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## **How much longer? An ethnographic exploration and methodological reflection of documentation, temporalities and collaborative zine-making in the context of the Dutch migration system**

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How

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longer?

# How much longer?

An ethnographic exploration and methodological reflection of documentation, temporalities and collaborative zine-making in the context of the Dutch migration system.

This master thesis is made as part of the specialization in Visual Ethnography at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University.

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# ABSTRACT

Thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers are entering the Netherlands in various (legal) ways and are stuck in a waiting time in different aspects of their procedures of acquiring residency. This research project explores the realms of migrating to the Netherlands by focusing on the perception of temporalities, documentation and communication with Dutch authorities like the IND (Immigration and Naturalization Service). Diving into the theoretical concepts of power-chronography, delaying, waiting and errance, I explore how appointments with the IND, being transferred, and having no legal residence documents and other (bureaucratic) challenges are experienced in the lived experiences of my collaborators. All four collaborators present in this thesis, as well in the audiovisual output in the form of a zine, have their own ambitions and coping strategies with caring for their time while being in documentation and bureaucratic challenges, such as waiting for the second interview with the IND.

Embedded within the framework of visual ethnography, this thesis attempts to dive into methodological reflections of zine-making as process and as audio-visual product in a multimodal way (including film and soundscapes accessible via QR codes). Together with the four young male collaborators from Kenya, Guinea, Yemen and Afghanistan, we aim to show parts of the asylum procedure in an artistic manner and critically question the current Dutch migration system and distribute the zines to engage with the research in line with the zine history of anti-institutionalism and activism.

This research contributes to critically unpacking what the intersections of power, documentation and temporalities mean for the four collaborators in their lived experiences, shedding light on in which forms they find agency and control while currently being in the residency acquiring in the Netherlands. Thereby this research project in form of the written thesis and the accompanying zine contribute to the discourse of temporalities and migration.

[Keywords: migration, refugees, IND, undocumented, zine-making, collaboration, asylum, temporalities, power-chronography, visual ethnography]

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project has been intense. Intensely emotional, painful, honest, personal, political and confronting and of course I tried to make it fun as well. I dove deeply into the complex apparatus of the migration system and not only engaged myself with this topic through this research project, but started taking additional courses on migration, started a volunteer position at a NGO for undocumented migrants and confronted myself with migration on an daily basis for the past year.

Massive thanks, deep gratefulness and a big amount of appreciation is dedicated to be able to work with Eras, Azzam, Tamba and Fatah. Thank you for opening up your vulnerability, explaining the asylum procedures, sharing the process of zine-making with me and being confident me filming you. Thank you for sharing your time with me.

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# GLOSSARY

AZC	Asielzoekers centrum Application Center for asylum seekers
Chavez procedure	gaining residency through being the caretaker of a Dutch under-aged child
COA	Centraal Orgaan Opvang Asielzoekers Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers
Daklozenloket	Shelter and assistance for homeless humans
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy Database finger print identification system in the management of asylum applications in Europe
gemeente	city council
hoor- en beslismedewerker	working for the IND as interviewer, as well as deciding on asylum cases
IND	Immigratie – en Naturalisatie Dienst Immigration and Naturalisation Service
Noodopvang	emergency refugee camp
statushouder	person who is granted asylum and has a current residency
Ter Apel AC	Aanmeldcentrum Ter Apel Application Center for asylum-seekers in Ter Apel
Verblijfs- vergunning	residence permit
v-document	Vreemdelingen Identiteitsbewijs Foreign Nationals Identity Document
VWN	Vluchtelingen Werk Nederland Dutch council for refugees
Wereldhuis	Worldhouse NGO for the services of undocumented migrants

# INTRODUCTION

I hold it in my hands, it is not heavy, its color is burgundy red – quite a pleasant color – and its letters are golden. It has 32 pages, not counting its cover. It is made of paper and plastic, some parts are very shiny and reflect the light differently depending on how I tilt it. Although it is mine and it represents me in numbers, one picture and stamps of some places outside Europe I have visited, I do not own it. It also has some invisible information in it, stored on a chip, but I do not have the technological means to examine what is written on this chip. I just know it is somewhere inside because there is this symbol on it, a round figure in the middle enclosed by two square-ish shapes. For the past six years I have been living with this German passport in another country: The Netherlands. I was not once asked to show it to any official institution.<sup>2</sup>



Picture 1: My own (author's) self-made purse with international travel documents: International Certificate of Vaccination & Passport



Picture 2: last page of the passport: translated from German: "This passport is the property of the Federal Republic of Germany"

<sup>2</sup> I was asked to show my identity card at the city council yet never my passport.

I took the pictures of my passport just before entering the period of fieldwork for this research project in which I dive into the meanings of (having the right) documentation and the temporalities of acquiring residency in the Netherlands. At the moment of picture-taking, I thought I knew the privilege that comes with a European passport, more specifically a German passport. The latter is ranked number one of all European passports in terms of being able to enter different destinations without a visa or with a visa of arrival (190 to be precise<sup>3</sup>). After meeting, living with and experiencing fragments of the everyday life of my collaborators<sup>4</sup> Tamba<sup>5</sup>, Eras, Fatah and Azzam - all non-European young aspiring men who are migrating to the Netherlands through different (legal) paths – I came to understand that I just thought of my own passport and its position in terms of crossing borders. I learned that not only is it an immense privilege to even have (the right) papers that are valid, but also to not think about my documents on a daily basis when walking through the streets and having in mind that the police can just perform random checks on you or the amount of time waiting for the right documents takes.

## FINALLYYYY

12-2-2022: Azzam “You are trying to waste time, I mean to kill time, until you have the second interview. It is like a really bad feeling every day until you receive the invitation. You don’t know when it’s gonna be. It is really a bad feeling. But we try sometimes to do other solutions to fill the gap or space. Because if you don’t do anything there is just a gap.

You don’t have goals in this situation, you can’t study. We do some activities. Sports or hanging out with friends and every weekend I come to Leiden to see my friends to change the place. It feels a bit better rather than to stay the whole duration in the camp”

It is the first of June 2022 and I just received a WhatsApp-message from Azzam:

“I got my second interview date

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<sup>3</sup> [Passports of the European Union - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>4</sup> I will discuss the term collaborator and collaboration in a later section.

<sup>5</sup> Tamba is a pseudonym as he did not wish to be identified in this thesis and also not in the zine.

Finallyyyyyy

It's going to be in 6<sup>th</sup> of July”

I feel so happy and relieved for him! I first text back in joy, congratulating him but a few moments later, I decide to just call him, to hear his happiness.

I met Azzam in January this year and since then he has been telling me that very soon, he will receive an invitation for the second interview from the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) which is a very important step in the asylum application. In the second interview, the IND *hoor- en beslismedewerker* will ask Azzam countless questions – general, personal, intimate and often confronting questions on which the answers will provide the basis for the credibility of Azzam's story and documents to either grant asylum or not. Azzam arrived in Ter Apel 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and has been waiting for the letter to arrive telling him the date of his interview since then. Eight months waiting, eight months uncertainty, and eight months of being transferred from AZC to AZC throughout the Netherlands to even start presenting his case.

With this vignette, I hope to convey that waiting is part of the asylum procedure in the Netherlands. A form of waiting in which one might feel uncertain, how much longer do I have to wait? What will the outcome of the waiting be? As trying to obtain information from the IND is almost impossible, in which working is not possible and the well-being of the people dealing with the Dutch migration and asylum process is not put at the forefront.

## RUTTE SHOULD BE ASHAMED

Prime minister Mark Rutte held a press conference on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May that sparked my attention, to be honest I do not follow the Dutch politics on a regular basis but as soon as Rutte was questioned about Ter Apel, I re-watched that section and looked up the written script of the conference.<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup>The script of the press conference:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/mediateksten/2022/05/13/letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-op-13-mei-2022>

Ter Apel - one of the main application centers which sparks the beginning of the asylum procedure for the majority of asylum-seekers in the Netherlands – some newly arriving asylum-seekers spent the night in tents from the Red Cross, as the AZC had not enough space for the number of people applying for asylum which is limited to 2000 beds. Yet, a number of people had to spend the night in the waiting rooms of the AZC, without access to a bed, but with blankets (Van Soest & Peer, 2022).

In the press conference premier Rutte acknowledged that this situation in Ter Apel is “natuurlijk uitermate slecht” (English: “of course extremely bad”)<sup>7</sup> but also recognized that the asylum procedure is totally overwrought. Not only in the first application but also at the moment someone has a *verblijfsvergunning* and is referred to as *statushouder* that person needs a living space outside of the AZC which is often not immediately possible, resulting in waiting for a house. Rutte blames the lack of *gemeentes* who need to agree to host an AZC, as well as the ‘housing crisis’ in the Netherlands in which there is a general lack of available housing. Interestingly, refugees coming from Ukraine do not have to apply in Ter Apel but have a separate procedure.<sup>8</sup> Some *gemeentes* only want to host Ukrainian refugees and not refugees from other countries which might put even more pressure on the asylum procedure in terms of housing, processing cases and thus also on the waiting times of all other asylum-seekers.

Marcelle Reneman and Martijn Stronks (2021), both researchers from the faculty of law, argue that the amount of time it takes to process an asylum case is deliberately accelerated or decelerated as a form of ‘temporal governance’. Between 2014 and 2019, Dutch authorities have treated asylum cases with lower chances of success faster while simultaneously decelerated cases with higher chances for receiving a *verblijfsvergunning*. Temporal governance thus refers to a “governmental strategy to control and discipline migrants by means of time” (Reneman & Stronks, 2021: 302). Although the authors state they cannot prove that asylum cases that are intricate are officially proposed to be decelerated and deprioritized by the Dutch government<sup>9</sup>, this form of time management and control is the clear

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/rutte-noemt-woningcrisis-als-een-oorzaak-van-overbelast-ter-apel-ik-schaam-me-diep~aa42bac0/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.de%2F>

<sup>8</sup> I will not go into depth of the Russian invasion into Ukraine in February 2022 during my fieldwork period.

<sup>9</sup> This would be considered as unlawful.

outcome of their policy. I cannot make any claims concerning quantitative case analyses, yet also the collaborators I talking to underlines this policy. Tamba received his negative decision within one month, due to a Dublin claim, while Azzam has been waiting for eight months to receive a date for the second interview and Fatah has not yet received a letter with the invitation for the second interview and has been waiting for nine months. The authors furthermore suggest that is strategy should deter more asylum-seekers from applying for asylum in the Netherlands.

This perspective of law and policy is a great starting point for conducting research on the (temporal) experiences of migrants in the Netherlands, yet I want to go beyond numerical and policy analyses and embed this research within visual ethnography.

One of the strengths of an ethnographic approach is that the objective is to dive into intersubjective experiences of people who are in the Dutch migration process. Instead of statistics and numbers such as my collaborators sometimes feel reduced to when interacting with the IND, the current focus lies on faces, stories to relate to, and specific situations and objects.

Writing a thesis while trying to do research through the lense of a postcolonial and feminist approach throughout the fieldwork, co-creation of a zine<sup>10</sup>, and reflecting on methodologies is challenging. Zines are little magazines that are usually following a do-it-yourself principle, they are “[...] non-commercial, non-professional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves.” (Duncombe, 1997: 6). I am the person who owns this powerful passport while Fatah and Azzam are still waiting for the second interview with the IND in their asylum-seeking procedure, Tamba has no legal status to remain in the Netherlands and is seen as undocumented migrant and Eras has a temporary *verblijfsvergunning*<sup>11</sup> for the next 4.5 years. I am truly overwhelmed by how I can give justice to these big concepts of power, positionality, caring and not writing too much about my own feelings, thoughts and only from my perspective. The more I write, I feel I cannot tell the story of someone else and

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<sup>10</sup> The zine is the accompanying audio-visual output, as well as part of the methodological approach to this research project.

<sup>1111</sup> check the glossary above for English translations.

that the migration system is just too much to deal with in its complexity and creating pain that I definitely share with my collaborators.

Besides that all collaborators, including me, share that we in some way migrated to the Netherlands and at the current moment all live in this country, I do not intend to give a coherent story of *the* asylum-seeker or *the* undocumented migrant, instead I want to highlight their subjective experiences. Focusing on the subjective experience of the four collaborators adds to the understanding of the world we live in (MacDougall 2005: 55; Pink 2013: 36) through zooming into documentation and temporalities in order to show how complex and varied migration can be. To date, ethnographic research in the Netherlands on migration from a perspective of asylum-seekers and their experiences within the Dutch migration system has been sparse (Hertoghs, 2019). Whereas research on migration on the whole, across space and time, is almost abundant and many journals are dedicated to different aspects of migration (European Journal of Migration and Law, Comparative Migration Studies, International Journal of Migration and Border Studies, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, Migration and Development, or Asian and Pacific Migration Journal<sup>12</sup> to name a few). However, the majority of migration research in the Netherlands is dominated by the perspective of law and policies (Reneman & Stronks, 2021; Brouwer, Van der Woude, Van der Leun, 2017; review in Hertoghs, 2019).

Delving into the subjective experiences of my collaborators at the background of my own experience of migrating to the Netherlands highlights how rich the narrative of migration in the Netherlands is. Engaging with concepts like power, waiting<sup>13</sup>, documentation and uncertainty through an everyday and contextualized way, I am able to study how for instance the asylum procedure might feel like, instead of quantifying the amount of days spent within the latter (Reneman & Stronks, 2021). What happens on an everyday basis and how is the day structured? In her PhD research, Hertoghs (2019) follows the Dutch asylum procedure from start to end during years of fieldwork, yet focuses on the response of the Dutch state, often in form of IND workers, as well as lawyers consulted in asylum cases. She argues that

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<sup>12</sup> For a greater list of journals, check this website: <https://migration.prio.org/Journals/>

<sup>13</sup> Waiting in this case refers to the concept of waiting (Khosravi, 2021), not the everyday usage of the word.

suspicion is one of the main lenses in which the state manages “in – and exclusion through its asylum procedure” (Hertoghs, 2019: 3).

Although I know I cannot fully give justice to the complexity as well as the experiences we have shared in this thesis, at least I can try and make this research project as collaborative and honest as possible which led me to the decision to co-create a zine. Co-creation refers to the growing participation of creation, as well as circulation of artistic practices and outputs from consumers (Banks & Deuze, 2009). In the case of co-creating a zine, which is traditionally often a collective effort of creation, this means that Tamba, Azzam, Eras and Fatah and I think about the content of the zine together, discuss the order of pictures and film pieces, we make a rather activist and political claim about the current painful migration system and thus co-create an anti-institutional easily sharable zine. I, as the person graduating with this zine, have the main responsibility in creation, sharing, editing and content, but simultaneously, this is still a collective effort which is why everyone shares responsibility in representing a ‘true’ content and in distributing the zine.

Azzam told me how much he dislikes his picture on his v-document, so we decided to create his own document, reclaiming the picture, the information and the categorization of having a certain document which is now part of the zine. This visual gesture and output will not be enough to deconstruct the power relation of him having a Yemeni passport and a v-document in relation to my German passport but co-creating a zine gives space to question these power relations while at the same time questioning the researched/researcher dynamic.

## RESEARCH LAYOUT

This research project is based upon officially ten weeks of fieldwork in different cities and villages in the Netherlands. I make use of the term officially because I am still in close contact with all collaborators at the moment of writing and the process of co-creating a zine has been expanding this period of fieldwork to at least double the amount of weeks. Four male

collaborators from Kenya, Guinea, Afghanistan and Yemen are taking part in this project. Although we all have our own stories and relationship with the Netherlands we share the intention to stay here in our adulthood as we are all in our mid-twenties. Eras, my good friend and main inspiration to dive into this topic of migration, documentation and waiting, introduced me into the challenges and paperwork of migrating to the Netherlands. Tamba, whom I met at the Wereldhuis<sup>14</sup> – a NGO to the services of undocumented migrants – where I continue to work as a volunteer. Fatah is currently waiting for the invitation for an interview with the IND to present his case of asylum while he knows that the IND put all decisions on hold for his country of origin as the institutions are awaiting a report that might change Afghanistan's status to the one of a 'safe country' which would affect the possibility of granting asylum. And lastly, I want to introduce Azzam, who is also waiting for his interview with the IND and does not understand why most of his acquaintances - in a similar position from Yemen - who arrived to Ter Apel either at the same time or later than him have already received their residence permit. I met Fatah and Azzam through a worker at VWN and first engaged in a couple of phone calls before meeting in person.

This research is embedded in visual ethnography which is 'a practice that attends to the visual elements of the worlds that we inhabit in terms of their inseparability from other elements of sensory experience' (Pink, 2013: 47), thereby engaging with theory and methodology through experiences in a different way. This different type of sensory perception through handling a camera and microphones, as well as central to this project the co-creation of a zine, has the potential to engage with migration at an embodied level allowing for expressing and exploring 'knowledge' from a personal level to larger societal and political structures. Thus, this research project has not only this version of a written thesis in front of you which centers the methodological reflection of zine-making entrenched and informed by theoretical conceptions, but also an audio-visual output resulting from the methodology: A zine incorporating pictures, text, drawings, illustrations and QR-codes that lead to short films and soundscapes. This zine is co-created,

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<sup>14</sup>Den Haag Wereldhuis is a center for information and aiming to empower undocumented migrants to take decisions in a well-informed manner. This advice is often in terms of medical access, legal procedures, financial options and creating a network. [https://denhaagwereldhuis.nl/home\\_old](https://denhaagwereldhuis.nl/home_old)

self-published and circulating around different audiences who are invited to dive into the snippets of all collaborators involved in this project. The history of zines is marked by their activist objective and anti-institutional nature and in this case, an attempt to deconstruct and critique power relationships.

Together with Azzam, Eras, Tamba and Fatah, we reclaim the often overlooked experiences of migrants being in the Netherlands and their lived experiences by sharing this zine in- and outside of an academic context in the Netherlands. Reclaiming experiences refers to individualizing, showing faces, stories and gaining a sense of control in the uncertain times of waiting. Zine-making and the final product are essential to tackle the research questions that has been shortly contextualized:

What is the experience of time when acquiring residency in the Netherlands?

# UNPACKING THEORIES

## EMERGENCE OF THE PASSPORT

To elaborate on the importance of documentation, I first want to dive into the historical context of the emergence of the Dutch passport. To better understand why it may still carry a lot of meaning in terms of access and control, I refer to Leo Lucassen's (2018) chapter on the early passport system in Northern Europe. Documents of identification including the passport date back to the 18th century and in the Dutch case are related to the French revolution as the Dutch aimed to prevent French (by then Belgium was part of the Netherlands) bodies and with them revolutionary ideas to enter the borders of the Netherlands. Passports served two purposes, first, to prevent non-Dutch from entering the country and second, to prevent Dutch bodies to leave the country.

By 1813 passports were obligatory for those who wanted to travel in- or outside Dutch borders. By 1830 even an internal passport was required for Dutch citizens and a safety-card (*veiligheidskaart*) for every single foreigner who had to deposit their own passport with the police in order to get this *veiligheidskaart* (Lucassen, 2018: 242). These regulations and necessities for proving one's identity and residence to the state are all ways of controlling and surveillance. Controlling who is moving to which place, keeping certain people, for instance from France, out of the country to avoid any ideas and spread of the French revolution that could crumble the hierarchies and power of the king in the Netherlands.

Another milestone in the evolution of the passport system in the Netherlands is the 1849 Dutch Aliens Act in which the government made sure that they could deport "dangerous and poor immigrants" (Lucassen, 2018: 246), essentially to make use of immigrants who work, pay taxes and keep out those who are considered to be 'troublemakers' which is determined by class and citizenship. This form of keeping track of bodies can be associated to the formation and tightness of the state that links mobility and not-moving to taxation and militarization. Altogether, mobility, power, class and control are

all concepts linked to the formation of the passport system in the Netherlands and in the 18th and 19th century freedom of movement confined by the ownership (or lack thereof) of identification documents.

Furthermore, to highlight the importance of the King not only through visual culture on the passport, the following quote is on the very first page of the inside cover of every Dutch passport:

“In naam van Zijne Majesteit de Koning der Nederlanden, Prins van Oranje-Nassau, enz. enz. enz., verzoekt de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken alle overheden van bevriende staten aan de houder van dit paspoort vrije en ongehinderde doorgang te verlenen alsmede alle hulp en bijstand te verschaffen.”



Picture 3: Cover page of a Dutch passport.

(English: “In the name of His Majesty the King of the Netherlands, Prince of Orange-Nassau, etc. etc. etc., the Minister of Foreign Affairs requests all authorities of friendly powers to allow the bearer of the present passport to pass freely without let or hindrance and to afford the bearer every assistance and protection which may be necessary.”)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This is my own translation.

Any passport ought to be designed in such a way that it is almost impossible to commit fraud and copy a passport which is why there are many secret security measures. These measures include color, reflections, materiality and the chip that carries biometrical data of its holder, many of which are invisible. Invisible, yet perceived are also the power relations and hierarchies of the passport. Why are these documents so important in proofing ones identity, what if I only have a copy of all important documents?

I am myself able to cross borders smoothly, while ‘others’ are checked, blocked from access and stopped; a term Cecilia Menjivar coins ‘liminal legal’. I argue that this experience goes further than crossing borders: Every day in public space, documents and legality play a role for my collaborators. Azzam while having handed in all his documents to the IND for checks and research had no document to show his (legal) identity as he did not receive the so called v-document yet.

## DOCUMENTATION

Who is considered an undocumented migrant? What does being undocumented actually mean. Having no papers? People with a passport that is valid might be considered undocumented migrants, so it is not necessarily owning<sup>16</sup> papers or not. Having no valid visa? Imagine someone entering a country on a tourist Schengen visa issued for ninety days. After the three months have passed and you are still in the country, are you immediately undocumented? ‘Uitstel van vertrek’ – postponing your travel is an option as well.

I engaged with documentation and especially with undocumented migrants through my position as working as a volunteer for *Wereldhuis*<sup>17</sup> – a NGO for advice and a meeting space for migrants without a valid residence permit, located in The Hague. This is also the space in which I first encountered Tamba who is currently waiting for his Dublin claim<sup>18</sup> to pass, so that he can re-enter the asylum procedure in the Netherlands. Suddenly, I was

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<sup>16</sup> Actually the state owns the passport, yet to make it clear what I am referring to, I say a person can own a passport (as well).

<sup>17</sup> <https://denhaagwereldhuis.nl>

<sup>18</sup> The Dublin claim refers to asylum cases for which actually other EU member states are responsible.

in a position to assist in making an informed decision about either trying to regain access to residency through applying for asylum or a Chavez procedure<sup>19</sup> or article 8<sup>20</sup>, medical issues or deciding to keep living without a residence permit. Being in a position of legal ambiguity restrains legal protection and rights, which is especially clear in domestic law on work (Mountz, 2011). Furthermore, migrants as a group are repeatedly homogenized instead of individualized, and from the perspective of law, migration and criminal law are converged into ‘crimmigration’ (Brouwer et al., 2017). As Brouwer et al. (2017) analyze, the framing of immigrants that have no valid residency in the Dutch media<sup>21</sup> points to the emphasis on illegality and thus “defines immigrants as criminals” (Lakoff & Ferguson, 2006: 1). Migrants are thus highly documented, in the asylum process their fingerprints are taken and stored at the *EURODAC* and their legal status is in the foreground of defining their identity.

Bureaucratic acts of documentation and policies rules are in place to make life easier, more controllable and ordered, however, in reality these modes of control create the opposite. Merely by having so many regulations, moments of documentation and instances in which the protocol has to be followed, filling out paperwork creates challenges. Also, not all policies and categories are clear-cut which makes the category of migrants in terms of being undocumented or documented difficult to distinguish and rather overlapping (Garza, 2018).

Graeber (2015) in his book “The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy” makes the former point clear. An example outside of the context of migration that Graeber starts his book with is the following: His ill mother is lying in the hospital and he needs a mandate for her bank account. He had to deal with the hospital’s notary a number of times just to be told by the bank cashier that the signature is in the wrong place and this document cannot be accepted. It took him many days, many phone calls, many times going to the bank and hospital just to get one approval to be able to cover the expenses of his mother’s hospital stay.

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<sup>19</sup> see glossary.

<sup>20</sup> Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights: Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence ([https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/guide\\_art\\_8\\_eng.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/guide_art_8_eng.pdf))

<sup>21</sup> The authors adopt the term unauthorized immigrants.

State practices that are controlling through legal and legislative standards are moments when the authority of the state is clearly felt by an individual. The anthropologist Griffiths (2014) researched that form of state control and uncertainty in British detention centers in which documentation and in their interlocutors' cases not owning valid residence permits and describes this temporal uncertainty by the inability to move, inability to gather information and the occurrence of violent incidents at detention centers. In the Dutch context, Van den Berg (2021) published a photo-book "Wachten" (Waiting) with portraits of asylum-seekers waiting in AZC. I appreciate all the beautiful black and white photos and think the portrait is a impressive account of how waiting can be captured. I am building on this notion of temporalities in the following section.

## TEMPORALITIES

'The all-powerful is he who does not wait but who makes others wait.'  
(Bourdieu, 2000: 288).

Power can be shown in different forms, but as Bourdieu phrased so clearly, making others wait is an excellent way of inseminating uncertainty into the process of acquiring residency in the Netherlands. Experiencing time, according to Sarah Sharma (2013; 2014) is influenced by institutional, economic and cultural conditions that manifest themselves differently according to class, gender and race. Instead of referring to time, she then introduces the temporality of the 'power-chronography' that is structured by different forms of power. The concept of power-chronography is related to documentation, because filling out forms, assembling copies and waiting for appointments takes time. Power-chronography is thus "a form of power structured in specific political and economic contexts, a site of material struggle and social difference" (Jacobson, Karlsen, Khosravi, 2021: 41). Sharma (2014) uses power-chronography as an opening for critically reflecting on time that is politicized, goes beyond individual accounts of time and theorizes on larger societal relationships of powers. I adopt that framework and base the

experiences of time of individuals, namely my collaborators in order to make a claim about temporalities in the Dutch context of acquiring residency.

Time, although a standard and agreed upon metric with an objective measure in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years is an inherently subjective concept when considering its perception. It depends on your position, your gender, race, if you have documents or not. Interestingly, often my collaborators, and more specifically Tamba who is defined as undocumented migrant, have a sense of time that is very immediate, a time of survival. In case you are living on the street and have no place to sleep, you occupy your time with the moment, with thinking about where to get food, where to spend the night, trying the *Daklozenloket*<sup>22</sup> who only let you enter with a BSN but at least you tried. While Azzam and Fatah who are in the asylum procedure have a very different sense of time, characterized by waiting for the interview and thinking of a specific moment in the future that is not set yet but is crucial to their further planning and path.

Jacobson (2020) unpacked the experience of temporality of irregular migrants<sup>23</sup> in Marseille (France) and argues that the waiting at the reception centers in France is a fundamental experience of power. “irregular migrants are not simply ‘put on hold’ or slowed down. Rather, their time is devalued and usurped in endless bureaucratic procedures.” (Jacobson, 2020: 50). The uncertainty of the moment of time one might be checked by the police, or when in a deportation center, when exactly that will happen makes it difficult to make plans for the future.

Khosravi (2021: 14) refers to this form of control and power during a specific experience of time, namely waiting “to keep people waiting, without ruining their hope, is an exercise of power over other people’s time in order to preserve dependency and subordination.” Waiting is not a linear experience, not homogenous and might be experienced as going back and forth. Baraitser (2017) goes beyond waiting in her book “Enduring Time” and describes delaying as an embodied form of political action (Baraitser, 2017: 93f). Being in the present can be defined as being in-between time, a permanent state of being in between the past and the future, a time that can be felt in restlessness and

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<sup>22</sup> see glossary and: <https://www.denhaag.nl/nl/zorg-en-ondersteuning/daklozenloket-hulp-voor-dak-of-thuislozen.htm>

<sup>23</sup> I am using Jacobson’s term of irregular migrants instead of undocumented migrants, the term I am applying.

disturbance. Baraitser wrote her book in the framework of care; care in the sense of feminist ethics of care and simultaneously taking care of time. Remaining in the route to residency in the Netherlands can be seen as a commitment and hence a form of care.

This form of temporality informs the current research strongly because her philosophical quest on the meaning of time and the incorporation of art and activist work dealing with time.<sup>24</sup> Together with Fatah, Tamba, Eras and Azzam, we tried to conceptualize time, especially waiting and how temporalities structures their daily lives.

Zuluga (2015) uses the concept of errance and elsewhere to analyze the journeys of African migrants in Dakar (Senegal), a place in which migrants' journeys are interrupted. They get stuck, plan, reassess or settle on their way to different destinations. Errance, a French term, highlights the non-linear experience of migration which is not marked by a straight line migrating from destination A to B: "Errance instead powerfully alludes to the sense of aimless wandering that characterized my interlocutors' journeys, journeys that get suspended, make loops, and take divergent paths." (Zuluga, 2015: 591). Elsewheres, as part of the conceptualization refers to the spatial experience that is connected to the temporal errance, and shows that a journey has a destination that is somewhere *else* than the current place one is in.

Although the concept of errance is situated in the interruption of a migrant's journey and the movement between country borders, I argue that this experience of time, marked by uncertainty and immobility is also relevant for the Dutch migration context that is often intended as end point of a long journey in case the *verblijfsvergunning* is issued. Waiting is not linear and the uncertainty that is felt by my collaborators is a real one that has a clear outcome – namely waiting for the residence permit decision, waiting for the Dublin claim to end, or waiting for the second interview with the IND to start – the dual uncertainty of first waiting for the date that this outcome will happen and the second uncertainty of whether the decision is a positive or negative one, leads to a precarious time.

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<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately the word count restricts me from going into more depth, but I recommend reading or looking up "The House that Herman Built", I was speechless by the amount of time and care that went into this project. <https://www.designboom.com/architecture/the-house-that-herman-built/>

Exploring temporalities in the experience of acquiring Dutch residency is an important addition to the existing body of literature on migration which is dominated by law and policies.



Figure 1: Hayfaa Alchalabi (2020) called “Refugees Welcome?”

This illustration by Hayfaa Alchalabi (2020) called “Refugees Welcome?” depicts refugees waiting in a room of a governmental institution in Sweden and it inspires this research project by its ability to convey this sense of waiting in a very emotional and relatable way. Closed eyes, body positions leaning forward and down are clearly convey the sadness of these people. Interesting is also the focus on hands which are covering the bodies. In the left upper corner (and on the polls) there is a depiction of a camera that is striped through, meaning that it is not allowed to take pictures in this room. This adds another layer to the visual representation of waiting rooms and the space and emotions that are shown. Visual communication is a powerful tool that adds more sensorial information than only text to the representation of the lives of migrants and asylum-seekers This focus on the visual strength of

displaying a complex situation in just one picture informs my choice on conducting research in a multimodal way and exhibiting my work in audio-visual (zine: 'How much longer?' and a written part that both relate and add to each other.

“Who should I ask? Where should I go?” These are the words of Eras.

Eras referred to the uncertainty, confusion and being referred to from place to place during his process of migration. He received and continues to receive letters and gets document during in-person encounters that he should fill out to receive even more documents. But to receive these documents, he has to wait. Wait, and wait, and wait. And having no idea when the waiting is over is overwhelming to deal with as one action and document builds upon the other.

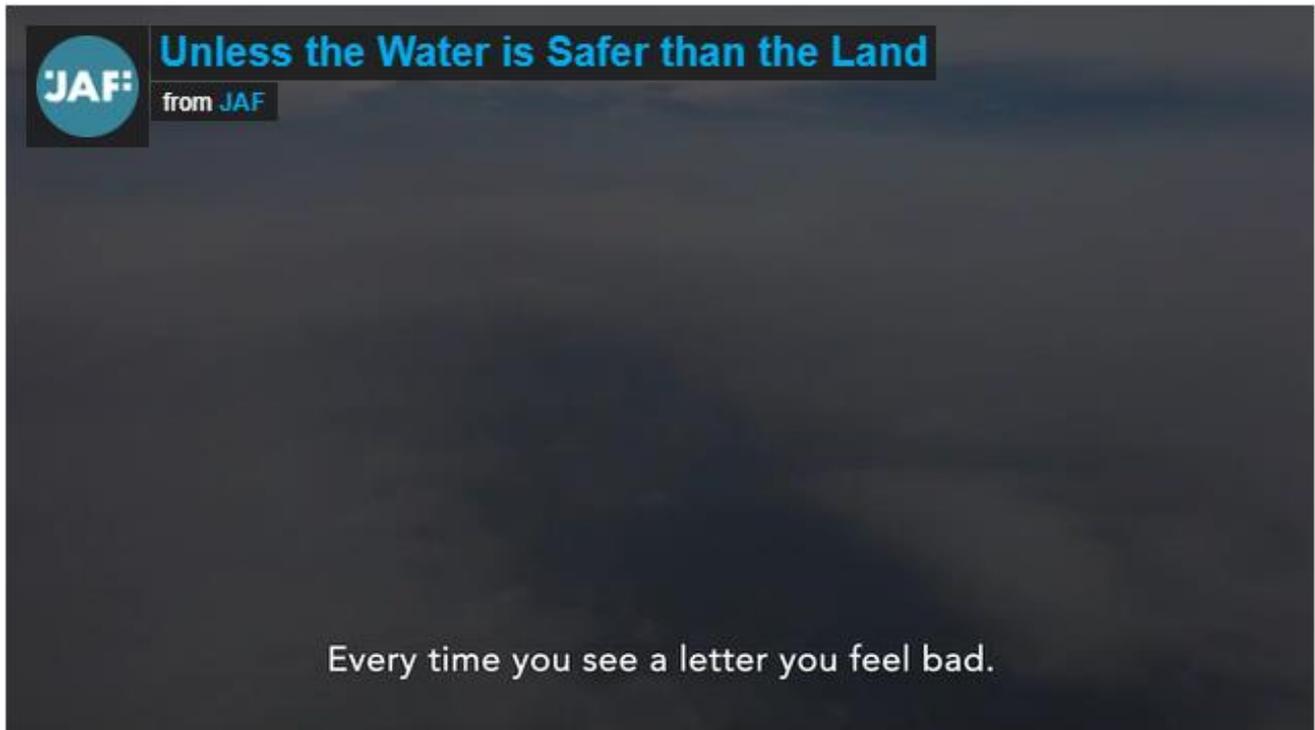
“Let me forward you to my colleague.” These are the words of the *gemeente* worker.

This often heard sentence that came to his mind when we talked about his experience of trying to navigate his waiting and gaining knowledge on where to go and what to do next. How will he get access to a BSN (Burgerservicenummer 'citizen number')? Workers from the IND said they were not responsible for his case and told him to talk to his local municipality that will provide him with the needed BSN so that he could start registering with various (governmental) institutions and most importantly for him, to be able to work.

# METHODOLOGIES

Most of the time that Eras and I spent together was in Kenya and not in the Netherlands, although during the past months of fieldwork were able to see each other on a weekly basis. We met in a course in psychology during a semester abroad within my Bachelor of Psychology, roughly four years ago. We became friends and he taught me a lot about the ways at our little cosmos of the university. Our campus is fenced with armed security at the entrance gate, curfews in the evening, and thus very separate and special within my experiences of Limuru and Nairobi. Through Eras, I was able to grasp the socio-cultural ways of St. Paul's University and could navigate my own way during the time I spent in Kenya. I feel like Eras is now in a similar position as I was and through me telling him about the (bureaucratic) ways of life here in the Netherlands, he is able to better navigate his own life. I help with translating Dutch letters or mails to English, accompanied him to the IND and had endless conversations about documentation and the role of passports in our lives. The choice of methods are influenced by my positionality as researcher. "positionality reveals the politics of identity developed in the field, and the reflexivity that this social awareness arises, in a circular process that keeps experience and interpretation in tension" (Bonfanti, Massa & Miranda 2018: 2).

## AUDIO-VISUAL APPRECIATION



Picture 4: Still from *Unless the Water is Safer than the Land* (2020) by Omrani & Razi

As I touched upon earlier in this thesis, this research is ingrained in visual ethnography and all my methodologies are thus reliant on audio-visual means: Zine-making, sound recording, filming, drawing and also my style of observation and note-taking has visual elements in them. Suhr and Willerslev (2012) argue that emotions, senses and bodily knowledge are profoundly better revealed in film than in written pieces. Moreover, the authors include categories and concepts in the meaning of the term invisible which not only points to sensory experiencing the film but also perceiving, almost interpreting the film. The latter is explained by the notion that (ibid.: 283) perception includes knowledge which shapes the perception of the film. Therefore, the invisible is not made visible by depicting the social reality but actively utilizing montage to surpass the visible towards showing the invisible. In the authors' reply to the comments by other scholars, they stress that the invisible will always remain invisible and thus impossible to show ((Suhr & Willerslev, 2012).

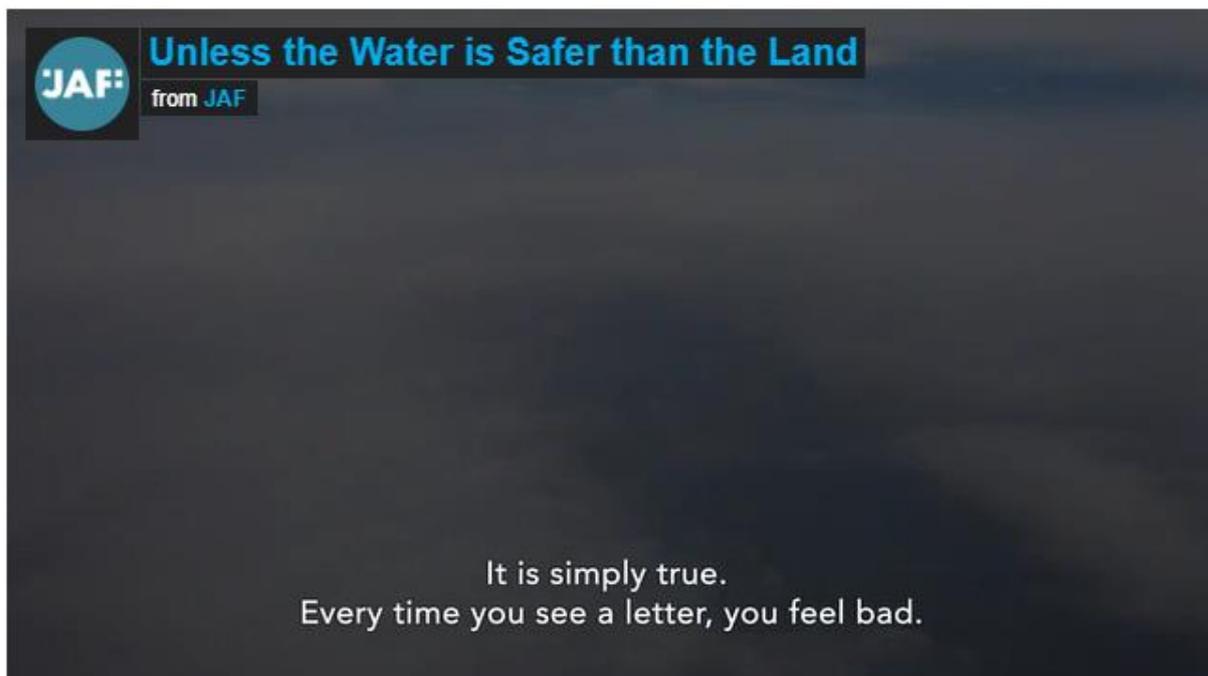
Not only film, but especially sound and music are an essential part in audio-visual research because sound allow for an understanding of the space around us and add to the feeling of being in a specific and situated space and time. I listened to several sonic ethnographies (Karel, 2016; Dauby, 2011; Dauby, 2016) and I was pulled out of my belief of what I assumed sonic ethnographies and sound/ field-recordings are. I just feel like I am transferred to another place and time when listening through good headphones and closing my eyes. Not only does this listening experience underlie that I tried to focus more on sound within the fieldwork, but also within the zine. QR-codes are incorporated that solely rely on sound and no visual, such as the reading of the poem in Farsi by Fatah (page 1 in zine 'How much longer?') or the signing of Azzam (page 10am in zine 'How much longer?'). Soundscapes provide the possibilities to create and relate to space differently and in my own experience to evoke imaginations of the place in a different way compared to sound and (moving) image.

Feld and Brenneis (2004) describe the importance of sound as medium and output for anthropology as sounds and hearing are central to our lived experiences. In their conversation they also touch upon the temporalities and layeredness of time in creating a sense of space which relates to my focus on temporality in waiting. What does waiting sound like?

*Absence of Apricots* by Faezi (2018) is another inspiring film for me because of its strong communication through the immersiveness of its sound and the clean and appealingly composed steady shots. I value and really enjoyed the Shamanistic ritual performed in the film, as well as the storytelling. I tried to incorporate a similar approach of 'performing', almost fictional character in 'How much longer' in the way that the voice of the state – the IND website pieces (page 11, 8 & 9 in zine 'How much longer?') – is engaging and performing with the experiences of Fatah, Azzam, Tamba and Fatah.

I was very inspired by *Unless the Water is Safer than the Land* by Omrani and Razi (2020), an experimental film about the experiences of minor age unaccompanied refugees during their journeys and also situations in their host countries. Not only has this film touched me by the content of the stories and the pain some of the refugees have and continue to endure, more so, I am impressed by the embodied feeling I got while viewing, although it

seems like the visual input is mostly b-roll of land- and urban-scapes<sup>25</sup>. There exists an anonymity of the person who I picture behind the emergence of the subtitles which tell a very personal story leading to an immense sense of intimacy and pain and fragileness through the words visible. Very simple, no flashy background, no bright colors, just a grey background and white letters outlined with black that are able to create this sense of embodiment through that space of interpretation (ibid.: 6:41 & 6:48).



Picture 5: Still from *Unless the Water is Safer than the Land* (2020) by Omrani & Razi

Although I like working with colors and provide stimulation in terms of diverse images and soundscapes, this film inspired me to experiment to create a personal story without ever showing a face, any body parts, no traces of the person apart from the subtitles. This approach of filming thus also influenced the zine in the sense that fragmented stories, written text and anecdotes are visible that may not correspond to a face of either Eras, Tamba, Fatah or Azzam. This anonymous, face- and body-less fragment in the zine has the potential to be highly personal and leaves space for imagining.

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<sup>25</sup> Except for 13:05-14:29 and 16:18-18:39.

Another reason that intrigued the creation of a zine is its affordance of being something material, something that you can hold in your hands like a document, like a passport. You can hold it, examine it, read it, draw and write on it, give it to someone else to share or just keep it on your desk. It invites the reader to turn a page, to perform an active movement which might give the reader more agency in engaging with it in a particular order that is different to a film. Although multimodal websites or i-docs are not printed, material zines, I want to draw some comparisons between the agency of the user to reading a zine.

When I first encountered the Feral Atlas (Tsing, Deger, Saxena, & Zhou, 2020) I navigated endlessly because I encountered more and more details in every corner, leading me to yet another path, another poem, another text, another map. I felt like I could explore the encounters of nonhuman and human worlds, the spaces in between and immerse myself into clicking further and getting closer to the large and complex story of the matsutake. While I appreciate a non-linear, challenging and multimodal output and the ability to click at the spots that interest me, I also got overwhelmed by the amount and simultaneously popping up icons, sounds and videos which I do not want to create with the zine. What I intend to elicit in the reader of the zine is to make their own connections and generate knowledge, as well as letting the reader question certain choices I made. This agency has the potential to create responsibility that weighs on the reader by deconstructing a linear form and deconstructing what an academic output is (Munro, 2018). The reader is invited to think critically about the asylum procedure, about the Dutch migration system and furthermore welcomed to dive into their own set of questions that occur while reading.

This act of exploring and of questioning is a reoccurring theme in the zine output, in the zine-making and throughout the research project in which I often questioned what is at stake for all collaborators. What happens when working together collaboratively and whose zine is it? Is it about ownership? The reader who holds the zine in their hands, is it yours now because you are entitled to read it? Is it mine because I am graduating with writing this thesis and co-creating the zine? Is it either Fatah's, Azzam's, Eras', or Tamba's zine because their stories and their input are fundamental to this zine? There is no (right or wrong) answer to this and potentially this question is not of

interest. What is of interest is the underlying issue of responsibility that is interconnected with ownership. Baker and Cantillon (2022) analyzed how zine-making and zines can be seen in light of community archive by critiquing and adding onto the dominant historical narratives which ultimately questions the ownership of a zine to a community-centered one and not individualized.

Zines are often photo-copied, not officially published and might evoke a feeling of a scrapbook, historically they are underground, anti-institutional and activist (Hroch & Carpentier, 2021; French & Curd, 2022; Gray, Pollitt & Blaise, 2021; Baker & Cantillon, 2022). These characteristics might not evoke publications in line with academic institutions, yet I want to argue that zines, and art and academia in general are highly interconnected (Borgdorff, 2011).

The incentive of creating a zine is in one way or another to share information, to educate and to make oneself heard. Publishing journal articles or ethnographic film aligns with that aim yet their approach is different and zine-making as well as the publishing process might be less hierarchical compared to peer-reviewed journals. Another comparison to research and zine-making is participatory action research (PAR): “A core goal of PAR is to elicit change in one’s own system, privileging collaborative, practical approaches that induce partnerships within the community; to research ‘with’, rather than ‘on.’” (French & Curd, 2022: 78). Even though this form of researching with and co-creating a zine sounds promising and admirable, simply challenging authorship, capacities and acknowledging institutional (and academic) power might still reinforce these existing unequal power structures and approaches to producing knowledge (Takaragawa et al., 2019). The question might arise if academia is appropriating the activist and underground idea of zines.

## ZINE; PROCESS, PRODUCT, ACTIVISM

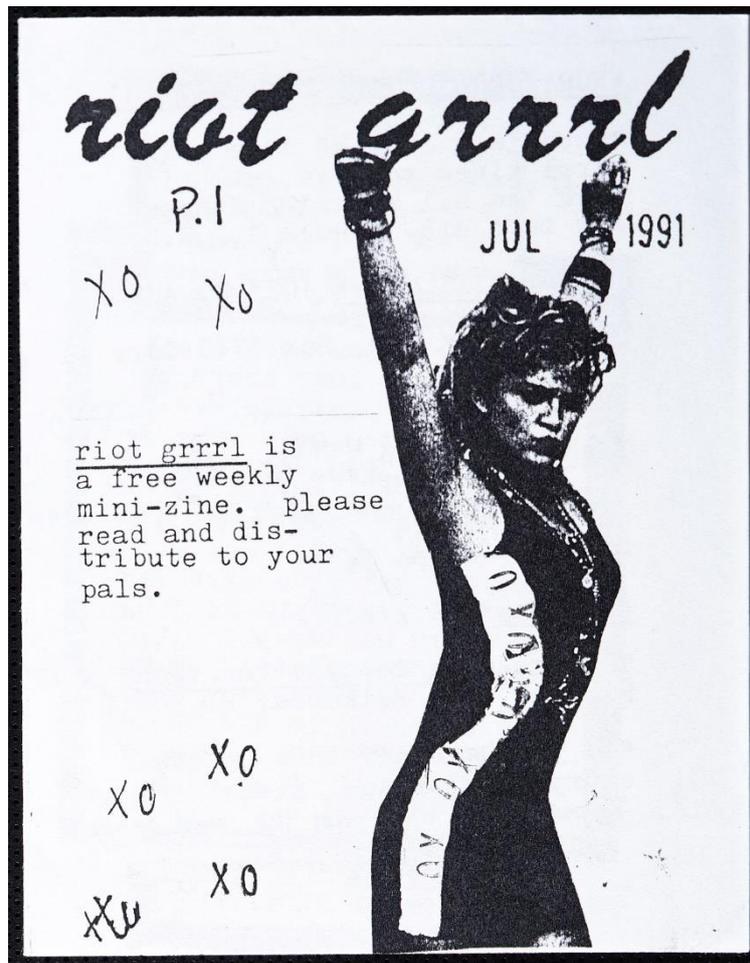


Figure 2: Cover of riot grrrl zine (1991, July). In MoPOP Permanent Collection

Zines date back to the 1970s fandom in the punk scene, as well as the third wave feminist movement in the 1990s with riot grrrl being the distinguished example for zines (Baker & Cantillon, 2022). Zines can take different forms and shapes, can be glossy polished, handwritten or digital but they all share that they are anti-institutional. No ISBN (International Standard Book Number), often underground distribution and as content-wise they often share that: “[Zines show] opposition to aspects of everyday life that are considered by zine readerships mainstream, repressive, exclusionary, technocratic or a combination of these characters” (Watson & Benett, 2020).

The “migrant zine collective” a women of colour activist-based collective is an inspirational source to zine-making for me. Their content is text-based as well as visually very appealing and all aimed at celebrating the

diversity of living as a migrant in New Zealand, as well as critically engaging with “white-dominated power structures that govern our lived experiences as people of colour”. This is relevant for my own research, because I am inspired by their activist nature and the sharing of the everyday life experiences of inequality (sexism, racism, classism and other forms of inequality) through self-published zines in which stories, poems, drawings and photographs are shown. With ‘How much longer?’, we aim for diving into the everyday living space, appointments with the IND, and the experience of waiting as a form of state power. We thus follow the long history of zines as engines for activism and the opportunity to create a personal, yet political statement in their material pages (Baker & Cantillon, 2022; French & Curd, 2022). Especially Azzam is inclined to this approach because he tries to speak about his personal experiences of migration and as an asylum-seeker also in other ways, such as engaging with workshops and film festivals in Zeeland<sup>26</sup>. Also Fatah pursues his activist side in the case of writing about the political situation in Khorasan (Afghanistan) and trying to spark discussions and debates about the Taliban. He has published in different online platforms about his home country but also worked together with me because he wants to shine light on his treatment here in the Netherlands.

Through working together and visualizing some of the forms of power relationships inherent in the relationship between me and all the collaborators, zine-making offers a way to exhibit and tackle this challenge inherent to ethnographic research and art making.

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<sup>26</sup> Zeeland is a province in the Netherlands.

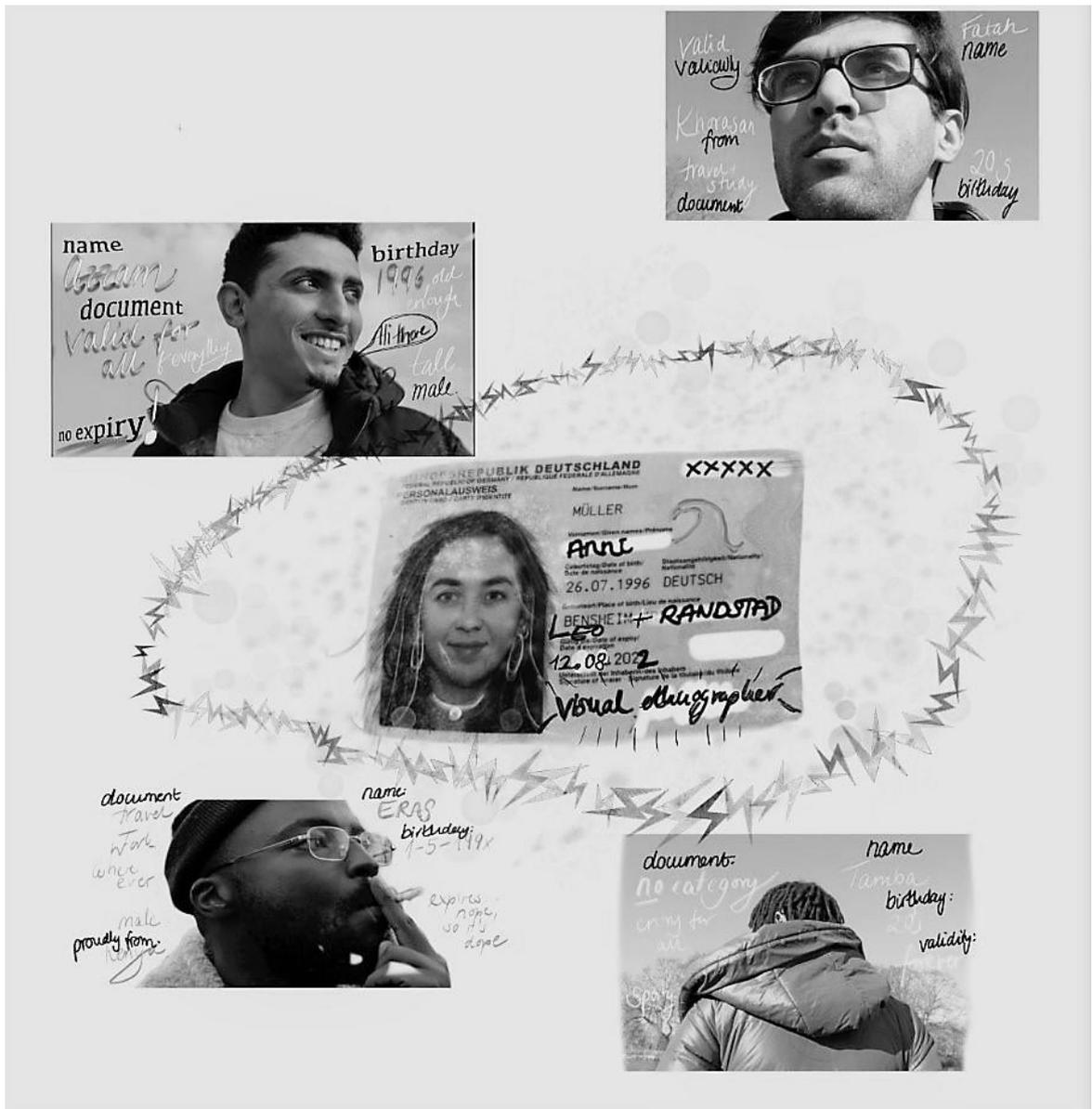


Figure 3: page 12pm in zine 'How much longer?'

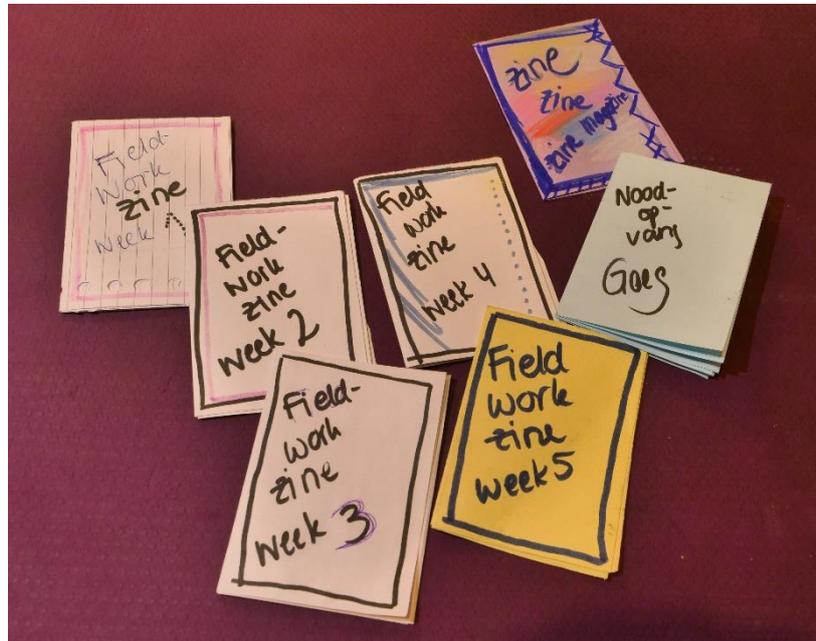
Borgdorff (2011: 44) exemplifies the knowledge production through artistic research as “thinking in, through and with art.” and thus shines light on the process of creating art as form of knowledge inviting for further thoughts. Next to this written thesis, a co-created zine is part of answering the research question of how acquiring residency in the Netherlands if felt, with a clear focus on temporalities and documentation. Before I reflect on the methodological part of this thesis, I want to pause at an essential notion of fragmented experiences. “There is no such thing as documentary – whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques.” (Minh-Ha 1990: 76). In her text, Minh-Ha questions representations of ‘truth’ and the role of the filmmaker as intervening and manipulating

(Minh-Ha 1990: 85), as well as the creation of meaning. For me, this inspires not only the critical engagement of what is real when conducting research with audiovisual means but also lets me engage with representation of my collaborators on a more general level.

The zine, although to be read from beginning to end, is not structured in a chronological, linear way. It is up to the reader on how to immerse themselves, it is possible to start engaging with the zine from back to front or just skip through a couple of pages or QR-code film and sound pieces. Thereby, fragmented experiences that are part of a never attainable coherent story show the ‘truth’ of Eras, Tamba, Fatah, Azzam and my own encounters with power-chronography, errance and bureaucracy in the Dutch migration context.

Zines as a methodological tool incorporate a spirit of collaboration, self-determination and resistance (Baker & Cantillon, 2022). Zines have become well-known throughout the rise of zine-making workshops, zine festivals and through their addition to popular culture (Arnold, 2016). To contextualize the zines that have influenced ‘How much longer?’, I want to mention that they are all small-scale, self-published, circulated in outside mainstream media and free of charge. Another characteristic that distinguishes zines from other forms of printed media like books, comics or journals is that they are (predominantly) community-centered and therefore independent, distributed among the community and intended to connect people.

In order to create a zine and to familiarize myself with the diversity of zines and zine-making, I followed a zine-workshop at worm in Rotterdam<sup>27</sup>, created weekly reflection zines in an easy-foldable manner that represent each week during the fieldwork and finally started ‘How much longer?’ together with Eras, Fatah, Tamba and Azzam.



Picture 6: Self-made zines as reflections of fieldwork

My first inspiration in film - for having more attention to the ones shown on camera in the process and outcome - is Jean Rouch. In *Chronique D'Un Ete* (Rouch & Morin, 1961), the filmmakers incorporated the screening moment in the final version of their film in which the interlocutors reflect on what has been shown. Filming the interlocutors' reactions (1:17:49-1:21:57) adds more depth in the sense of giving them more authority and the ability to out critique. I followed Rouch's style and incorporated a QR-code (page 1pm in zine 'How much longer?') in which Tamba and I talk about how the zine could be distributed in the future and what his stakes in the zine are in a manner in which my positionality as researcher but also as European-passport-holder is expressed.

In order to embed this sound-piece into the zine, I relied on an audio-visual approach to ethnography. Filming, creating photographs, drawings, recording sound, folding and last but not least participant observation and

<sup>27</sup> <https://worm.org/production/zinecamp-2021-day-2/>

interviews are the main methods I relied on. I will not go into depth of all methods, including their merits and demerits, as the word count of this thesis is limiting me. Hence, I will highlight certain choices in the zine, such as the font used in this thesis and in the zine and the significance of simple binding and black and white printing.

Ingold (2014: 389) puts it beautifully “Surely participant observation, if nothing else, is just such a practice. It is one that calls upon the novice anthropologist to *attend*: to attend to what others are doing or saying and to what is going on around and about; to follow along where others go and to do their bidding, whatever this might entail and wherever it might take you. [...] Indeed, waiting upon things is precisely what it means to attend to them.” Participant observation and attending to my collaborators lived experiences allow for a different kind of knowledge, namely the immaterial, invisible and hidden parts of culture (MacDougall, 1998). It is a kind of knowledge that might even be implicit and ‘unknown’ to my collaborators but serves the relevance of creating meaning through the body as whole and not solely through spoken words. I aimed to humanize and give individual identity, voice and sound to the system of numbers, of letters, of waiting; of bureaucracy and documentation. I will wait and in the past waited with my collaborators but this waiting is also reflected in the introspection, feelings and emotions that are experiences, it is with all the senses (Khosravi, 2021). It is a whole-body experience that I simply cannot fully engage in in my personal situation. I am not waiting for my Dutch residency. To constantly seek for new forms of methods to co-create meaning and data, I explored participatory and performative methods (Pink, 2013; 2015). Observations are reflected and inform the written parts of zine (page 9am in zine ‘How much longer?’), for instance on the reflection of being in the *Noodopvang* in Goes.

## NOODOPVANG

It is a Wednesday, I spent 2.5 hours to even get to this village in Zeeland which is quite far off the Randstad if you keep in mind that I can cross the Netherlands from West to East in about 2 hours and end up in Germany. Before I entered, I had to state my name and my objective here, got a name tag, a key for the toilet and then was allowed inside to meet Fatah.

I hear people talking in languages I do not understand, I can hear that Arabic is one of them and I can only guess that one sounds like Igbo but to be honest, I don't know. Fatah and I sit on a table in the 'common room' of the *Noodopvang*. I am observing, trying to take in the sounds and visual inputs I have while Fatah is drawing. COA who are managing the camp told me I am not allowed to film or photograph anything inside which is one of the reasons why I asked Fatah to draw how he sees his current living space: An emergency refugee camp for men who seek asylum in the Netherlands. Fatah told me that he had no choice in selecting a location in which he wants to spend his time waiting for a decision from the IND or rather for his second interview. Also, he was transferred a couple of times and at the moment of writing he is in Budel, a much larger camp with rooms, facilities to cook for himself and more privacy compared to the 320 beds in one big hall which is intended for events and has no daylight in it. I draw myself and focus almost solely on the beds. Rows of bunk beds, numbered; the rows are categorized in letters and are right next to each other. The only privacy you have is when you close the little plastic curtain on your bed. Fatah draws and experiences the *Noopovang* differently. He draws an outline from a bird's eye perspective. Including the showers, toilets, common room, the study area, washing machines and the beds. Fatah keeps himself very busy with a structured day, learning Dutch, studying history and politics, reading about the news in Afghanistan and writing essays about the future and how to deal with conflict. Every day at around 3pm he does exercise for an hour, eats something, showers and goes back to reading. The way he drew the area is very much in line with his daily structure. He points with his index finger on the rooms and paths he takes and says he does all this structuring because he wants to claim his agency "I don't want to rely too much on other people. I rather do my own thing and I'm happy with that. I see others. I see how they are just staying in bed, having nothing to do. I'm not like that. Not having anything to do is actually a problem. I don't want to get depressed."

I am dazed at how rational and practical Fatah reacts to the lack of structure and just creates this structure for himself. I tell him that I am surprised in a very positive way that he seems to cope so well with waiting. He simply replies "There is nothing else I can do than waiting, so I rather make it my own. It's not so bad. And more importantly, I do not lose hope". While I'm

still thinking about his words Fatah asks for an eraser and keeps on drawing and perfecting his interpretation of the *Noodopvang*. My attention is drawn back to the sounds. Men talking, one man sitting at the table next to us playing Afrobeats from his phone, others drinking tea, many footsteps and silently the pen touching the paper of Fatah's drawing.

Drawing is another method that is crucial to creating 'How much longer?' and to understand how Fatah forms his day during the waiting process for his asylum procedure. Drawing provides the opportunity to visualize implicit and embodied knowledge, such as the bodily perception when waiting. This kind of participatory drawing enables my collaborators to show, not tell and thus, helps me to answer the research question and in co-creating the zine. Causey (2017: 11) supports the methodological use of "seeing-drawing" in which participating as in actively seeing and interpreting is connected to looking or rather observing with great focus. My first zines are all drawn and written by hand and not in predominantly digital editing space as it is the case for this zine. Drawing allows for a different engagement with the materiality of the paper, feeling its structure and carrying the zine already in your hands during the process of creation instead of printing it after.

The materiality of the zine is an additional factor of why it fits to this research project. You have to carry it, it is made of paper and you have to engage with it by opening it, turning the pages and maybe not even start with the first page but the last one instead. It can be folded in another way, drawn upon, striped through or even erased. The size of an A5 zine invites the reader to engage with it compared to a large, glossy A4 print that conveys the aura of officiality and glossy professionalism. The solely usage of the font 'Coconut' by Sara Lavazza which is described as "an arrogant two style non-conventional type family"<sup>28</sup> is a feminist act, as I argue in the following. Referencing and employing a font created by a woman challenges gender norms in design which are predominantly fonts by men (Jurgens, 2017). Design and font is not only important in aiding the readability, but also font designs are important in understanding a visual language that I intend to convey as

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<sup>28</sup> For more fonts created by non-men, check this website by badass libre fonts by womxn: <https://www.design-research.be/by-womxn/>

irregular and subtly challenging the (gender) norm in visual culture. Although all my collaborators are cis-male, it is important for me to act from my own principle of intersectional feminism. Therefore, this research, from deciding on the topic of migration to the distribution of this thesis and the zine is encouraged by and enacted through what I refer to as feminism and post-colonialism. Through the way of relating, speaking nearby, and working together, as well as incorporating ethics of care (Chen, 1992; Minh-Ha, 1989; Minh-Ha, 1990; Held, 2006).

Interviewing, a method central to qualitative research and incorporated with the aim to understand my collaborators' values, norms, beliefs and attitudes (Bryman, 2012) did not lead to the intended outcome. Although I tried to only ask open questions and have a semi-structured interview, it felt too unnatural and staged. Especially with Eras whom is my friend for a couple of years now this change of me being an interviewer and he a researched interviewee did not feel organic. There is no interview script in 'How much longer?', yet the film and audio bits (QR-codes) are in a style that is not observational cinema but closer to interviewing. For me the focus on the rapport and good relationship I have with the person is more important than showing the most cinematographically beautiful shots. This style is furthermore conveyed by the pictures that are present in the zine, they are exclusively stills from recorded film. Additionally, all the pictures, drawings and text is printed in black and white.

Black and white printing has several reasons, first of all, it is a cheaper than on printing color which is an important part in self-published zines and in the DIY-mode. Another reason is that accessibility to the zine is crucial – when you open the first page, you are encouraged to copy, print and distribute the piece. Not only is this aspect of sharing the zine with a copy (which is cheaper in black and white and therefore more accessible to a larger group of people) essential, also the simple binding method with an rubber band allows for easy access to the pages, reassembling them and feeling the materiality of the pages. I furthermore hope that this engagement has the potential to involve the zine readers in the act of self-publishing, spreading their ideas and potentially sparking (political) movements. This connecting part of zine reading comes in handy as it invites the readers to share their thoughts, figure out what the lines might mean that are spread throughout 'How much

longer?’<sup>29</sup>. It is okay and wishful to not understand every detail of the zine but rather give agency to the reader to interpret for themselves, to conduct their own research or to ask friends or strangers on the train – the main part is to share knowledge and open up discussions on the migration system in the Netherlands based on these four young men (and my own engagement with migrating from Germany).

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<sup>29</sup> A little hint on my intention: Lines represent borders, as well as timelines, yet feel free to share your own interpretation with me.

# CONCLUSION:

## How much longer?

### ON COLLABORATION

8-2-2022

It is much more difficult than anticipated to truly work in a collaborative manner because some of the challenges I have encountered are that my collaborators do not want to engage with the research in an in-depth manner.

They are completely fine with me asking them questions, hanging out, experiencing their day with them but when it comes to ideas they have in mind or when I ask about what their role is and how they want to shape this research project, I often get the answer that they don't know or do not bother. I thus feel that the project is my responsibility and that I have to present their stories and experiences in a correct manner that is true and close to them but without receiving more input from their side. The feedback sessions were not as successful as I hoped because again, I asked specifically about methods they liked that we did together or some things they disliked or particular communication that was off but again, there was no deep engagement and no discussion. I am really struggling to find more ways on how to receive feedback from my protagonists and sense that they are happy and comfortable to help me but do not want to go beyond and 'make it our project'.

I wrote this reflection in my field notes in February, five weeks into full-time fieldwork and at that moment thought that I am not able to work and create this thesis together. My expectations were that Eras, Azzam, Tamba and Fatah are eager to share, to create and have many ideas on artistic reflections about their experience of time and documentation – which was not the case during the first weeks. However, especially in the editing and zine-making process which occurred mainly after the official ten weeks of fieldwork, I

predominantly met Azzam and Tamba to watch and edit the film outputs, as well as the zine drafts.<sup>30</sup>

This process was not only fun and insightful, moreover the moments of feedback and co-creation are central to zine-making because they showed me which parts are most important to them, which details we might have missed or even potentially misunderstood. Showing material and short edited pieces of film I created and thereby displaying my first analysis of the fieldwork only develops into co-creation of zine-making by discussing and having continuous instructions from all collaborators. My first discouraging moments of doing research collaboratively are valuable and inform that working together is not an easy process. I experienced that input and feedback and more engagement on designing the final audio-visual output of this thesis 'How much longer?' fundamentally started with me first creating something as a basis to give feedback to. Something material that provides the possibility to be changed.

To create another layer to the zine, we printed the first drafts Azzam and Tamba wrote on the zine to change, add and delete anything that they wanted. After that first moments of feedback, I edited the zine digitally again, printed it again and we repeated that process of going back and forth. Tamba and I audio-recorded one of these feedback moments and an excerpt is added to the zine as well, in order to show the importance of co-creation.

As time passed, Azzam was transferred again to a different AZC which is located at a calmer place which was great news for his wellbeing. He told me he finally was able to sleep throughout the night without much noise and feels more control and privacy, having a room shared with only three others who are out a lot. Page 8am in zine 'How much longer?') of the zine, in which he explains how he arrived at the *Studio*<sup>31</sup> in Middelburg. His transfer thus became very interesting as a basis to reflect on as he does not live at the Studio anymore and he was able to share how distressed he felt in the Studio.

The question of ownership, responsibility and doing research collaboratively in a multimodal way of co-creating a zine does not mean that

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<sup>30</sup> Fatah was transferred to another camp close to Maastricht, while Eras found another job in Nijmegen and works 6 times a week. Both distance and time constraints created challenges in meeting physically. Azzam and Tamba were the main collaborators in writing on the zine as we could regularly meet physically. Feedback from Fatah and Eras was mainly through phone and is therefore incorporated through my digital editing.

<sup>31</sup> Studio 58 - that is the name of the event hall in which COA created an emergency shelter (Noodopvang) in Middelburg.

power relationships are dissolving, that a Western gaze is not reproduced, or that the dissemination of the zine is reaching a diverse audience. Takaragawa et al. (2019: 1) argue “Although the idea of multimodal anthropology may challenge dominant paradigms of authorship, expertise, capacity, and language, we argue that there is nothing inherently liberatory about multimodal approaches in anthropology.” Multimodality and more specifically zine(-making), as process and product, points towards generating knowledge that is not restricted to a specific (‘typically scientific’) form but allows for different interpretations and multi-layered ways of knowing and sensing. Which ultimately might not change anything in terms of ongoing power imbalances of legal status, gender, class, skin color or ability, as Ahmed (2007: 149) questions: “What does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible actually do?” I have no straight-forward answer to this question and often I feel like I failed to co-create a zine and to write this thesis that gives more context and allows for reflections of this research project process and outcome.

I shared this thought with all collaborators and especially Tamba reacted almost outraged to it because he could not see my point, as he supports the zine, its content and wants to share it not only with his friends in the Netherlands but even with friends and acquaintances he has in West Africa. Also Azzam is content with the zine and feels the urge to distribute it, yet keeps encouraging me to edit a coherent film with the footage we have created, instead of having short film and audio-pieces accessible as QR codes. The relationship to Eras changed throughout the zine-making process, as this was our main topic of conversation when we had time to meet (virtually), as he is currently very busy with working two different jobs simultaneously. We tried to discuss power relationships and often compare our situation and relationship in the Netherlands with how it was when we meet and lived together in Kenya. Before the start of the research, we also talked about our legal status and migration but the majority we spent together was filled with taking walks, going to cafes and bars, as well as concerts and felt more like being friends in an ‘equal’ position.

As the zine and the whole research sparks and hopefully continues to invite people to reflect and engage with migration, power, temporalities and the importance of the ‘right’ legal documents, I want to argue that this might

be the answer to Ahmed's question (2007: 149): Engaging in whatever way with making the invisible power visible and then reflecting on how we could make these power relationships crumble. This of course takes time and we should make sure to actively take care of time (Baraitser, 2017).

## SWEATY HANDS

21-11-2022

On the stairs of the communal house in which Eras lives, four different letters were laying down, he went through them and saw this letter from the IND. His hands became sweaty, leaving a little mark and warmth on the envelope.

While we walked up the stairs to the third floor, where the kitchen and also his room are located he seemed nervous already. The moment we were in his room, he opened the letter quickly and I noticed how his eyes were filled with anticipation and then a little detached or confused. I was waiting for his reaction first but then he just looked at me and said. "Always in Dutch. Anni, can you read it for me? I cannot understand anything."

Letters are the way that the IND communicates with all collaborators, they wait for letters, for a piece of paper that is so important in managing their uncertainty with regards to when the next appointment is. A letter, conveying the potential for the IND to have a positive or negative answer, maybe make Fatah or Azzam wait longer for their second interview is still written in Dutch. So even though the information shared by the state arm of the IND is literally black and white in their hands, they are not able to understand it and thus need more time and effort. Relating this back to the concept of power-chronography, different forms of power, in this case of the state structure temporality differently for people with a legal residency and their ability to understand Dutch.

Another situation in which this concept and temporalities are structured differently for my collaborators is when Azzam talks about his v-document.

"I do not have any papers, they are all at the IND, my passport, my ID card, my birth certificate, everything is checked right now. And getting an appointment to pick up my V-document takes very long, all appointments are

booked and I have to wait 6 weeks in order to collect it. But I was trying to go beyond the booking and just refreshed the browser again and again. So I was able to get an appointment quicker because someone cancelled theirs and I sneaked in! It feels good to have a v-document, because you know, the police can always stop you and check and then you have nothing to prove you are here legally.”

Documents are thus important in feeling secure and being able to move in (public) space more freely. ID-cards have a certain meaning and might serve as entry-tickets to certain places within society and between countries. Azzam’s relationship to his v-document made me aware of how naïve I was in thinking that I know about the value of having a German passport and only thinking about my privilege in crossing borders almost effortlessly. I came to understand that documents are an important material tool to prove one’s position and right to be. Somewhat contradictory is the situation of Tamba who has no valid residency until the end of 2023 which is the time he can re-enter the asylum procedure. Tamba explained how he does not think about papers on a daily basis, he works illegally, lives illegally is not registered but amplified how he lives day by day. He said that if he would think about his papers, he would be anxious, be in his head and ‘go mad’. His relief of not engaging with waiting or documentation is to exercise, play football and go to the local parks.

While analyzing and writing this research project, I visited a performative theater “Salomonsoordeel”<sup>32</sup> (English: “Judgement of Solomon”) piece (Den Boer, 2021) based on the asylum case of Hassan from Gaza and the decision of the IND *hoor- en beslismedewerker* Peter. This theater piece tackled the question of responsibility for engaging with and deciding on Hassan’s asylum case. It made me realize that the IND and the workers at state institutions are only part of the larger structures of power and migration (policy). This is also the reason why I incorporated the paragraph on prime minister Rutte’s response to the chaotic and inhumane situation at Ter Apel. Larger political structures, policies and governmental strategies of

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.tgilay-salomonsoordeel.nl/>

temporal governance (Reneman & Stronks, 2021; Hertoghs 2019) all influence the daily lives of people acquiring residency in the Netherlands.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research project is sparked by my own experiences with migrating to different countries and currently living as a non-Dutch citizen in the Netherlands, I thus have been in contact with bureaucratic issues of visa, housing, and registrations myself, however, from a very privileged position white, middle-class, female German passport-holder. This research project became so close to my heart because I have seen the pain and uncertainty that the bureaucratic immigration system can cause and I intend to unpack and highlight the inequalities and (power) structures of documents and temporalities that many migrants have to deal with in individual ways. I realized how much meaning a simple document can carry on a day-to-day basis and not only for crossing borders.

Embedding this research within the anthropological discourse of temporalities, such as power-chronography (Sharma, 2013; 2014), errance and elsewhere (Zuluga, 2015), and waiting (Khosravi, 2021) allowed me to look at the experience of time and documentation while acquiring residency in the Netherlands. Although the experience of temporalities and uncertainty within asylum cases or undocumented migrants has been researched ethnographically in Britain (XXX) and France (XX), this research contributes to the discourse in the Netherlands. Additionally, I expanded on the assets of visual ethnography engaging with the visual, sensorial and invisible elements of the experience of time and documentation (Willerslev & Suhr, 2012; Lawrence, 2020; Pink, 2013). Employing zine-making as methodological tool, as well as the zine 'How much longer?' as accompanying audio-visual output to the written thesis enabled me to combine art and anthropology in a meaningful way through co-creation and resulting discussions with all collaborators. In line with the often activist nature of zines and their non-documented distribution (Duncombe, 1997; Arnold, 2016; Gray et al., 2021), we hope to engage and inspire the readers to further engage with the role of the

state in the larger framework of migration and shine light on the ways in which reclaiming the notions of documents and structuring and controlling one's daily lives can aid in the constant waiting and coping with the feeling of uncertainty.

# FIGURES & PHOTOGRAPHS

Picture 1: My own (author's) self-made purse with international travel documents: International Certificate of Vaccination & Passport – Müller, 2021

Picture 2: last page of the passport: translated from German: “This passport is the property of the Federal Republic of Germany” - Müller, 2021

Picture 3: Cover page of a Dutch passport. - Müller, 2021

Figure 1: Hayfaa Alchalabi (2020) called “Refugees Welcome?” in Alchalabi, H. (2020). *Refugees Welcome?: A study of Structural Apathy towards refugees in Sweden-How can illustrative storytelling challenge the socio-political restrictions of independent refugee narrations in Sweden?*.

Picture 4: Still from *Unless the Water is Safer than the Land* (2020) by Omrani & Razi

Picture 5: Still from *Unless the Water is Safer than the Land* (2020) by Omrani & Razi

Figure 2: Cover of riot grrrl zine (1991, Juy). In MoPOP Permanent Collection

Figure 3: page 12pm in zine ‘How much longer?’ - Müller, 2022

Picture 6: Self-made zines as reflections of fieldwork - Müller, 2022

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