pure biological life – zoé – is transformed into political life – bios – at the time of birth. There is no space left for simply being zoé. From the time of birth zoé is connected to abstract bodies like the nation, the state, citizenship or the law and is therefore instantly transformed into bios. Thus, from the time of birth, paperwork influences one’s life.

However, a simple binary opposition of refugees being included or excluded from bios cannot be made. Refugees live a bare life both within and outside a political and legal society. Because zoé must live within society and therefore occupies space, it is often driven into the dark corners of society to live a marginal life. Once a person steps out of bios, his life will change. *“If I take a step’, I thought, ‘I will be somewhere else. When my foot touches the ground on the other side of the road, I will be an ‘illegal’ person and the world would never be the same again”* (Khosravi 2007:321).

The quotation of Khosravi (2007) is illustrated by the map of the world. The map of the world shows that one step can transform a citizen into a homo sacer or an illegal. The world map shows a mosaic of nations with clear outlines and hardly overlapping borders (Sharma and Gupta 2014, Khosravi 2007:322). In the words of Ernest Gellner the map of the world equals the painting style of Modigliani: flat surfaces with clear boundaries, which hardly overlap each other and make clear where one surface begins and another ends (Khosravi 2007:322). Malkki states that those borders of flat surfaces became a natural order in the world (Khosravi 2008:322). Borders became an essential part in the identification of communities and the sense of identity. Also they play a major role in people’s consciousness of the world.

Although borders seem to draw excluding boundaries on the map of the world, there are certain organizations and treaties that are designed to transcend those boundaries. The European Social Charter is ought to be one of those treaties which is established by the Council of Europe. *“The Council of Europe is a political organization, founded in 1949, to defend the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Membership is open to all*

European states which undertake to abide by the Organization's principles. At present the Council of Europe has 47 member states"¹⁵ and the Netherlands is one of them.

European Social Charter

The European Social Charter (ESC) is a treaty that guarantees civil, political, social and economic human rights. In 1961 it was adopted and it was revised in 1996. The ESC not only provides rights and freedoms, but it also establishes supervisory mechanisms to monitor if its rights and freedoms are indeed performed. In the view of both WAH and this supervisory mechanism the Dutch state is breaking article thirteen and article thirty-one. In short, article thirteen states that any person without adequate resources and who is unable to secure these recourses by his or her own efforts, must be provided with adequate support. Moreover, when one is sick, one must receive the care as necessitated by ones condition. Furthermore, one must not suffer from a diminution of their political or social rights¹⁶. Article thirty-one continues with stating that access to housing with an adequate standard must be promoted and that homelessness must be prevented and reduced with a view to its gradual elimination.¹⁷

The full articles can be found in attachment III.

However, although these articles seem to include everyone an exclusive character can be seen. As the appendix of the European Social Charter reveals it is not obligatory for states to treat their stateless inhabitants the same as their legal citizens. The articles "*include foreigners only in so far as they are nationals of other Parties lawfully resident or working regularly within the territory of the Party concerned.*"¹⁸ As a result, many stateless people in The Netherlands fall outside the protection of the European Social Charter treaty which is meant to guarantee people civil, political, social and economic human rights. The members of WAH thus find themselves excluded from both citizen's privileges and protection provided by the Dutch government as well as excluded from citizen's privileges and protection provided by the European treaty. In this environment of double exclusion WAH struggles to realize their ideas of what their future should ideally look like.

¹⁵ The European Social Charter. Retrieved from

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Presentation/AboutCharter_en.asp

¹⁶ Europees Sociaal Handvest (herzien), Straatsburg, 03-05-1996 (Geldend op 15-05-2015). Retrieved from http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0001800/geldigheidsdatum_15-05-2015#AuthentiekEN_VDRTKS575053

¹⁷ Europees Sociaal Handvest (herzien), Straatsburg, 03-05-1996 (Geldend op 15-05-2015). Retrieved from http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0001800/geldigheidsdatum_15-05-2015#AuthentiekEN_VDRTKS575053

¹⁸ Europees Sociaal Handvest (herzien), Straatsburg, 03-05-1996 (Geldend op 15-05-2015). Retrieved from http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0001800/geldigheidsdatum_15-05-2015#AuthentiekEN_VDRTKS575072

Embodying the border

Whereas the court case's verdict on the eviction of the Vluchtgarage was merely an outcome of a larger debate on whether the government should provide people with food, clothing and shelter after they have been officially denied a residence permit, the larger debate is an outcome of the border politics of nation-states. Although the European Social Charter treaty is designed to provide people with civil, political, social and economic human rights, the agreement is not binding for the member states of the European Council as is stated in the court case by the lawyer representing the Dutch State. This double exclusion, both from national and international human rights, makes that sans-papiers lose their status of being fulfilled, right-bearing human beings. Some people of WAH put this in other words; some told me that it feels as if your humanity, your dignity and your respect were taken away from you.

“You lost your dignity as a refugee, because you lost your identification. As a refugee you are a non-person. You are from nowhere. It gives you dignity if people mention your country or your name. It shows respect, because your identity is known. When your card says unknown, your dignity and respect are gone. You lost it.” (Interview with Barkhado, Rozemijn Aalpoel, February 12, 2015).

At the demonstration on the seventh of February a flyer was handed out. This flyer not only introduced the WAH group, but also provided WAH's view on the European Commission on Social Rights.

“On November 10th, 2014, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) ruled that the Netherlands is violating the rights of irregular migrants under the European Social Charter. The large majority of undocumented migrants without resources who have not been returned are generally not provided with accommodation and are denied proper medical assistance. [...] As recalled by the ECSR, the Dutch government should provide appropriate short-term assistance to any persons in a situation of immediate and urgent need. No-one in the country should be deprived of food, clothing or shelter. This also applies to rejected asylum seekers. They should be looked after, rather than put out on the street. The ECSR notes that the right to shelter is closely connected to the right to life and crucial for the respect of every person's human dignity.” (Flyer at Museumplein demonstration, February 7, 2015).

The court stated that the Bed, Bath and Bread facilities as provided by the municipality of Amsterdam should be sufficient and offer adequate shelter. They offer open access to the court cases' respondents and include more provisions than the shelters for homeless people. The Bed, Bath and Bread facility, however, is not sufficient according to the members of WAH and is not regarded as being adequate shelter. The Vluchtgarage, on the contrary, was regardless its primitive character able to provide twenty-four-hour shelter.¹⁹ Night shelter means that the members of WAH must be on the streets during daytime. Moreover, the members of WAH see the court case's verdict as another denial of the situation of sans-papiers in The Netherlands. Their requests for residence permits were rejected, but at the same time it is not possible to go back to their country of origin. Due to an asylum policy that does not consider the impossibility of returning to one's country of origin, the sans-papiers of WAH are forced to live its consequences on the street. Bed, Bath Bread is thus not perceived as a structural solution. This again demonstrates the contradiction: to the state the situation of WAH is provisional, whereas to WAH their situation is structural.

By putting people on the street and depriving them from shelter the state creates zoé by stripping the unwanted migrant of his political rights; which in this case entails the right to shelter. By doing so, the Dutch State consciously violates international human rights. This is a contribution to the statement as formulated by Andersson (2014): bodily movement influences people's perceptions of someone being a fulfilled, right-bearing human being. The theory of Khosravi (2007) makes clear that becoming a sans-papiers is a result of taking steps; steps that cross borders. As a result of crossing borders without having legal paperwork a person can be easily transformed into a sans-papiers, a zoé. Therefore the act of movement is a major influence on someone's life.

Once a person has crossed a border, a sharp line on a painting of Modigliani, without legal permission the world will never be the same according to (Khosravi 2007). The state and its performances of power do not only exclude undesired migrants at the borders, but also *“penalizes and regulates them by petrifying them into immobility in detention centers, by ignominious and terrifying forms of deportation, or by racialized internal border control”* (Khosravi 2007:332-333). The borders Ernest Gellner speaks of when he talks about the Modigliani painting as a metaphor for the map of the world (Khosravi 2007) seem, however, to have become blurred. The painting can no longer be a metaphor for border politics, as

¹⁹ P E R S B E R I C H T : Uitspraak Hof over Vluchtgarage. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier?fref=ts>

borders are constantly moving, migrating just like human bodies. Borders cannot merely be found at the boundaries of nation-states, but are everywhere. Yet it seems borders are not everywhere for everyone. Once someone is given the label of an undesired traveler invisible borders appear everywhere. Balibar stresses that some borders are then no longer only situated at geographical borders (Khosravi 2007:333); borders are on the move, just like the world and its people.

In the particular case of WAH the performance of power by the court took shape in the decision to evict the Vluchtgarage to contribute to the development of the neighborhood. Yet again their need for twenty-four hour shelter had been rejected and they were told that a twelve-hour shelter should be sufficient for them. The people of WAH are not only haunted by migrating, moving, invisible borders, but are occasionally themselves the very embodiment of those borders. Everywhere their bodies go, the borders will be one step ahead. The borders deprive people of a twenty-four hour shelter; they prevent people from understanding what is said during the court case; they make people squat and leave the Vluchtgarage. Surrounded by the shadows of ever-present borders the people of WAH move towards their configurations of their future. It has, however, been decided for them that this future will not lie in the Vluchtgarage.

Moving forward

The eviction of the Vluchtgarage will take place on the thirteenth of April, 2015. From the moment of the court case's verdict the inhabitants of the Vluchtgarage will have time to pack their belongings and be ready to live on the streets again. As the international laws which should have protected them from homelessness will not be applied to them in The Netherlands, they will have no other solution for the absence of adequate shelter at the moment. The human bodies of WAH have once crossed national borders without the right paperwork and as a result they are now living the consequences of it in The Netherlands. Hence they are forced to be the border, to embody the border everywhere they go. The movement of a human body can thus either take away or give him or her access to shelter, food, work, school and education. Therefore bodily movement can have a crucial role in people's perceptions of full-filling, right-bearing human-beings (Andersson 2014).

As a result the WAH movement demonstrates this everywhere they go. In their flyers they make clear their consciousness of their rights, national and international, being taken away due to their bodily movement and a so-called 'gap' in the asylum policy. The next chapter will illustrate that the government cannot fully transform the sans-papiers of WAH

into zoé beings without political being. The state can express its power by evicting the Vluchtgarage, but then it must recognize the political influence of the people of WAH again. The next chapter will focus, again, on movement.

Eviction of the Vluchtgarage. April 13, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/photos/pb.423445664355669.-2207520000.1435179881./948342665199297/?type=3&theater>



Chapter 4 Eviction

The event: Eviction of the Vluchtgarage. April 13, 2015.

The eviction of the Vluchtgarage took place on the thirteenth of April, 2015. This event asks for a detailed analysis when looked at from the perspective of being a total event following the Manchester School's notion of a 'total event'. The eviction provides a privileged point of view into both the expressions and exercises of power by the members of WAH and the state. First, it becomes clear that the frequently used symbols and narratives as described in chapter two are also used during the eviction which as a result gains a contradictory character. It is contradictory because while the state damages the reality of the sans-papiers, the sans-papiers transform their imagination into reality again by means of their slogans, banners and bodily synchronicity. Second, the chapter emphasizes the use of force of the state to show that the state is no longer capable of ignoring the presence of the sans-papiers. Third, a short conceptual framework enlightens the power of resistance. Last, whereas the state neglects its sans-papiers, some of its registered citizens do not. This section shows the efforts that civil initiatives make to provide the sans-papiers with the respect and dignity that the state has taken away from them.

From imagination towards reality, from reality towards imagination

The Vluchtgarage is empty and almost deserted. Its former inhabitants, supporters of WAH, police on foot, mounted police, mobile forces, Dutch media, suitcases and boards with slogans all surround the Vluchtgarage in the early morning sun. The last suitcases of the inhabitants are carried out of the building over the ramshackle stairway. 'Hi Elinora, do you perhaps have room for another couple of suitcases in your car?' asks one of the supporters. 'I already carried a couple of suitcases to my car just a few minutes ago, but it is okay, give them to me, I will make sure they are safe' answered the seventy-year-old lady while she looks emotionally and worriedly at the Vluchtgarage: the place that had been the home of sans-papiers for more than a year. It is nine o'clock sharp, the official start of the eviction. The police on foot start to intermingle with the audience that gathered on a lawn in front of the entrance and its ramshackle stairway.

All of a sudden a muted sound comes from the heart of the Vluchtgarage, that seemed empty and almost deserted a few minutes ago. The sound tries to find its way through the walls. Louder, brighter and more terrifying the noise is heading towards the audience on the lawn in the bright morning sun. The muted noise causes feelings of tension, excitement and

fear among the audience. Suddenly the sound loses its muteness and becomes brightly understandable: they are slogans. The slogans have found their way out and brightly find the ears of the audience after they descended the staircase. Loud and clear the slogans 'no man, no woman, no human is illegal', 'we are here, and we will fight, for freedom of movement is everybody's right', 'oh la la, oh le le, solidarité avec les sans-papiers' fill the air. The last occupants of the Vluchtgarage appear on top of the staircase and start to descend it noisily. The media that patiently waited on the lawn in the bright morning sun now zigzag towards the staircase. When the last inhabitants of the Vluchtgarage descend the ramshackle staircase, the audience picks up their slogans and join the singing. The audience on the grass has formed a circle now and is a mixture of slogan-singing sans-papiers and supporters. The banners are in the circle as well. When the last inhabitant reaches the safety of the audience, ten police officers in yellow slowly climb the staircase to ensure that the building is deserted. The eviction has been successful, the building is empty.

At nine o'clock sharp the eviction of the Vluchtgarage was finished successfully. The last belongings of the habitants were given to the supporters who were willing to transport them in their cars and to bring them to a place where they could be stored safely. When the muted sound became clearer, the event gained a contradictory character as a result. The eviction had not only been an act to elucidate the state's point of view that sans-papiers do not have more rights to shelter than already has been offered by the Bed, Bath and Bread facilities, but also impeded WAH's road towards the realization of its imagined future. When the Vluchtgarage was evicted and transformed into an empty building, the ability to perform from a home, a steady base, vanished for WAH as well. To lose a shared starting point for living also hampers someone's ability to live, to gather, to organize, to move. After the eviction it is harder for the group to organize, because the organizational structure of the building and its inhabitants diminished as well. The road towards the future had been made more difficult and therefore the course of time had been changed as well.

While descending the ramshackle staircase the occupants were singing and shouting their usual slogans to create and reassure the group's narrative and to make clear the group's demands (Casquete 2006). The audience on the grass carried large banners with slogans. Although the movement's reality just changed, their imagination still lived on in their performances. And their imagination lived on not only among the last inhabitants of the Vluchtgarage, but was also carried on among its supporters and other members who waited for them on the grass outside. When the ten police officers went inside, one single body of

singing and dancing members of WAH had been established on the grass, surrounded by police and media.

In that single moment in time – when the last inhabitants came out of the building and descended the staircase – the course of time had been confused for a single moment. From imagination towards reality and from reality towards imagination suddenly became each other's equation. Simultaneously the state and the WAH movement were stripped of their ideal image of the future and simultaneously they started to reconstruct their ideal again. WAH did this by continuing formulating its demands and configurations of a future after their home had been evicted and the state by successfully evicting the building to make clear that these people do not have the right of access to (this) shelter. These two processes gave the start of the eviction a contrasting character. The state realized their ideal by evicting the sans-papiers from their squatted shelter and damaged their reality of having shelter. The reality of the sans-papiers was damaged by the state after they were evicted from their home. Consequently they responded with their imaginations and demands by means of banners, slogans and bodily synchronicity to make their imagination reality again.

The clash of imagination and reality

From the field of early-spring green grass the group starts to march towards the city council where another demonstration will be held. In a large row the group starts walking, leaving behind the Vluchtgarage which is still being inspected by the police. The mobile forces, mounted police and police on foot start to drive, ride and walk along with the procession. They, however, do not actually join the march as they are organized in small groups that are only a meter next to, behind, in front of, or away from the march. The eviction had been a voluntary one, as the occupants agreed on leaving the building on the thirteenth of April at nine o'clock. After the building's eviction the police still follow the movement. A fellow supporter and me wonder why we are still being followed by them. "How long will you be following us", my fellow supporter asks a police officer in blue. "It depends on how harmoniously this will go" he replies. Through his radiotelephone I can hear the following: "Let the mobile forces follow them in the streets parallel to where they are now." So we continue walking in a large row, visibly and invisibly followed by authorities.

From behind a dark mobile force vehicle is slowly and silently approaching. It starts to drive very closely to the procession. All of a sudden a door opens and quick blue hands appear. The quick hands do not have to search long, because they already found what they had been searching for. Then someone disappears into the dark opening that appeared in the

vehicle. The singing of slogans stops. Chaos, fear and panic appear. The blue car tries to quickly move away, but is hindered by the angry and scared bodies of sans-papiers. One of their group members had just been arrested without a clear reason for those who were walking. People start to scream and run. The procession is no longer a procession as everyone runs around in panic. Some members of the WAH group run towards the blue vehicle and hit it with their hands and their words. For a moment in time their bodies, hands and words seem to be enough to hinder the car from moving away. But then the mounted police appear. People spread out of fear for the horses' enormous bodies. The vehicle has now enough space to quickly move out of sight, behind the surrounding buildings not be found again. We are left behind, staggered and scared.

The group continues, because there is no other option than to continue. There is no home to go back to, because it just has been evicted. There is no home to go to, because there is none. The group can only move forward on the road, because that seems the only possible thing to do. Scattered the group continues to walk towards a four-lane road.

While everyone is still silent and staggered, someone in a red shirt starts to scream when he arrives on the four-lane road. "I want to die!" he shouts, "I want to die!" and he lays his body down on the road in front of a car. Another appears and starts swinging an iron chain. Still confused the group reorganizes itself. Mary, one of the sans-papiers, shouts "Sit down everybody! We stop ourselves from moving now, as we are also not allowed to move in and out of this country! Sit down everybody, sit down"! Consequently people sit down on the road and a circle of sitting sans-papiers establishes itself. The screaming man still lays in front of the car, many sans-papiers are sitting on the road, a bus stands still on the road, because it is unable to continue, some supporters join the circle, some stand on the road and look confused.

Many things happen at the same time as chaos joins the group again. A supporter of WAH gives an emotional speech to the Dutch media after he heard a police man saying "Suicide is a choice" with regard to the man lying on the road in front of the car. Someone else is arrested and disappears into a blue vehicle. As a result the group of sans-papiers stand up and intermingle with the police. A few more blue vehicles of the mobile forces appear. It almost looks like there is a clash between the police officers in yellow and blue and the sans-papiers and their supporters. A police officer in blue gesticulates that the mounted police should come to the clash now. Bodies are intermingled, screaming, yelling, moving and maybe hitting. Then the almost prancing horses intermingle in the clash. Pepper spray flies around. Another person is arrested and disappears into a blue vehicle. And then it is over.

Three people have been arrested and taken away in a blue vehicle. The mobile forces and mounted police disappear. Many of the Dutch media seem to leave as well. Only four police officers in yellow remain and start talking to the sans-papiers in a language that sounds like Arabic. Then the group continues, because there is no other option than to continue.

The description of the event above shows that physical violence was used against the members of WAH. Before I analyze the violent occurrence, I need to make a personal note first. I prefer not to speak of this violence, because it distracts from what the movement stands for and is not similar to any daily activity I have participated in. However, as the government uses more violence to prevent the movement from becoming a collective body which articulates its demands and narratives very visibly, I cannot leave this out of this thesis. Also the Dutch media seem to adore the scenery in which they could take beautiful pictures of violence when the police seemed to clash with the sans-papiers. Beautiful pictures of two parties clashing on several levels: their physical bodies, their collective body and their different imaginations of a future. The second picture in attachment IV was already given to the WAH group that same evening, while we were sitting in a park eating soup that some organization had offered us. So I label the violence as something distractive - perhaps even as something which maintains the image of the dangerous Other; the dangerous disease for the nation-state. But it plays a crucial role in analyzing empirical power relations according to the notions on power of Foucault and therefore its enlightening is of major importance.

Foucault argues that universals do not exist in his analysis of power. Moreover, instead of deducing concrete power relations from universals or using universals as a starting point to analyze power relations, he utilizes a method in which he starts his analysis with the concrete practices and actions of people (Maiolo 2013:11). Power relations in this sense become more empirical and more directly related to the visible world. However, Foucault did acknowledge the existence of a certain degree of similarity or regularity between certain events, practices and justifications of individual acts and therefore he accepted that mental constructs which were frequently used as if they were universal, could be coped with in the scientific world as if they were universals.

Foucault also stresses that the idea of a central point of power must be abandoned and that power must be embraced in its multiplicity, differences, reversibility and versatility. The juridical model of the state as central actor of power therefore must be left behind. In Foucault's words this model must not be seen as a manifestation of power, but as a technique

used by the state through which power is distributed (Maiolo 2013: 8). Power, however, does not originate from the inside of states; it already existed when states did not (Maiolo 2013, Smith 2011). Power is exercised and expressed rather than possessed; power is not a privilege of the dominant group in society, but is an effect expressed by and expended by the actor which is considered as the dominant group. Furthermore, power can be found in all groups, in both the dominant and the subordinate. Power is transmitted by and through all groups and therefore power relations “*go right down in the depths of society*” (Maiolo 2013: 23). The only situation in which power exists, is when it is exercised by some on others and can be transformed into action. Power itself is no longer power.

Physical violence towards the WAH movement increased. During the protest march to the city council these violent occurrences appeared when the group became one collective body. This collective body, or synchronic body, often occurs in protests in a variety of forms: from tight rows in which people walk arm in arm (Krøijer 2010) or when people are standing close to each other and hold their hands with the same message in the air, when people sit in a circle to embody their inability to move. At these moments Krøijer (2010:147) argues that “*some of the ideals that activists struggle for temporarily become real and concrete, a bodily otherwise in the here and now of the confrontation.*” It is therefore crucial to the state to desynchronize the body to protect its own imaginations of the future and political situation. During the moments in which the group of sans-papiers becomes a collective the state is no longer capable of ignoring that sans-papiers do have political influence.

At these moments of bodily collectivity or synchronicity it becomes empirically visible that this social construction of the sans-papiers as made by the state is no more than an ideal. The state as central actor of power indeed does not exist, as the WAH movement is temporarily capable of exercising power over the state. This expression of power will therefore be immediately reduced and stopped, as it affects the ideal image of the state as the sole actor of power. As a result the coping mechanisms of the state diminish and are no longer capable of managing significant resistance. Violence, therefore, is merely an indication that the government becomes incapable of propagating its ideal image of sans-papiers as being apolitical bodies.

When someone has lost protection of the state and has to live a bare life, he still occupies space in a nation. Once a person falls outside the protection of the state and is not considered a citizen, the state still has the legitimacy to perform punitive sanctions. This contains a certain contradiction. The state is not responsible to take care of sans-papiers, but it

does have the legitimacy to punish, neglect or deport them. Having said this, I would like to give no further attention to physical violence. The next section will focus on the spaces where the government refrains from operating. Registered citizens take up responsibility where the state refuses to do so.

In the name of body and life

The state may have turned former refugees into humans that are in effect living a zoé life, but this, however, does not mean that this is generally accepted among its population. According to Foucault all people within a governed community carry a certain obligation to show mutual solidarity and must speak out against abuses of power (Maiolo 2013:16). This illustrates that all people within a governed community are responsible for the situation in their community and are thus capable to resist the sovereignties provided by the state. While the state pretends to be the only actor in the web of power relations, this is not the case. Resistance against border and citizenship policies are now considered as elements and strategies of the biopolitical. Those who resist the governments' regulation and control of lives, often formulate claims and ask for recognition in the name of body and life (Lemke, Casper and Moore 2011:50).

“[A]gainst this power [of the sovereign state]... the forces that resisted relied for support on the very thing it invested, that is, on life and man as living being... [W]hat was demanded and what served as an objective was life, understood as the basic needs, man's concrete essence, the realization of his potential, a plenitude of the possible. Whether it was Utopia that was wanted is of little importance; what we have seen has been a very real process of struggle; life as a political struggle was in a sense taken at face value and turned back against the system that was bent on controlling it.” (Lemke, Casper and Moore 2011:50).

The sovereign of the old days had the power to take life or to let live, the sovereign that exists today has the right to make life and let die (Maiolo 2013:25). Acts of resistance have arisen against governments which have human life as its object. These acts illustrate that the existence of bare life within the borders of a juridico-political society is no longer accepted by everyone. Power and resistance constantly confront each other by means of always changing tactics and are always used by each other as there is no binary opposition between the two. The next section will focus on some particular organizations of resistance.

Civil initiatives

After the violent occurrence with the police the group walks on. The atmosphere is now silent and everyone is still puzzled by what had happened. It takes the group at least thirty minutes to pick up its atmosphere of the early morning. Under a large bridge the group takes a break and reorganizes itself. Policemen in blue join the group again as we are nearing the city center. They, however, do not seem to disturb the mood of the reorganizing group. I do not wish to dehumanize the police officers in this chapter. Moreover, I would like to enlighten some parts of a forty minute conversation that I had with a police officer in blue who was involved in the 'clash'.

Police officer in blue: *"It is good to see that there are so many supporters here today. They are people with a good heart. Those people make the world a better place. I regret the behavior of the supporters today, however, because they almost seem to encourage the anxiety. It should have been their responsibility to keep the group calm. Violence is often aimed at us police officers which I understand today. But if someone disrupts the public order, we must intervene. I wish that this can be done harmoniously, but if it does not then I take no risks.*

This is a political game, you know. Only politics can give an outcome to this game. That is why I consider it regretful that the WAH group did not play along with the political game today. It is all about 'goodwill'. Now that there was a violent occurrence, the goodwill towards the group is probably affected. People want to see foreigners on television like this [clashing with authorities], especially foreigners who are not even supposed to be here anymore."

Those who act to 'save' sans-papiers act out of moral goodwill and act out of the pure kindness of their hearts (Ticktin 2011:11). Some organizations pick up tasks where the government neglects to do so. I have spoken to two organizations who offer services to the members of WAH. One of these organizations is called Stap Verder (Step Further).²⁰ Stap Verder states that every person deserves dignity. Moreover, they state that every person needs

²⁰ Stap Verder provides the basic necessities and services people need. They state that as a human being you need food, shelter and clothing. Many inhabitants of the Vluchtgarage come to Stap Verder to take a shower and have lunch on Wednesday. Stap Verder works together with the Voedselbank and the Kledingbank. Moreover, they work together with Doctors of the World and provide people with medical assistance where possible. Furthermore, they have office hours in which pastors offer to help with explaining letters and to give advice about for example lawyers.

the necessities of life, “no matter where they are from and no matter if they are documented or not. Verse nineteen²¹ is saying that wherever you are, you are no foreigner. You are a creation of God everywhere. Geographical borders divide people into foreigners and non-foreigners. This verse shows to Stap Verder that even when governments create foreigners, that these foreigners are still no foreigners to God. And in the end the earth, the heavens, they all belong to God. The minute you come here from a different country, godly people will embrace you and therefore you are no foreigner anymore. You forget about governmental demarcations.” (Interview with spokesperson of Stap Verder, Rozemijn Aalpoel, April 1, 2015).

Stap Verder makes a clear statement by providing the sans-papiers with the services that the state deprives them of. Governmental demarcations and geographical background are of no importance to Stap Verder. They provide their services to those in need: also to Dutch citizens. They say that in the body of Christ there are no foreigners: that is why people are treated with dignity and that is why people must be treated with the basic human needs.

The other organization I have spoken to is named Vrouwen Tegen Uitzetting (Women Against Deportation). Vrouwen Tegen Uitzetting is a cooperation between Dutch women and female refugees. The organization is mainly trying to emancipate the women of WAH and to empower them. This means that the women are, given the circumstances, able to operate more independently. Vrouwen Tegen Uitzetting encourage people to undertake more things on their own, without being told to do so. Besides their social assistance on a societal level, they also attempt to increase solidarity between Dutch women and refugee women and to have influence on the public opinion and political policy.

Both organizations mentioned above act out of moral goodwill. Goodwill, as the police officer states, is of major importance for a group like WAH. Without moral goodwill a group may lose civil support which is important, whereas the state neglects to offer the sans-papiers their basic needs in life. When people become sans-papiers and cannot stay, but cannot leave a country either it is up to “volunteers, doctors, city councils, to solve the problems. But actually, the first step to solve the problem is in the political world, or in the

²¹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

asylum procedure.“ (Interview with Vrouwen Tegen Uitzetting, Rozemijn Aalpoel, April 13, 2015).

The sovereign that exists today has the right to make life and let die (Maiolo 2013:25). Its citizens, however, prove to be able to resist the sovereign’s right to make life and to let die and respond with action. Every action – donating clothes or empowering women – is an act of resistance against the power of the state and shows that the state is not the only actor in the web of power. Power is relational and always negotiable. The response of the civil society to the acts of the state that create *zoé* in its territory are empirically visible acts of power exercised by citizens.

“The most important thing for a human being is respect. You can show respect by your acts. Stap Verder helps humans in every aspect of their lives.” (Interview with spokesperson of Stap Verder, Rozemijn Aalpoel, April 1, 2015).

The final decision

In the evening the group of sans-papiers and the supporters all gather in a green park somewhere in Amsterdam to have a rest after a long march and another demonstration. An organization offered food for the sans-papiers so after a while a huge container of soup was brought. This evening would be the last evening of my period of ethnographic fieldwork. Some sans-papiers play football, some lay down in the grass. After dinner in the park there is a meeting. It is time to make the decision about the future. Mary becomes the facilitator of the meeting in a natural way. Everyone gathers on the grass in a large circle with Mary in the middle.

“Okay,” she says, “we have two possibilities tonight. First: we can set up a tent camp on a private terrain. Second: we can set up a tent camp before the City Council. When we choose the second there is a huge possibility of getting arrested and consequently be put into a detention center.”

To camp in front of the City Council will result in lots of visibility and will be more likely to result in a structural solution. The people are thinking, talking, chaotically. There is not much order in the circle of sans-papiers and people begin to speak to each other in their own languages. The supporters do not participate in this discussion, as it is not their choice to make. At first it seemed that the members of WAH had chosen option two. Mary comes to me

and laughs when I say to her: "So you have become a leader now?" Another supporter joins us.

"Why," he asks, "why are you choosing to camp in front of the City Council?"

Mary: "We are going to gemeentehuis [council house], because we want to choose and do not want to be chosen for."

Supporter: "That is your right indeed, but I do not consider it smart."

Mary: "Thank you. Trust me, we have seen things in life which are more worse than this night. If we are arrested, then we can live like we do now. We do not want night shelter. What will we do in the day? It is no solution."

Around me I hear more members of WAH saying to each other "It is not smart to camp in front of the city council, because the only eyes that will see us are the eyes of the police. We need the people, we need support. Otherwise what will happen?" Another meeting takes place in the same setting: a circle with Mary in the middle. It is getting dark and cold outside. There is a discussion going on which I cannot follow, as it is spoken in another language. Then the decision is made: they are going to set up a tent camp in the private area which they will squat that same evening. After this decision I leave the park and go home.

Bed, Bath, Bread demonstration, May 29, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/WijZijnHier/photos/pb.423445664355669.-2207520000.1435179881./956153891084841/?type=3&theater>



Chapter 5 Conclusion

Towards a future

This is not the end, nor the beginning of the story of WAH. This thesis has not been a chapter of their story as their story is an ongoing one full of people, thoughts, ideas, and movement. Both the Vluchtgarage and the Vluchtgebouw have now been evicted. The places where I met the people in this thesis no longer exist. Therefore this story is on the move just like its characters are on the move. Throughout the chapters I have shown while loosely following the statement of Andersson (2014) that the movement of the human body is of key importance in peoples' perceptions of considering someone as a fulfilled, right-bearing human being. This has become clear in the three chapters that discussed one main event.

In the second chapter the demands and ideals of the group have been formulated. Having adequate shelter is of major importance, because it amounts to civic and human rights in WAH's view. To carry out these demands the group creates liminal thresholds where they perform these demands when creating a synchronic body. As a result their demands become reality for that moment in time. The performance of their demands, the symbolic movement of their bodies, is a political act and therefore the state can no longer ignore the political influence of the WAH movement, which it ideally portrays as a group consisting of *zoé* members living a purely biological life.

The third chapter has shown that due to the geographical movement of their bodies, the members of WAH have lost their right to have the paperwork which they need to be included in the political life in the Netherlands. The court case's verdict has shown this even more by concluding that the Vluchtgarage would be evicted and that the Bed, Bath and Bread facility should be adequate. The state makes many efforts to exclude the *sans-papiers* from its political community and at the moment from having adequate twenty-four hour shelter. The state even violates international human rights to maintain its ideal image of the *zoé sans-papiers*.

The fourth chapter described that although the government keeps making the road towards WAH's realization of its configurations of its imagined future more difficult by evicting their homes, the movement keeps on carrying out its demands and ideals. Moreover the chapter illustrated that when the movement shows characteristics of becoming a synchronic body which is able to realize its demands and ideals for a short moment, the government responds with violence. Violence is an indication that the government can no longer ignore the political influence of WAH. This is contrasting to its ideal image of the

sans-papiers as being apolitical bodies living a *zoé* life. Furthermore the chapter stressed that the government is not the sole actor of power in The Netherlands due to the acts of civil initiatives.

Because the members of WAH once joined the flow of people in a world that is on the move, they are now forced to embody an ideal image of the state: being a human body living a purely biological life which is excluded from the political community. Consequently the members of WAH respond with their bodies, which is the only right they still have. By organizing these individual bare bodies and by squatting buildings, the individual bodies became a collective in 2012. After the collective formulated demands and configurations of a future, a movement emerged. Using bodily strategies in demonstrations – wrapping bodies up in the same slogans, writing ‘I am here’ on everybody’s hand palms – the movement was able to create liminal thresholds which are of major importance to realize their demands and ideals. The liminal thresholds change the course of time as time then no longer ticks linearly forward. For some moments the group was able to embody their imaginations and therefore was able to not only realize their demands and ideals, but also to embody and carry out their political rights and being. Even during the critical moment in which the state evicted their building, home and central organization point and therefore took away some time that is necessary to realize their configurations of their imagined future, the members of WAH kept on carrying out and realizing their demands by acting as a synchronic body creating a liminal space. The thesis has thus shown that time can be temporarily influenced by the human body.

Not only the sans-papiers respond with their bodies, but the civil initiatives also tend to respond to the political exclusion of the sans-papiers in terms of the human body. The Foucauldian insight that everyone in a community tends to be at work for the situation within it, leads to resistance as being the right of the individual subject. It is of little importance if that resistance is directed against the power of the state on the life of people as living beings or on the rejection of a utopia. What is of importance, however, is that resistance now has formulated itself by the same means and symbols as its controlling mechanism: namely in terms of the human body and life. Life as a political struggle turned back against the system which controls it.

Movement of the human body can influence one’s perception of considering someone as being a fulfilled, right-bearing human being. The human body, however, is also able to respond by influencing time and making real ones demands and ideals after its ‘fulfillment’ and ‘right-bearing’ has been taken away from it. Therefore the human body is crucial in

understanding the situation of the sans-papiers as it first contributes to the creation of the social construction of the sans-papiers as made by the government and as it hence contributes to its deconstruction by means of bodily synchrony and collectivity. A simple binary opposition between the oppressor and the oppressed cannot be made as is also stated in chapter two, because the two are in constant negotiation.

After I left the people of WAH behind in the park on the evening of the thirteenth of April, they indeed set up a tent camp in a private area. They, however, were not allowed to stay there for long and the authorities already evicted the terrain the next day. That night an organization offered the group shelter for one night. Notwithstanding that the government still did not provide a structural solution the group decided to squat a building the day after. After the eviction of the Vluchtgebouw its inhabitants also waited a week to squat a new building. At the moment it is not the government where the group can find safety and shelter – its citizens provide them. As long as the state defines the situation of the sans-papiers as provisional, it will not provide the members of WAH with what they consider a structural solution: papers. As long as this contradiction lives on, the group will probably be followed by authorities everywhere it goes and so this story continues. As long as the image of sans-papiers as being apolitical bodies is maintained, the sans-papiers of WAH will keep facing the excluding borders from political inclusion everywhere they go. They will continue to be the very embodiment of the borders themselves. Until this social construction is deconstructed, the people of WAH will continue to go forward in the shadows of the ceaseless flow of celebrated people, beneath the lonely night and day, amid the gloom.

Attachment I Reflection

Is there an unbridgeable boundary between being an anthropological researcher and an activist citizen? Spiro states that anthropology is built upon subjectivity (Moore and Sanders 2014:429). Due to this subjective character some argue that anthropology cannot be perceived as a science, because its most important research tool, the anthropologist, shall always be subjective and shall therefore never be able to find out the objective truth. What then is subjectivity?

Spiro states that within the postmodernism era the focus in anthropology was often on the notion of subjectivity (Moore and Sanders 2014: 429). Sherry Ortner argues that subjectivity is “*the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects [as well as] the cultural and social formations that shape, organize and provoke those modes of affect, thought and so on.*” (Moore and Sanders 2014: 186). I think it is the intersection between the search for a somehow objective truth and the ensemble of modes as described by Ortner (2014), which is in its turn influenced and shaped both by the history of the researcher and by the interaction between the researcher and the participants’ notions during a period of extended fieldwork, that makes the line between subjectivity and objectivity so blurry and grey.

Knowledge and truth in this sense are a construction created by the anthropologist and the informant. Postmodernists do not believe that ‘the’ reality can be portrayed and consequently, fragmented, inconsistent, undefined and incomplete representations of reality are commonly provided (Geuijen, Raven and Wolf: 1995). An overall rationality does not exist. Instead there are many realities which are all defined through their context: time, place and culture. To make clear that these are not a matter of overall rationality, reflections of the ethnographer are used (Geuijen, Raven and Wolf: 1995). Even if an anthropologist tries to be objective, he or she will always be influenced by his or her ethnocentrism and subjectivity. D’Andrade and Spiro both state that objectivity as such is not achievable, but that aiming at it is possible (Moore and Sanders 2014). Aiming at objectivity happens when being open about your subjectivity. So here it is, my reflection to demystify my influence and perceptions on my thesis once and for all.

My slightly activist and idealistic nature keeps convincing me that no human deserves to live on the street, stripped of his rights. My choice to do my research with the people of We Are Here is both a personal statement and an attempt to show that activism and anthropology can

go along very well. It was never my intention to veil myself in a cover of objectivity and not choose sides. I have taken sides: the side of the sans-papiers. I slept in their home, I ate their food, I had conversations, I shared my thoughts. During demonstrations my body was sometimes wrapped in slogans as well. With every step I took during my fieldwork I moved forward towards an understanding of the movement.

During my period of fieldwork I tried to pick up my role as an engaged *comrade* as described by Scheper-Hughes (2014). When an anthropologist is a comrade, he or she is “*a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who will ‘take sides’ and make judgments.*” (Moore and Sanders 2014: 417). Moreover, as a comrade someone is not only a spectator, but also a witness. So I joined demonstrations, I joined protest marches, I joined the organization named Women Against Deportation. But please, do not understand me wrongly. I did not join to satisfy the image of me being an engaged anthropologist or to just get more understanding. I joined not only to be there and to understand, but also to show that I have taken their side, to show my solidarity, to be true to myself, to show that I do not accept how people are treated in my own backyard, figuratively speaking.

Speed (2006), however, states that it is more than just the ideological position of the anthropologist to join protests; because the responsibilities of the outcomes of protest and demonstrations are shared with the group of participants and the anthropologist. Because the anthropologist is present during demonstrations, their structures become visible and the anthropologist will gain inside perspectives and knowledge.

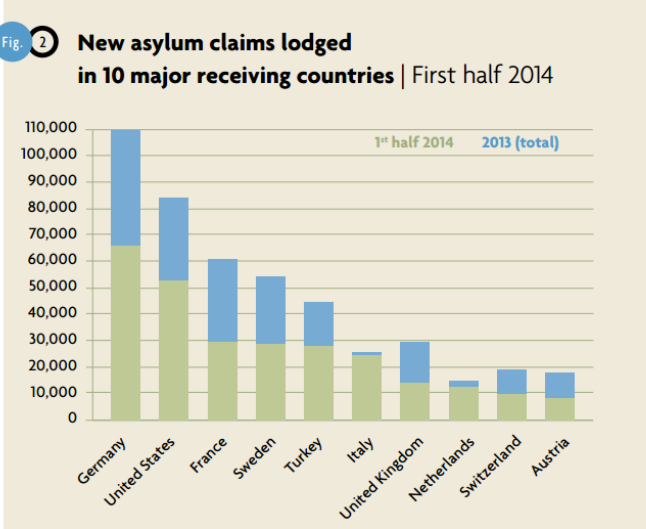
My experiences in the field are constantly conducted by and with my informants. It is the task of the anthropologist to collect various viewpoints, listen to them and to unravel them. Moreover, it is the task of the anthropologist to tell stories that otherwise would be silenced. I argue that there is no unbridgeable boundary between being a researcher and an activist citizen. A researcher is always influenced by his or her own perceptions and always dependent on what informants let him or her understand about the field. However, by taking sides and being open about it, an anthropologist is in the position to both collect inside perspectives, to understand and to be objective after being open about his or her subjectivity.

Attachment II Trends in Refugee Flows

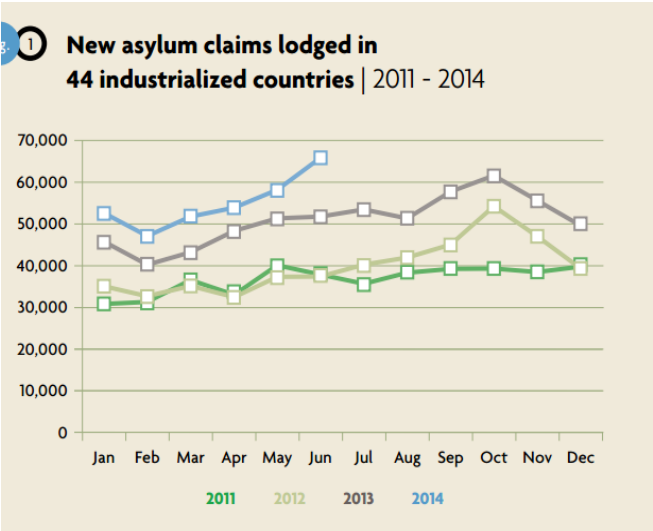
Top: Number of asylum applicants in 10 major receiving countries.

Bottom: Number of asylum applicants in 44 industrialized countries

Right: Top 10 of nationality of asylum applicants in the Netherlands in the second quarter of 2014²².



Netherlands	
Eritrea	3,146
Syrian Arab Rep.	2,300
Stateless	580
Somalia	202
Iraq	160
Afghanistan	141
Islamic Rep. of Iran	129
Mongolia	114
Georgia	97
Nigeria	63



²² All figures are retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/5423f9699.html>. UNHCR is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Attachment III Articles of the European Social Charter

Article 8. - Right to respect for private and family life²³

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 13. The right to social and medical assistance

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social and medical assistance, the Parties undertake:

1. to ensure that any person who is without adequate resources and who is unable to secure such resources either by his own efforts or from other sources, in particular by benefits under a social security scheme, be granted adequate assistance, and, in case of sickness, the care necessitated by his condition;
2. to ensure that persons receiving such assistance shall not, for that reason, suffer from diminution of their political or social rights;
3. to provide that everyone may receive by appropriate public or private services such advice and personal help as may be required to prevent, to remove, or to alleviate personal or family want;
4. to apply the provisions referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this article on an equal footing with their nationals to nationals of other Parties lawfully within their territories, in accordance with their obligations under the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance, signed at Paris on 11 December 1953.

²³ Verdrag tot bescherming van de rechten van de mensen en de fundamentele vrijheden, Rome, 04-11-1950 (valid on 08-06-2015). Retrieved from http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0001000/geldigheidsdatum_08-06-2015#AuthentiekEN_VDRTKS571940_SECTIONI_Article8

Article 31. The right to housing

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to housing, the Parties undertake to take measures designed:

1. to promote access to housing of an adequate standard;
2. to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination;
3. to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources.

Appendix to the Revised European Social Charter²⁴

Scope of the Revised European Social Charter in terms of persons protected

1. Without prejudice to Article 12, paragraph 4, and Article 13, paragraph 4, the persons covered by Articles 1 to 17 and 20 to 31 include foreigners only in so far as they are nationals of other Parties lawfully resident or working regularly within the territory of the Party concerned, subject to the understanding that these articles are to be interpreted in the light of the provisions of Articles 18 and 19.

This interpretation would not prejudice the extension of similar facilities to other persons by any of the Parties.

2. Each Party will grant to refugees as defined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva on 28 July 1951 and in the Protocol of 31 January 1967, and lawfully staying in its territory, treatment as favorable as possible, and in any case not less favorable than under the obligations accepted by the Party under the said convention and under any other existing international instruments applicable to those refugees.

It is understood that these provisions are not concerned with the question of entry into the territories of the Parties and do not prejudice the provisions of the European Convention on Establishment, signed in Paris on 13 December 1955.

²⁴ Appendix for the Revised Social Charter. Retrieved from http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0001800/geldigheidsdatum_15-05-2015#AuthentiekEN_VDRTKS575072_1

Attachment IV Pictures of Police Violence



Retrieved from
http://www.rtnieuws.nl/sites/default/files/styles/landscape_2/public/content/images/2015/04/13/vluchtgarage3_1.jpg?itok=c3CeFC5E



Retrieved from
http://static1.ad.nl/static/photo/2015/3/15/5/20150413132617/media_xll_2907440.jpg

Attachment V Summary in the Language of the Informants

This is a study of sans-papiers in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. A sans-papiers is a person who has no paperwork for staying legally in a country's territory. Sans-papiers constantly come across excluding borders: national borders, borders which provide access to citizenship, borders which provide access to social facilities. Moreover, a sans-papiers is imagined and constructed by the state as being deprived of all political influence and ideally lives a purely biological life. Without having access to shelter, food, education, health-care and other social facilities the members of We Are Here face life. The sans-papiers of this research organized themselves: they became a collective and formulated demands. As a result a movement emerged named We Are Here. The organizational structure of the movement is of major importance as it enables shelter, demonstrations and other activities. The main goals of the movement are to make the situation of sans-papiers in The Netherlands visible and to provoke a structural solution for it. The sans-papiers live in squatted buildings in Amsterdam. Having shelter amounts to civic and human rights. To be able to carry out the movement's demands, the group goes onto the street frequently to demonstrate. Consequently the movement often becomes a synchronic body that is able to perform its demands and is therefore able to realize its demands and imaginations of a future for a short moment in time. The state responds to this bodily synchronicity with violence. The violence is a mere indication that the political influence of the sans-papiers can no longer be ignored and that they can and do, actually, have political agency. Because the members of We Are Here have once crossed national borders without having the right paperwork to do so in a legal way, they now face its consequences in Dutch society. Everywhere they go, they face excluding borders. It can even be argued that they not only face borders, but that they are the very embodiment of those borders themselves. The Dutch state tends to see the situation of its sans-papiers as provisional, whereas We Are Here demands a structural solution: papers. As long as this contradictory approach to the situation exists, the members of We Are Here will keep facing excluding borders everywhere. Not only sans-papiers respond to this situation, but the civil society also reacts with acts to deconstruct the social construction of a sans-papiers as made by the state. This proves that the state is not the sole actor of power that is able to have influence on the lives of sans-papiers. Civil society formulates its acts of resistance in the same terms as the state: namely in terms of the human body and life. Life as a political struggle turned back against the system which controls it. Movement can thus influence one's perceptions of being perceived as a full-filled, right-bearing human being.

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