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NAVIGATING PROTRACTED LIMINALITY

An anthropological study of the experiences of Syrian refugees in Istanbul in re-establishing livelihoods after displacement

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This thesis is dedicated to our informants in Istanbul and beyond, who allowed us into their lives and generously shared with us their stories, their dreams, their perseverance and their losses, and who inspired us and gave us perspective to our own lives.

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Abstract

On the basis of ethnographic fieldwork, this thesis sheds light on the experiences of urban Syrian refugees in re-establishing livelihoods in Istanbul after displacement. The first part of the thesis identifies social exclusion mechanisms, including lack of access to a stable legal status, education and permission to work legally, as well as extensive discrimination and harassment as constituting central challenges in the pursuit of livelihoods. Other challenges include the absence of a sense of security, familiarity, community and hope for the future, which constitute key elements for building the feeling of being at home, as well as the inability to follow expected and desired life trajectories and fulfil a process of social becoming. Homebuilding and social becoming are claimed to be existential dimensions crucial for the successful re-establishment of livelihoods. The situation of the informants is characterized as a state of protracted liminality, which cannot easily be terminated, because aggregation is, to a large extent, unavailable in Istanbul. The second part of the thesis is therefore concerned with the tactics applied in order to deal with the protracted liminality and attempt to reach aggregation or at least gain a sense of meaning in life. These tactics include crossing the Aegean Sea to Greece, returning to Syria and engaging in activism related to Syria in Istanbul.

Key words

Social anthropology; Syrian refugees; Turkey; livelihoods; liminality

List of abbreviations

AFAD	Turkey’s Disaster and Relief Agency
AIDA	Asylum Information Database
ASAM	Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migration
DGMM	General Directorate for Migration Management
DIIS	The Danish Institute for International Studies
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IS	Islamic State
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
LFIP	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
MSF	Doctors Without Borders/Medecins Sans Frontiers
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PKK	Kurdistan Worker’s Party
RRT	Refugee Rights Turkey
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SPI	Small Projects Istanbul
TL	Turkish Lira
TPR	Temporary Protection Regulation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
YPG	Kurdish People’s Protection Unit

Table of content

Acknowledgements 1
Abstract 2
Key words 2
List of abbreviations 3
Prologue: A Syrian Story 7
Chapter 1: Introduction 8
Existing literature 11
Thesis structure 14
Chapter 2: Contextual framework 16
The Syrian conflict 16
The legal framework for Syrians in Turkey 18
The EU-Turkey joint action plan 20
Chapter 3: The field and methodology 22
A dual approach: Ethnography and phenomenology 22
Our path through the field 25
Entering and engaging with the field 26
Voluntary and non-voluntary positions in the field 32
Ethics - studying people's suffering 33
Processing a fieldwork 34
Chapter 4: Theorizing a field of precariousness 36
Separation, liminality and aggregation 36
Displaced livelihoods 37
Bourdieu's theory of practice 38
Homebuilding 40
Social navigation 40
Chapter 5: Protracted liminality - Challenges in re-establishing livelihoods 41
Rupture with life as it was 42
Losing everything to the war 43
Betwixt and between citizen and refugee 44
Excluded from livelihoods 46
Struggling to obtain legal status 46
Legal labourer or exploited employee 48
Delayed futures 51
'Yabancı' - being treated differently 53
Feelings of home 55
Stuck in the middle 59
'Waiting like a refugee' 62
Getting by - circumventing constraining elements 66
A shattered illusio 68

Disrupted life trajectories ... 69
Chapter 6: Dealing with liminality ... 71
Balancing social death with dangerous life chances ... 72
An uncertain social environment of refugeeness ... 74
Navigating the Aegean Sea ... 74
A calculated choice ... 75
Navigating back to Syria ... 77
Escaping liminality in Istanbul ... 79
Activism in a state of liminality ... 82
Chapter 7: Conclusion ... 86
Further empirical perspectives ... 88
Bibliography ... 89
Online resources ... 97
Appendix A: Overview over informants ... 104
Appendix B: Interviews with NGOs ... 106

Prologue

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A Syrian Story

It was a Tuesday afternoon and there was a local market in the streets of Fatih. We got lost, but Zeinah, a Syrian woman in her mid thirties and single mother of two, found us and warmly welcomed us in her basement apartment. She took off her headscarf and sat down on the couch with her mother, after having served us Syrian tea. From the window of the living room, we could see the feet of the people walking by, and the sounds from the market were mixed with the voice of the news anchor on Al Arabiya, where footage of war and suffering were presented in a constant stream. Now in relative safety themselves, Zeinah and Sahar started telling us about their own experiences in Syria and about the day they decided to leave their home: "79 people were killed with tanks when the military invaded the village. It was doomsday. It was very, very difficult for us [...] we were watching as you are watching a war film on TV [...] and then we decided to go away. We left in such a hurry that we didn't have time to bring anything. Not even Zara's dolls. She's still looking for them under the couch".

Zeinah was a trained electrical engineer, but she was struggling to find work, enabling her to support her sick mother and two daughters alone. Despite having been in Istanbul for two years, she hardly knew anyone in the enormous city. When talking about her current life, Zeinah would tell how "Turkish people are afraid of strangers", and how discrimination had become a part of her everyday life. Though life in Istanbul was hard, following the many Syrians, who have crossed the Aegean Sea to Greece was not an option for Zeinah, as she knew that she would not be able to "hold [her] daughters across the sea", could not afford to pay the smugglers and feared that she and her daughters would be subjected to sexual violence.

A rainy summer evening in Copenhagen several months later, we received an audio message from Zeinah: "My mother and the two girls are going back to Syria tomorrow, inshallah. Because I don't have any work here. There is no money and no work. And I can't handle living in Istanbul. So we are all going back to Syria. Maybe I will go in two or three months. But my mother and my two daughters are going tomorrow".

Chapter 1

………..

Introduction

Not since the aftermath of World War II has the world witnessed as many forcibly displaced people as today, with over 65,3 million refugees and internally displaced people worldwide. The Syrian conflict, which entered its 6th year in the spring of 2016, has caused a devastating humanitarian disaster, which has forced over half of the pre-war population to flee their homes, resulting in 4,9 million Syrian refugees and another 6,6 million internally displaced (UNHCR 2015:2, 6). A large majority of the Syrian refugees are hosted in the neighbouring countries, and in Turkey alone 2,728,986 Syrians are registered, of whom only about 10% live in camps. Thus, the vast majority of Syrians in Turkey are living mainly in urban areas, where the access to humanitarian assistance is severely limited or non-existent, and they therefore need to find ways to support themselves (ECHO 2016). With no end in sight of the conflict, the opportunities for returning to Syria within a foreseeable future appear to be limited. For the Syrian refugees it is thus not only a matter of satisfying their basic needs, but also concerns their opportunities for re-establishing their livelihoods and building their futures in Turkey on the long term. Due to Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (henceforth the 1951 Geneva Convention), Syrians are not granted refugee status in Turkey. Instead, they are eligible for temporary protection status, but this only gives them limited opportunities, as it for instance does not enable them to obtain long-term legal integration into Turkey or resettlement to a third country through the UNHCR.

Today, over 60 % of the world's refugees live in urban settings (UNHCR 2016), and this share is expected to rise in the coming years, especially with the ongoing influx of Syrian refugees to the neighbouring countries. A key cause to this tendency is that cities provide a number of opportunities, which are absent in traditional, closed refugee camps, such as opportunities for earning money, as well as for building a future. However, cities also represent harsh living conditions and insecurities. Besides being confronted with the same problems as local urban poor, urban refugees also meet additional challenges. They are vulnerable to exploitation by for example

employers, they are competing with the poorest local workers over the least attractive and worst paid jobs, they live with an imminent risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, they are often denied fundamental rights and access to basic services, and they are regularly exposed to harassment and discrimination. At the same time, many of them lack the necessary documents, which can make already comprehensive bureaucratic processes even more impassable (UNHCR 2016; Urban Refugees 2016; IRC 2012; Jacobsen 2005:44-45). In contrast to refugees living in camps, urban refugees are furthermore left to fend for themselves, as they often have no access to humanitarian assistance. Therefore, re-establishment of livelihoods is essential for urban refugees in order to get by (Jacobsen 2005:42).

The aim of this thesis is to explore how urban Syrian refugees experience their lives in Istanbul. It is concerned with how they themselves perceive their situation, which opportunities they see, and which challenges they are faced with, both in their daily lives and with regards to aspirations for the future, as well as how they deal with their situation. More specifically, this thesis will seek to answer the following research questions:

How do Syrian refugees in Istanbul experience re-establishing livelihoods, and which different tactics do they apply in order to deal with their situation of protracted liminality?

When using the term 'refugees', we refer to all Syrians living in Turkey, including those who are not registered by the Turkish authorities. We will use the term refugees regardless of Turkey not recognizing Syrians as such, due to the limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention, as the majority of the Syrians would be granted refugee status in countries not holding limitations to the convention (eurostat 2015).

By the term 'tactics' we refer to Michel de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics, with the former referring to the ability to deliminate a space as one's own; an ability held by those in power, and the latter to the calculated actions carried out by 'the weak', who "must play on and with a terrain imposed on [them] and organized by the law of a foreign power", i.e. by the powerful (de Certeau 1984:36-37). Tactics are to seize the opportunities and possibilities that arise within the demarcated space (ibid.:37). Thus, we understand tactics as the actions carried out by the Syrians, in

order to improve their situations, which are determined by various external actors, including Turkish and European politicians.

When referring to livelihoods in this thesis, we will, as a point of departure, refer to a holistic approach, meaning that we will take into account both material and non-material aspects of livelihoods. Modern livelihood studies has its roots in development studies, and the most commonly acknowledged definition is based on Gordon Conway and Robert Chambers' interpretation of livelihoods as "the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible assets, such as stores and resources, and intangible assets, such as claims and access" (Chambers & Conway in de Haan & Zoomers 2005:27, 44). Unlike previous approaches to livelihoods, Conway and Chambers do not only focus on material capabilities and assets required to pursue a living, such as land, livestock and money, but also include non-material capabilities and assets, such as health, education, skills, experience and social network (de Haan & Zoomers 2005:33; Jacobsen 2014:101, 108). This more holistic approach to livelihoods is further underlined by Wallman, who argues that: "The tasks of meeting obligations, of security, identity and status, and organizing time are as crucial to livelihood as bread and shelter" (Wallman in de Haan & Zoomers 2005: 32), as well as Bebbington, who stresses that: "A person's assets [...] are not merely means with which he or she makes a living: they also give meaning to that person's world" (Bebbington in de Haan & Zoomers 2005:32).

However, after time spent with Syrians in Istanbul, we soon realized that even the holistic approach to livelihoods is not sufficient, in order to understand what is at stake for forcibly displaced people trying to re-establish livelihoods, because we found that aspects beyond those entailed in this approach were also essential dimensions of re-establishing livelihoods for our informants. This led us to formulate an addition to the above research question:

What existential dimensions can be identified in the processes of re-establishing livelihoods and finding tactics to deal with a situation of protracted liminality among Syrians in Istanbul?

The basis on which we will seek to answer these research questions is empirical data collected during a six weeks fieldwork conducted in Istanbul in March and April 2016. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 people, informal interviews with 14 people and six group interviews.

In total, we had 47 informants; 17 female and 30 male (see appendix A), many of whom we met with multiple times. Furthermore, we conducted participant observation at a number of different locations, which we will further address in chapter 3. Our informants constituted a highly diverse group, but despite being in different situations, when we met them, they had all experienced being forcibly displaced from their homes, and were now subject to the same structural constraints. All of our informants have been anonymised in the thesis and will be referred to under pseudonyms.

The production of this thesis has been carried out in collaboration between the two of us. We have both been present during all interviews, and have had equal responsibility for all parts of the thesis during the writing process.

Existing literature

In the following, we will provide a brief overview of the existing literature regarding Syrian refugees in Turkey, as well as address some of the main anthropological contributions to the study of refugees. Due to the topicality and the scope of the matter, much literature has been produced regarding the situation of Syrians in Turkey, but most of it in the form of reports from government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), rights groups and international organizations, which take into account the situations faced by both urban and camp refugees in Turkey. These reports include needs assessments, status updates on the humanitarian situation, demographic overviews of the Syrian refugee population, policy recommendations and monitoring of the human rights situation (cf. IMC & ASAM 2014; 3RP 2016; AFAD 2013; World Bank 2015; Kirişci 2014; Amnesty International 2014). Whereas the majority of these reports focus on policies and material well-being, the study by the Syria Research and Evaluation Organization (sreo) on how Syrian women cope with displacement and how donors can seek to empower displaced women takes into account the social, psychological and emotional aspects of wellbeing, which is more in line with our approach in this thesis (sreo 2013). In our review of existing literature, we found one report to be of particular interest, namely the country report for Turkey from the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), which provides a thorough overview of the legal framework and practice surrounding the Syrians in Turkey, and addresses some of the major gaps between policy and practice (Durukan 2015).

The academic literature remains relatively scarce, and the majority of what does exists focuses on policy and legislation related to the Syrians' presence in Turkey (cf. Gümüş & Eroğlu 2015; Bidinger 2015). Among the academic literature we found especially the two political scientists Aslı N. Öner and Deniz Genç' (2015) exploration of Syrians leaving Turkey due to vulnerability caused by the temporariness of the legal status, they are granted under the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR), to be in line with some of our main arguments. However, this study is mainly concerned with problems arising from the legal framework being inadequate to overcome the vulnerabilities of the Syrians, which made them leave Turkey for Europe. It does not include the experiences of the refugees themselves of living with the temporariness, nor does it take other aspects of their lives in Turkey, which might have contributed to them leaving, into account. Anthropologist Kristen Sarah Biehl's (2015) study of refugees in Turkey does take into account their own experiences, but is concerned with refugees of non-Syrian origin, whose situation in Turkey is significantly different from that of the Syrians, as they are eligible for resettlement through The United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, which is a main focus of Biehl's study. International relations scholars Ayselin Yıldız and Elif Uzgören (2016) have studied the situation of non-camp refugees in Izmir, focusing on socio-economic opportunities and challenges experienced by the Syrians, as well as the Turkish host population's perceptions and acceptance of the Syrians. While the study resembles this thesis in many ways, we will also pay attention to the existential aspects of the Syrians' experiences of re-establishing livelihoods in Turkey. Furthermore, a number of academic master's theses have been produced throughout recent years concerning Syrian refugees in Turkey, including in Istanbul, focusing on specific issues such as access to the labour market, establishment of businesses, housing, social networks and ways of coping (cf. Smorenburg 2015, Valarini 2015, van der Sar 2015, Dermaux 2015, Jensen & Christensen 2015).

Furthermore, urban refugees have increasingly gained more attention in academia (cf. Parker 2002; Jacobsen 2006; Koizumi & Hoffstaedter 2015) as well as from humanitarian NGO's and the UNHCR (Hoffstaedter 2015:1). However, despite increased attention to urban refugees in recent years, there are, according to Landau, still significant gaps in the research, often caused by practical and logistical challenges in gaining access to this particular group of refugees, as many often prefer to stay under the radar (Landau 2014:141).

Anthropology has played an important role in the development of forced migration studies, and this thesis is a contribution to the anthropology of forced migration, which prioritizes the views and lived experiences of the displaced themselves, by utilizing ethnographic and phenomenological field methods. By doing so it gives voice and agency to the displaced and provides a 'view from below', which contrasts the focus on legislation and policies found in many other academic accounts about displacement (Chatty 2014:75). Peter Loizos, who conducted repeated field studies among the inhabitants of his father's Cypriot village, who became refugees after the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, has been recognized as a pioneer within the study of refugees in anthropology (ibid.:78). The first field study was conducted in 1968, while the last one took place in the early 2000s. He combined the intimate insights into the experiences of individuals with survey techniques and tried to build bridges to economic history and medicine, as he explored how the Greek Cypriots came about with re-establishing their livelihoods after their displacement, including how their physical and psychological well-being developed as a consequence of this (Loizos 2008). Loizos' approach to the displacement of the Greek Cypriots was holistic in its nature, and in the number of monographs he has written about the topic, he addresses a wide array of aspects of their lives, such as their relationships with the home village, dreams about return, and their ways of coping with their difficult situation (Loizos 2008:2-3; Chatty 2014:78).

Anthropologist Liisa Malkki's study on the lived experiences and collective memories of Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania has become seminal to the anthropology of forced migration. Based on her study of people in exile, Malkki has since the 1990's challenged popular discourses of nationalism and the territorializing conceptualizations, within political science and earlier anthropology, of a naturalized link between peoples and places, national identities and territories; or what she calls 'the national order of things'. She argues that the movement of people historically is more the rule than the exception and that people create 'homelands' and national identities in the absence of territorial bases (Chatty 2014:76, 81; Malkki 1995:2; Malkki 1992:25, 37). In this way, she argues that "deterritorialization and identity are intimately linked" (Malkki 1992:38).

Anthropologist Barbara Harrell-Bond represents the perhaps most important contribution from anthropology to the interdisciplinary field of refugee studies. In 1982, she founded the first refugee studies programme in the world at the University of Oxford, which includes all relevant disciplines in order to ensure holistic research on forced migration (Chatty 2014:80). Harrell-Bond's own work

has largely evolved around a critical perspective on humanitarian assistance, based on numerous field studies among refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa (cf. Harrell-Bond 2002; Harrell-Bond 1986).

Based on fieldwork in refugee camps in various African countries as well as the West Bank since 1999, anthropologist Michel Agier has written extensively on war, humanitarian aid and people in exile, and his latest book is concerned with the lived experiences and identity struggles of refugees throughout the world (Agier 2008). Our use of Arnold van Gennep's tri-partite ritual model in this thesis resembles the structure of this book, as it is divided into three main chapters each representing a stage of exile; the first being that of destruction, in which houses and towns are destroyed, life trajectories are broken and people are injured physically and mentally; the second being constituted by months or years or lives of waiting in transit, and finally, the last stage is that of action, where the person regains identity, voice and perhaps form new political commitments (Agier 2008:3-4).

Specifically related to the conflict in Syria and the large number of refugees, it has resulted in, anthropologist Dawn Chatty is conducting research on how the refugees have been received and perceived in the three neighbouring countries, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, respectively. This study presents an overview of the different approaches to the humanitarian disaster taken by the three countries (Chatty 2016).

Thus, anthropological accounts of refugees can differ greatly in their approach, scope and focus, and they can be concerned with camp and urban refugees alike, but they all take the lived experiences of the refugees themselves as a point of departure. However, there appears to be a significant gap in the literature, as the lived experiences of urban Syrian refugees in Turkey has only to a limited extent been addressed and examined from an anthropological perspective.

Thesis structure

Following this introductory chapter, we will account for the context in which our thesis is situated, focusing on the Syrian conflict, the legal framework for Syrians in Turkey and the EU-Turkey joint action plan. Chapter 3 will be concerned with the methodological foundation of the thesis, namely ethnography and phenomenology, as well as provide the reader with an insight into our path

through the field. In chapter 4, we will briefly present the theoretical framework that will guide the analysis. This will be followed by two analytical chapters, where we will first, in chapter 5, focus on how our informants' experienced their current situation and what challenges they encountered in pursuing livelihoods in Istanbul, focusing on both access to material and non-material livelihoods assets, as well as on what we will describe as the existential dimensions to the process of re-establishing livelihoods. Subsequently, in chapter 6, we will explore how our informants dealt with these challenges through the use of different tactics, such as crossing the sea to Europe, returning to Syria or engaging in activism in Istanbul. The final chapter will summarise the main findings of the thesis and present additional perspectives arising from our empirical data, which could be subject to further exploration.

Chapter 2

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Contextual framework

In this chapter, we will present an overview of the context in which our thesis is situated. First, we will give a brief account of the Syrian conflict, which made our informants flee to Turkey, followed by an introduction to the TPR, which constitutes the legal framework, under which Syrians in Turkey are registered. Subsequently, the deal struck between the European Union (EU) and Turkey, aimed at stopping irregular migration to Europe, will be addressed.

The Syrian conflict

> The barrel bombs. It's an iron container. It's full of nails and they throw it from the helicopter and the apartments and houses will be in the earth with the people in it (Zeinah, informant).

What is today known as the deadliest conflict of the 21st century began in the southern city of Daraa in March 2011, when residents took to the streets to protest the arrest and torture of a group of children, who had made anti-government graffiti. President Bashar al-Assad's government responded to the protest by killing and imprisoning a large number of demonstrators. This resulted in pro-democracy protests throughout the country demanding the resignation of Assad. The government's brutal and deadly crackdowns on the protests engaged even more people, and in the following months hundreds of thousands took to the streets. In July 2011, defectors from the army formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which first aimed at defending the protesters and later at overthrowing the government. This became the beginning of the country's slide into civil war, and the FSA was joined by a number of other rebel groups in the fight against government forces (Al Jazeera 2016; Rodgers et al. 2016).

The war has later come to include multiple warring parties, particularly when the Islamists entered the stage and Daesh[1] in June 2014 proclaimed a caliphate and now control large parts of both Syria and Iraq. The government of Syria is therefore, together with its allies from Russia, Iran and the Lebanon based Hezbollah movement, fighting on several fronts, against both secular, moderate and Islamist rebel groups, with the main one being the former Al-Qaeda affiliated group Jabhat Fatah al-Sham[2] and against Daesh. Furthermore, secular and moderate rebel groups are also fighting the Islamist rebel groups and Daesh (Al Jazeera 2016; Alami 2016). Since September 2014 an international US-led coalition, which among others includes all 28 NATO member states and the Arab League, has also entered the war fighting Daesh strongholds, mainly from the air (McInnis 2016:1). Additionally, the Kurds in Northern Syria are fighting both Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and Daesh, and the US is supporting the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which primarily consists of the Kurdish People's Protection Unit, YPG, but also includes Christian and Sunni Muslim groups, in their fight against Daesh (Lund 2016). YPG is affiliated with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which has been fighting for an independent Kurdish state within Turkey's current territory since the 1980s. This has led Turkey, a NATO country and member of the coalition, to bombard the YPG, because it feels threatened by the group's territorial advances in Northern Syria close to the Turkish border (BBC 2016).

Thus, the conflict has evolved from a civil war to a multi party proxy war, characterized by webs of official and unofficial alliances and allegiances. All parties to the conflict have, according to the United Nations (UN), committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. The violations against international law include, but are not limited to, the use of barrel bombs and chemical weapons, torture, forced disappearances, deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, attacks on hospitals, the use of child soldiers and the of use sieges as a method of war (UN 2015:4-5, 7; Rodgers et al. 2016).

The Syrian conflict has caused a devastating humanitarian disaster, with over 280,000 people killed since the onset of the conflict, more than one million injured and the majority of the population in need of humanitarian assistance, making the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon call the Syrian

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[1] Following our informants, we will use the term Daesh, when referring to the group also known as the Islamic State of

[2] The group is formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, but changed its name to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham when it broke its ties to al-Qaeda on July 28th 2016 (Alami 2016).

people "victims of the worst humanitarian crisis of our time" (Ban Ki-moon 2015; Al Jazeera 2016; UN 2016).

The latest peace efforts by the UN, the so-called 'intra-Syrian talks', have been led by the UN special envoy for Syria during the spring of 2016, but have so far been unsuccessful in resolving the violence. On the contrary, the violence has escalated, especially in and around Syria's largest city Aleppo. The third round of the intra-Syrian talks are supposed to be resumed in late August 2016, but so far there appears to be no end in sight for the Syrian conflict, and thus no opportunities for Syrian refugees to safely return to Syria (UN 2016; UNOG 2016).

The legal framework for Syrians in Turkey

Turkey has since its inception in 1923 been a country of asylum, and its geographical location between the Balkans and the rest of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa has made it both a transit country and a place of refuge for many (Ihlamor-Öner 2013:191, 193, 196). In 1951 Turkey became one of the original signatories to the Geneva Convention, stating refugees' rights to international protection. Turkey signed the convention with a geographical limitation, making only people fleeing from Europe eligible for refugee status, and while most other countries holding this limitation removed it, when the 1967 protocol to the convention was added, Turkey was one of the few countries to sustain the geographical limitation (Bidinger 2015:226-227). This means that people fleeing from non-European countries can only obtain the status of asylum seekers and 'conditional refugee status', which is a temporary protection status only lasting until they can return to their country of origin or are resettled to a third country (Gümüş & Eroğlu 2015:470-471). Hence, the Syrians in Turkey are legally considered as merely guests. The expectation has been that their stay would be short and that they would soon be able to return to Syria, and no attempts have therefore been made to integrate them into Turkish society (ibid.:472). This expectation has changed, as the conflict in Syria has entered into its 6th year, but Syrians are continuously viewed as guests in Turkey.

When the first Syrians began arriving in Turkey in March 2011, the Turkish government announced an 'open border policy', which meant that Syrians would be allowed to cross the border and be admitted to Turkey and that their basic humanitarian needs would be met. This provided the basis

for the later temporary protection regime, which also includes the principle of non-refoulement[3] (Durukan 2015:104). Following the arrival of the first Syrians a de facto temporary protection regime was installed, treating the incident as a 'mass influx', which meant that these arrivals were to be treated outside the framework of Turkey's asylum system, and thus Syrians would not have their cases treated individually. It was not until October 2014 that the TPR was adopted by the government, and thus between 2011 and 2014 there was no proper domestic law basis for the de facto temporary protection regime carried out, where decisions were based on political and administrative discretion leading to "spontaneous, ad hoc measures and changing practices in regards to key implementation aspects such as admission to territory, identification and documentation, registration, access to shelter and access to healthcare, among others" (ibid.:105).

As stated in the Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) from 2013, in the case of a mass influx of people seeking protection, a temporary protection regime can be declared by a Board of Ministers Decision, which can also terminate an existing temporary protection regime (DGMM 2014:93). There is no maximum time frame set for temporary protection regimes, but if a regime is terminated, the Board of Ministers can decide either to return the temporary protection beneficiaries to their countries, to collectively grant them international protection status or to allow them to stay in Turkey under different conditions. This means that the temporary protection beneficiaries are not guaranteed the opportunity to apply individually for international protection, when the temporary protection regime is terminated (TPR 2014:4-5; Durukan 2015:108). Despite the fact that people can potentially be living under temporary protection in Turkey for an indefinite amount of time, they do not enjoy any possibility for long-term legal integration in Turkey. The temporary protection ID does not serve as a residence permit and time spent in Turkey under temporary protection does not count in terms of fulfilling the requirement of five years uninterrupted legal residence in Turkey, which is a precondition for applying for Turkish citizenship (Durukan 2015:108).

In the current temporary protection regime, which was installed together with the adoption of the TPR in 2014, it is, following Oktay Durukan, stated that ""Syrian nationals, stateless people and

[3] The principle of non-refoulement refers to Article 33(1) of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which states that: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UN 1951:177).

refugees" who have arrived in Turkey, whether individually or as part of a mass movement of people, due to events unfolding in Syria, are eligible for "temporary protection" in Turkey." (Durukan 2015:110). The TPR defines the core elements of the regime, including the criteria for eligibility for temporary protection, the procedure for obtaining temporary protection and the temporary protection ID. It also states the specific rights that temporary protection beneficiaries are granted, including access to basic healthcare services and support for medication costs, free enrolment in public schools on the basic level, access to family reunification, protection from refoulement and access to the labour market (ibid.:128).

On paper, LFIP and the TPR are two pieces of legislation significantly improving the situation for refugees in Turkey. It is the first legislation actually creating a proper system for how to handle regular and irregular migration into Turkey, and it is based on EU criteria for migration legislation (İçduygu 2015:5-6). However, as we will address later on, there is a severe gap between policy and practice, which results in difficulties for Syrians to secure the rights and access the services they are entitled to. Based on experts' assessments and our own fieldwork, the lack of proper implementation of the TPR as well as its inherent temporary nature, creates a high level of precariousness for the Syrians living in Turkey.

The EU-Turkey joint action plan

On March 18th 2016, the EU and the Turkish government agreed on a joint action plan, which aims at ending irregular migration from Turkey to the EU. The main component of the deal is that all irregular migrants arriving in Greece from Turkey after March 20th 2016 will be sent back to Turkey, and for every Syrian individual being returned to Turkey, the EU will resettle one Syrian individual from a refugee camp in Turkey. The agreement, furthermore, entails Turkey to "take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration opening from Turkey to the EU" (European Commission 2016). In return for the readmission of all irregular migrants and efforts to prevent them from going to Greece in the first place, Turkey should receive a total of €6 billion to improve the conditions for asylum seekers and temporary protection beneficiaries in Turkey. Furthermore, visa-free travels for Turkish citizens into the Schengen zone should be ensured and a chapter in the accession process for Turkish EU membership should be opened (European Commission 2016). However, in order for the visa exemption to be approved, Turkey

needs to meet 72 conditions. One of these conditions entails Turkey to reform its terror legislation, often used to prosecute political opponents of the governing AKP party. So far, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has refused to comply with this demand and after the attempted military coup on July 15th 2016, Turkey's EU Minister, Omer Celik, has stated that it will be "impossible" to reform the terror legislation in the foreseeable future (Loveluck 2016; Pitel & Brunsden 2016). On the contrary, President Erdoğan is currently promising that death penalty will be reinstated in Turkey, if the decision can be backed by the parliament, something which made German chancellor Angela Merkel state explicitly that if doing so, Turkey will not be able to continue its EU accession process, thus further destabilizing the basis of the deal (Pitel & Brunsden 2016).

The deal has been subject to severe criticism from numerous humanitarian organizations, including Doctors Without Borders (MSF), UNHCR, and human rights groups, who say that it is a violation of international law (Kingsley & Rankin 2016; E.H. 2016). Amnesty International has labelled the deal "illegal" and "reckless", because asylum seekers are returned to Turkey "on the false pretence that it is a "safe country" for refugees" (Amnesty International 2016). According to Amnesty International this is not the case, since Turkey does not offer full refugee status, is unable to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers and has been accused of arbitrary detention of refugees, as well as forced returns, including to Syria (ibid.). Furthermore, according to many migration experts, including senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Nauja Kleist, the deal will very likely force refugees to take longer and more dangerous routes, such as from Libya to Italy (Kleist 2016).

The deal has also meant a de facto suspension of Turkey's open border policy, largely closing its border to Syria in order to avoid more Syrians to enter the country and thus creating a bottleneck. This has been done despite increased fighting around Aleppo in Northern Syria, which has forced hundreds of thousands to flee (Loveluck 2016). Furthermore, as mentioned above, only around 10% of Turkey's 2,7 million registered Syrian refugees live in camps. This means that the majority of the Syrian refugees in Turkey, including our informants, do not qualify for resettlement according to the deal (Kleist 2016).

Chapter 3

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The field and methodology

In this chapter, we will explain the basis for the thesis, concerning both its methodological foundation, as well as our path through the field, the ways in which we gained access to the knowledge, upon which the analysis is based, and how this knowledge was processed.

A dual approach: Ethnography and phenomenology

The task of the anthropologist is twofold; to depict the experiences of people and seek to understand how they find meaning in their lives, thus gaining an understanding of what is at stake for them, as well as to analyse the underlying structural conditions, which affect people's lives (Sjørslev 2015:162-163). In order to do so, the anthropologist must situate her/himself as one among those studied, and to some extent become a part of that community; hence, the anthropologist must enter the world that is the object of study and engage in it. The primary way for the anthropologist to do so is through the ethnographic fieldwork (Hastrup 2010:10).

While ethnography can include various different methods, participant observation remains the primary one (O'Reilly 2009:150). Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt describe participant observation as "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (2011:1), and further defines it as "the central and defining method of research in cultural anthropology" (ibid:2). Hence, participant observation is a central way for the anthropologist to gain an insight into people's lived experiences.

The ideal way of conducting participant observation involves staying in the field for long periods of time and living closely together with those studied. However, this ideal cannot always be met, and in our case, we could not engage in all aspects of participant observation due to time and practical constraints. We did, nonetheless, engage in a range of what DeWalt and DeWalt describe as the main elements of participant observation, including "using everyday conversation as an interview technique", "informally observing during leisure activities" and "recording observations in field notes" (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:5). All of these activities provided us with a deeper and

contextualised understanding of the lives of our informants in Istanbul, which enabled us to make use of “both tacit and explicit information in analysis and writing” (ibid.).

While participant observation is considered as constituting the main method of ethnographic fieldwork, interviews are gaining ground as a central method for anthropologists, and interviews can also provide a deep insight into the lives of the interviewees. Anthropologist Cecilie Rubow used interviews as her primary method in a study of funeral rituals in Denmark, which resulted in intimate knowledge about people’s experiences of sorrow, thoughts about death, the meaning of the ritual etc., and thus in her case the interviews did not appear to be a ‘bad surrogate’ for participant observation, as it has previously been accused of being among anthropologists (Rubow 2010:227-228, 232-233). This approach to interviews resembles the phenomenological method, which employs semi-structured interviews as the sole way of gaining insights into people’s life worlds.

Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, was founded in the early 20th century by German philosopher Edmund Husserl, who studied the relationship between human consciousness and what that consciousness was directed towards. Phenomenology became the study of different phenomena, as they are perceived by the individual, and has developed as both a diverse philosophical movement, and as a set of empirical scientific methods applied within the social and human sciences (Jacobsen et al. 2010:185). A pivotal concept within phenomenology is ‘life world’, which is to be understood as the world, as it is encountered in daily life, and as it appears to consciousness, irrespective of and prior to all explanations, including scientific and common sense explanations (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:47; Jacobsen et al. 2010:185; Sjørslev 2015:148). The life world, following Inger Sjørslev, also includes “dreams and fantasies as an integrated part of the empirical reality” (2015:148). Hence, it is the world as it is experienced by the individual, which matters, rather than what in a positivist sense can be considered ‘real’ due to its objective measurability. In this way, phenomenology is relevant to anthropology, because anthropology is not concerned with whether something objectively exists, as it is what exists within the human experience that matters and must be taken into account by the anthropologist (Sjørslev 2015:151). In general, phenomenology as a philosophical approach has had significant influence on anthropology, because it appeals to particularly the first part of the anthropological task, mentioned above, as it is about “empathizing with people’s everyday lives on their own conditions without intellectual and cultural preconceived notions” (Sjørslev 2015:162). However, Sjørslev stresses that,

in an anthropological analysis, it is not sufficient to merely describe and comprehend people's lived experiences, which is the primary aim of the phenomenological method. It is an important step to do so, but it must be followed by an understanding of the experiences within their context, and the anthropological analysis must, furthermore, seek to uncover the underlying structural conditions and power relations, which contribute to creating the situation, in which people find themselves (ibid.:150, 163). The phenomenological method does, however, provide useful insights, particularly into how semi-structured interviews can be used as a way to understand the social phenomena, as they are experienced by the informants, and to form the basis for interpretation of the meaning of these phenomena (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:44-46).

In our fieldwork, semi-structured interviews have been the primary method for data collection. A semi-structured interview is characterized by neither being an everyday conversation, nor a closed questionnaire. It has a specific purpose and is based on the use of an interview guide, which provides an overview of specific topics, as well as suggestions for questions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:45). In our case, what we were interested in, was to gain an insight into the life worlds of Syrian refugees in Istanbul, focusing on their lived experiences of being refugees, the challenges they faced, as well as their dreams and hopes for the future. Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann list a number of aspects of the qualitative interview, inspired by the phenomenological approach, which we kept in mind and tried to actively apply when conducting interviews with our informants. Among other things this meant that we asked open questions in order to obtain "nuanced descriptions of different aspects" of our informants' life worlds (ibid.:46), that we paid close attention, not only to what was said, but also to how it was said and which gestures and facial expressions it was accompanied by, and that we sought to be 'consciously naive', which meant that we tried to remove all our preconceived notions of the phenomena in question, and be open towards "new and unexpected phenomena rather than working with ready-made categories" (ibid.:46, 48, 49).

Furthermore, in many of our interviews, we were also inspired by the narrative approach, which is closely related to phenomenology, as it aims at gaining an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to lived experiences, and is based on the assumption that "we can only know something about other people's experiences from the expressions they give them" (Eastmond 2007:249). This is done by inviting the informants to share their stories, and as a researcher assume a primary role of

the listener, who does not interrupt the story, but merely seeks to support its continuation (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:175).

After having conducted the first couple of semi-structured interviews, we soon realized that we could not understand our informants' lives in Istanbul, as well as their thoughts about the future, without knowing about their lives, as they had been in Syria and the experiences they had undergone prior to arriving in Istanbul. This was what led us to adopt the more narrative approach, where we would initially ask our informants to share their stories with us. In some cases these stories would come to begin when our informants were children, as was the case with Yussef and Adnan, both mid-aged men, we met at Aisha's café, and in other cases they would begin at the beginning of the revolution, while in yet other they would not begin until the time where the informant fled Syria. Common to all of these stories were that they included, what our informants considered to be important for their present lives, but at the same time, it was a way of allowing our informants to steer the interviews and make decisions about which parts of their stories they wanted to share with us. These stories became the basis for us to adopt the overall analytical framework of this thesis, namely that of van Gennep's tripartite ritual model as it is used by Victor Turner, because we found it necessary to make sense of both what our informants came from, what they were currently experiencing, and where they attempted to go.

Our path through the field

We came to approach our fieldwork through three main points of access, which evolved into three parallel, but at times overlapping tracks, together shaping our overall path through the field. Following Kirsten Hastrup, we understand the field as not being fixed, but as emerging, while we study it. As the anthropologist's object of study is people, "who perceive and act in a way that is simultaneously unique and recognizable, the contours of the field are subject to constant change" (Hastrup 2009:21, our translation). This means that the 'real' field only reveals itself amidst the fieldwork, when the anthropologist has gained a deeper understanding of what is at stake (ibid.). As we will show in this section, it was through the paths we took and were led down, and thus the people and stories we encountered, that the field emerged. Hastrup further emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the empirical and the analytical object, with the first referring to who or what the anthropologist seeks to examine, and the latter being the framework that delimits

the study based on a theoretical interest, narrowing down the focus of the anthropologist (2010:15). In our study, the empirical object was Syrian refugees in Istanbul. But as studying all aspects of the lives of Syrians in Istanbul would be unmanageable, we narrowed down the focus of the study by identifying livelihoods as the analytical object.

In the following, we will introduce the three main points of access of our fieldwork and the tracks that they constituted, namely the craft collective at Small Projects Istanbul (SPI), our interpreter and gatekeeper, Sayid, as well as the language exchange café Tabadul.

Entering and engaging with the field

The cultural, historic and economic centre of Turkey, Istanbul, is an enormous, densely populated, dynamic and diverse city, where the West and the East, literally and culturally, meet each other. While the skyline of Istanbul reminds one of "One Thousand and One Nights" with all its magnificent, ancient mosques, the bars and cafés are as taken straight out of Berlin or Copenhagen, crowded with young hipsters drinking caffe latte and beers. Istanbul is home to people of diverse backgrounds, nationalities and religions, and in recent years the streetscape of Istanbul has also come to include a new group of people, namely the up to one million Syrians, who have settled there. Many of these live in the district Fatih, which came to be a spatial starting point for our exploration of the lives of Syrians in Istanbul.

Before leaving Copenhagen, we had made arrangements to meet with a Turkish lawyer, who works with different organizations focusing on Syrians. One of the first days of our fieldwork, we met her at a session about legal rights in the organization SPI. Our visit to SPI that day turned out to be the first of many. Among other things, SPI offers Turkish and English classes for adults and children, grants scholarships, organizes legal counselling and runs a craft collective, where Syrian women make jewellery and other handicrafts. We ended up volunteering in the craft collective twice a week, taking care of the children, while their mothers were working.

According to James P. Spradley, participant observation can be understood through a continuum consisting of five types of participation: complete, active, moderate, passive and non-participation (1980:58). Throughout the fieldwork the ethnographer will usually move back and forth along the continuum, and thus take on the role of observer and participant at different times. Likewise, we

found ourselves conducting different degrees of participation in different settings. As we did not participate in the same activities as the women, such as the jewellery making, our degree of participation at SPI can be seen as moderate, because we were present in the setting, but did "not actively participate" but "only occasionally [interacted] with people in it" (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:23). Our participant observation at SPI provided us with insights into the challenges faced by this group of women, whose only source of income was the food stamps they received in return for their work in the craft collective, as well as into the strength of the community, which had arisen between the women, many of whom were otherwise completely without social networks in Istanbul. Furthermore, it was also at SPI that we met Zeinah, who became one of our main informants.

Prior to our departure from Denmark, we had conducted a preliminary desk study on urban refugees, Skype-interviews with the NGOs Urban Refugees and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), as well as interviews with two Syrian refugees now living in Denmark; Mustafa, who had lived in Izmir for three years, and Nasser, who had previously lived in Konya, all of which provided us with a basic understanding of what was at stake for urban Syrian refugees in Turkey. Based on this, we planned to focus on the challenges and solutions of humanitarian and development NGOs in assisting Syrians in Istanbul to re-establish livelihoods, as well as the experiences of the refugees themselves related to this. We had tried to establish contact to a wide range of organizations present in Istanbul, but only few had replied to our inquiries, one of them Özlem, the lawyer we met with at our first visit to SPI. Based on our agreements with Özlem prior to arriving in Istanbul, we expected that she could serve as a gatekeeper and help us access the organizations that she worked with, but due to her time constraints, we ended up only meeting that one time. Thus, we experienced the first turn of our path through the field, leading to different access, insights and thus a changed focus, which entailed solely focusing on the experiences of the Syrian refugees themselves.

It was in this context that we met Sayid, who became both our friend, informant and gatekeeper, as well as our paid interpreter, throughout the rest of our time in Istanbul. We met Sayid a week into our stay through a common friend from Denmark, Naja, who had heard about our challenges in accessing the field. Sayid was a 32-year-old filmmaker, who had come to Istanbul from Damascus 11 months before we met him. Not being able to find a job within his field in Istanbul, Sayid worked as a 'fixer' and interpreter for foreign journalists doing stories on Syrian refugees. Hence, Sayid knew the field both personally, as he was part of it, himself being a Syrian refugee, as well as professionally through his work. In this way, Sayid was in a good position to help us access the

field and function as our gatekeeper, i.e. “a person who has the means to facilitate contacts between the researcher and the subject/object to be researched” because of possessing “knowledge and understanding of the local context and the network required to set up contacts” (Eklund 2010:129). By introducing us to people, which we on our own, due to lacking Arabic language skills and familiarity with the Syrian exile community in Istanbul in the beginning of our fieldwork, would not have had the opportunity to meet, Sayid in many ways shaped our path through the field. However, while Sayid’s role as a gatekeeper to a large extent was positive, it was at times also challenging, as he would sometimes try, in Lisa Eklund’s words, to “‘take over’ the research design and implementation” (2010:130) and lead us through the field the way he considered to be the right one. Sayid was quite explicit about his attempts to ‘take over’, and explained to us that it was because he was “scared [we were] going to understand it the wrong way”. Since Sayid himself, unlike us, was a Syrian refugee, we valued his view of the ‘right understanding’ of the situation of Syrians highly, which meant that we most of the time chose to follow his suggestions of who we should and should not meet and talk to in order to understand the situation ‘the right way’. However, following Eklund, we were very aware of how Sayid’s influence over our fieldwork process would impact our findings, which meant that we at times chose to take back the control of who he should establish contact with for us (ibid.).

Sayid not only played an important part in shaping our path through the field. He also, in his capacity as our interpreter, influenced the specific knowledge we obtained in the different interviews. Sayid’s English was not fluent enough for simultaneous translation, and he thus got to make important choices about what was translated and what was not, being an example of the translation problems and inaccuracies, which Karen Jacobsen and Loren B. Landau mention as a potential challenge when working with an interpreter (2003:193). Furthermore, in some cases Sayid also tried to steer the interviews, as he would try to keep the interviewees on what he thought was the right track. An example of this was when we interviewed Yussef and tried to adopt a narrative approach. Yussef was a 40-year old doctor from Raqqa living in Istanbul with his wife and two children and working at different Syrian medical clinics, whenever there was work to be done. When Yussef was telling about his studies in Aleppo, Sayid interrupted and said that this was not relevant for our research, which countered the narrative approach. Furthermore, Sayid would often express his own points of view and experiences during interviews, which was in some ways disturbing, but, on the other hand, also led to very rich data and made him our key informant.

Through Sayid, we met Tariq, his wife Tammar, and their sons, who were about to return to Syria, and we became curious to understand how anyone could even consider returning to the war-torn country, when they had reached relative safety in Istanbul. Our meeting with Tariq's family was the first time we encountered someone, who had decided to return to Syria, but we soon came to discover that this tactic to escape, what we will describe as a state of protracted liminality, would be applied by other of our informants as well, including Sayid himself. Through Sayid, we also met another group of people, who were planning to pursue their livelihoods elsewhere than Istanbul, namely Ali, Abood, Khalid and Haitham. They were all artists and about to embark on a journey to cross the Aegean Sea to Greece with Berlin as their final destination. Meeting this group, as well as the family, we realized that the social environment, the Syrian refugees' lives were set in, could not be limited to covering Istanbul, but was a 'social environment of refugeeness'[4], which transgressed geographical borders, and that the way Syrians in Istanbul were dealing with the challenges, they faced related to re-establishing livelihoods thus had to be understood both inside and beyond the geographical space that Istanbul constituted. In many ways, especially the young men planning to go to Europe, reminded us of anthropologist Henrik Vigh's informants, who had also chosen a dangerous tactic in order to seek to improve their future, and we found his concept of 'social navigation' useful in order to shed light on their decision to cross the sea, as well as on the tactics of other of our informants.

Through the meeting with Tariq's family we also encountered other ways in which Syrians dealt with their situation. Tariq's 20 year old son Mohammed was part of a Syrian theatre group, which became our way into the Syrian activist community that frequented Aisha's café; another central location for our fieldwork. Mohammed's theatre group was practising in the basement of the café, and it was when we went to see them practice that we first met Aisha.

Aisha was a woman in her late thirties; a Syrian Palestinian, who had worked as a high school and university English teacher in a large Syrian city until the revolution began. The revolution had led her to follow a new way in life, as she was trained in a Hamas military training camp in Lebanon and became a sniper for the FSA. She became a famous character in her city and beyond. In Istanbul she had started a café, which became a spot for former and present activists to meet, organize activities and to talk about the revolution and about their current situation.

[4] For other uses of the term 'refugeeness', see Malkki 1995.

When we first came to the café, as the only non-Syrians in the room and the only non-Arabic speakers, we stood out. However, as our visits became more frequent and we got a chance to discuss our project with more people, we soon felt more accepted and welcome there and experienced that many of the guests were interested in talking to us, telling their stories and sharing their opinions about the situation in Syria. Thus, a number of our informants were people, we had met when visiting the café, both with and without Sayid. The café also became a sight for us to conduct participant observation. When we took part in the life in the café; drinking tea, following the news from Syria, listening to performances of Syrian folkloric songs, chatting about everyday matters and discussing important issues, our participation could be described as relatively active, as we were seeking "to *do* what other people [were] doing" (Spradley 1980:60). Through our participant observation at the café, we experienced how much time and energy many of our informants spent on issues related to Syria, which contributed to our analytical foci of liminality and of homesickness and nostalgia; matters that were also explicitly addressed by several informants during interviews and conversations.

Sayid had often mentioned a group of young men, who were renting beds in a collective living space in the outskirts of the city. When we met Mohammed's theatre group we realized that these were actually some of the guys, Sayid had been talking about previously, and we ended up visiting them. At this point, Mohammed and his brother, Hamudi, had also moved into the collective, because the rest of the family had returned to Syria. It was an old garage lit up by half-functioning fluorescent lamps. The air was extremely moist and there was mould on the walls. Up against the wall an old couch and one armchair was standing. This was the hangout place for the 20 young men and boys (the youngest was 15), who were living there, five people in bunk beds in each of the four "rooms" made up of thin chipboards. Visiting the collective gave us a first hand insight into the miserable conditions, under which many young, single Syrian men live in Istanbul. Most of the men from the collective were working as day labourers, often taking night shifts at vegetable markets, in order to get by. Furthermore, it was also here that we experienced how they used their leisure time, when they were watching videos on YouTube about recent attacks in Syria, discussing plans and dreams for the future and chain smoking. Simultaneously, they were paying constant attention to their smartphones, trying to stay in touch with family and friends still inside Syria and following the news from Syria through social media. We conducted a semi-structured group interview with some of the men from the collective, namely Saleh, a former fighter in the FSA now planning to start an

ice cream business; Karim, a 21-year old member of the theatre group, who had only just managed to finish high school before fleeing; Hussein, who was a 27-year old former informatics student, who had been forced to leave his studies due to the revolution, and was now renting the beds to the other young men and himself living in the collective, while spending much time involved in different forms of activism; and Abdullah, a 23-year old, who was often just described as the barber, because he would sometimes earn a little money making fancy haircuts and beard trimmings on people he knew.

The third track was introduced to us through Naja, who was running a language exchange café, called Tabadul, which many young Syrians, as well other nationalities, attended. A few weeks into our fieldwork, we decided to join Tabadul with a two-fold aim; to learn some basic Arabic and to become further acquainted with another group of Syrians in Istanbul, namely the resourceful, well-educated youth, and Tabadul thus became our third point of access. In the breaks between the sessions of practicing English, Turkish and Arabic, we had the chance to have casual conversations with the other participants, while doing participant observation, and thus conduct what Spradley terms informal ethnographic interviews, which provided us with important insights into the lives and experiences of this group of Syrians (1980:123). In this international setting, we were ordinary participants, and thus our participant observation in this situation resembled what Spradley describes as complete participation (ibid.:61). Thus, the unequal power relation that will usually be present in the semi-structured research interview, as the interviewer defines the situation, decides on the topic and is the one asking the questions, while the interviewee's role is to answer, was not present at Tabadul (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:51).

During the last weeks of our fieldwork, we finally managed to arrange meetings with representatives from different NGOs working with Syrians in Istanbul and the rest of Turkey. We decided to utilize these interviews as a way of gaining a further understanding of the legal framework surrounding Syrians in Turkey and the challenges related to its implementation, which we had encountered when talking to our informants, as well as of the general situation faced by Syrians in Istanbul. In total, we conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of seven different organizations, including some of the main organizations providing support for Syrian refugees (see appendix B).

Voluntary and non-voluntary positions in the field

The roles and positions of the ethnographer will always significantly influence the types of knowledge that can be accessed and obtained (Hasse 1995:54; Cohen 1984:221). During our fieldwork, we experienced deliberately taking as well as being ascribed different roles, which came to be both enabling and disabling for our fieldwork. In the following, we will present some examples of this.

> We were walking into an office in Fatih in order to meet with someone from a local Syrian NGO. Hussein from the collective, who is volunteering there, had arranged for us to attend one of their meetings to get an insight into the work they are doing. When we entered the meeting room, approximately ten people were sitting around the conference table in large office chairs, just waiting for us. It soon became clear that we were not only there to be observers of their meeting, but rather to be the center of it. Somehow, they had gotten the understanding that we came as representatives from our university in order to help vulnerable Syrian students with for example scholarships and that we were now there to discuss the selection procedure for the students to receive help (excerpt from fieldnotes, April 10th 2016).

The above excerpt from our field notes is an example of how our role in the field was several times misunderstood, when people believed that we were in a position to help them or others out of their difficult situations. A number of women at SPI, for instance, told us detailed stories about their children, who were injured from the war, in the belief that we could help them access medical care, and Sahar, Zeinah's mother and a retired gynaecologist, first thought that we came from the UN, when we came to visit them. We suppose that a lot of these misunderstandings were due to communication problems caused by the absence of a shared language with most of our informants, which led some to assume and hope that we, due to our position as white, privileged, Europeans, were representatives of some kind of establishment; governmental or nongovernmental that could provide assistance to them. In retrospect, it has thus become clear to us that some people might have agreed to participate in our study on false pretences, despite our attempts to always be clear about our purpose, which is indeed ethically problematic. However, when the misunderstandings had been sorted out, people were still happy to participate in our research.

Our position as white, privileged, Europeans was further underlined by Zeinah, when she told us: “Everyone wants to go back to their home. You are in Istanbul and I am sure you are very comfortable here, but you need to go back to your country. What about Syrians?”. Zeinah was thus underlining the fact that we could comfortably get on a plane and return to our homes, which was in striking opposition to her situation. For Zeinah, this seemed like a way for her to try to make us understand the incomprehensible experience of displacement that she was enduring. Sayid, on the hand, made it clear that, no matter how hard we tried, we would never be able to understand what the Syrians were living through, and that despite our attempts to help where possible, we would not be able to change the situation, which the Syrians faced: “It’s hard for people to understand. You can come and study Syrians in Istanbul and you can do a lot of beautiful things, you can do a lot of amazing, great, human things [...] but we are going [through] hell.” Thus, in some cases, our position as ‘the privileged’ might have led some of our informants to distance themselves from us, because they knew that we would not be able to fully comprehend their experiences, but in other cases it made our informants share as much of their stories as possible, in order for us to understand their situation.

As mentioned above, we deliberately took the position of volunteers at SPI. While in some ways constraining us, because we were responsible for caring for the children and thus had limited time to engage with the women, this position, nonetheless, provided us with access to a group of very vulnerable women, who would have been difficult to access otherwise. By becoming regular faces at SPI, trust, or ‘rapport’, was established between us and particularly a few of the women (Bernard 2011:277). Tabadul similarly became a place for rapport building. Here, the fact that we were Europeans did not make us stand out the same way as it did in many other settings, and thus it was natural for us just to be ‘part of the group’, because the group was already very diverse and international. Hence, Tabadul was a place where we were just ‘hanging out’, which, following Bernard, is an important way of creating an atmosphere of trust that provides the space for ordinary conversation to take place, and in which our presence did not disturb people’s ordinary behaviour (Bernard 2011:277).

Ethics - studying people’s suffering

> Research into others’ suffering can only be justified if alleviating that suffering is an explicit objective (Turton in Jacobsen & Landau 2003:185-186).

In line with David Turton’s words, a growing consensus that the obligation to ‘do no harm’ when studying other people, cannot be considered sufficient when conducting research into people’s suffering, has emerged (cf. Jacobsen & Landau 2003; Hugman et al. 2011; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014; Chatty 2014; MacKenzie et al. 2007). This has turned into what is known as ‘the dual imperative’, which is particularly prevalent within the field of refugee research. The dual imperative designates the need to produce research with sound academic content, as well as research that has relevance for policies and can be used to create improvements in the lives of the specific groups of refugees studied or for refugees in general (Jacobsen & Landau 2003:186, 201). The purpose of our research as such, namely to produce a sound anthropological thesis, only fulfilled the first part of the imperative, and therefore the second part was something that we constantly kept in mind throughout the fieldwork, as well as the writing process. Whether our research will actually influence policies related to Syrian refugees in Turkey is highly unlikely, but we do plan to use the knowledge gained from the fieldwork actively in order to raise awareness about the situation of Syrians in Turkey. Hence, we spent much time throughout the fieldwork discussing whether we could justify studying the suffering of Syrian refugees, when we could not be sure to fulfil the second part of the dual imperative by alleviating their suffering, or that of others.

Another important ethical issue that we took into consideration, both prior to and during our fieldwork, was dealing with people, who had undergone traumatic experiences. Many of our informants shared these experiences with us, and there was a risk of ripping up traumas. However, in order to avoid imposing discussions about these matters on our informants, we had made the deliberate choice not to ask questions about their losses etc. Therefore, when our informants shared their stories, it was on their own initiative and we were there to listen to them, but did not try to engage in anything resembling a therapeutic conversation, as we did not have the prerequisites to do so.

Processing a fieldwork

After six intense weeks in Istanbul, we returned to Copenhagen with our backpacks full of memories, stories, insights, emotions, computers full of recordings of interviews, and note books full of field notes, which all together formed the knowledge, we had gained about the lives of our informants. We had begun processing the data already while in the field, as we started transcribing interviews, discussing possible theoretical perspectives and incorporating new insights into our remaining interviews. Thus, we adopted what Karen O'Reilly describes as the iterative-inductive approach, in which the researcher moves between "theory and analysis, data and interpretation" (2009:105). With this approach the different procedures of reviewing and revising theory, analysing and writing down findings, cannot be seen as stages in a linear progression, but rather form overlapping parts of the on-going research process (ibid.).

Nonetheless, when we returned home, the backpacks were still heavy and thus needed unpacking. We continued transcribing hours of interviews and writing up and sharing field notes and notes from interviews with each other, and it turned into approximately 500 densely written pages, which we read through in order to gain a further overview and identify recurring themes. This was followed by a process of coding the data according to the identified themes, such as 'discrimination', 'dreams for the future' and 'instability', with the aim of later in the analytical process being able to identify specific statements. On this basis, we identified further possible theoretical perspectives, and we thus continued the iterative-inductive process of moving back and forth between theoretical perspectives and our empirical data.

Chapter 4

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Theorizing a field of precariousness

In this chapter, we will briefly introduce the theories and concepts that provide the main theoretical framework for the present thesis. The theories will be explained in depth when applied in the analysis.

Separation, liminality and aggregation

The concept of liminality, which will provide a theoretical starting point for this thesis, is coined by the anthropologist Victor Turner (1967), who draws upon the tri-partite model of ‘rites of passage’ developed by the ethnologist Arnold van Gennep (1960). Van Gennep describes the rite of passage as consisting of three distinct phases: Separation, liminality and aggregation (Barnard & Spencer 2002:491). According to van Gennep, the rites of passage are “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” (van Gennep in Turner 1967:4-5), and are not limited to only marking important times of life such as birth, puberty and death, but can accompany any types of significant change (Turner 1967:4-5).

The concept of liminality has been widely used by anthropologists and other scholars to describe the experiences of refugees, including Malkki, who argues that refugees can be seen as liminal in ‘the national order of things’ as they do not fit into existing categories based on nationness (1995:1-2). Anthropologist Shahram Khosravi uses the concept in a different manner, as he examines the border crossing of ‘illegal’ migrants as a performative ritual, where the borderland can be seen as a zone of liminality (2007:330). Barbara E. Harrell-Bond and Eftihia Voutira argue that “refugees are people who have undergone a violent 'rite' of separation and unless or until they are 'incorporated' as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in 'transition', or in a state of 'liminality'” (1992:7). We will similarly argue that our informants had experienced a violent rupture with their previous lives, marking the ‘rite of separation’, which led them to ‘a state of liminality’. However, as incorporation as citizens into the Turkish state was not an option for our informants, we will examine different ways of escaping the state of liminality.

Cecilia Menjívar's (2006) focus is also on the liminality of the legal status of refugees, as she uses the concept 'liminal legality' to describe the temporariness of the legal status held by most Salvadorans and Guatemalans in the USA. Similar to this, we will argue that the unstable legal status acquired through the TPR is contributing to placing our informants in a liminal position. Menjívar, furthermore, presents an important point related to Turner's original use of the concept of liminality, as she states that: "[...] although in Turner's view these transitory stages are empowering and are positive moments in social transformation, when they are extended indefinitely [...] they can breed uncertainty and lose their empowering potential" (Menjívar 2006:1007). The latter is in line with one of our main arguments, as we claim that our informants were situated in a state of protracted liminality, which fostered uncertainty. Furthermore, it must be noted that despite liminality often being used to describe the legal in-betweenness faced by refugees, "this 'betwixt and between' status may not only be legal and psychological, but social and economic as well" (Harrell-Bond & Voutira 1992:7). Thus, in our use of the concept liminality, we will also take the psychological, as well as social and economic dimensions into account.

Displaced livelihoods

In this thesis we will argue that re-establishing livelihoods is key in order to deal with the state of liminality, and have the possibility of reaching aggregation. The starting point of our exploration of their experiences of re-establishing livelihoods is therefore the concept 'displaced livelihoods', which refers to "the experience of forced migrants [refugees and internally displaced people] in pursuing livelihoods and the role of migration in livelihoods" (Jacobsen 2005:9-10). More specifically we will draw upon Karen Jacobsen's contribution to the theory of displaced livelihoods, in which she argues that forced migrants face different challenges related to the pursuit of livelihoods than other migrants[5] (Jacobsen 2014:100). According to Jacobsen, the first difference is that forced migrants have experienced loss related to their forced displacements, which places them in an unfortunate position, when attempting to re-establish livelihoods (2014:100). The second

[5] Until recently there has been a prevailing understanding in the social sciences that people, who migrate across borders occupy two distinct categories; either they are labour migrants associated with voluntary migration and economic motives and behaviour or they are refugees associated with forced migration, and dependency on relief assistance (Jacobsen 2005: vii). This distinction is also evident in the fact that migration studies and forced migration studies are two distinct research areas. There is, however, increasing recognition that the two areas are closely connected and in many aspects overlapping. Especially when studying 'economic livelihoods' the boundaries become unclear (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 5-6, 15).

difference is related to the denial of access to livelihoods assets, which she explains using the concept of social exclusion, showing how social exclusion mechanisms played out at different levels of society in the host country, present obstacles to the pursuit of livelihoods by forcibly displaced people (ibid.). The concept of social exclusion has traditionally been used to understand the failed relationship between the state and its citizens in a European context. However, the term has also in its early stages been used to describe the situation faced by migrants. The French social theorist René Lenoir, who popularized the term in the 1970s, presented migrants as an example of those who are typically socially excluded (Manijkian 2013:53-55). In recent years, it has become even more apparent how the theoretical framework can be applied to questions concerning potential and non-citizens, and it has thus been used to explain and investigate challenges faced by refugees and asylum claimants by for instance Lalai Manijkian (2013) and Sari Hanafi et al. (2012). Anthropologist Lisa Åkesson (2012) has also explored how descendants of Cape Verdeans in Sweden are experiencing exclusion from the Swedish society and from being ascribed a Swedish identity, due to racialized perceptions of identity. The exclusion did not originate from people that the Swedish-Cape Verdeans knew, but rather from anonymous encounters, such as the one between one of Åkesson's informants and a cashier in a bank, who refused being able to spell his name, because it was 'foreign' (2012:45-46). Åkesson's focus is thus on how racist perceptions in everyday encounters serve as an exclusion mechanism, which we will also address when viewing the discrimination of our informants on a daily basis as a social exclusion mechanism.

Jacobsen adopts a holistic understanding of livelihoods, which, as expounded in the introduction, entails focusing on both material and non-material aspects. More precisely, Jacobsen understands livelihoods as "the different capabilities, assets, and activities required to pursue a living" (Jacobsen 2014:101), which include natural and physical capital, including land and livestock, human capital, such as education, skills, life experience and health, social capital comprising networks and knowledge, as well as financial capital (Jacobsen 2005:10).

Bourdieu's theory of practice

In order to shed light on the situation our informants find themselves in and their ways of dealing with it, we will draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's extensive theoretical apparatus, focusing on his concepts of 'habitus', 'field,' 'capital', 'illusio' and the idea of 'the imminent forth-coming'. This

theoretical apparatus has been developed through Bourdieu's empirical studies, which addressed a wide range of aspects of social behaviour, including marital strategies, literature, academia, art, class, gender etc. and were conducted primarily among farmers in Béarn in South-Western France, and among the Kabyle people in Algeria (Järvinen 2007:345-346). Bourdieu's concepts are all part of his theory of practice and are thus closely interrelated.

Bourdieu's theoretical project was an attempt to put an end to the understanding of structure and agency as a dichotomy within the social sciences. The structure-agency debate is concerned with whether the individual is determined by social structures or if it acts according to free will, and thus it has mainly taken place between structuralists, with a rather objectivist view on human actions on the one side, and existentialists and rational choice theorists, concerned with subjectivism, on the other side (Järvinen 2007:362). Bourdieu sought to bridge this divide through the concept of habitus, where he argues that social structures are internalized in the agent in the form of lasting, but changeable dispositions, which makes the agent predisposed to act in a certain way. However the dispositions do not fully determine how the agent acts, as he/she still has a free will to find "creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu." (Wacquant in Navarro 2006:16; Agargaard 2007:266-267). Whether Bourdieu succeeded in his attempt is, however, highly disputed, and he has been criticized for attributing the social structures too much influence on the agent's behaviour in favour of the agent's free will. Following this, Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus has furthermore been criticized for being unable to explain social change, because the structures, through habitus, will be continuously reproduced. This rather static view of the social environment is likely based in the fact that the empirical contexts, which they spring from, were relatively stable and not subject to rapid social change (Agergaard 2007:267). Bourdieu has, however, in his later work, become more open towards the possibility of social change and viewed social environments as less stable (cf. Bourdieu 2000; Bourdieu & Wacquant 2002). However, Bourdieu's work is still recognized as having significantly influenced social theory, and his concepts are continuously widely applied by and incorporated into the work of other social theorists, including Henrik Vigh and Ghassan Hage, whom we will turn our attention towards in the following. Thus, despite the criticism, Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus can be used to shed light on the underlying motivations for human actions, but when applying his concepts, it is important to keep in mind the agentive possibilities held by the agent, which we will do by including theoretical perspectives from Magdalena Villarreal and Vigh.

Homebuilding

As we have found that the holistic understanding of livelihoods is not sufficient in order to understand what was at stake for our informants, when pursuing livelihoods in Istanbul, we find it useful to apply Hage's concept of 'homebuilding' in order to shed light on the existential dimensions of the process of re-establishing livelihoods. In relation to an empirical study on Lebanese migrants in Australia, Hage draws on a linguistic differentiation between the conceptions of 'home as family' and 'home as construction' presented by Émile Benviniste, and argues that home-building is not equivalent to house-building. Rather, Hage defines home-building as "the building of the feeling of being 'at home'" (1997:2), and argues that it is a process of assembling different affective building blocks, representing homely feelings, in order to provide what Hage identifies as four key feelings enabling the feeling of being at home, namely 'security', 'familiarity', 'community' and 'a sense of possibility or hope' (ibid.).

Social navigation

Based on extensive fieldwork among former youth soldiers in Guinea Bissau, Vigh, has developed the concept of 'social navigation' to make sense of the motivation behind his informants' mobilisation and engagement in conflict. In short, the concept offers an analytical optic to look at how people act and seek to steer their lives in a positive direction despite living in an unstable social environment. According to Vigh, the mobilisation of the youth soldiers was neither an act of patriotism nor a case of coercion, but rather an example of social navigation. The young men were navigating by taking the possibilities that arose in a situation of war, like entering a patrimonial network of a warlord in the hope of improving future life chances and social possibilities. However, Vigh argues that the mobilisation of young men is not only a move towards a possibly better future, but also an escape from a situation where they are stuck in the undesirable social category of youth, which he describes as characterized by 'social death' (2006:31-32, 36-37). We will similarly draw on the concept of social death in order to describe the situation faced by our informants in Istanbul, and we furthermore find the concept of social navigation useful in order to explore the decisions of some of our informants to either return to Syria or cross the Aegean Sea to Europe.

Although drawing upon Bourdieu's theory of practice, Vigh is among those who criticize it for not being able to explain rapid social change, because the implicit premise of the theory is that social environments are generally relatively stable (2009:247). Hence, Vigh has developed his version of a theory of practice with the purpose of explaining practice within fluid and ever-changing social environments, in which actors are moved by the social environment, while simultaneously shaping it through their own movements (ibid.:420, 433).

Chapter 5

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Protracted liminality

- Challenges in re-establishing livelihoods

In this chapter, we will first examine how the TPR in both theory and practice placed our informants in a state of protracted liminality, because it challenged their opportunities for re-establishing livelihoods in Istanbul. We will argue that the TPR produces liminal subjects, because the temporary protection beneficiaries are betwixt and between the statuses of refugee and citizen, which makes it difficult to reach aggregation, through obtaining citizenship or permanent residency in Turkey or elsewhere. Subsequently, we will examine how the gaps between policy and practice concerning the TPR, as well as the discrimination and harassment experienced by our informants, which will be understood through the lens of social exclusion, affected the attempts of partially reaching aggregation through the re-establishment of livelihoods. Secondly, we will examine how the feelings of security, familiarity, community, hope and opportunities, as well as strong nostalgic feelings for Syria affected the abilities to engage in what Hage describes as 'homebuilding', which we consider to be crucial for re-establishment of livelihoods. In the last part of this chapter, we will first explore how the 'open-ended waiting', which many of our informants arguably experienced, could lead to a sense of powerlessness. Finally, we will argue that our informants were unable to follow their expected paths of 'social becoming', which had been disrupted by war and displacement, leading to a threat of 'social death'. Overall, we will show how the challenges of re-establishing livelihoods for our informants were not only concerned with lack of access to material and non-material assets, as Jacobsen would argue, but that also existential aspects of their lives, manifested in efforts of homebuilding and social becoming, significantly affected their abilities to re-establish livelihoods.

Rupture with life as it was

All of our informants experienced an abrupt separation with their previous lives, when they suddenly had to flee their homes in Syria. Many fled Assad's barrel bombs and Russian airstrikes, some left because their names appeared on the lists of the Syrian military intelligence service, the Mukhabarat, and risked ending up among the many who "disappeared" in Assad's infamous

prisons. For many of the young men we talked to, it was the prospect of having to do military service, which became the conclusive reason for them to leave Syria, because like Abood, a 28-year old interior designer and installation artist, explained: “Either you kill, or you get killed. And we chose none of them". Yet others were forced to leave the country by Islamist groups, including Yussef who was threatened by a member of Daesh and told that he would get killed if he did not leave straight away, and Navdar, a Kurdish textile workshop owner from Northern Syria, who had been forced to leave by the Jabhat Fatah al-Sham.

Following Turner, the separation phase of a ritual marks the “symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions, or from both” (Turner 1969:359). The term ‘symbolic behaviour’ clearly underlines the fact that the phases of the tri-partite model are developed to describe ritual behaviour. However, despite the fact that the actions carried out by our informants when they fled their country is of a much more concrete nature, we still find that the three phases can be used to explain our informants’ experience of fleeing Syria and becoming refugees in Istanbul. Both in the rituals Turner studied and in the case of our informant’s flight, the separation marks a complete rupture with life as it had previously been lived.

Losing everything to the war

> This is the worst face of the war. We wanted freedom, but we lost everything (Jalloud).

All of our informants started their lives in Istanbul from a position of loss, including the loss of economic and non-economic assets, as well as personal loss. Most of our informants had lost their houses and other physical belongings, they had lost their jobs and been forced to terminate their education, and most had experienced losing family and friends to the war, like Jalloud, whose fiancé was killed in an airstrike at her university. Yussef described the scope of the loss of loved ones experienced by Syrians in the following way: “If you get close to any family in Syria, they will tell you about one in this family, who is dead or in the prison of Assad. At least one. Any family you meet”. Additionally, many of our informants were suffering from both mental and physical

hardship caused by the conflict and forced displacement, including Zarah, who could not sleep because she had “felt and seen the war and heard the bombs”.

Loss, as it was experienced by our informants, plays a central part in Jacobsen’s contribution to the theory of displaced livelihoods, in which she argues that forced migrants are faced with additional challenges related to re-establishing livelihoods after displacement, compared with other migrants (2014:100). According to Jacobsen "all forced migrants begin from a position of loss, including the loss of assets, family and community, and often emotional and physical health” (2014:100), which, as described above, was the case for our informants. Jacobsen, furthermore, draws upon the work of Michael Cernea and argues that “each type of loss has an impact on economic power, but also has psychological or cultural impact, leading to reduced social status” (ibid.:103). Throughout this chapter, we will address how the losses experienced by our informants affected their abilities and opportunities to pursue livelihoods.

In the following sections we will gradually expound on how the lives of our informants in Istanbul can be characterized as set in a state of protracted liminality, which followed the violent separation, they underwent and the losses, they endured when fleeing from Syria.

Betwixt and between citizen and refugee

> In Turkey, we live here not as refugees, but we live here as guests (Aisha).

Like Aisha, several of our informants expressed frustration over neither having the opportunity to obtain citizenship in Turkey, nor to become recognized as refugees enabling them to apply for resettlement to a third country through the UNHCR. Following Turner, we argue that they were ‘betwixt and between’ the statuses of ‘citizen’ and ‘refugee’, which resembles the liminal state of his ritual subjects.

According to Turner, the liminal phase constitutes the main part of the ritual and a period of time, which does not resemble neither the past, nor the coming state of the subject. Liminality is characterized by structural invisibility, which means that the subject is, if not physically, then

structurally invisible, as it cannot be defined within any existing categories, which creates a certain level of ambiguity for both the ritual subject and those surrounding it (Turner 1967:5-6). According to Turner, "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial", which can be understood as them not being completely outside of the normal order, but not part of it either (Turner 1969:359). An example of this, in Turner's work with rites of passage, is that a ritual subject is neither a boy nor a man, as long as he is in the liminal phase, but somewhere both between and outside of the categories (1967:6). In the same way, our informants can be seen as between statuses. They are not refugees, but they are not citizens either. Instead they have been assigned a status, which is outside of the existing categories, namely that of temporary protection beneficiary. This status can indeed be characterized as ambiguous, both for the Syrians themselves and for those surrounding them. The Turkish government welcomed the Syrians into their country, but as guests, who are supposed to leave again. As this has not occurred due to the prolonged conflict in Syria, the treatment of the Syrians can be seen as ambiguous, which we will elaborate on in the following sections. For the Syrians, the TPR, at least in theory, provides them with basic rights and protection, but at the same time keeps them stuck in a position, from which they can hardly progress with their lives. This leads us to another central aspect of liminality, namely that it is a step towards aggregation. Hence, liminality is supposed to make up a delimited period of time. Aggregation is understood as the phase where the passage is consummated and the subject steps out of the liminal phase and re-enters into a relatively stable state, where it is expected to behave in accordance with customary law, and is provided with rights and obligations suited for its new social status (Turner 1969:359). In the case of our informants, a crucial step towards aggregation would be to either obtain a permanent status, such as citizenship, in Turkey, being resettled in a third or to return to a safe Syria, and thus escape the uncertainty that is entailed in the liminal state, they are currently stuck in. However, none of the three steps towards aggregation were possible for our informants in a foreseeable future. The latter due to the situation in Syria described in chapter 2, and the first two due to the TPR, which does not offer these opportunities. Another way many Syrians have attempted to reach aggregation on the long term has been by crossing the sea to Europe and applying for asylum there. However, the EU-Turkey deal has made it significantly more difficult for Syrians in Turkey to travel to Europe illegally. Hence, our informants' opportunities for aggregation in the near future were highly limited, meaning that their liminal phases would most likely last for extended and undetermined periods of time, which is in contrast to the delimited

liminal phase of Turner's rituals. Based on this we argue that our informants were experiencing a 'protracted liminality'.

The aggregation we have addressed in this section is primarily concerned with legal status. However, other issues were important in order for our informants to move out of the protracted liminality and towards aggregation, including the re-establishment of livelihoods, which we, in the following section, will argue was impeded by social exclusion.

Excluded from livelihoods

As expounded above, the TPR would, even if fully implemented, leave Syrians in a state of liminality. Nonetheless, as we will argue in this section, our informants did attempt to re-establish their livelihoods, but these attempts were seriously impeded by the fact that there is a significant gap between what the TPR offers on paper and what Syrians can actually benefit from in practice. We will address the consequences of this gap by applying Jacobsen's use of the concept of social exclusion, which she argues constitutes the second distinct issue that adds additional difficulties to forced migrants' attempts to re-establish livelihoods. In Jacobsen's sense the social exclusion mechanisms are related to "the sociopolitical, legal, and policy factors in the host country" (2014:100), which in different ways can seriously hinder refugees' opportunities for regaining their lost livelihoods assets (ibid.:100, 104-105). In the following we will show how this was also the case for our informants.

Struggling to obtain legal status

> I cannot get kimlik in Istanbul if I don't pay. The problem is the municipality. They send you to different municipalities and say you can get it there, but when you get there, you need money to get it. The problem is always the money. No money, no kimlik, no school, no nothing (Tariq).

‘Kimlik’ is the everyday term for the ‘Temporary Protection Identification Card’, which Syrians, according to the TPR, are supposed to get upon registration. The kimlik gives access to temporary protection status and the accompanying rights presented in chapter 2 (Durukan 2015:16). As the above quote shows it is, however, far from unproblematic to obtain a kimlik. In fact, when talking about the challenges of living as a Syrian in Istanbul, many of our informants highlighted the difficulties in obtaining a kimlik, and several of them mentioned it as one of the main reasons for not wanting to stay in Turkey.

Through conversations with our informants we realized that the process of obtaining a kimlik was characterized by arbitrariness, corruption and long waiting time. Anas, who was a former law student from Aleppo and whom we had met at Tabadul, expressed his frustration over the long waiting time, as he told us: “It is very difficult to get kimlik. If you just show up in a police station, the police will typically tell you to come back in 4-5 months and get your kimlik”. Furthermore, Sayid explained how Syrians trying to obtain their kimlik were often forced to visit several different police stations, never knowing whether they would be open or not, or if they would issue kimliks at all.

Lack of a kimlik can make life as a Syrian in Turkey very difficult. Therefore, having to wait for 4-5 months and still not be sure to obtain the kimlik is, according to Ezgi from ASAM, extremely challenging. This is especially the case for those with school-aged children and/or urgent medical needs. Ezgi furthermore told how local police officers take advantage of this by asking for bribes of around 2-400 Turkish Lira (TL) (€60-120), in order to issue the kimlik at once. Several of our informants had experienced this and told us that it was a general issue, which was also what Tariq referred to in the above quote, when he said ‘no money, no kimlik’. Neither Tariq, nor his wife and their four sons had a kimlik, because “I don’t have money to give under table to get the kimlik”, as Tariq explained. This meant, inter alia, that the children could not access the public Turkish education system.

According to Jacobsen, documents proving legal status, such as kimlik, are crucial for refugees in order to secure their general safety, as it, among others, protects them from deportation, arbitrary arrest and extortion, when being stopped by the police. The vulnerability caused by lack of

documentation can, according to Jacobsen, be viewed as a social exclusion mechanism as it hinders refugees' opportunities to pursue livelihoods (Jacobsen 2014:106).

The connection between having a kimlik proving legal status and feeling secure was also present among our informants, particularly Saleh, Karim, Hussein and Abdullah from the collective, who expressed that having a kimlik provided them with at least a limited sense of security from arbitrary arrests and refoulement. Sayid also explained to us, how he, with no kimlik, was subject to arbitrary treatment by the police, who would sometimes ask him for bribes in order not to arrest him. He several times told us that "kimlik is for the police". Along similar lines, Yildiz and Uzgören argue, based on their study on Syrian refugees in Izmir, that the unregistered are the most vulnerable, because "they do not exist in society in legal terms" (2016:202). Hence, while temporary protection beneficiaries, i.e. those Syrians who do have kimlik, at least have some kind of status, those who have not been able to obtain kimlik simply do not have any official status in society. Like Turner's ritual subjects, they have had their former statuses wiped away, however, it has yet to be replaced by a new one.

The fact that it is problematic to obtain kimlik shows a significant lack of implementation of the TPR, which provides the main hindrance for Syrians to access the services they are entitled to. However, as we will show in the following, not only lack of kimlik played a central role in excluding our informants from pursuing livelihoods, as they faced a wide array of social exclusion mechanisms.

Legal labourer or exploited employee

> This is what all Syrians want - a work permit. I know that I am going to stay for a long time. I am scared to be sick. I know if I do, I'm completely in danger. No work permission, no health, nothing. I know that. I'm scared (Abdallah).

Until January 2016 temporary protection beneficiaries were completely cut off from gaining access to legal work in Turkey, making them easy targets of exploitation by employers, as they were working with no security, minimum wage, sick payment etc. (Durukan 2015:134). We found that the inaccessibility of work permits for our informants was key in shaping their experience of uncertainty and instability, as Abdallah explained in the above quote. Abdallah was a 43-year old father of six, who was working as a tailor in a textile manufacturing workshop 12 hours a day, in order to support his family, but was struggling with a deteriorating health. For our informants, having a work permit was not so much of a necessity in order to get a job, as they could get jobs in the large informal sector, where the demand for cheap labour is high. What seemed to be more important for them was that having a work permit would protect them from the exploitation that far too many of them were subjected to. An example of this was Sami, a 26-year old man from Deir ez-Zur in Eastern Syria, who told us that "He [the employer] exploited me like an animal and afterwards he didn't give me any liras". Sami referred to his first experience with the Turkish labour market, where he had worked for a Turkish man, but never got paid. Later on, he got a job at an elevator company, but was paid as little as 500 TL (€150) per month. He was only able to pay his rent and buy food because he had a cousin in Saudi Arabia, who supported him financially. Sami's story is unfortunately not unique among Syrians in Istanbul, as many of our other informants described how they were forced to work 12-14 hours a day and paid only a fraction of what Turkish workers was paid. The stories of people who, like Sami, had worked and were afterwards refused their salary were plentiful as well. In many cases, children also had to perform hard physical labour, like Abdallah's daughters, who had previously been working in a clothes-manufacturing workshop, and Tariq's 14-year old son, who was working in a similar workshop.

The fact that our informants accepted these working conditions was a matter of desperation and lack of other choices. Istanbul is a very expensive city to live in, and competition for unskilled labour is high, forcing wages downwards and making it increasingly difficult for Syrians to make ends meet. Thus, they are forced to accept the meagre working conditions if they want to keep their jobs. Following Sarah Bidinger this is the case among the general Syrian population in Turkey:

> It seems extraordinarily likely that the rise in illegal labor in Turkey is tied to the length of the conflict in Syria [...] and the rising desperation of Syrians, who have exhausted their savings, [and] are increasingly unable to meet their

> families' basic needs [...] This raises humanitarian issues with regards to [...] exploitation of workers who are willing to work below the minimum wage (Bidinger 2015:235).

Hence, while lack of work permits did not exclude our informants from working as such, it did make it challenging to meet 'basic needs' in a city, which many of our informants multiple times described as "very expensive", because they, when working illegally were underpaid and risked not getting paid at all. In this way, work permits functioned, like Jacobsen argues, as a social exclusion mechanism challenging refugees' opportunities for pursuing livelihoods (2014:106).

The 'Regulation on Work Permits of Refugees Under Temporary Protection' of January 15th 2016 finally granted temporary protection beneficiaries access to legal employment. It states that it is the responsibility of the employer to apply for the work permits (Turkish Labor Law 2016; İçduygu 2015:9). Many employers are, however, hesitant towards providing their Syrian employees with work permits, as this will require them to pay the minimum wage of 1300 TL (approximately €400) per month and health insurance (Kingsley 2016).

It appeared both from talking to our informants and from media coverage that the regulation on work permits is far from implemented. According to the Turkish Labor and Social Security Ministry, by mid May 2016, 3,800 Syrians under temporary protection had received work permits, accounting for only 0.014 per cent of the registered Syrians in Turkey (Daily Sabah 2016). Furthermore, Jacobsen mentions that: "Many refugees lack awareness of their rights, of what a work permit is and how to obtain it" (2014:105), which appeared to be the case among our informants. None of them were currently holding work permits, and no one seemed to have even heard about the new regulation officially granting them the right to legal employment.

Work permits are, as Abdallah underlined in the initial quote, an essential tool in order to create better conditions, security and stability for Syrians working in Turkey. However, as we have argued in the current section, it is highly unlikely that the majority of Syrians in low-paid and unskilled jobs will ever be able to obtain a work permit. This means that they will continue to be excluded from the legal job market and subject to further exploitation from employers.

Delayed futures

Many of our informants had experienced that they themselves or their children were in the middle of an education, when they were forced to flee Syria. Hence, they had experienced an abrupt halt in their education and wished to presume it in Turkey, without losing more years than they already had. According to the TPR, individuals who hold a kimlik have access to free primary, secondary and higher education as well as to Turkish language courses (RRT 2016:2).

As of May 2016, only 323,592 out of 809,000 estimated school-age children registered under the TPR were enrolled in school, equivalent to an enrolment rate of 40% (3RP 2016:42). As these numbers do not include those who are not registered, the enrolment rate is presumably significantly lower. Based on our informants' experiences we detect a number of social exclusion mechanisms affecting children's opportunities to attend school, which all underline the fact that the official entitlement to education under the TPR can be difficult to benefit from in practice.

From our informants we learned that especially among the older children language was a major hindrance for their enrolment in public schools. Zeinah's 14 year old daughter was, for instance, in a private Syrian school, a so-called 'temporary education centre', where the language of instruction is Arabic, because her Turkish language skills were still not good enough for her to attend public school, where the sole language of instruction is Turkish. Her little sister, on the other hand, had been directly enrolled in public school. The case for Maya's children of 10 and 12 years was similar, as they were attending classes in a private Syrian school, but trying to learn Turkish to be ready to attend public school from the beginning of the next term.

As already mentioned, the alternative to Turkish public schools is the private Syrian schools. However, a number of challenges are also present when it comes to securing children's education here. First of all, these schools generally charge tuition fees, which exclude many; including Tariq and Tammar, from enrolling their children because they cannot not afford it. Secondly, several of our informants told us that the quality in the private Syrian schools was generally low. Finally, the legal validity of diplomas and certificates issued by the private Syrian schools is uncertain, which can pose challenges for the children in the future if they want to continue their education (Refugee Rights Turkey 2016:3-4; Durukan 2015:132-133).

Furthermore, some of our informants' children did not have the opportunity to enrol in either Turkish public or Syrian private schools, because they had to work instead, in order to help pay the rent and food. This was for example the case in Tariq's family, and thus in their case, many different barriers affected the children's ability to attend school, as they were both excluded due to lack of kimlik, because Tariq and Tammar were unable to afford private Syrian schools, and because they needed to work instead of attending school.

It was not only on the level of basic education that getting access was considered difficult by our informants. A number of challenges were also mentioned related to higher education, where particularly language and lack of access to scholarships functioned as social exclusion mechanisms. Hussein, for instance, told us that he would love to resume his studies at a university in Istanbul, but he did not speak Turkish, and he could not afford to pay the tuition fees at the private Syrian university in Istanbul. Mohammed also dreamt about going to university, and he had applied for scholarships several times to cover the costs, but without any luck. Many of our informants told us that it was impossible to get scholarships as Syrians. Jalloud explained his experiences like this: "When I apply to scholarships, I always get rejected. I don't know if it's because I'm Syrian, is it not for you? And I'm a straight A student. [...] I don't know, is it a racist thing, because we're a lot, is it about this? But it's really difficult to get scholarships here".

Our informants several times told us how they themselves or their children had 'lost' a number of years to the war, particularly when talking about education. Among our informants, education was articulated as a central part of their expected life trajectories. Riham, a mother of three young women, whom we met at SPI, for instance, explained to us that the worst part of living in exile in Turkey was that her daughters were unable to finish their educations and "get started with their lives". When she was their age, she had graduated and started her life without delays, and she wished the same for her daughters. Thus, being able to continue or start an education in Turkey was, by many of our informants, considered an important step in order to pursue their livelihoods and follow their expected trajectories of life.

In the above, we have focused on the structural exclusion of Syrians from the Turkish education system and labour market. In the following, we will look further into how our informants experienced exclusion through discrimination and harassment on a more interpersonal level.

‘Yabancı’ - being treated differently

> When you are Syrian, for example, if you go to the market and you want to buy this mobile and the seller doesn’t know the price, he calls the owner of the store and he tells they are ‘yabancı’ – they are Arab. The first word. They are ‘yabancı’. There is a different price for ‘yabancı’ and Turkish people [...] I know the meaning of ‘yabancı’. It’s about another nationality. This is a very big problem. Everything has another price, another treatment, another situation for other people (Zeinah).

The use of the term ‘yabancı’, which means ‘foreigner’, ‘stranger’, ‘alien’, ‘outsider’ or ‘unknown’, very well captures the everyday discrimination against Syrians in Istanbul, where there seems to be two ‘laws’, as Zeinah explained it; one for Turkish people and one for ‘yabancıs’, particularly Syrians. While most of our informants had both good and bad experiences with the Turkish host population, almost all of them had experienced being treated differently because of being Syrian; “the Turks make Syrians feel different”, as Nasser expressed.

Several of our informants had experienced xenophobic attitudes from Turkish people, and according to some it had gotten worse in recent years. Many told us that the first Syrians arriving in Turkey were well received, but that around 2014, mainly due to the emergence of Daesh, the Turkish population became more suspicious, worrying that Syrians were terrorists. Sayid explained it like this: “After 2014-15 the Turkish people start to hate the Syrians a lot. They liked them a lot in the beginning and now they hate them”. This is in line with Zeinah’ experience: “The Turkish people recently hate Syrians. There is some aggressiveness towards the Syrians because some Syrians have a bad reputation and this is expanded to include all the Syrians [...] They are afraid of strangers, they are very afraid of strangers”. Morhaf, a 32-year old man, who worked part-time at a real estate company, which belonged to Yussef’s Syrian friend Yaffar, said something similar, but explained the increasing xenophobic attitudes with the high number of Syrians currently in Turkey: “Three years ago, the Turkish helped us, but now too many Syrians and they don’t like”. The negative perception of Syrian refugees is also reflected in Yildiz and Uzgören’s study, where they found that half of their Turkish informants currently perceived the Syrians as a security threat,

whereas the other half expressed that the Syrians would become a security threat in the future, if the conditions, under which the majority was living, were not improved (Yildiz & Uzgören 2016:206).

Some of our informants also experienced both physical and verbal harassment. Sayid was for instance violently kicked out of his first apartment, when "some racists broke into my room and kicked me out because I was Syrian". Mustafa, experienced some young boys throwing stones on Syrian people, while Zeinah experienced having eggs thrown on the windows of her basement apartment. Furthermore, Zeinah's daughter Zara and Abdallah's son Erdham, who both attended Turkish schools, had experienced being beaten and bullied, because they were Syrian. This resulted in Abdallah and his wife Nabila putting their eldest children in a private Syrian school where there were fewer problems with discrimination and racism, which provides an example of how discrimination could serve as a social exclusion mechanism, as it kept the children from attending Turkish schools.

Furthermore, according to Jacobsen, xenophobic behaviour towards refugees, in the form of discrimination and harassment, constitutes essential social exclusion mechanisms, as she argues that this can lead to increased livelihoods transaction costs (2014:108). As the examples from our informants in the past sections show, this was also the case for them, both related to being forced to pay bribes in order to obtain kimlik, having to pay higher prices for daily commodities, and having to pay for private Syrian schools, in order to avoid that one's children are either physically or verbally harassed. The higher transactions costs due to discrimination were, furthermore, particularly visible when it came to housing. Reen from Support to Life (STL) summed up the challenges faced by Syrians related to this:

> Many people come to STL with the problem that when they rent a house, they don't get a rent contract, and because of that they can be kicked out whenever the landlord wants, and he can also increase the rent, and they cannot say anything because there is no contract.

From conversations with our informants as well as from the interview with Reen, it became clear that landlords in general take advantage of the Syrians' precarious situation. They require much higher rents and deposits from Syrians compared to Turkish people and they often increase the

rent every year, like Zeinah explained: “The house owner, maybe next year he asks for 1050 TL. There is no law preventing him to do that. You don’t have a court where you can go and tell them”. As both Zeinah and Reen addressed, Syrians live without leases, which means there is no legal framework protecting them from exploitation by landlords. This also created a constant fear among many of our informants of getting kicked out of their apartments. For Zarah, whom we met at SPI where she attended the craft collective, the fear became reality, when their landlord suddenly asked her and her husband to leave their apartment because his son wanted to move in. Aisha also stressed the insecurity in housing: “It is temporary, I don’t feel confident about him [the landlord]”. Furthermore, some of Hesham’s friends experienced not being able to rent an apartment because they were Syrian and the same happened to Hila, who explained it like this: ”They don’t want foreigners, they said, but I think they meant Syrians. [...] Not all people are doing this. Some of them. Because, you know […] They are afraid. People are afraid of aliens”. Thus, there were, among our informants, a general sense of precariousness and instability caused by their uncertain housing arrangements and direct discrimination. Being forced to sleep in the streets posed an actual risk for many Syrians in Istanbul, and was what our informants genuinely feared.

In the above sections, we have shown how social exclusion mechanisms constrained our informants’ access to legal documentation, education, housing, as well as legal and non-exploitative employment. This lack of access to important livelihood assets were highly disabling for our informants to re-establish their livelihoods in Jacobsen’s holistic understanding, and it thus obstructed our informants’ opportunities to escape the protracted liminality this way. However, when talking with our informants it became clear that in the process of re-establishing livelihoods, the above mentioned material and non-material assets were not sufficient to explore, in order to understand what enabled and disabled this process. We found that more existential dimensions had to be taken into account, which we will address in the following sections, firstly by drawing on Hage’s concept of homebuilding.

Feelings of home

I cannot build home (Morhaf).

Building a home can be understood in many different ways; focus can be on the physical structures that make up the home, or it can, as Hage argues, be concerned with assembling affective building blocks that together constitute "the feeling of being at home", which is enabled by four key feelings, namely 'security', 'familiarity', 'community' and 'a sense of possibility or hope' (1997:2).

The conditions, under which our informants were living and working, and the instability it entailed, arguably challenged their abilities to satisfy their basic needs, understood as shelter and food, leading to a sense of insecurity. Following Hage, feeling secure, however, not only requires "the satisfaction of basic needs", but also "the absence of harmful threatening otherness" (1997:2). Our informants experiences of harassment and discrimination can be seen as having constituted an environment of 'harmful threatening otherness', which further added to the sense of insecurity. Moreover, we argue that the underlying fear of arbitrary arrest and detainment, experienced by many of our informants, reinforced the feeling of insecurity.

Furthermore, the overall state of refugeeness, which our informants were currently in, was characterized by unfamiliarity, which Sayid explained like this: "we are not learning to be in this situation". Thus, being a refugee was not something, which the previous lives of our informants had prepared them for. Before having to flee they had hopes and dreams for their future, which corresponded to the 'normal' lives they were living in Syria, but after their flight these expectations did not correspond to their surrounding reality anymore. Living as refugees in Istanbul, Mohammed, Karim and Hussein for example had to do hard manual labour instead of going to university, and Zeinah could not use her skills as an engineer, because she could not get a job, both due to her missing Turkish language skills, the inability to obtain a work permit, and the lack of recognition of the qualifications held by Syrians. Following Hage, these people could be seen as being in a setting that was highly unfamiliar to them, suddenly facing completely different requirements and opportunities compared to what they had prior to their displacement.

Hage explains familiarity using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which can be understood as "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions" (1977: 82), through which agents perceive and appreciate subsequent experiences and act in the world (Bourdieu 1977:78; Järvinen 2007:353). Habitus is partly a 'product of history', which is socially constituted and in which past experiences

are integrated, and partly constituting future practice, and thus "plays its part in determining the things to be done, or not to be done" (Bourdieu 2000:148, Bourdieu & Wacquant 2002:106). Thus, a person's habitus can change over time, but the earlier experiences of a person weigh heavier than later ones, and the change will therefore be slow and gradual (Järvinen 2007:353). The dispositions that form habitus have been inculcated by the objective conditions, and thus the agent's subjective expectations and aspirations, which are formed by these dispositions, are adjusted to the objective conditions. Therefore, the subjective expectations are "compatible with those objective requirements" (Bourdieu 1977:77). Thus, the agent will not strive for what does not strive for him/her, but instead for being in "an environment in which one feels 'at home'", and in which the agent is able to fulfil its desires (Bourdieu 2000:150; Järvinen 2007:353). Hence, a harmony between subjective expectations and the objective probabilities will arise from the agent's attempt to seek out environments or fields adjusted to its expectations.

Hage's argument is that a habitus well-fitted to the social environment will lead to a stronger sense of familiarity (Hage 1997:3). Bourdieu elaborates on this point, as he draws upon German philosopher Hegel and argues that "'being at home' arises from the quasi-perfect coincidence between habitus and habitat [...] or between expectations and the objective chances of realizing them" (Bourdieu 2000:147). Hence, our informants were arguably currently unable to fulfil the expectations they had had to their lives prior to their displacement, because the objective probabilities did not allow it. Thus, their habituses were not adjusted to the new situation, they were now in, because habitus can, as mentioned, only change very gradually.

The third key feeling of homebuilding is the feeling of community, which involves both recognizing the people one is surrounded by as 'one's own' and feeling recognized by them (Hage 1997:3). Many of our informants expressed a lack of both aspects of this feeling; they neither recognized Turkish people as 'their own', as they repeatedly pointed out how significantly different from themselves the Turkish were, nor did they feel recognized by the Turkish host community, illustrated by the extensive discrimination and harassment depicted above. Though, while not experiencing a feeling of community with Turkish people, many felt a strong sense of community with other Syrians. Hage designates shared values, morality and language as key in order to experience a sense of community, and during our fieldwork, we experienced how the Syrians formed tight communities, where people would gather for different social events, where Arabic was

spoken as the sole language and where everyone shared the same reality of having been displaced from their country and now living as refugees. We, furthermore, on several occasions, experienced how the Syrians would help and support each other with anything from jobs to medical care, and thus they provided each other with a feeling of having someone to rely on. Following Hage, this is important, because a homely space is where "one knows that at least some people can be morally relied on for help" (1997:3).

Finally, in order to build the feeling of being at home, one must begin from a sense of possibility or hope, Hage argues. A homely space must be a space in which the individual is able to perceive opportunities to pursue a 'better life', which Hage defines as "the opportunity to develop certain capacities and skills, the opportunity of personal growth and more generally, the availability of opportunities for 'advancement' whether as upward social mobility, emotional growth, or in the form of accumulation of symbolic or monetary capital." (1997:3). Moreover, another central point related to this notion of possibilities is that, according to Hage, "homely structures are more an aspiration, an ideal goal guiding practices of home-building, than an existing reality" and thus, he argues, "what propels people into home building is precisely the recognition of a future possibility of more security, familiarity, etc." (ibid.:4). Hence, what is most important in order to enable individuals to homebuild is not whether the first three key feelings are fully present, but whether one believes that they will be able to emerge. Our informants did not seem to believe that they would be able to pursue better lives in Turkey, and they did not see a future for themselves in Istanbul, due to the lack of access to a stable legal status, education, rights, legal work and stability, as elaborated earlier. With limited possibilities to continue their studies, especially those of our informants, who were young, did not have the opportunity to 'develop certain capacities and skills' through education and thus the future they had dreamt of. Furthermore, the limited possibilities of getting a job within one's professional field, which Sayid and Zeinah were examples of, also made it difficult to 'advance' and move 'upwards' in the system, socially and emotionally, as well as financially. Finally, while the social exclusion mechanisms led to a broad sense of insecurity among our informants, they also talked about how the Turkish host population was becoming less and less welcoming towards them. Thus, it appeared that our informants did not believe that the other key feelings of familiarity, community and security would be able to grow in Istanbul under the current circumstances.

As we have shown in this section, the social exclusion that our informants were faced with in Istanbul in a range of different ways, did not only affect their ability to establish livelihoods, but also to homebuild, which we argue is crucial in order to re-establish livelihoods. In the following, we will address further existential dimensions that made it difficult for our informants to build a sense of home, relating to the feeling of being physically present in Istanbul, while emotionally and mentally being present in Syria, which we encountered among several of our informants in various ways. This feeling was related to a sense of deep homesickness, which, we argue, became debilitating, as it contributed to making it more difficult for our informants to re-establish their livelihoods in Istanbul.

Stuck in the middle

> I feel all the time I'm stuck in the same place. This small room without a window, very closed, very... Nothing [...] The only way is to forget and go far. Or go back inside Syria and fight with them. Not fighting to kill people, just fighting with the rebels, just to get the energy and get back your heart. I think going far is better. Meaning be far away from Syrians. In Germany, you're gonna feel the same way if you are always with Syrians. Any country is the same. Going far, not just geographically. Going far. Finish [...] Cut it. Completely cut it [...] Just sitting in the middle like this, it is very hard (Sayid).

In the quote, Sayid claims that Syrians will continue to be stuck in-between, or betwixt and between in an emotional sense, as long as they are mainly surrounding themselves with other Syrians, which was exactly what the majority of our informants did. Most of what our informants undertook on a daily basis was somehow related to Syria, making it difficult to cut the ties and start a new life in Turkey, as Sayid suggests above. In our experience from doing participant observation in different parts of the large Syrian community in Istanbul, everything revolved around Syria. They sang Syrian folkloric songs, played Syrian music, drank Syrian tea, ate Syrian food and the main topic of conversation was always Syria; the revolution, the war, the humanitarian situation, friends and family still inside, news etc. Hence, we argue that being engaged in the different Syrian communities, particularly activist ones, such as Aisha's café, kept some of our informants, like

Sayid explained, ‘in the middle’ - between Syria and Turkey. Another contributing factor to the feeling of not being fully present in Istanbul was, according to Ibrahim, a 26-year old real estate agent, whom we met at Tabadul, that many Syrians had not yet decided whether they wanted to stay in Istanbul or go to Europe. Ibrahim argued that the only way to escape what he described as “a limbo that could last for years” was to make the choice about either staying or leaving. Moreover, all of our informants had family and friends who were still in Syria, and thus they were constantly on Facebook, as well as following the news in order to keep track of what was going on and making sure their beloved ones were okay. Taking the situation in Syria into account, this was practically a full time job. Hence, although our informants were physically present in Istanbul, virtually and emotionally many of them were still in Syria.

Similarly, Zeinah and Sahar told us that they were “dreaming about Syria” - about their family and house, about the lush fruit garden and the veranda that they were constantly missing now that they were living in the dark and moist basement apartment. When Zeinah wanted to show us a picture of their family home, Sahar did not want to look at the picture and clearly became emotional, saying: “I’m sick when I see my house“. Sahar expressed a deep sense of homesickness, which we encountered among many of our informants, including Sayid, who told about his longing for home, and said: “There is a big miss. Named home. Named heart. Anything you do, it’s without taste”. When drinking tea one late evening at Aisha’s café after having seen the theatre group perform, Yussef also talked about his homeland and his big wish to return soon. He got very emotional talking about it and said: “My eyes - water”.

All of the above examples can arguably be seen as expressions of nostalgia, which, according to Hage, is another important aspect of homebuilding (1997:5). Following Bourdieu, nostalgia is a product of a discrepancy between subjective expectations and objective probabilities, as the subject will long for the future that was supposed to come, but has been disrupted, or as Bourdieu explains, drawing upon the French philosopher and mathematician Pascal, “we recall the past, to stop its too rapid flight” (Pascal in Bourdieu 2000:209; Bourdieu 2000:209). Hage explains how nostalgic feelings “guide home-building in the present because one seeks to foster the kind of homely feeling one knows” (1997:5)*,* and thus nostalgia can have a positive form. We suggest that this was partly the case among our informants, because partaking in the Syrian communities fostered, as explained above, a feeling of community and familiarity, which could contribute to building a sense of being

at home in Istanbul. On the other hand, nostalgia can also turn into what Hage calls 'debilitating homesickness' if the individual is unable to build the feeling of being at home, i.e. when the four key feelings are not experienced by the individual (ibid.). We found this to be the case particularly among those of our informants, who were not actively involved in a Syrian community. Both Zeinah and Tariq's families were in a situation, where they had very limited social relations in Istanbul, and expressed that they were left on their own and without any supportive community. Hence, they neither experienced a feeling of community and familiarity in the Turkish, nor in the Syrian social environment. In this situation, the nostalgic feelings were arguably allowed to fill the emotional and social empty space that displacement had created. Hence, the debilitating homesickness they experienced, due to the unavailability of the four key feelings, further limited their opportunities for homebuilding in Istanbul.

Similarly, Sayid on several occasions, including in the initial quote of this section, talked about how constantly being engaged with matters concerning the Syrian situation affects the individual. One day, when we were drinking tea with him and Yussef in Aisha's café, discussing the situation in Syria as always, he expressed it like this: "You can talk five days about Syria, not finished. Talking five days and becoming crazy. So I need to shut my mouth. But if I shut my mouth, I have to forget Syria. And this is a problem also. I become a sick person. And alone also". Even though Sayid in the initial quote suggested that the only way to break out of the liminality was to cut the ties to Syria and Syrians completely, in this quote he discarded this solution, as he knew that cutting the ties was not a viable option, because it would leave him 'sick' and 'alone'. Thus, in Sayid's case, the nostalgic feelings for Syria arguably made it impossible for him to do what he found necessary, in order to escape liminality in Istanbul or elsewhere. Hence, for Sayid, as well as for Tariq and Zeinah's families, the nostalgic feelings arguably led to debilitating homesickness, which added to their inability to re-establish livelihoods in Istanbul. Homesickness can therefore be seen as a contributing factor to their eventual decisions about returning to Syria. Sayid expressed that the feeling of being at home was so important for him that he was willing to risk his life to regain it: "Maybe I'm going to die fast, but at least you feel it [the beating of your heart] for two or four or five or six or one year". In chapter 6, we will introduce the concept of 'social navigation' in order to shed light on some of our informants' willingness to risk their physical life in order to save their social life.

’Waiting like a refugee’

Among our informants there were some, who were not only stuck between Syria and Turkey, but also stuck between Turkey and a third country, as they were waiting to be able to legally move to either a European country or Canada. Nour, a young sociology student, who was a friend of Zeinah and Sahar, had recently married a Syrian man, now living in Sweden and was currently waiting for family reunification. When we met her, she had been waiting for four months, and it was uncertain how long she would have to continue waiting before she would be able to join her husband and start a new life in Sweden. Following anthropologist Kathrine Vitus, who has worked with children waiting for prolonged periods of time in Danish asylum centres, we will argue that Nour experienced open-ended waiting time, i.e. “waiting without knowing when the waiting will stop” (2010:39). Vitus follows Bourdieu in her understanding of waiting time as problematic, as she draws upon the idea of waiting time as created by a mismatch between subjective expectations and objective probabilities.

Bourdieu sees ‘the anticipated future’, or what he calls the ‘imminent forth-coming’, as a fundamental framework for our present being (2000:207). Bourdieu applies analogies of games when explaining his theory of practice, and defines the forth-coming as “not a possible which may happen or not happen, but something which is already there in the configuration of the game and in the present positions and postures of the team-mates and opponents” (ibid.:208). Thus, the imminent forth-coming is the point of reference for our present actions, as we constantly move towards this forth-coming, and therefore the good player is the one who either places the ball in a better place and follows it there or who places her/himself “not where the ball is but where it is about to land” (ibid.:207-8). Under normal circumstances, “time is often phenomenologically and existentially implicit” (Vitus 2010:33), however, when what Bourdieu calls “the quasi-automatic coincidence between expectations and chances” is broken, time will be experienced as problematic (2000:208; Vitus 2010:33). When the objective probabilities or subjective expectations are changed, such as in the case of displacement, i.e. when the dispositions of the habitus and the expectations based in these, no longer correspond with the probabilities offered to the subject, it gives rise to the feeling of time as waiting time, as the anticipated future is no longer available (Bourdieu 2000:161, 209).

Morhaf had applied for a visa to go to Canada and reunite with his sister, but at the time we met him, he had been waiting for eight months with no answers, and we could tell that he was starting to get frustrated, as he expressed that he was: "Waiting. Only waiting [...] for the visa to come, like refugee. You can sit two months, three months. I'm waiting, I told you, since last year." For Morhaf, time had indeed become problematic, as he was arguably experiencing a lack of harmony between his former expectations to his life and the probabilities he was facing in Istanbul. Instead of striving towards working professionally with sports, which he had a university degree in, Morhaf was now working as a receptionist in a hotel and for a real estate company. Morhaf explained his situation like this: "My dreams are all destroyed. Not my dreams and future, my dreams and past. I have dreams also. I'm trying". Thus, his dreams for his future from before the war did not exist any longer, as they were not viable in his current life situation, but he was trying to build new dreams about a life in Canada. Following this, Morhaf was arguably trying to re-establish the harmony between his expectations for life and the objective probabilities by seeking out an environment, in which the chances of fulfilling his expectations were better than in Istanbul. Accordingly, he did not have any dreams for his life in Istanbul, as he considered his stay to be temporary, but whether it really would be temporary was highly uncertain, as it depended on whether he would obtain a visa to Canada.

Vitus argues that open-ended waiting time, like the one faced by Morhaf and Nour, creates a sense of powerlessness in the subject, as the future, in Bourdieu's terms 'the imminent forth-coming', can no longer serve as a point of reference in life. Instead the present becomes the dominant point of reference, but the present can often be felt to be without existential value, when it is not leading the individual any closer to the anticipated and desired future, as this is beyond the control of the individual (Vitus 2010:38-39). Morhaf did not appear to have lost all hope for his future, but as the decision of whether he would get a visa to Canada was out of his hands, he was de facto left with only very limited power over his current situation. There was no direct connection between his current life and actions in Istanbul and the future he was anticipating, which arguably means that his present being was lacking existential value. This was clear from Morhaf's own description of his current situation: "It's not life [...] Just wake up, eating, coming here [work], come back. No relaxation, only here, and then come back". Similar to Morhaf, Nour expressed that she felt completely without power over her current situation due to the open-ended waiting she was faced with. Sahar, who translated for Nour, described her lack of opportunities: "She can't go back to her

family [in Syria] and she can't go to her husband. She's obliged to be here. And to wait for the visa [...] Wait what will happen. And she cannot do anything".

However, it was not only those, who were waiting to go elsewhere through legal pathways, who could be seen as experiencing open-ended waiting time. The nature of the TPR is in itself temporary, as it is designed as an emergency scheme to deal with the mass influx of Syrians into Turkey, and it is inherent in the regulation that the temporary protection beneficiaries are expected to return to Syria one day. Thus, the TPR is expected to be resolved at some point, which means that the Syrians might lose their protection status. It is, on the other hand, also a possibility that the Turkish legislation will be changed and that Syrians will become eligible for citizenship. The current political instability in Turkey, intensified by the failed military coup in July 2016, further adds to the uncertainty regarding the future of Syrians in Turkey. Thus, all of our informants were arguably left in a position of waiting, but what they were waiting for was unclear, as the circumstances are ever-changing. Hence, the feeling of powerlessness due to open-ended waiting time, which we argue was experienced by Nour and Morhaf, can also be considered present among other of our informants. Zeinah expressed her feeling of powerlessness through two different analogies: a boat floating in the sea without a compass and a mouse in a box:

> As you put a boat in the sea and you must wait to see where the waves will take it [...] I don't have a compass. I don't have compass to my life. This is the worst thing in my life that I don't have this. I don't have my decision. I'm waiting for... [...] Like they put Syrians in a box. Like [...] when you put a mouse in a box and you open the way that you want it to walk. Syrians are like this. Because it's today's situation. You can't go anywhere. You can't [get any] work. They don't help you with money and you must live… how I can live?

Zeinah experienced not having any control over her life. Together with her mother and daughters she was waiting for things, which she had no power over, including for the war in Syria to end, for getting a job in Istanbul or for obtaining citizenship in Turkey. All of this was in the hands of others; of those who possessed a compass and those who controlled, which walls in the box would be opened or closed, including the warring parties in Syria, Turkish and European politicians, and Turkish employers. This relationship between waiting time and power relations can be understood

following Bourdieu, who argues that: “The all-powerful is he who does not wait but makes others wait […] Waiting implies submission” (2000:228). Hence, our informants were in a subordinate position, waiting for someone else to make decisions with significant influence on their lives. In accordance with de Certeau’s distinction between strategies and tactics, the powerful parties were demarcating the spaces, within which our informants were confined to act (1984:36-37).

As we have shown throughout this chapter, our informants were placed in a situation where their agentive possibilities were constrained by various factors, such as social exclusion. This situation can be understood through Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, the social world is constituted by a number of fields, which are relatively autonomous (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2002:85). Bourdieu more specifically defines a ‘field’ as “a network or a configuration of objective relations between different positions” (ibid.:84, our translation). In Bourdieu’s work, examples are the artistic and the academic field. In our case fields are for example seen as constituted by the activist Syrian community in Istanbul, or by young business people in the city. Within each field, different forms of capital are considered to be important, as they give access to specific benefits and advantages and thus to positions of power. Therefore, the positions of the agents within the field are defined by their placement in relation to the distribution of these particular forms of capital (ibid.:84-85). Bourdieu defines three main forms of capital; economic, social and cultural. All of these capital forms can possibly function as so-called symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is thus the particular forms of capital, i.e. the attributes, possessions or actions, recognized as particularly important and prescribed a significant positive value by the agents within a given field (Bourdieu 2000:242; Järvinen 2007:347). Furthermore, symbolic capital affects the objective chances that the agent is faced with, as it places the agent in a position of power within the field and thus, as mentioned above, gives access to benefits and advantages within this field, which widens the scope of possibilities for the agent. According to Bourdieu, “the more power one has over the world, the more one has aspirations that are adjusted to their chances of realization, and also stable and little affected by symbolic manipulation” (2000:226). Thus, people with more symbolic capital are expecting more from the world because their chances of succeeding are greater than those of people with little capital. Furthermore, and as the last part of the quote points towards, capital is seen as a “set of pre-emptive rights over the future” (ibid.:225), as those with more capital are less affected by things that would usually affect their chances of realizing their aspirations, or what Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic manipulation’ (ibid.:226). Bourdieu argues that ‘the stigmatized’,

such as refugees, carry with them “the curse of a negative symbolic capital” (ibid.:241), which means that they arguably do not possess the power enabling them to affect the objective probabilities, they are facing and thus widen their scope of possibilities. Hence, we argue that our informants could be seen as having negative symbolic capital in the Turkish society. As they were, to a large extent, living on the mercy of others, including the Turkish government and authorities, landlords and employers, they were not able to improve their chances of fulfilling their expectations, and therefore had only limited power over their own futures, and thus their present lives.

Getting by - circumventing constraining elements

Although our informants experienced being and could in many ways be seen as powerless against the structures that, as described above, affected their lives to a great extent, they were still able to do things in their everyday lives, which did affect their possibilities, albeit on a small scale. They still got by, at least physically; they did not sleep on the street and they did manage to get some food on the table. Magdalena Villarreal, who has conducted fieldwork among female tomato pickers and beekeepers in rural Mexico, argues that her informants, despite being viewed as some of the most powerless, exercised agency as they performed what can be seen as subtle forms of resistance against the powerful. Villarreal refuses to view power as simply relations between those, who possess power and the powerless, who are seen as oppressed and passive victims (1992:255). She instead argues that the issue of power is much more complex, stating that: “It also involves personal abilities and the perspicacity to perceive ‘edges’ and ‘social interstices’ that can be taken advantage of.” (ibid.:257). Following this, she describes how different social processes in our lives are constituted by constraining and enabling elements, and thus exercising agency can be understood as “the ways in which people deal with and manipulate these constraining and enabling elements.” (Villarreal 1992:257).

Thus, we will claim that our informants also found ways of exercising agency by circumventing the constraining elements and take advantage of the enabling elements. This was what enabled them to get by, despite their difficult circumstances. As explained previously, none of our informants had permissions to work legally, but still most of them had jobs. Working illegally can thus be seen as a way of trying to ‘manipulate the constraining elements’ of the Turkish system by taking advantage

of the ‘social interstices’ that were offered at the Turkish labour market, and though it entailed risks of exploitation, it was a way for our informants to keep homelessness at arm’s length and ensure their immediate physical survival. Another recurring example of how our informants found ways to deal with their challenging situation, was by actively drawing upon the help they could receive from their social and kinship networks. As already mentioned Sami received financial support from a relative abroad and the same was the case for several of our other informants. Likewise, upon arrival in Istanbul, Zarah, Nour and Anas all lived at the houses of relatives and acquaintances, and it was also through the use of social networks that Mustafa and Nasser had found jobs, when they lived in Turkey. Another example of taking advantage of every opportunity, in order to improve one’s situation and get by, was Nabila, Abdallah’s wife, who demonstrated that she had the ‘personal abilities and the perspicacity’ needed in order to do so. Sayid described her like this:

> This woman is really smart. She talks, she explains, she’s not scared, she goes outside, inside, she speaks to the people, she tries to find solutions all the time. She’s a really special woman. She was in the mosque and she met Erdoğan by chance. And when she met Erdoğan she went to him and she told him that there were scorpions and rats in her home [...] Her husband worked all the time and they could not find a solution.

The random encounter with President Erdoğan led to a promise that the municipality would support the family by paying half of their rent for a year, enabling them to move to their current scorpion free apartment. When we met the family, the year was up, and the municipality was still paying, but the family did not know how long it would continue to do so. However, Nabila’s actions had, despite the continuous insecurity, enabled the family to move on and improve their situation, at least for a while.

In the above, we have presented examples of how our informants managed to get by and ensure their physical survival by attempting to re-establish the material aspects of their livelihoods, despite the vast challenges they were facing. In the following, we will return to the existential dimensions to the process of attempting to re-establish livelihoods, by presenting Sayid as an example of how a loss of symbolic capital and a mismatch between subjective expectations and the chances of fulfilling them following displacement can affect, what Bourdieu calls ‘illusio’.

A shattered illusio

> We are not learning to be in this situation [...] Never real happiness. When you are a refugee, you lost all the details in life. Things become like stuck: 1, 2, 3. Work, food, sleep. All the day, all the day. Sometimes I think I will throw myself from a building and it's finished (Sayid).

Drawing on the game analogy, Bourdieu defines the concept of 'illusio' as 'the interest in the game'; the feeling that the game is worth playing (2000:207). Illusio is constituted by the subjective expectations, as it is the expectation that playing the game will lead to something fruitful, which gives the agent a particular interest in the game. Illusio is thus closely related to 'lusiones', which Bourdieu defines as the 'tendencies immanent to this game' and the probabilities they offer for the game to be won (ibid.:208). In order to understand situations, where the abilities developed in one's familiar setting are no longer considered useful, such as war or forced migration, anthropologist Michael Jackson draws on the concept of illusio, and argues that "it is at precisely these critical moments, when the expectations that spring from our habitus are no longer reasonable possibilities for us, that our illusio – our interest and investment in life – is shattered." (2005:xxiii). The lost interest in playing the game, as winning the game, i.e. fulfilling one's expectations, is no longer considered possible, can, according to Jackson, "lead to such a loss of confidence, satisfaction and enjoyment that one may feel that life itself no longer has any meaning, and is not worth living" (2005:xxii).

Prior to the revolution, Sayid had been living a comfortable life as part of the cultural elite in Damascus with a father who is a renowned filmmaker in Syria. Thus, Sayid had lived a life where his habitus as the son of a filmmaker, and as someone who had studied cinematography in Paris, was perfectly adjusted to being part of this cultural elite. He had been acting within a field, in which his abilities were recognized as symbolic capital, which, according to Bourdieu enables "social importance and reasons for living" (2000:241). Hence, the opportunities present within this field corresponded with Sayid's aspirations of one day becoming a renowned filmmaker himself. When Sayid was forced to leave Syria, because of his activism, he found himself in new fields, all somehow related to being a refugee, in which his abilities were not recognized as important in the

same way as they had previously been. Within these new fields, a mismatch between the objective probabilities, offered by the fields, and Sayid's expectations had arguably occurred, making him unable to fulfil his expectations. Hence, Sayid's experience of his current situation, as he expressed it in the above quote, can be seen as an example of a shattered illusio. He did not experience 'real happiness' anymore and had 'lost all the details in life', making him sometimes feel that life was not worth living.

Disrupted life trajectories

> I am not happy here. I am not living now. Because I think it is not my place here. I hope to go back to my students at university and secondary school. Because I have been a teacher for more than 16 years. I am very sad here. It is not my job to be here in a café (Aisha).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Aisha's and many of our other informants' situation, we find it useful to draw on Vigh's use of the concept 'social becoming', which he understands as "a movement along an expected and desired life trajectory" (2006:33). While Vigh's informants in Guinea Bissau were unable to complete a process of social becoming, due to inability to set up a household and get married, and thus move from youth to adulthood, our informants were similarly not able to proceed in life the way they aspired to, due to war and displacement. When an individual is not able to fulfil a process of social becoming, it is, according to Vigh, threatened by 'social death' (2006:45). This concept is originally coined by Hage, who used it to describe the situation of Palestinian suicide bombers. Hage draws upon Bourdieu's arguments about unequal distribution of symbolic capital, as well as his concept of social aging, which is described as "a social situation where the possibilities that life has opened before us become fewer and fewer." (Bourdieu in Hage 2003:78). Following this Hage argues that Palestinian suicide bombers are confined to social death, defined as a "situation where there is a quasi-complete absence of possibilities of a worthy life" (Hage 2003:78). As an example of social death, Vigh introduces Buba, one of his informants, who "is not dying of starvation. His imminent death is not physical but social [...] He is [...] unable to attend to his social needs and fulfil a process of social becoming" (Vigh 2006:45).

Based on our empirical data, we find that social death characterizes the situation of many our informants. Being a Syrian refugee in Turkey is, like being young in Guinea Bissau and under Israeli occupation in Palestine, characterized by social marginality, liminality, stagnation and a minimum of agentive possibilities, like we have elaborated on in the previous sections (Vigh 2006:36-37). Similar to Vigh's informants, our informants were also not dying of starvation, but were rather threatened by social death. An example of this is Ali and his friends, who all wanted to go to Europe, but explained that leaving was "not about having life [surviving]. We all work, we all have [...] It's about the future actually. For the future there is nothing. You can't guarantee a future here". Ali's dream for the future was to pursue a career as a filmmaker and artist, which was not possible for him in Turkey. According to Sayid, this was the general picture of many of the Syrians with similar plans: "People want to go to Europe, in Turkey there is no future, people don't see any future, but in Europe there is at least a little bit of hope. To study, to make work". Similarly, he talked about the young men living in the collective, about whom he said: "It's also not only about food for them. I tell you, it's about rights and security". Furthermore, Morhaf pointed to an issue, which was also dominant among Vigh's informants, namely that there are many young single Syrian men in Turkey, including himself, who want to marry, but do not have the opportunity to do so, because they are unable to provide for a family.

The situation faced by particularly those of our informants who were young, provides another way of understanding how the position of Syrians in Istanbul can be understood through Turner's concept of liminality. As van Gennep's original tri-partite ritual model is developed to understand rituals marking a transition from one social position to another, for example from youth to adulthood, it is directly applicable to the situation faced by these young men, who were unable to reach aggregation into a new social position. This is particularly clear in the cases of both Morhaf, who experienced not being able to marry, and of those who were unable to continue their studies or establish their expected careers, marking significant steps into adulthood.

According to Hage, "Nothing symbolizes social death like [the] inability to dream a meaningful life" (2003:79). Many of our informants could not visualize a better future in Turkey, and they expressed that they felt stuck and unable to move on with their lives. Their life chances and possibilities of social becoming were minimal. They were not able to continue their studies, they did not have proper rights, they felt insecure because of their temporary status, and they were not

able not get married, because they lacked the money to provide for a family. Hence, we argue that the inability to continue the process of social becoming, as well as the lack of opportunities of a worthy life, together with the inability to build the feeling of being at home, constituted essential existential dimensions challenging the process of re-establishing livelihoods for our informants, and thus added to the protracted nature of the liminality they were currently in.

Both Hage and Vigh are inspired by Bourdieu's theory of practice, and thus the idea of 'desired life trajectories' must be understood as closely interrelated with Bourdieu's understanding of subjective expectations. Furthermore, Hage also includes the concepts of illusio and symbolic capital, when he describes how Palestinian suicide bombers can escape the situation of social death by using the existing martyrdom culture as a way of regaining symbolic capital and re-establishing illusio Thus, by becoming martyrs the Palestinian suicide bombers obtain large amounts of symbolic capital, and they hereby swap their "physical existence with symbolic existence", Hage argues (2003:78-80).

In the present chapter, we have focused on how our informants experienced their current life situations, which we have described as a state of protracted liminality, that the majority of our informants were unable to escape, due the challenges they were facing related to re-establishing livelihoods in Istanbul. The words of Mahmoud, the manager of the Syrian NGO 'The Hope', who ended up sharing his story with us during the interview, sum up many of our informants' experiences of war and displacement, and underline how starting anew, i.e. escaping liminality and reaching aggregation, is not possible for everyone: "In the war there is no plan. I lost all my plans. There is no focus. No aim in life. The war destroys everything; your dreams, your life. Some can start anew, but not all".

Chapter 6

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Dealing with liminality

In this chapter, we will examine how our informants dealt with the situation they were in, which we in the previous chapter argued was characterized by protracted liminality. Drawing on Vigh's concept of social navigation, we will in the first part of this chapter shed light on the tactics applied by some of our informants, which entailed either crossing the Aegean Sea to Greece illegally or returning to Syria despite the on-going violence. In the second part of the chapter, we will explore how some of our informants found ways of dealing with the liminality, while staying in Istanbul. Here we will firstly focus on one of our informants, Ibrahim, who became an example of someone, who appeared to have managed to, at least partly, escape the liminality in Istanbul. Secondly, we will look further into a large group of our informants, namely those who were involved in different forms of activism related to Syria and Syrians, and, drawing on Bourdieu's concepts symbolic capital and illusio, we will explore how they arguably decided to stay in the state of liminality, because it enabled them to continue their activist activities in exile and gave them a sense of meaningfulness in their lives.

Balancing social death with dangerous life chances

Sayid had numerous times told us about a group of his friends planning to go to Europe by crossing the Aegean Sea. One day he told us that they were leaving the following day. They had to hurry before the EU-Turkey deal came into effect and they would be sent back to Turkey from Greece. Sayid quickly made arrangements for us to meet with the group and after a two hour metro ride we found ourselves in an apartment in the outskirts of Istanbul together with Ali, Haitham, Khalid and Abood. They were all young men aged between 24 and 28. As they were sitting there, cross legged on a bed turned couch in their common apartment, smoking, joking and talking, it was difficult to grasp that they, the coming day, would embark on a journey, which for way too many ends at the bottom of the sea. At first glance, it seemed to us that this group of young men in many ways were much better off than some of our other informants. Abood had a job as an interior designer, and Ali, Haitham and Khalid did freelance animation work online. Thus, they were not vulnerable to exploitation or hard manual labour to the same extent as many of our others informants, and they had found a decent apartment. We were left wondering why these young, reasonable men with a relatively decent life in Istanbul would risk their lives for an uncertain future in Europe.

In order to shed light on the motivation behind their choice, we will in this part apply Vigh's concept of 'social navigation', which in his own words "enables us to make sense of the opportunistic, sometimes fatalistic, and tactical ways in which youth struggle to expand the horizons of possibility in a world of conflict, turmoil, and diminishing resources" (2006:31). Social navigation refers to:

> a dynamic quality of attentiveness and ability to act in relation to the movements of the social terrains one's life is set in. It is motion within motion requiring both an assessment of immediate dangers and possibilities as well as an ability to envision the unfolding of the social terrain and to plot and actualise one's movement from the present into the imagined future [...] towards possibilities and life chances (Vigh 2006:52).

Thus, social navigation deals with people, who are moving within a moving social environment, and it is therefore generally used to describe how people navigate "in unstable places and contexts of insecurity and/or rapid social change" (Vigh 2009:419). We find the concept of social navigation useful to shed light on the tactic applied by Ali, Khalid, Abood and Haitham, because their situation in many ways was unstable. While they had jobs and a decent place to live, they still did not have a stable legal status and no prospect of gaining it, they did not have work permits, and they lived in a country, which had just experienced an attempted military coup, showing how the political situation could change at a glance with potentially drastic consequences for all the Syrians living there. Furthermore, while they in Jacobsen's understanding to a large extent had been able to re-establish livelihoods, they were unable to follow their expected and desired life trajectories while in Istanbul, which placed them at risk of social death, and they arguably did not possess the key feelings enabling them to homebuild, which meant that they, in our understanding, were partly unable to re-establish their livelihoods in Istanbul. Thus, we argue that they navigated away from the inability to fully establish their livelihoods in Istanbul and the threat of social death and instead sought to reach an (imagined) future with better life chances and opportunities.

Hence, we argue that, like Vigh's informants' choice to become soldiers was a matter of "balancing social death with violent life chances" (2006:31), our informants' plan to cross the sea to Europe was a matter of balancing social death with dangerous life chances. Finally, we argue that going to

Europe illegally was the, perhaps only, way for them to, in Vigh's words "disentangle themselves from [the] confining structures" (2009:419), which we in the previous chapter argued place them in a state of protracted liminality.

An uncertain social environment of refugeeness

According to Vigh, an important aspect of social navigation is to be constantly attentive to the changes in and movement of the social environment one's life is set in, asses this and take it into consideration when acting (2009:423-424). Like Vigh's informants, the lives of our informants were, as elaborated in chapter 5, set in an unstable, ever-changing and insecure social environment. Additionally, the social environment, which our informants lives were set in is arguably not limited to Turkey, but transgresses geographical limits. Like the lives of Vigh's informants were set in a 'social environment of war', the lives of our informants were arguably set in a 'social environment of refugeeness'. As mentioned, most of our informants followed the situation in Syria, which is highly unstable, insecure and changing, very closely, not only because they wanted to make sure that their families and friends were okay, but also because many were ready to go back as soon as the areas where they came from were relatively safe. Additionally, the possibilities of going to Europe are also changing constantly with the EU-Turkey deal severely hindering attempts to enter the EU through Greece, as well as borders inside the EU closing and smugglers introducing new and more dangerous routes. We experienced that those of our informants, who considered leaving Istanbul were paying close attention to the changing situations in Turkey, Syria and Europe, and planned their ways of navigating accordingly.

In accordance with de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics, Vigh equals navigation to the tactics applied within spaces demarcated by of others (2009:424). As we have explained above, the space, i.e. the social environment of refugeeness, has already been demarcated by, for example, Turkish and European refugee policies, confining our informants to tactically navigate within this space by, for instance, crossing the sea illegally to Europe.

Navigating the Aegean Sea

> Berlin is special. We love Berlin. I was going to Berlin with a visa in 2011, but then the revolution started, so I stayed in Syria [to participate]. It's like my plan was delayed for five years. So now I am going to follow my plan (Ali).

Ali, Khalid, Abood and Haitham had, like our other informants, experienced a rupture in the way they expected and hoped that their lives would proceed and many of their dreams for the future had been shattered. Like Vigh's informants, they were in their current situation "unable to attend to [their] social needs and fulfil a process of social becoming" (2006:45). Navigation provides a way to escape this situation characterized by the threat of social death and seek better possibilities for realizing one's expected and desired life trajectory. This was arguably what this group of young men were doing by navigating the opportunities, including the opportunity for illegal migration to Europe, which had arisen in the uncertain social environment of refugeeness. Hence, they had been following the constantly changing situation, related to crossing the sea to Europe, very closely through Facebook groups, Syrian friends, who had already made it to Berlin, an activist friend in Macedonia and the general news, in order to assess when, where and how it was best to leave. Once the conditions were most favourable, they would go to Izmir, pay the smuggler they had made a deal with 700 dollars each, enter a boat and cross the Aegean Sea to Greece, from where they would make their way to Berlin. In this way, they were assessing the dangers, as well as the possibilities in the moving social environment, planning how to move from the present into the imagined future and realizing the plan. Although crossing the sea in an overcrowded dinghy, like becoming a soldier for a warlord in a civil war, in Vigh's words "might appear to be a direct road to physical destruction it can in fact be a roundabout route to the construction of future social being" (Vigh 2006:52). Hence, it appeared to be a calculated choice where they weighed the dangers of crossing the sea against the chances of a better future in Berlin, i.e. they were balancing social death with dangerous life chances.

A calculated choice

> They buried their dreams in the sea to build a stairway to heaven (Khalid).

Khalid worked freelance as an animator making illustrations for magazines and children's books. The quote is from one of his illustrations about the children, who drown in the sea on their way to

Europe, which he showed us during the interview. It is a powerful illustration of a little girl with closed eyes sinking down into the deep, dark blue ocean, moving away from a fading light above her. We find that the picture and text illustrates the great risks that people take, on their own and in many cases also on their children's behalf, in order to improve their life chances, when crossing the sea to Europe. In 2015, more than one million migrants and asylum seekers arrived in Europe by sea, while more than 3,770 people drowned in the Mediterranean in the attempt, including 800 in the Aegean Sea (Brian & Laczko 2016:1). Thus, these people risk everything in order to reach the 'heaven' that Europe represents.

Based on our interview with Ali, Haitham, Khalid, and Abood, we find that the concepts of illusio and symbolic capital are useful to further explain their decision to cross the sea. As elaborated earlier, illusio represents the interest in playing the game. According to Bourdieu, the interest implies recognition of the stakes of the game, which makes the game worth playing (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2002:102). The specific form of illusio differs depending on the given field, as "each field refers to and stimulates a specific type of interest" (ibid.:103*,* our translation) and thus also what is recognized as stakes worth playing for (ibid.:103). In the case of this group of young men, what made them feel that crossing the sea was worth the risk, was arguably that it constituted the only way for them to obtain the careers and lives that they dreamt of.

Ali, Haitham, Khalid and Abood were all artists and their main motivation for going to Berlin was the vibrant, international art scene, in which they imagined that they would have much better possibilities of realizing themselves as professional artists. Khalid said about Berlin that "It's great for artists", Abood was looking for a place more accepting of art and had therefore chosen Berlin, and Ali said that Berlin was "better for our work", which made it clear that they trusted their art to be more recognized there than it had been in Istanbul. Thus, for the group the international art scene in Berlin represented a field, which offered the objective probabilities necessary for their expectations for the future to be fulfilled. Hence, going to Berlin was a way for them to pursue their expected and desired life trajectories. Furthermore, it can be argued that Berlin represents a field in which the attributes possessed by the young men would be recognized as more important than they were in Istanbul, because the city is considered one of the main art centres of the world, and thus in this field, artistic skills are recognized as symbolic capital. The expectations of obtaining symbolic capital as well as realizing their dreams of living and working as artists in Berlin can thus be seen as

the stake in the game, which made playing the game, i.e. crossing the sea, worth the risk for this group. Sayid, on the other hand, said that it was "stupid to take the boat to Europe" and "not worth the risk" because he believed that his friends had unrealistic ideas about what life as a refugee in Europe was like. Thus, Sayid did not recognize the stakes that gave Ali, Khalid, Haitham and Abood their illusio, which made them embark on their journey towards Europe.

While we have argued that the choice for Ali, Khalid, Haitham and Abood to cross the sea was an attempt to escape the threat of social death in Istanbul and move towards better life chances, this is far from the case for all Syrians crossing the sea. The young men expressed themselves that their situation was much more privileged than that of many other Syrians, who are not only escaping social, but also physical death by crossing the sea. Abood elaborated on the situation faced by most Syrians fleeing to Europe:

> I read something on Facebook. Someone said: "no one puts his children in a boat, unless the water is more safe than the land". And this is exactly what happened. Maybe not for us, but for other people, who survived the war, they will not fear the sea. That's easy. Even it reminds you of Moses, the prophet. His mother put him on the river, just because she was afraid of the land. She didn't know where he would go, but maybe it would be something better.

Navigating back to Syria

> We want to go back. To just forget all of this nightmare of being refugees and go back to home (Tammar).

An early morning some weeks into our fieldwork we visited the Eyüp Mosque, which distributes food to the needy; Turks and Syrians alike. Outside the mosque, we recognized a bunch of familiar faces. It was Tariq, Tammar and their four sons. They greeted us warmly. Apart from our visit to their home some weeks before, we had met the whole family to events in the activist community and we had been spending time with Mohammed and his theatre group regularly. The family was out for a morning stroll, they told us. But it was not a regular morning stroll. It was the last they would have together in a long time, as Tariq, Tammar and their two youngest sons were going back to their village in Northern Syria the same evening, while the two eldest sons were staying in Istanbul. We already knew that this was their plan, but meeting them the same day as their family would be split up, somehow made it more real. Like with the young men deciding to cross the sea, we were puzzled by their, as well as Zeinah and her family and Sayid's, decision to return to Syria. To shed light on this, we again find the concepts of social death and social navigation useful.

As we have elaborated on in chapter 5, Tariq and his family were in a particularly precarious situation because they did not have kimlik, which meant that they could not access free health services or assistance from various mosques and organizations and that the two youngest children were unable to attend school. Furthermore, the eldest sons were not able to get scholarships and therefore could not start university. All of this meant, that they all, including the children, had to work in workshops under highly exploitative conditions in order to pay for housing and food, which was the main reason for the family to decide to go back to Syria, as Tariq explained: "I want to go back to Syria because I don't want my kids to go to work [...] They must go to school – not work. In Turkey we need too much money". Working in textile workshops was not the life they had imagined for their children and they did not see any opportunities to improve their life conditions in Turkey. Hence, Tariq and Tammar did not have the possibility to create worthy lives for their children and were thus arguably confined to social death in Istanbul. Like Ali, Abood, Khalid and Haitham they assessed the movement of the social environment of refugeeness and acted accordingly, making a calculated choice. Crossing the sea to Europe with small children was far too risky, they could not afford to pay the smuggler and they did not have a social network in Europe. In their village, on the other hand, Tariq believed that he would be able to find work to support the family, enabling the children to go to school instead of working, and they had a house and a vegetable garden to secure food.

Tariq and Tammar naturally also assessed the risks and dangers of going back to Syria. Their village was under alternating control by rebel groups and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, respectively, and was a regular target of Assad’s air strikes. The children would be able to go to school, but it would be underground, because all the schools had been bombed, and thus life back in the village would neither be safe, nor easy. Tariq and Tammar had closely been following the unfolding of the situation in their village and as soon as Russia had stopped its airstrikes, they decided to go back, because they assessed that Assad’s bombings were tolerable compared to the Russian airstrikes. Hearing this explanation, we were struggling to grasp how Assad’s bombs could ever be considered tolerable, but it underlined how danger, due to the war, had come to be understood relatively. This was something we encountered several times during our fieldwork, including when Ali explained that he did not consider crossing the sea to Greece in an overcrowded rubber dinghy dangerous, compared to living in Syria.

Tariq, Tammar and their two youngest sons’ return to Syria, which was based on their assessment of the unfoldment of the insecure and ever-changing social environment of refugeeness, in which their lives were set, can be seen as an example of social navigation, as they attempted to escape social death in Istanbul and to ensure a better future for their children. However, while Tariq and Tammar had decided that they would rather live with Assad’s airstrikes than stay in Istanbul, the two oldest sons, Hamudi and Mohammed of 19 and 20 assessed that they would be in too great a personal danger if they returned, as they were young men from a rebel stronghold and thus considered a large threat to Assad. The risk of them being taken by the Mukhabarat and ‘disappear’, like so many other young men during the past five years, was too severe. Therefore, Hamudi and Mohammed were staying in Istanbul, but because they wanted to follow their dreams of going to university, which was not an option in Istanbul, they considered crossing the sea to Europe, because they believed that it would improve their possibilities for a better future, and they were thus navigating the social environment on their own.

Escaping liminality in Istanbul

Among our informants, one person stood out, because he appeared to have been able to break out of the liminality, arguably experienced by all of our informants and at least partly reach aggregation in Istanbul. Unlike many of the other Syrians we met, Ibrahim had from the very beginning, when he

came to Istanbul two years ago, decided that he wanted to stay there. Unusual for a young, single man, he had decided that he did not want to go to Europe, and he did not have any plans about returning to Syria in the near future either. Thus, Ibrahim had started re-establishing a livelihood in Istanbul from day one, and when we met him two years later, he had established a life, which he appeared to be content with. We argue that this was made possible because Ibrahim had managed to overcome some of the main barriers for aggregation presented in the previous chapter; social exclusion as well as barriers for homebuilding.

As soon as he arrived in Istanbul, Ibrahim began to learn Turkish online, which improved his opportunities for getting a job. He began working in a real estate company, where he worked his way up, and soon became a partner in the firm. Syrians under temporary protection cannot get permissions to open businesses (RRT, Berk), but by becoming a partner in a company, which he ran together with two Turkish people and two other Syrians, Ibrahim managed to become self-employed and run a business, despite not being able to obtain official permission to do so, because his Turkish partners were listed as the official owners. Hence, Ibrahim had a stable and well-paid job, as well as a decent apartment and a car, which arguably provided him with the general sense of security and stability that the majority of our informants were missing. He had both Turkish friends and colleagues and, opposed to many of our other informants, he did not share stories of harassment and discrimination from Turkish people, or underlined how Turks and Syrians were different. It appeared to us that he felt a sense of community, both among Syrians and Turks, as he both felt recognized and recognized them as 'his own'.

Istanbul for many of our informants represented more challenges than opportunities, and for most of them not a place of choice, but rather a matter of where they would have the best chances of finding employment and being able to support themselves and their families. Ibrahim, on the other hand, had deliberately chosen to stay in Istanbul, finding within the city a space, in which he could realize the potential and abilities he had brought with him from Syria, by entering the field of young business people in Istanbul. This is in line with Hage's description of familiarity as "where we feel in possession of what Bourdieu would call a well-fitted habitus", which Hage explains as being in a space where the strategic dispositions of one's habitus "can be maximized" (1997:3). Furthermore, Ibrahim spoke fluent Turkish and overall seemed to have the practical know-how that Hage argues

is another important aspect of feeling a sense of familiarity, which is necessary for homebuilding (ibid.).

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Ibrahim did not only perceive the opportunities of 'a better life' in Hage's sense, he was actually pursuing a better life; his work had enabled him to develop monetary and arguably also symbolic capital within the field of young business people in Istanbul. Furthermore, he spent his spare time with friends; Turks, Syrians and internationals alike, using the city of Istanbul with all it has to offer; bars, restaurants, music etc. Every week he attended the same language café as us, and once a week he was learning how to dance the Brazilian dance 'foho'. Hence, it seemed that Ibrahim had managed to re-establish essential aspects of his livelihood, including building a feeling of being at home. According to Ibrahim himself, his success in building a new life in Istanbul was due to his early decision of staying and starting over, which incentivised him to learn the language, find Turkish friends and create a satisfying working life. Hence, Ibrahim arguably did not feel stuck in the middle between neither Turkey and Syria, nor Turkey and a third country, which enabled him to better escape the state of liminality and reach partial aggregation. However, it must be noted that Ibrahim could in some ways still be characterized as being in a state of liminality, for instance because he was also living under the TPR, which we have argued produces liminal subjects with temporary and insecure legal statuses. At the same time, Ibrahim was also subject to many of the social exclusion mechanisms that our other informants encountered, and thus, despite his apparent success, he was still facing a wide range of challenges living as a Syrian refugee in Istanbul.

In many ways, Ibrahim, as well as the other young Syrian men we met at Tabadul, differed from the majority of our informants. It was a group of young, highly educated people, who had the gumption required to start a new life, which was based in social and perhaps also economic capital. Our Arabic teacher Majd was a clear example of this gumption. He lived in an apartment with people from all over the world, providing him with a strong social network, and was eager to learn new languages. Even before he had left Syria, he had started learning Turkish from YouTube videos, and he was now trying to learn Japanese and German, as well as to improve his British accent. He told us that: "If you have the desire to learn, you can learn anything", and this statement somehow characterized both the way he, Ibrahim and the other Syrians from Tabadul seemed to approach their lives in Istanbul.

Activism in a state of liminality

> The spirit of the revolution can never die [...] Impossible. The people can die. But the revolution, never. The idea will stay forever (Sayid).

Among the Syrians we encountered in Istanbul, a large number was somehow involved in activities directly concerned with issues related to Syria and Syrians, either by engaging in revolutionary activities advocating for a free, secular and democratic Syria through theatre, literature, peaceful manifestations etc., by organizing humanitarian assistance inside Syria, by working professionally in humanitarian organizations or by working for the Syrian Interim Government. Furthermore, all of these people, as well as many of our other informants, had been actively engaged in the revolution while in Syria, either through peaceful activism or armed resistance. However, in this section we will pay attention to those who, while living in Istanbul, were engaged in activism. Despite the diversity of this group, we will collectively refer to them as 'the activists' in the following.

When meeting people actively involved in different activities related to Syria we soon discovered a pattern, namely that most of them did not express a desire to go to Europe or elsewhere. Instead, they had deliberately chosen Turkey as their place of exile, mainly due to its geographical proximity to Syria, which would enable them to return as soon as possible, as well as to continue their revolutionary and humanitarian activities. Spending most of their waking hours working on issues related to Syria, they did not attempt to 'cut the ties' to other Syrians, but on the contrary engaged intensively in activist communities only consisting of Syrians and made their fight for a free, secular and democratic Syria their main purpose of life. This left little space for engaging in the Turkish community, learning the language and establishing new lives there, as Hila, a former Women's League activist in Syria, currently working as an interpreter for international organizations working with Syrians, expressed:

> When you are an activist, you are thinking more about the cause you are working on, and you are so much indulged in it and engaged [...] it just doesn't

> give you the space to focus on all life. Or at least it affects the way you think about your settlement and about your personal life (Waeda.)

Unlike other of our informants, who attempted to break out of the liminality, by for example learning Turkish and trying to re-establish their livelihoods, or by planning to go abroad or to return to Syria, the activists can, thus, be seen as having deliberately chosen to stay in the liminality, geographically as well as socially and emotionally.

In her study of Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Malkki shows how those living in a refugee camp, unlike those living in a town, opposed naturalization and assimilation into Tanzanian society (1995:2, 206, 209). Instead, they embraced their liminal refugee status, which they used to create and affirm a collective Hutu identity and to signal a connection with their homeland and thus "the possibility of an eventual return" (ibid.:230). Hence, to remain in the liminal "categorical state of displacement, both legally and socially" was, according to Malkki, an important type of socio-political resistance (ibid.:209). The Hutu camp refugees can thus be understood as not only deliberately choosing to stay liminal, but to also use their liminal position proactively for a socio-political project entailing the affirmation of a collective identity and eventual return to their homeland.

Like Malkki's camp-based informants, the activists arguably chose to remain in the state of liminality, because it provided a space for political and humanitarian action. While those of our informants, who we have described to be stuck in between Turkey and Syria, arguably experienced their liminal state as problematic and disabling, the liminality can, on the other hand, also be seen as providing a space of opportunities for the activists, as it enabled them to continue their activities related to Syria, while being physically safe in Istanbul. Thus, the liminality became the underlying premise for their activism, and they seemed to accept its positive, as well as negative properties.

In order to shed light on why the activists decided to remain in the state of liminality, rather than attempting to break out of it, despite the fact that they were also experiencing the negative aspects of liminality described in chapter 5, such as the lack of a permanent legal status, we will return to the concept of illusio. The interest in playing the game, which in this case can be understood as taking part in the Syrian activist community and carrying out activist activities, was fostered by a

shared recognition by the members of this particular field that the stakes were important and that the game was thus worth playing. We identify the stakes to be the achievement of a free, secular and democratic Syria, which was what had made them participate in the revolution in the first place, and now their activism in exile became a way for them to continue working towards this shared goal.

As we have argued, many of our other informants experienced their lives in Istanbul as characterized by open-ended waiting time leading to a feeling that their current lives were lacking existential value. However, we suggest that the time spent in Istanbul by the activists cannot be characterized this way, as their involvement in activism gave a sense of meaning to their present, because the actions directly targeted the future that they desired. The importance of the present actions, which represent a struggle for symbolic capital, rather than of the end goal, i.e. the stakes, is reflected when Bourdieu draws upon Pascal and argues that "the chase [...] counts as much as, if not more than, the quarry, and there is a happiness in activity which exceeds the visible profits and which consists in the fact of emerging from [...] being occupied, projected towards goals, and feeling [...] endowed with a social mission" (Bourdieu 2000:240). A free, secular and democratic Syria, which was the stake that made the activists interested in carrying out their activist activities, was arguably rather unrealistic to obtain within a foreseeable future, given the current situation in Syria. However, 'being occupied' with something closely related to this stake can be said to have given the activists a feeling of 'happiness', like when Mohammed explained why he was making theatre about the revolution: "[The theatre] makes me very happy. It's for the revolution. I always feel the revolution inside". Being a part of the activist community and carrying out activism in Turkey, as well as having been part of the revolution in Syria was something, which, within the field that the activist community constituted, was recognized as symbolic capital. Hence, the activists were engaged in the 'the struggle to accumulate symbolic capital', which, as described in the previous chapter, can be seen as mirroring the way we generally make our lives worthy of living, as we search for 'reasons for living' and a 'feeling of social importance', which, according to Bourdieu, is what symbolic capital provides the ground for (ibid.:241).

Aisha, who, when introducing herself told us: "At the revolution, I was a sniper and a very famous character. They all know me and they all believe in me", was a clear example of someone who had obtained symbolic capital both from her involvement in the revolution and from the humanitarian

and activist work she was now carrying out in Istanbul. She had reached a position of particular social importance and was considered a central character in the Syrian activist community in Istanbul. As Sayid said: “She is famous [...] she is active, she is connected”, referring to her knowing a lot of people, as well as being well-known in the community.

Despite her symbolic capital, Aisha, as mentioned previously, still did not feel that she was living the life she was supposed to. She missed being a secondary and university English teacher, but made ends meet by running the café, which also formed the basis for a wide range of activist activities. It can be argued that her habitus was not adjusted to the situation, she was currently in, being a refugee in Istanbul, which at times made her describe her life as ‘not living’, but as long as she was acting within the field of the activist community, she had a sense of a purpose in life.

Chapter 7

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Conclusion

The on-going conflict in Syria has forced millions of people to not only flee their homes, but also their local communities, educations, social networks, jobs and the future they had dreamt of. Many have sought refuge in neighbouring countries; the majority in the larger cities in Turkey. Among these we found our informants, who were all Syrian refugees based in Istanbul. This thesis has been concerned with how they, as urban refugees, who face distinct challenges, experienced their lives in Istanbul, focusing on the pursuit of livelihoods and the challenges they encountered in this process, as well as with how they dealt with their situation. During our six weeks ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul, we discovered that what was at stake for our informants related to the processes of re-establishing livelihoods could not solely be covered by the holistic understanding of livelihoods, but that more existential dimensions had to be taken into account. Therefore, in this thesis we have sought to answer the following two parallel research questions:

How do Syrian refugees in Istanbul experience re-establishing livelihoods, and which different tactics do they apply in order to deal with their situation of protracted liminality?

What existential dimensions can be identified in the processes of re-establishing livelihoods and finding tactics to deal with a situation of protracted liminality among Syrians in Istanbul?

In order to answer these questions, we have found it suitable to adopt an ethnographic methodological approach leading us to base our empirical data collection on a fieldwork, which included both participant observation among, as well as semi-structured and informal interviews with Syrian refugees. When conducting interviews, we were inspired by the phenomenological approach, which enabled us to gain an insight into the lived experiences and perceptions of our informants.

We have argued that our informants experienced re-establishing livelihoods in Istanbul as highly challenging for a number of reasons. Drawing on the concept of social exclusion, we have first shown how they in many ways were excluded from re-establishing livelihoods, due to the instability

of their legal status, lack of implementation of the legal framework, which should secure them access to, for instance, education and legal employment, as well as harassment and discrimination in their everyday lives, particularly related to housing. Furthermore, we have argued that the absence of a sense of security, familiarity, community and hope for the future constituted a central existential dimension impeding our informants' opportunities for re-establishing livelihoods. Another important existential dimension was that their displacement, as well as the social exclusion they experienced, made our informants unable to follow their expected and desired life trajectories and thus fulfil a process of social becoming. Because they had limited opportunities for creating worthy lives for themselves and their children, we have argued that they experienced a threat of social death. We have suggested that the existential dimensions of homebuilding and social becoming were just as important for our informants' abilities to re-establish livelihoods as their access to material and non-material livelihoods assets.

We have argued that our informants were in a state of liminality, because they had undergone a violent separation from their previous lives, when they were forced to flee Syria, but were unable to reach aggregation in Turkey, particularly because the TPR did not enable them to obtain a stable legal status. Re-establishment of livelihoods could provide a way of reaching partial aggregation, despite the lacking opportunities for legal integration into Turkish society or resettlement to other countries. However, as our informants were significantly hindered in re-establishing their livelihoods, it was also difficult for them to reach aggregation this way. Therefore, we have described their situation as one of protracted liminality. Nostalgia and homesickness can be seen as other factors contributing to the liminal character of the lives of our informants, as many were feeling stuck between Syria and Turkey; being physically present in Istanbul, while emotionally and mentally being occupied with Syria. Because it was uncertain when and how our informants would be able to escape the state of protracted liminality, we have argued that they were experiencing open-ended waiting time, which made them feel powerless, because the control over their lives and futures were in the hands of others. However, we have also shown how our informants, despite being in a situation where they had limited power over their situations, still found ways of getting by in their everyday lives by circumventing the constraining elements, they were faced with and taking advantage of the possibilities they encountered.

In the second part of the analysis, we have shown that there, among our informants, were mainly four ways of dealing with the protracted liminality. Firstly, we have presented two different tactics applied by our informants, namely going to Europe illegally by crossing the sea and returning to Syria. We have explored these tactics drawing on the concept of social navigation, and argued that they attempted to evade the lack of possibilities of a worthy life in Istanbul and sought to move along their desired life trajectories and reach aggregation elsewhere. Ibrahim applied a different tactic, which entailed circumventing the challenges related to re-establishing his livelihood, including homebuilding, while staying in Istanbul. Finally, we have shown how those of our informants, who were involved in different forms of activism, can be seen as having deliberately chosen to stay in the liminality, because doing so enabled them to continue their struggle for a free, secular and democratic Syria, as well to gain symbolic capital and a feeling of meaning in their lives.

Further empirical perspectives

Through our fieldwork we gained rich insights into many different aspects of the lives of our informants, and this thesis only addresses a fraction of the data, we collected. The thesis is a result of the delimitation we undertook when choosing our analytical object to be that of livelihoods. Another aspect, which emerged in our empirical data and could be subject to further exploration, is the potential for women's empowerment arising from displacement. Among our informants were a number of women, who had experienced gaining more personal freedom after leaving Syria, because they were no longer subject to social control in their local communities. An example of this was Hila, who could now have a boyfriend, and expressed that, in Istanbul, she was able to do and wear whatever she wanted, without risking herself or her parents being looked down upon by the local community. A large number of the women attending the craft collective at SPI were solely responsible for their households, either because their husbands had been killed in the war or were imprisoned by the regime. This represents a general tendency of female led households among Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries. While studies in Lebanon and Jordan have shown how this has led to a significant change in gendered social and economic roles, such a study has yet to be conducted in Turkey (El-Masri et al. 2013; UNHCR 2014).

A number of other potential perspectives arose from the data, such as the emerging Syrian civil society in Istanbul and the challenges it faced; how narratives about war and homeland were used to form communities in exile, but also depicted the conflicting understandings of ‘the truth’; and how the controversies from Syria were played out on different ‘battlefields’ in Istanbul, including the contesting notions of the revolution held by young and older revolutionaries, respectively.

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Appendix A: Overview over informants

Informant	Gender (M/F)	Age	Civil status	Children Yes/no
Adnan	M	39	Unmarried	No
Zeinah	F	35	Divorced	Yes
Anas	M	-	Unmarried	No
Reem	M	24	Unmarried	No
Sami	M	26	Unmarried	No
Youssef	M	40	Married	Yes
Sayid	M	32	Unmarried	No
Hila	F	29	Unmarried	No
Jalloud	M	26	Unmarried	No
Aisha	F	38	Married	Yes
Riema	F	-	Unmarried	No
Morhaf	M	30	Unmarried	No
Zarah	F	42	Married	No
Riham	F	-	Married	Yes
Hesham	M	32	Unmarried	No
Taleb	M	-	Married	No
Elias	M	27	Unmarried	No
Hayyan	M	19	Unmarried	No
Farah	F	-	Unmarried	No
Leilah	F	-	Married	Yes
Yaffar	M	-	Married	Yes
Ibrahim	M	26	Unmarried	No
Maya	F	32	Married	Yes
Fatima	F	45	Married	Yes
Khazal	F	58	Married	Yes
Mahmoud	M	-	Married	-
Abdallah	M	43	Married	Yes
Nabila	F	39	Married	Yes
Tariq	M	45	Married	Yes
Tammar	F	42	Married	Yes
Mohammed	M	20	Unmarried	No
Navdar	M	-	Married	Yes
Nour	F	24	Married	No
Sahar	F	60	Married	Yes
Ali	M	27	Unmarried	No
Khalid	M	28	Unmarried	No
Haitham	M	24	Unmarried	No
Abood	M	28	Unmarried	No
Karim	M	21	Unmarried	No
Saleh	M	-	Unmarried	No
Hussein	M	27	Unmarried	No
Abdullah	M	23	Unmarried	No
Abdul	M	26	Unmarried	No

Amira	F	-	Unmarried	No
Hussam	M	-	Unmarried	No
Mustafa	M	39	Married	Yes
Nasser	M	22	Unmarried	No

Appendix B: Interviews with NGOs

Name of organization	**Interviewees**
Small Projects Istanbul (SPI)	Shannon, co-director and Anna, project manager
Association for solidarity with asylum seekers and migrants (ASAM)	Ezgi, project manager
Refugee Rights Turkey	Berk, law student and volunteer
Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV)	Maria and Özge, interns
Syrian Smile Makers Team	The whole team, including Samer, project manager
Support To Life (STL)	Leen, consultant
The Hope	Osman, project manager
Urban Refugees	Sonia, co-founder and executive director
Danish Refugee Council	Melissa, consultant