CLAIMING TO BE NORMAL

THE STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN AMSTERDAM AND TURIN

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CHAPTER 1

CAN IRREGULAR MIGRANTS BE CITIZENS?

Can irregular migrants be citizens? At first, this might seem an impossible idea. Being 'irregular' implies not being even legally recognized as a resident migrant, let alone a citizen. Citizenship is often seen as something you either have or do not have. Of course, people may aspire to citizenship. But this does not change the basic premise: you are either recognized or you are not; and, in the latter case, you remain an 'irregular migrant'. But let us consider the case of Mario*, an irregular migrant living in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

> *Vignette Mario*
> The first time I met Mario, he was playing djembe during a performance of his band in an Amsterdam community centre. After playing, the band spoke with the audience about their situation as irregular migrants. Over the months I spent researching irregular migrants in Amsterdam, I slowly got to know Mario. Originally from the Ivory Coast, at the time I met him, he was 32 years old. Mario was part of We Are Here, a group of irregular migrants who tried to make the situation of irregular migrants in the Netherlands visible; they organised protests, and lived in squats. At times, Mario considered himself a leading figure of the group's francophones. He had been in

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* Pseudonyms are used throughout.

the Netherlands for more than half his life, arriving when he was a minor. Therefore, he had been to high school in the Netherlands. Yet due to 'circumstances', he didn't receive his diploma. He said that this was something he now desperately regretted. He never specified the reason he didn't receive his diploma, only that he himself was partly to blame and that it was partly because of immigration issues. Yet, because he attended a Dutch school and due to his long residence in the country, he spoke Dutch very well. Some years before I met him, he had a son with a Dutch woman. However, at the time of my research, he rarely saw his son, since the relationship was already long ended. Mario hoped that times would change and that one day he would be able to provide for his family.

When I first met him, he lived in one of We Are Here's biggest squats, in which he inhabited one of the largest rooms in the building. His room was always very tidy, his double bed neatly made; on the floor next to it, he showcased his modest sneaker collection, all the pairs neatly polished and in a row. On the coffee table, he always kept a plate of cookies, which he offered to his guests, like me. On one of my visits, he introduced me to his 'mothers', two older ladies from the neighbourhood who visited him frequently, and to whom he referred to as 'Mama Ingrid' and 'Mama Anne-Marie'.

Circumstances could not have been more different when, after the authorities shut down the squat in which Mario lived comfortably, I visited him in his new squat, an abandoned thrift shop. The squat was one large open space, a bit like a warehouse, inhabited by more than 50 people. Against three of the four walls, matrasses were stacked up. Small groups of men sat together in silence in the corners. Some played ping-pong or card games. Others watched movies on an old television set. Still others just rested on their beds. I found Mario on the couch that he managed to bring from his old room, surrounded by plastic bags holding his belongings. On the new 'coffee table', a cardboard box, stood four half-litre beer cans, two of them empty. He was upset about the move, and as soon as I sat down, he launched into a hasty and emotional monologue in Dutch. Which went something like the following: 'You know, my colour is orange. Because you know the Netherlands is red, white, and blue, and my

country is orange, white and green, but the Netherlands has orange as well. Because you know… the King. So orange is my colour because it is both countries. You know, the Netherlands is my country. Sixteen years I have been here. And I lived everywhere: Leiden, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Den Haag. I lived everywhere. And the king and also Mark Rutte, they are also orange. You know the king is your king, but he is also my king. And Rutte is your prime minister but he is also my prime minister. I think I just need to talk to him. We need to talk and then I can explain the situation. Maybe it will change something'.

This study is about the citizenship of irregular migrants like Mario. Irregular migrants are migrants who, for various reasons, fall outside the standard trajectory for obtaining a residence permit and inclusion in the (welfare) state. Because of this, both inside academia and out in the world, irregular migrants are not usually seen as members of a political community or potential citizens. Mario's situation, however, shows how—even though he does not have formal permission to live in the Netherlands, which can result in extreme hardship—he has managed to live relatively normally during prolonged periods of his life. He speaks the language, had a house, a family, a social network, played music in a band, felt a connection to Dutch politics and a sense of belonging in Dutch society; he just lacked formal recognition of this. Mario managed to have valuable relationships with citizens and participate in society to a certain extent.

He felt 'orange' and his participation, social relations and ties, feelings of belonging, could also be seen as indicators of connections to a community, country, or state. Mario's story shows how irregular migrants are officially excluded; yet attempt and manage to find alternative ways to secure at least some form of inclusion. It suggests that considering a residence permit the only indicator of inclusion might be too narrow a definition. Indeed, it could serve as an example for how a binary understanding of citizenship, being either included or excluded, does not do justice to the lived reality of irregular migrants.

1.1 IRREGULAR MIGRANTS BETWEEN INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Irregular migrants are formally excluded from the societies in which they reside. However, in practice this does not preclude them from citizen-like activities, such as living and participating in these societies. Nor does it completely preclude them from becoming part of (political and social) communities. The existence of irregular migrants questions static understandings of nation-state and citizenship, which assume a nation-state to be a collection of full, formal, citizens, or people who are otherwise formally entitled to be present in a territory, under the premise that everyone is a citizen somewhere. Yet, this binary idea of citizenship cannot account for an empirical reality in which irregular migrants live and participate in and construct forms of belonging and thereby membership and citizenship in a state.

It has long been recognised that citizenship is not an absolute, but rather composed of many different parts. Conflating one element of citizenship, mostly legal citizenship status, with the whole of citizenship does not allow us to observe how persons can be citizens by certain standards, but not by others (Cohen, 2005, pp. 223, 234). Citizenship could be interpreted as the condition that enables being recognised as a participant in a (political) community, that is, 'being political' (Isin, 2002). It could therefore be seen as a sort of membership relation that ties the individual to the community, consisting of various elements, which include: legal status, rights, participation, and identity (Bloemraad, 2000). According to this definition, irregular migrants are in many ways in between inclusion and exclusion: they are not formal citizens; they lack legal status, but they possess other elements of citizenship, which they acquire informally. This implies that the different elements that comprise citizenship may be obtained in various ways that combine distinct strategies or acts.

This is what 'critical citizenship'* scholars have argued in recent years.

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* In this thesis, I refer to the collective body of work on informal or substantive citizenship as well as citizenship from below as 'critical citizenship studies'. I am aware that the field of critical citizenship studies is not homogeneous, and that conceptualisations of forms of informal and substantive citizenship, and citizenship from below, are subject to debate.

These scholars increasingly see citizenship as more than just a status bestowed by the state, but as an *enactment of belonging* (see, for instance, Ataç, Rygiel, & Stierl, 2016; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; McNevin, 2013; Neyers, 2008; Rygiel, Ataç, Köster-Eiserfunke, & Schwiertz, 2015). The body of literature in the broadly defined field of critical citizenship studies describes the processes by which those formally excluded from citizenship nonetheless create citizenship as 'citizenship from below' (see, for instance, Ambrosini, 2016a; Ataç et al., 2016; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Rygiel et al., 2015; Shinozaki, 2015). Citizenship from below is often described in relation to social movements and political mobilisation of irregular migrants as part of migrant action groups (Ataç, 2016; Bhimji, 2016; Cappiali, 2016; Nicholls & Vermeulen, 2012; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2016; Raimondi, 2019; Rygiel, 2011; Swerts, 2014a). Irregular migrants strive for and partly achieve gradual or incremental inclusion (e.g., Bulmer & Rees, 1996; Cockburn, 1998; Das, 2011) or differential inclusion (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013, pp. 157-159) as a result of these struggles. The mobilisation and struggles of (irregular) migrants for citizenship is sometimes even referred to as a 'new era of protest' (Ataç et al., 2016; From the Struggles Collective, 2015). All over Europe, social movements of refugees and undocumented migrants have aimed to influence politics to improve their situation (e.g., Ataç, 2016; Ataç, Rygiel, & Stierl, 2016; Cappiali, 2016; Chimienti, 2011; Monforte & Dufour, 2011). Some theorists interpret this through the lens of challenging practices of bordering, by going against or resisting the forces that exclude irregular migrants, both at physical borders and during everyday practices of exclusion and bordering (e.g., Dadusc, 2019). Many migrant social movements are involved in squatting (e.g., Belloni, 2016; Dadusc, 2019; Maestri, 2018; Mudu & Chattopadhyay, 2016; Raimondi, 2019) or occupy social spaces in other forms (e.g., Cappiali, 2016; Rygiel, 2011; Sandri, 2018). In these cases, irregular migrants are between inclusion and exclusion, since they find ways to become (more) included in substantive citizenship, from the margins.

My research aims to understand this in-between situation by examining the relationships between irregular migrants and citizenship, by interpreting attempts by irregular migrants to become included in the (political and social) community as struggles for citizenship. It demonstrates how irregular migrants can attain (forms of) citizenship. It thus adheres to theories that regard citizenship as more than a binary concept of absolute

inclusion or exclusion, but only partially adheres to those that treat irregular migrants' citizenship as a political struggle. It argues instead that this perspective both over-politicises the citizenship struggle of irregular migrants and questions the assumption that (political) change is mobilised 'from below'.

This thesis analyses citizenship struggles of irregular migrants by examining their claim-making efforts (Bloemraad, 2018; Lindekilde, 2013; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 1996; Zivi, 2005; 2011). Mario's vignette above already demonstrates claim-making in the 'traditional' sense of the term— joining a social movement, protesting, and squatting, as well as through making claims to rights by stating that the Netherlands is likewise his country (*Rutte is your prime minister but also my prime minister*). However, Mario's participation in Dutch society, his home-making practices (see, for instance, Boccagni, 2017; Cancellieri, 2017), and his social relations with Dutch citizens could also be seen as forms of claim-making. Establishing oneself as a worthy and weighty claimant can in itself signify claim-making (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 22). Moreover, claims may be seen as more than just words or artefacts, but as descriptions of potential realities (Zivi, 2005, p. 1; 2011). This has repercussions for how to 'read' Mario's situation. Enacting a situation in which Mario performs as an active citizen who is seen and heard, instead of an irregular migrant, who is invisible or even in hiding, can call into being circumstances according to which Mario can be considered a citizen. This performative understanding of citizenship (Isin, 2017) is an underlying principle of a core theory in critical citizenship studies: 'acts of citizenship' (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). The notion is that, by acting in certain ways and claiming rights, non-citizens can be seen as citizens (see Chapter 2).

This thesis contributes a nuanced understanding of such enactments of citizenship by showing how irregular migrants' opportunities to enact citizenship or make claims to it are sometimes either overestimated or portrayed in an overly positive way. Because what also becomes clear from the vignette that opens this chapter is that Mario is still excluded from regular society in many ways: he does not have a stable place to live, nor the right to housing. He is officially excluded from the labour market, cannot pursue an education, and is not allowed to obtain a driver's license. Moreover, what the vignette clearly reveals is that every aspect of the life Mario has constructed is under constant threat and can disappear all of a sudden. This thesis aims to

describe the everyday reality of the citizenship of irregular migrants. It reveals that viewing citizenship as a completely bottom-up practice, or seeing irregular migrants as prime political actors challenging excessive bordering practices, does not match what careful analyses of their everyday reality reveal. Indeed, what Mario's story makes clear is how he, in waves, manages to live comfortably at the margins of society, which could be seen as 'citizenship from below'. But, at the same time, it shows how this carefully constructed life can end in the seeming blink of an eye. The consequences of this precariousness are that one day you can live relatively normally and the next day you live in a warehouse; that one day your living situation can benefit from integration from below, but that, when this changes, it can exacerbate the risk of getting stuck in a downward spiral, for instance, of drugs and alcohol abuse, instead of an upward spiral of increasing citizenship (from below). Moreover, Mario does not seem to have prospects for substantial improvement of this insecure situation without a change in his legal status. This thesis therefore also explores not only the political struggle for citizenship, but also whether non-citizens' efforts to create substantive citizenship from below is dominated by a lack of formal rights or substantive life opportunities. Mario's story shows how precarious the situation of irregular migrants can be, not because they do not have any rights or agency, but because they lack state protection in the areas where it matters the most. To come to grips with the claim-making of irregular migrants, we should critically examine those theories that aim to broaden or change our understanding of citizenship. Moreover, we should seek to connect those theoretical approximations to concrete empirical observations. This thesis, then, contributes an analysis of the everyday, lived experiences of citizenship by irregular migrants with the goal of rethinking the reality of irregular migrants' lives. Employing ethnographic methods, the research I conducted focuses upon claim-making among irregular migrants empirically, by observing irregular migrants who participate in migrant social movements.

These observations allow us to question some of the assumptions theorists working on citizenship among irregular migrants make. The data this thesis contributes to the discussion of these assumptions comes from two movements of irregular migrants, who make claims to citizenship, in two different European cities in different European countries— Amsterdam, the Netherlands and Turin, Italy. The research regards how the construction of

citizenship through claim-making works and reflects upon the consequences for our sociological understandings of citizenship. The study contributes to the existing field of critical citizenship studies by arguing for a less politicised and a more everyday perspective than is current in the literature. I argue that irregular migrants live in a much more complex reality than is often portrayed by those who describe their situation in critical citizenship studies. In order to gain a full understanding of irregular migrants' instances of claim-making, it is important to pay adequate attention to the conditions under which claim-making does or does not occur, and what the underlying reasoning for action or lack thereof is. I describe a variety of practices through which irregular migrants can and do make claims to citizenship, using insights from social movement theory to enrich descriptions of how claims citizenship can come, but most often do not, into being. The ethnographic methods this study employs allow for observing and following mobilisation and claim-making processes and ultimately the process which create citizenship. Ethnographic methods allow for identifying and understanding practices, including acts of citizenship and claim-making, through their meaning in context and the interactions surrounding them. Moreover, an ethnographic approach allows for seeing how structural opportunities for and constraints upon the agency of irregular migrants function. Moreover, observing the same processes in two different settings provides comparative data that reveal the influence of varying contexts upon (opportunities for) claim-making.

1.2 WE ARE HERE AND EX MOI

In the two locations where I conducted ethnographic research, I focussed on two migrant social movements, the We Are Here in Amsterdam and Ex Moi in Turin. Exploring the lives of irregular migrants in social movements and squats in two different contexts provides interesting contributions to understandings of citizenship among irregular migrants because the two groups faced similar problems despite their different contexts.
We Are Here started in 2012 in a tent camp, and gained national attention when it moved to another tent camp and later squatted a church in western

Amsterdam. During its existence, the group has occupied more than 50 abandoned buildings in different sections of Amsterdam. At the time I conducted my research, between March 2017 and January 2018, the group consisted of between 200 and 300 migrants, the vast majority of whom were irregular migrants whose claims for asylum had been rejected. The nationalities most represented were Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. During the research period, as well as at the time of writing in Winter 2021, We Are Here was and is the only durable migrant social movement in the Netherlands. Its members still squat in Amsterdam, although the group has lost a considerable amount of its previous political momentum.

The name of the group in Turin, Ex Moi, refers to the location of the buildings a group of irregular migrants squatted—the Ex Mercato Ortofrutticolo all' Ingrosso (the Former Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market). After the market shut down, this was the location where the 2006 Winter Olympics village was built. The Ex Moi squat started when the *Piano Emergenza Nord Africa*, the government programme that accommodated the influx of the large numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Italy due to the war in Libya, was terminated in 2013. Those whom the *Piano Emergenza Nord Africa* had served had to leave their shelters and ended up on the streets. In collaboration with two Social Centres (Centri Sociali), Gabrio and Askatasuna, migrants squatted four or the empty buildings in the Olympic village. While I was conducting my research in 2018, an estimated 1,300 migrants from all over Africa lived in the occupied buildings. The numbers changed continuously, as new migrants arrived from the south of the country and other migrants left (often for France or Germany). Some migrants left temporarily (often for the tomato harvest in the southern Italy or to work in the orchards in the southern part of Piedmont). Yet other migrants returned temporarily from abroad to renew their Italian documents. The primary nationalities were Somali, Malians and Senegalese. At the time of my research, Ex Moi was the largest migrant occupation in Italy, but only one of many in Turin and in the country as a whole. The Ex Moi squats were permanently shut down in August 2019.

CHAPTER 1

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The aim of this thesis is to gain a sociological understanding of 'citizenship-in-use': a (re)negotiation over the notion of citizenship in society. It does so by looking at the particular case of social movements of irregular migrants. This leads to the following research questions:

> *-a- How do irregular migrants make claims to citizenship?*
> *-b- When, or under which circumstances, do irregular migrants make claims to citizenship?*
> *-c- What do claims to citizenship by irregular migrants mean for the understanding of citizenship?*

By combining these questions with a methodological focus on the everyday, using qualitative and ethnographic methods, my thesis gains insight into the dynamics of claim-making beyond the current theories of binary citizenship, as well as critical citizenship and autonomy of migration studies.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first part (Chapters 2 and 3) outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the research project. **Chapter 2** provides a theoretical overview of perspectives on citizenship and (irregular) migration, as well as on the migrant social movements to which this thesis relates. Its main question is how to understand citizenship in light of the presence of irregular migrants and how insights from social movement theory can be used to understand the citizenship struggles of irregular migrants. While classic 20th century theories of citizenship either focus upon who count as citizens and the development of their (citizenship) rights, most notably T.H. Marshall's (1951/2009), or upon those who are not citizens and how this excludes them from rights altogether, most notably Hannah Arendt (1951/1973; 1958/1998), more recent developments in citizenship studies aim to conceptualise a broader understanding of citizenship. Often, these 'more inclusive' theories differentiate between formal and substantive citizenship, view (substantive) citizenship as a process rather than a status, and ascribe an important role to the agency or autonomy of immigrants (see, for instance, Isin 2008; 2009; Staeheli, 2003; Bendixsen, 2013). In critical citizenship studies, the notions 'citizenship from below' and 'acts of citizenship' aim to capture how, from the margins, non-citizens can make claims to rights, membership,

belonging, and political participation (see, for instance, Ataç, Rygiel & Stierl, 2016; Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; McNevin, 2006). In this way, the struggles of non-citizens are considered to have the ability to be transformative, as they challenge the borders of (political) community, membership, and political subjectivity, enacting forms of citizenship from below through their demands and claims (Isin, 2008; 2009; 2017). Moreover, these notions are used as a way to unsettle the citizen / non-citizen binary by both reframing non-citizens as potential political subjects and by aiming to unsettle citizen privilege (Rygiel et al., 2015). This chapter questions whether this emphasis on moments of rupture as political acts is the best way to understand the struggle of irregular migrants. Despite the theoretical focus on political acts of irregular migrants in critical citizenship studies, scholars of social movement theory are reluctant to incorporate accounts of these types of mobilisations. This is precisely because, according to the dominant theories of social movements like 'resource mobilisation theory' (see, for instance, McCarthy & Zald, 1977; 2001) and 'political opportunity structures' (see, for instance, Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1989; Della Porta, 2013), (irregular) migrants unlikely to be political subjects or contentious actors.

Chapter 3 provides an outline of the methodological approach and consideration used in this thesis. The research project is primarily based on ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews. These methods allowed me to gain the trust over my interlocutors over time, so that they candidly spoke about their struggles as irregular migrants, as well as giving me the opportunity to observe, participate in, and experience parts of their struggle, while following them in their daily activities over a prolonged period of time, in this case months to a year. Moreover, the methodological focus on the everyday lives of irregular migrants that make claims to citizenship, instead of focussing on the outright political action of irregular migrants, allowed to observe the more complex dynamics that form the basis of their mobilisation and claim-making. Furthermore, this chapter describes how the two cases, movements in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Turin, Italy, contribute to see the connections between citizenship, claim-making, and context.

Part Two (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) of the thesis is empirical and describes the practices of claim-making that occur in the two specific urban contexts of Amsterdam and Turin.

Chapter 4 describes irregular migrants' practices of building relations with local citizens and institutions: with (local) politicians, political parties, and local government; activists and activist networks through lobbying and demonstrating; neighbours and neighbourhoods by occupying buildings; and artists and the (local) cultural sector by creating art and participating in cultural activities. The chapter demonstrates empirically how irregular migrants can be observed creating citizenship from below. This is significant to the overarching argument of the thesis, as it empirically demonstrates how citizenship can be understood according to theories such as 'acts of citizenship' or 'citizenship from below', which assumes irregular migrants can create, enact, or establish without involvement from the state. I further argue, however, that these theories place too much emphasis on the moments in which 'social order' is broken and over-politicise irregular migrants.

Chapter 5 reveals empirically that for irregular migrants to engage in political acts and practices of claim-making there are important (pre-)conditions. In both Amsterdam and Turin, irregular migrants rarely made political claims, even those who were organised into what appeared to be social movements. In order to make claims they needed to possess, as I frame it, the 'right degree of marginality'. This means that they cannot be so marginal that their primary concerns pertain to the basic necessities of life. Yet, there must be grounds for their claims. Hence, their living conditions should not be so comfortable that there is no reason to demonstrate or protest. At the same time, for claim-making to occur, one also has to be in a situation of 'nothing to lose'. If there is too much at stake, the risk of making oneself visible by making claims might simply be too great. It is here that we need to appreciate the particular role of supporters of irregular migrants. Supporters are beneficial for claim-making. By providing basic life necessities or helping them access services, supporters can help irregular migrants become less marginal. Moreover, they can function as the connection between the irregular migrants and society, and help make claims more effective by sharing their local knowledge (see, for instance, Hajer & Ambrosini, 2020). As many scholars already argue, the city is an important place for renegotiation of citizenship (rights) (see for instance: Ataç, 2016; Grazioli, 2017; Miller & Nicholls, 2013b; Neyers, 2008; Nicholls & Vermeulen, 2012; Nordling, Sager, & Söderman, 2017). It provides an urban political opportunity structure from which irregular migrants can benefit. Moreover, the already-existing meaning

of places in a city or the potential of interstitial urban places for meaning-making can add weight to claims by means of 'claim-placing' (Hajer & Bröer, 2020).

An additional precondition for irregular migrants to engage in claim-making is to have a relative safe space, in which they can potentially find benevolent audiences who recognise their claims, and which are literally safe for claim-making without the risk of grave repercussions like being arrested. Chapter 5 also elaborates upon state responses to citizenship claim-making. Current theories that argue for citizenship outside the control of government sometimes overlook the ways in which nation-states influence irregular migrants' claim-making or even repress their social movements. The state influences claim-making practices by means of various kinds of surveillance and policing of irregular migrants and their supporters. The chapter describes how, in both Amsterdam and Turin, various state practices seek to break the collective action of irregular migrants and activists. Most prevalent at the time of my research were attempts to individualise the problems of irregular migrants, for instance, by the strategic issuing of residence permits to key players.

This strategy, perhaps unknowingly, touches upon the core of the lived reality of claim-making among irregular migrants, a reality in which social movement participation and politicisation have to be weighed against a deep desire to be normal. I explore this topic in **Chapter 6**. Employing a broad interpretation of claim-making and carefully documenting claims embedded in the daily lives of irregular migrants, this chapter paints a picture of activism, on the one hand, and the yearning for a normal life, on the other. Irregular migrants framed notions of 'a normal life' both as a way to frame claims to citizenship, and to represent an actual desire to live a normal life, to be normal. I argue that keeping in mind irregular migrants' expressed desires to live a normal life is key to obtaining a clear understanding of their actions. Claim-making can be both a way to attain a normal life through citizenship from below, but it can also lead to aspects of a normal life in other ways. This chapter evaluates the influence of migration contexts (in terms of migration policy, the welfare state, and the informal economy) on the lives of irregular migrants and the role of citizenship from above on the level of everyday practices and social interactions. Similar to other aspects of citizenship for

irregular migrants, it argues that legal status does not matter as such, but having it allows irregular migrants to *normalise* their lives.

The concluding remarks in **Chapter 7** reflect upon how the empirical findings of this research project influence theoretical understandings of citizenship. While it acknowledges the value of examining citizenship from below in that this approach attempts to dismantle the binary view of citizenship as inclusion or exclusion, and therewith contributed to a better understanding of the citizenship of irregular migrants, I argue that is important to analyse this constructed citizenship critically, and to realise that claim-making and successfully creating citizenship from below are rare, temporary, and insecure. Additionally, while irregular migrants can make claims to citizenship, construct relations, and create (substantial) citizenship, this is structured by the (state) context in which such struggles for citizenship occur. I argue that prevailing notions of citizenship of irregular migrants risk to both present an overly optimistic image of the mobilisation of irregular migrants, and risk to over-politicise their citizenship struggle. The conclusion reflects critically upon how a focus in critical citizenship studies on the political aspects of citizenship limits our understanding of citizenship from below, as it does not account for irregular migrants' deep desires to *not* be political, as well as ways in which irregular migrants create citizenship by going along with social order instead of against it. To such an extent that we can wonder whether irregular migrants' struggle for citizenship does not demonstrate a transformation of citizenship or the political, but rather confirms the culturalised processes of making and shaping citizens. Citizenship studies tend to focus on claim-making or the construction of substantive citizenship, while this thesis argues for the importance of including looking at the ways in which citizenship allows people to normalise their lives. Thus, instead of trying to theoretically define the concept of citizenship itself, urged by the empirical notion of a normal life, I make a distinction between citizenship and the 'life of a citizen'. Citizenship and 'the life of a citizen' are separate yet interconnected, where the 'life of a citizen' refers to the life citizenship allows one to live. Not all activities in the life of a citizen are directly linked to their citizenship, to their relation with their social and political communities. Nonetheless, many activities are made possible because of these relations. This dynamic, however, only becomes apparent

when there is a lack of (certain aspects of) citizenship. The life of a citizen is the (normal) life which citizenship enables.

CHAPTER 2

WHO IS A CITIZEN?

Since social life is multiple, in trying to categorize social phenomena, we most often only create ambiguity. Social life also changes constantly, and not only because certain actors actively try to change their social life. Citizenship is an aspect of social life, of which many scholars have attempted to develop an adequate theory. The questions of what it means to be a citizen and who can be one date as far back as Aristotle:

> 'A city is a certain number of citizens; and so we must consider who should properly be called a citizen and what a citizen really is' (Aristotle, Politics: book III, translation 1995)

Citizenship is a versatile concept that connotes different meanings at different times and in different contexts, as well as in different theoretical streams. Therefore, it might be advisable not to look at what citizenship itself is, but rather what is called citizenship (Isin, 2009). What is called citizenship, who is perceived as a citizen, and how one can become a citizen change over time. The shifting nature of citizenship as a concept is reflected in the theoretical literature on the topic, as well as in how we speak about various sorts of non-citizens, both inside and outside academia. This thesis examines the tensions

between citizenship and non-citizens, focussing on irregular migrants,* as they are not citizens but present in society nonetheless. The first part of this chapter addresses the concept of citizenship, and how we can understand citizenship in light of the presence of irregular migrants. I explore alternatives to a binary understanding of citizenship by looking at the extent to which irregular migrants can be or are recognised as citizens. The second part of the chapter explores how insights from social movement theory can be used to understand irregular migrants' citizenship struggles.

Traditional theories of citizenship often assume a relatively formal understanding of citizenship. A prominent theory of citizenship comes from T.H. Marshall (Marshall, 1951/2009; see also, Bulmer & Rees, 1996) who assumes a legal idea of citizenship, as formal membership in a nation-state, which is accompanied by certain rights in different periods. Hannah Arendt famously shows how an approach to citizenship and rights tied to nation-states falls short in situations of statelessness (Arendt, 1951/1958; 1958/1998). Yet, Arendt upholds a static understanding of citizenship as well. A static or binary interpretation of citizenship perpetuates the 'myth of full citizenship' (Cohen 2009), as it cannot account for the many inequalities within the citizenry and how certain (groups of) people are differentially included in citizenship. Therefore, more recent scholarship of citizenship attempts to formulate a more 'inclusive' theory of citizenship (see, for instance, Balibar, 2010; Bloemraad, 2018; Dadusc, Grazioli, & Martínez, 2019; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin, 2009; Lister, 2007b; McNevin, 2011; Nyers, 2008; Nyers, 2015; Swerts, 2014a). By differentiating between legal citizenship and substantive citizenship, theorists argue that focussing on the latter reveals how different forms of inclusion in citizenship occur regardless of legal citizenship *from below* (see, for instance, Ambrosini, 2016a; Rygiel, Ataç, Köster-Eiserfunke, & Schwiertz, 2015; Shinozaki, 2015; Turner, 1990). The idea of citizenship from below concerns how citizenship can be enacted in the absence of a legal status or formal citizenship, from above. These theories are often based on a broad interpretation of politics, creating citizenship from below is seen as an act that

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* In the thesis in general, I use the term 'irregular migrants'. However, in this theoretical chapter, I employ the terms 'irregular migrants' and 'non-citizens' interchangeably, as irregular migrants constitute part of a broad theoretical category of people who are not citizens. For further considerations regarding terminology, see Paragraph 2.1.

breaks with social order, as an attempt to change, even restructure, the social order. Such an approach proposes that non-citizens can express themselves politically and establish themselves as political actors by defying the existing boundaries of the political, as well as borders and processes of bordering (Nyers, 2008). However, the question arises as to how adequate this broad interpretation of politics is to understanding the citizenship struggles of irregular migrants. Could it be that it focusses too much on the political? Does it, for example, empirically align with how irregular migrants view their relation to citizenship?

Classic social movement theories like 'resource mobilisation theory' and the 'political opportunity structures' approach (see, for instance, Della Porta & Diani, 2009), for instance, are relatively silent about the mobilisation of (politically) marginalised subjects like irregular migrants, as these theorists would consider them as unlikely political subjects (Steinhilper, 2018). However, since we do witness political mobilisations by irregular migrants, these theories can still, to some extent, provide insight into how and under which circumstances, irregular migrants mobilise. This usually occurs by joining forces with local supporters, who can help with the 'resource mobilisation' and recognising 'political opportunities' that might present themselves to irregular migrants. A second branch of social movements studies demonstrates that political action or protest often is not about breaking with social order, but instead in order to make claims recognised as legitimate, actors have to connect to existing values (see, for instance, Bloemraad, 2018; Nicholls, 2013b). Moreover, spatial theories of citizenship and urban social movements show how the existing meanings of urban places, can be used in claim-making (see, for instance, Dadusc et al., 2019; Hajer & Bröer, 2020; Leitner, Sheppard, & Sziarto, 2008; Swerts, 2017).

2.1 CITIZENS AND NON-CITIZENS

When discussing citizens, it is important to keep in mind that implicitly or explicitly those who are not citizens are present. Immigrants, in general, and irregular migrants, in particular, can be seen as embodying the ambiguity of

categorising people who are citizens in specific nation-states. This categorisation is not something that only happens during processes of drawing or enforcing borders, or something only assessed in asylum and other residence permit procedures. It also features in the ways in which we speak about 'irregular migrants', both in societal debates, as well as within academia. A perfect description of what we call 'irregular migrant' probably does not exist, and if it did at some point, it's meaning definitely changes over time. As Isin (2009) describes:

> An as yet unnamed figure is making its appearance on the stage of history. It is unnamed not because it is invisible but because we have not yet recognized it. It is inarticulate. Otherwise, it is quite visible. We have categories to describe this figure: foreigner, migrant, irregular migrant, illegal alien, immigrant, wanderer, refugee, émigré, exile, nomad, sojourner and many more that attempt to fix it (Isin, 2009).

How we speak about non-citizens, both in society and in scholarly discussions, says something about how this phenomenon is seen at a particular time and in a particular place. The examples are countless. For instance, 'guest worker' (*gastarbeider*) implies a migrant's residence is temporary; a term like 'fourth-generation migrant' implies extended migration status; and terms like 'illegals' (*illegalen*, *migranti illegali*) or 'clandestines' (*clandestini*) emphasise 'illegal' border crossing and stay without official permission. Moreover, as often happens with politically sensitive topics, new words are introduced with the aim of finding a term to talk about a phenomenon in a 'neutral' way. One such euphemism, illustrating how the terms used to designate irregular migrants in public debates can influence perceptions is the Italian *extra-comunitario.* This literally translates to 'outside the community', and officially refers to non-European citizens, opposed to *comunitari* used to indicate Europeans. The term is used as a technocratic or 'neutral' way of referring to a 'third country national'. However, colloquially it is often used to indicate (African) immigrants or poor (non-European) foreigners. Coburn (2013) argues that *extra-comunitario* is used to refer to 'visibly non-European' people. Moreover, the relative innocence with which *comunitari* and *extra-comunitari* are used could mask

racial connotations (Coburn, 2013, p. xxxiv; Makaremi, 2015, p. 204). The term's use also is an indication of everyday processes of exclusion of those referred to as '*extra-comunitari*', who are continuously, semantically, placed outside the community, while often fulfilling roles in society nevertheless.

Labels matter. Some terms are predominantly used in public debate and only rarely in academia. Yet, sometimes academic terms influence public discourse. An example of this is the Dutch term, *allochtoon*. Coined in 1971 by sociologist Hilde Verwey-Jonker, *allochtoon* was intended to be a neutral alternative, borrowed from geoscience, for guest worker, foreigner or immigrant.[*] However, over the years, this new 'neutral' term acquired unfavourable meanings in public debates and was subsequently abandoned as a scholarly term. This shows how the public and academic discourses develop simultaneously, as well as influence each other.

Furthermore, there seems to be a tendency for 'terminology activism', such that activists oppose a certain conceptualisation and introduce a new, alternative term. In Amsterdam, for example, both irregular migrant and local activists heavily opposed both the epithet 'illegal', since no human can be illegal, and *uitgeprocedeerd* (having exhausted all procedures), since, according to them, many had not exhausted all means to apply for asylum. In exchange, they actively tried to introduce *ongedocumenteerd* (undocumented) into public debates. Given such forms of activism, it is important to listen carefully to how situations are discussed and described, as even small terminological decisions may have an impact later on.

In academic debates, many different terms are used to refer to migrants without legal/citizenship status depending upon the research tradition: illegal migrants (e.g., Schuster, 2011; Van der Leun, 2006); illegalized migrants (e.g., Kalir, 2019; Wilcke, 2018); undocumented migrants (e.g., Bhimji, 2016; Monforte & Dufour, 2011; Nicholls, 2013a; Swerts, 2014b); irregular migrants (e.g., Ambrosini, 2018; Bloch & Chimienti, 2011; Chimienti, 2011; Düvell, Triandafyllidou, & Vollmer, 2010; McNevin, 2013); aliens (e.g., Benhabib, 2004a; Bosniak, 2008); non-citizens (e.g., Chilton & Posner, 2017; Gibney, 2009; Könönen, 2018); clandestine migrants (e.g., Buehler & Han, 2018; Coniglio, De Arcangelis, & Serlenga, 2009; Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014),

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[*] https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/allochtonen, https://onzetaal.nl/nieuws-en-dossiers/dossiers/het-woord-allochtoon/

to name those most frequently used. As the enumeration of different terms used to describe 'irregular migrants' above illustrates, there is no agreement over the use of terminology. Moreover, categories change over time as do the words with which we refer to those categories, which in turn influences how we see migrants.

This rich diversity of terms referring to more or less the same category of people indicates a scholarly struggle to find the right words to describe 'irregular migrants'. It also highlights the importance of paying attention to the terminology being used. For this thesis, I have chosen to use 'irregular migrants', as it calls attention to the irregular status of such migrants in society, but leaves open how meaning is attributed to this status. On the other hand, one could argue that the term, irregular migrants, is quite broad and relatively vague. It can, for instance, include both 'illegal border-crossers' and regular migrants who have overstayed their visa's and subsequently became irregular. Moreover, empirically irregular migrants can move in and out of (ir-)regularity. For this, scholars, including myself, have chosen to treat those with precarious legal status, a form of regularity, as part of a wider interpretation of irregular migrants. However, the ambiguity concerning their status reflects how irregular migrants fall outside the supposedly 'regular path' of migration. It not only refers to their border crossings, but also to the ways in which their 'inclusion' into a nation-state falls outside the 'regular' path.

2.2 FORMAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE AMBIGUITY OF NON-CITIZENS

It could be said that classic twentieth-century definitions of citizenship focus on those who are citizens and the development of their rights. One of the most influential theories regarding citizenship comes from T.H. Marshall (1951). For Marshall citizenship is 'a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with the respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed' (Marshall, 1951/2009, pp. 149-150). Marshall divides the rights that come with citizenship in three kinds—civil, political and social—which he describes with reference to their

development in eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century Britain. Civil citizenship refers to those rights necessary for individual freedom: 'liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice' (as cited in Rees, 1996, p. 5). Political citizenship refers to the right to participate politically: 'the right to participate in an exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of such a body' (ibid). Social citizenship refers to those rights that enable one to live 'the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society' and relate to the right to a 'modicum of economic welfare and security' (ibid). These conceptions of citizenship are tied to the nation-state directly and almost inseparably. According to such principles, it is the norm that everyone is a citizen of a particular nation-state, somewhere. Such a binary principle creates its own tensions, as Zygmunt Bauman reminds us in his famous analysis of ambivalence: when there is a categorisation, there is ambivalence as the by-product of this categorisation (Bauman, 1991). From a static perspective towards citizenship, irregular migrants are an anomaly. They create a form of ambivalence in a system that is to a large extent categorised into nation-states, where nation-states are delineated by borders and inhabited by distinguishable and registered citizenries. Those who do not fit the system, but are present in a given territory nevertheless, can find themselves in a situation of rightlessness, as rights, including human rights, are often still tied to formal citizenship status. Hannah Arendt famously describes this situation of the stateless in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt, 1951/1958), as people who fall outside the 'old trinity of state-people-territory' who then become rightless because they are stateless. As Gündoğdu (2015) explains, Arendt defines statelessness as 'a fundamental condition of rightlessness', which has to be understood not as 'the absolute loss of rights, but instead as a fundamental condition denoting the precarious legal status of migrants' as 'lives that are not guaranteed but bestowed in the answer to prayer', 'lives that are dependent on the favours, privileges or discretions of compassionate others' (Gündoğdu, 2015, pp. 91-93). The stateless have lost the right to have rights, the right to live in some kind of organised community (Arendt, 1951/1973, pp. 296-297). According to Arendt, because nationality, or citizenship in a nation-state, is still the norm in the organisation of the international system, those outside it expose the ambiguity in international

categorisations and are 'an unfortunate exception to an otherwise sane and normal rule' (Arendt, 1951/1973, pp. 267-268). But 'only in a world organized into nation-states "could the loss of home and political status, become identical with the expulsion of humanity all together"' (Arendt, 1951/1973, p. 297). In other words, because rights are tied citizenship status, which is tied to nation-states, those who lose their citizenship status, for instance, because they migrate, can lose their rights all together.

However, while both Marshall's theory of citizenship and Arendt's analysis of the stateless are helpful for understanding the particular contemporary situation of irregular migrants, they cannot account for this situation in its entirety. Marshall's concept of citizenship and his analysis of the developments of the rights of citizens are criticized from a variety of perspectives. Critiques focus on the lack of attention to structural inequities in society related to citizenship. Normatively, Marxists and other scholars on the left argue that such an idea of citizenship does not change the structural positions and inequities within capitalist systems (Giddens, 1982; Turner, 2009). Feminist scholars argue that modern citizenship does little to improve the position of women in society (Siim, 2000; Turner, 2009). Moreover, it is suggested that Marshall's account of citizenship is characterised by an absence of differences in general and ignores how ethnic and racial divisions, as well as religious, cultural, and class differences influence national citizenship in particular. Ong (2005) argues that this is also why many sociologists now find the Marshallian model redundant, as it cannot cope with multiculturalism, ethnic diversity, migration, and modern diasporas (Turner, 2009), and the differential forms of inclusion that these entail. At the same time, critiques focus on the lack of attention to the agency of (non-)citizens in the progression of citizenship. Marshall's theory describes an almost linear development of citizenship rights, but fails to account for the ways in which citizenship rights are (often) the result of active agency by those who are excluded or marginalised (Giddens, 1982).

Moreover, while on a theoretical and broad philosophical level I agree with Arendt's theory of the stateless, it is too static to make sense of the issues of citizenship that irregular migrants face at the present moment. Arendt's portrayal of the stateless as having only their bare humanity left, and being therefore excluded from all rights in general, may provide a perspective of the situation of irregular migrants that is overly pessimistic. Because, as this thesis

will show, irregular migrants find all sorts of subtle ways to claim (at least some) rights and manage to obtain certain forms of (differential) inclusion (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013, pp. 157-159). In this thesis, I will, therefore, explore alternative insights that, admittedly, often find their origin in critical readings of Arendt. An example is the work of Jacques Rancière, who, in challenging Arendt's differentiation between Bios Politikos or the political life of citizens, on the one hand, and Zoë or non-political life, on the other, finds that those deprived of political life have the ability to claim the right to have rights (Rancière, 2004; Faghfouri Azar, 2019). Theories like 'acts of citizenship' directly follow from this idea, as I will elaborate below.

2.3 INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP FROM BELOW

A variety of scholars of critical citizenship studies conceive of alternative, inclusive theories of citizenship in response to static and binary understandings of citizenship. Differentiating between formal or legal citizenship, i.e., citizenship as a legal status that entails membership, and substantive citizenship, which refers to the social, material, and political practices and ties citizens actually develop (Isin, 2008, p. 17), some scholars argue that citizenship can be transformed *from below* in a variety of ways (see, for instance, Atac et. al 2015; Lentin 2012; Ambrosini 2016). Citizenship from below refers to how, through struggles and social movements, non-citizens can make claims to rights, membership, and belonging from the margins. These struggles are transformative as they challenge the borders of political communities, as well as notions of political subjectivity (Rygiel et al, 2015).

Focussing on substantive citizenship enables analytical inclusion of a wide variety of observations: from migrants' claims for legal recognition, to their everyday attempts to sustain a life as de facto citizens, from campaigning for rights, to actively negotiating entitlement (Anderson, 2010, p. 63), from attempts to achieve incremental inclusion (e.g., Bulmer & Rees, 1996; Cockburn, 1998; Das, 2011) to differential inclusion (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013, pp. 157-159). Substantive citizenship is thus brought about at least partially and temporarily in a process with many partial successes and setbacks. The concept of differential inclusion emphasises persistent

differences in terms of gender, class, and race, instead of repeating and reinforcing a 'myth of full citizenship' (Anderson & Hughes, 2015; Cohen, 2009). The following outlines various aspects of inclusive theories of citizenship.

2.3.1 Agency of non-citizens

Inclusive theories of citizenship aim to include attention to the agency of non-citizens, which, one might argue, has previously been neglected in citizenship studies (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). Irregular migrants can be seen as non-citizens as they 'have crossed state borders or remain in state territory without the sanction of the state' (McNevin, 2006, p. 136). They thus challenge both the existing binary categories of citizen versus non-citizen and the ways in which these categories are separated by (physical) borders. Challenging these borders and various bordering forms and processes can be interpreted as a form of agency on the part of non-citizens. Challenging the boundaries, thereby breaking with social order, can be seen as a process of challenging the boundaries of the political, as a process of political subjectification (Dikeç, 2013). From an Arendtian perspective, one could argue that non-citizens are deprived of their rights precisely because they are denied a meaningful political presence in the public sphere; in other words, they are denied the ability to be political actors. Non-citizens lack the appropriate political subjectivity to make their voices heard (Bendixsen, 2017; Nyers, 2013; Sigona, 2014). Yet, as Peter Nyers argues:

> [W]e are witnessing an interruption and transformation of the political. The lives of non-status people do not fit neatly into the frameworks of inclusion or exclusion, welcomed or rejected, dangerousness or vicitimage. Non-status migrants may be subjected to all of these discourses and practices, but they are also emerging as something more, something else, something other. They are not merely the citizen's Other, but also other claims-making and rights-taking political beings (Nyers, 2008, p. 177).

In other words, non-status migrants, as Neyers calls them, contest the boundaries of the political, or of what is traditionally understood as political. They constitute a challenge to the prevailing hegemony. Nyers argues that: 'the process of subjectification…allows non-status groups to extract themselves from the hegemonic categories by which political identity is normally understood' (Nyers, 2008, p. 177). Following this line of reasoning allows for analytically exposing processes of political subjectification of non-citizens to see how they establish themselves as political subjects.

An interesting perspective of politics in this regard is Rancière's theory of the 'partitioning of the sensible', which he defines as the ways in which a society is ordered. Rancière uses the concept of 'the police' to describe the policing effect such a partition of the sensible has as a governmental logic or 'ordering regime' (Rancière 1999, 2015; Dikeç, 2012). The partition of the sensible is:

> the symbolic distribution of bodies that divides them into two categories: those that one sees and those that one does not see, those who have a logos—memorial speech, an account to be kept up—and those who have no logos, those who really speak and those whose voice merely mimics the articulate voice to express pleasure and pain (Rancière 1999, p. 22).

Hence, a partitioning of the sensible requires us to understand these practices of sense-making: what do we understand as a voice and what as noise? What is seen and what is heard? What is possible and impossible, thinkable and unthinkable (Dikeç 2013, p. 82). According to Rancière, there are those that are seen and heard; and those who are invisible, whose voice is not a voice that can be heard but a voice that is a mere expression of bodily functions. Breaking with this implicit order is what is considered the very definition of politics. Politics, for Rancière, is the breaking point or the point of rupture, where these routinised sense-making practices are re-configured (Dikeç 2013). This conceptualisation of politics helps to us to understand frequently used approaches to studying irregular migrants in relation to issues of citizenship. These moments of rupture are said to be where the space for new imaginaries is created, where non-citizens can challenge their non-citizen status by breaking with this assigned category. Autonomy of migration theory (see, for

instance, Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013) and acts of citizenship (Isin & Nielsen, 2008) are based on this theoretical insight.

2.3.2 Challenging borders

Scholars who focus on the 'autonomy of migration' emphasise the agency of migrants when they cross borders and thus defy them (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013). Yet, irregular migrants do not only cross and consequently challenge physical borders. Balibar, for instance, argues that both the external borders of the state and internal borders of belonging to the community produce non-citizens (Balibar, 2010, p. 316). The symbolic boundaries place non-citizens outside a bounded community of citizens (Benhabib, 2004). These 'post-physical-border' practices of bordering to which irregular migrants are subsequently subjected, causes them to be in between inclusion and exclusion. Swerts (2017) argues that non-citizens' in-between status makes it difficult to categorise both for state-actors and scholars to categorise them (Swerts, 2017).

Crucially, these borders are not fixed entities but are constructed via practices of bordering and are therefore subject to ongoing negotiation and contestation. The physical act of border crossing can then be seen as an expression of migrants' agency and a challenge to borders and processes of bordering. But the linchpin of this perspective is that the contestation of non-citizens' 'internal exclusion' is interpreted in the same vein, as a regime of subjection produced and reproduced by both internal and external borders (Balibar, 2004). Moreover, by challenging borders and boundaries designed to exclude, citizenship acquires new meanings as a result of struggles over various practices of bordering (Balibar 2004, p. 59). This perspective implies that non-citizens can become political actors when they challenge borders and practices of bordering.

2.3.3 Acts of citizenship

Acts of citizenship theory focusses on the new imaginaries created in moments of breaking with social order. It assumes that, when struggling for citizenship, irregular migrants perform and create citizenship from below and thus substantiate their claim to have the right to have rights. These acts of citizenship could then be understood as:

> [T]hose moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens — or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due (Isin 2008, p. 18).

The central issue for research is those moments when, maybe even against all odds, migrants defy the seeming 'order of things' and become visible instead of invisible, audible instead of inaudible, act instead of merely existing. In these moments, irregular migrants constitute themselves as political subjects and therefore as citizens instead of non-citizens. Citizenship in this sense also entails comprehending the 'modes and forms of conduct that are appropriate to being an insider' (Isin, 2009, pp. 371–372). In a way, this process of political subjectification could be seen as non-citizens subjecting themselves to the implicit order that is imbedded in notions of citizenship. This social order is one that distinguishes between 'good citizens' and 'bad illegals'. In such acts of citizenship, it seems as if non-citizens, who are often deemed 'bad illegals', are attempting to behave like the 'good citizens'.

Acts of citizenship can create changes or ruptures in the categorisations that exclude non-citizens. By enacting citizenship, irregular migrants constitute themselves as political, as having the capacity to act (Arendt, 1969, as cited in Isin, 2009, p. 380). This suggests that it is important to closely examine citizenship as a process of obtaining 'the right to have the rights' (Arendt, 1958, pp. 296–297). When non-citizens actively constitute themselves as people with the 'right to claim rights', they transform forms and modes of being political by creating themselves as new actors who are claimants of rights (Isin, 2009, p. 383). The question here, formulated by Oudejans, is:

> How does the refugee claim a *right* to have rights while he is excluded from the *rights* that give *us* equal claim to political activity, and that

enable us to appear and stand up for our rights? (Oudejans, 2011, p. 84. Emphasis in original)

Performative ideas of citizenship present the practice of citizenship not only as the *exercising* rights, but also as *claiming* rights. As everything depends upon the enactment, this approach suggests that the question of who can exercise and claim rights is itself contestable (Isin, 2017, p. 501). Performative understandings of citizenship, therefore, refer to both the struggle, i.e., the making of rights claims, and to what that struggle performatively brings into being, i.e., the right to claim rights (Isin, 2017, p. 506). This perspective helps to order the orientation of research in this vein. A performative citizenship perspective forces us to not only analyse the content of claims but also the processes of claim-making (Zivi, 2005). Through claim-making, non-citizens simultaneously make claims to and enact citizenship; by making claims, they performatively claim the right to claim rights, and claim to be subjects of rights (Isin, 2017, p. 506).

2.3.4 Is citizenship over-politicised?

In sum, the above shows how scholars try to find ways to theorise the ways in which those who are formally excluded can become political actors and included in substantive citizenship in alternative ways. These approaches shed new light on citizenship amidst exclusionary state practices and instances of bordering, as well as on exclusionary ideas of citizenship. Moreover, they provide an alternative narrative that accommodates those instances of inclusion for which there would otherwise be no account. This arguably explains why these theories have gained in popularity in recent years. As irregular migrants often face a situation of neither full exclusion nor full inclusion, the challenge is to find a theory that represents the middle ground in which they exist. Chapter 4 describes the struggles for citizenship among irregular migrants in Amsterdam and Turin from this perspective.

However, at the same time, one wonders whether such theories might overestimate or over-represent the political aspects of citizenship and the ruptures that citizenship struggles effect. Chapter 6, elaborates upon the tension between political action, claim-making, and acts of citizenship, on one

hand, and the wish for a 'normal life' accompanied with very traditional ideals of citizenship (*burgerlijke idealen*), on the other. When one interprets politics as breaking with order, a special relation between subjects and practices can be observed, meaning that certain practices are considered differently depending upon who is the subject of the practice. Applied to the specific case of irregular migrants, this means that one could view nearly everything irregular migrants do in political terms, if one wanted to do so. Precisely because one could interpret the lives as irregular migrants, as: 'a refusal to submit to the administrative categories (asylum seeker, refugee, temporary migrant worker, etc) through which mobility is regulated' (McNevin, 2006, p. 192). While this perspective encourages researchers to perceive irregular migrants as something other than passive victims, it risks over-emphasising their relation to politics and the political side of citizenship. Because McNevin and other scholars of critical citizenship studies (see, for instance, Ellermann, 2010; Isin, 2008; Nyers, 2015; Rygiel, 2011), look primarily at the subjects of actions, they see the everyday practices of marginalised subjects, in general, and of irregular migrants, in particular, as political acts. In other words, they regard actions from a political perspective, which colours them as political in nature. From their perspective, the people who perform these acts are intrinsically political, therefore all their acts and practices are likewise political. In this way, even the most 'standard' actions can be seen as revolutionary, if performed by irregular migrants. However, as these practices are not political in and of themselves, the same practice can be either an instance of rupture or conversion to bourgeois values. Looking at actions through the lens of rupture and as challenging borders assumes a priori the meaning of those actions because of who the actors are. However, I argue that it is important to reflect upon who decides what the meaning of these acts or practices is. Do fellow activists decide? Or do the academics who write about them decide? Should we also examine the meaning the subjects of research themselves give to these acts and practices? I assume the latter position and pay attention to both subjects and practices, without pretending to know in advance what meaning the former attribute to the latter. This allows for the possibility that, even for irregular migrants, and despite their position in society, certain actions are indeed not acts, i.e., political, but rather everyday practices. It then becomes an empirical challenge to interpret the meaning of these practices, and likewise to pay attention to subjects' intentions or

perceptions. In certain instances, this could show how irregular migrants' actions constitute self-embourgeoisement (*verburgerlijking/imborghesimento*), going along with societal values and orders, rather than breaking them or a refusal to submit to them.

Even though acts of citizenship could be interpreted as much broader political action, I suggest that the process of acquiring citizenship is also a process of social incorporation outside the realm of politics. Bastenier and Dassetto (1990), for example, write about *processi di cittadinizzazione*, or citizenship processes, which reference acquiring citizenship from below through everyday practices and social interactions (Ambrosini, 2016a). Perhaps citizenship is a process, in which potential citizens can acquire both the explicit 'modes and forms of conduct' and the 'tacit knowing', the unspoken and difficult-to-describe mechanisms, of functioning of society through everyday interactions (Polanyi, 2009). This focus on everyday life, rather than on political acts and on citizenship as a practice, is also reflected in notions of 'lived citizenship' (Lister, 2007b). Lived citizenship relates to how people understand and negotiate their rights and responsibilities, belonging, and participation, which come with citizenship, as well as the meaning citizenship has in people's everyday lives and how this is influenced by their diverse backgrounds and material circumstances. It elaborates on how citizenship acquires meaning when it bestows dignity upon everyday interactions (Lister, 2007b, pp. 53, 55). Here, the social theory and methodological elements of the thesis interrelate. It is important to reflect upon the methodological starting point of these theories. A methodological focus on acts of protest or acts of citizenship can lead to understanding of citizenship as a collection of moments of political rupture. While if one were to also consider other aspects of the everyday lives of irregular migrants, one could see a nuanced picture of the substantive citizenship of irregular migrants, which includes both breaking with social order and radically conforming to it.

2.4 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OF UNLIKELY POLITICAL SUBJECTS

Critical citizenship studies focus theoretically on political acts and claim-making practices among irregular migrants. So do empirical studies outlining their (political) mobilisation and social movement formation. Even so, social movement theory is reluctant to incorporate accounts of these types of mobilisations on the part of irregular migrants. Steinhilper (2018) argues that this reluctance is precisely because the dominant theories of social movements like 'resource mobilisation theory' (see, for instance, McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Klandermans, 1984; Edwards & Kane, 2007; Jenkins, 1983) and 'political opportunity structures' (see, for instance, Tilly, 2008; Giugni, 2011; Kriesi, 1989; Della Porta, Donatella, 2013) render (irregular) migrants unlikely political subjects or even contentious actors. (Irregular) migrants face legal obstacles, scarce resources, and closed-off political and discursive opportunities (Steinhilper, 2018, pp. 574–575). Even though social movement theorists are unwilling to incorporate accounts of the struggles of irregular migrants, irregular migrants form social movements, through which they make claims and attempt to acquire legitimate political standing. Here, social movement theory provides some useful insights. While scholars of critical citizenship studies focus mostly on the subjects of actions they consider political, social movement theorists can teach us about the practices of political action. For example, their work can answer from a different perspective questions regarding if and how marginalised subjects mobilise politically (see, for instance, Piven, 1979; Zorn, 2013). Below I highlight three aspects of the citizenship struggle of irregular migrants: the mobilisation of irregular migrants, the framing, and structured mobilisation (Bloemraad, 2018) of irregular migrants, and visibility and spatial aspects of citizenship struggles.

2.4.1 Unlikely Mobilisation

Irregular migrants are often marginalised and lack economic, cultural, as well as social, capital, which social movement theory notes are important factors for political mobilisation. Marginalisation and exclusion do not automatically lead to mobilisation. Indeed, those who are most marginal often do not

protest. Chapter 5 describes empirically when, and under which conditions, irregular migrants mobilise, and reveals that most irregular migrants in fact do not mobilise.

Irregular migrants often lack the most basic resources. Since they struggle to arrange to have such things as food, clothing, and shelter, one might imagine that organising demonstrations or other political gatherings could be difficult, not to mention not at the top of irregular migrants' list of priorities. Whether or not to mobilise has to do with how one perceives the possibility of (future) change, as much as how one perceives political opportunities for protest. How marginalised subjects mobilise relates to their approach to political processes and to resource mobilisation. Resource mobilisation theory accounts for the practical aspects of social movements, by explaining that, in order to mobilise politically, members of social movements need very basic resources, like a printer to make flyers, a space to hold meetings, an 'address-book of useful contacts' (Giddens, 2009, p. 1015). Irregular migrants often lack these resources; yet, social movements of irregular migrants still happen. It is therefore important to note that the mobilisation of irregular migrants does not occur in a political vacuum. The likelihood of successful political mobilisation is greater if irregular migrants receive support from local citizens who do have these resources or know how to obtain them. Mobilisations of irregular migrants often occur in collaboration with local citizens or as part of already exciting social movements. Examples of this include the No Borders movement, squatters' movements, or *centri sociali* (social centres) in Italy. Support from local citizens often provides a vital link between irregular migrants and the society in which they live (e.g., Nicholls & Uitermark, 2015). Local citizens can be a valuable recourse to irregular migrants, and also help with the mobilisation of further resources. They often provide or help with the basic necessities of life, e.g., shelter, food, and medical care. As I will explain in more detailed in the empirical chapters that follow, support from citizens can be seen as humanitarian aid, which allows irregular migrants to survive, but also as a precondition for the (political) mobilisation of irregular migrants, as it enables them to shift their focus from survival to their potential political activity (Hajer & Ambrosini, 2020). Moreover, local citizen supporters can play a crucial role in identifying political opportunities. Theories of political opportunity structures primarily concern how (potential)

activists *perceive* political opportunities (Koopmans and Olzak 2004), instead of defining an 'objective' notion of what makes for a political opportunity. Therefore, to identify political opportunities, one has to have knowledge of a society's 'rules', dynamics, agents, and rhythms (Crossley, 2002, p. 14). In other words, in order to identify and act upon political opportunities, one needs adequate knowledge of how a society functions.

2.4.2 Structured Mobilisation

Along with the problems irregular migrants might have mobilising, they may also have problems with framing their claims effectively. Constructed citizenship relies upon the recognition of already-established citizens. Therefore, the claims and acts of non-citizens may stretch existing notions of citizenship but never be too far out of the box. Or, as Bloemraad (2018) puts it, they have to navigate a situation of 'structured mobilisation' (p. 17). In other words, social movement theory shows how practices of political action or instances of claim-making can never be *only* about breaking with social order and be recognised as legitimate political action at the same time. Moreover, in light of hostility towards immigrants and a narrowing of understandings of citizenship, it can be difficult for irregular migrants to become and remain legitimate political subjects.

A different stream of social movement studies focuses not on (perceived) political opportunities, but on discursive opportunity structures. This stream examines how (potential) activists and opportunities are linked by framing. This entails that (potential) activists have to make issues resonate with existing cultural repertoires in order to meet with success (Bröer & Duyvendak 2009, p. 338). Effective political mobilisation requires an appreciation of subtle culturally specific mechanisms, which may well be out of reach of activists coming from outside a particular culture. Bourdieu (1991) writes how, to be able to be political, one should understand the norms and values of the political field. Or, as Jasper (1998) states, to have a message, or claim, that resonates both intellectually and emotionally, activists need intimate knowledge of the political culture to align their message appropriately. The frames of a social movement have to resonate with the

targeted audiences (Snow, 2013). In other words, activists have to follow certain 'framing rules', 'rules according to which we ascribe definitions or meanings to situations' (Hochschild, 1979, p. 566; Bröer & Duyvendak, 2009, pp. 337-338) or 'rules governing how we see situations' (Hochschild, 2003; Tonkens, 2012, p. 199).

We cannot presume that irregular migrants have (a lot of) the insider knowledge necessary to adequately assess a particular society's framing rules. Therefore, they rely to a large extent on (local) citizens for help. Nicholls (2013b) describes how supporters of migrants have the cultural and symbolic resources needed to translate their claims into powerful frames that resonate with the norms of the national political field (Nicholls, 2013b, p. 93). These supporters can then become representational brokers because they use their social capital to create 'representations that connected groups discursively and emotionally to publics that had cast them to the margins' (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2015, p. 203). The role of citizen supporters is key to understanding how irregular migrants make claims and what makes these claims resonate with people in the countries to which they have migrated.

However, irregular migrants are not (yet) legitimate political actors. This can make their claims to citizenship difficult, since direct disagreement and critique can easily be perceived by public opinion as angry and ungrateful, if any attention is paid to it at all; and their citizenship claims can be discarded should they make any faux pas. Nicholls (2013a) argues that, for irregular migrants, 'dissensus' is easily disregarded as noise instead of voice. If irregular migrants want to effectively convey their message, they have to establish themselves as and remain legitimate political actors, which means that they have to act like ideal citizens. They have to establish themselves as deserving of the 'right to have rights' (Nicholls, 2013a). Creating citizenship thus entails an elaborate balancing act of being on one's very best behaviour and still making a change in one's situation. One way to do this is, according to Nicholls (2013b), is identification with the (national) community.

> In contexts of heightened anti-immigration hostility, the road to recognition as people deserving rights depends on the ability of undocumented immigrants to publicly demonstrate identification with the national community…. through public discourses and

performances, these immigrants cleanse themselves of the polluting stigmas attributed to them (Nicholls 2013b, p. 90).

Nicholls argues that by publicly portraying themselves in the preferred (self-) image of citizens, citizens can come to see irregular migrants as deserving of insider status. This constricts how they make their claims and their forms of protest, as these cannot break with social order, and, at the same time, allow irregular migrants to be perceived as likable, eloquent, and well behaved, instead of angry or threatening. We thus need to acknowledge the cultural dimension of citizenship. Duyvendak (2011) describes how citizenship is culturalised, such that 'native' culture is perceived as threatened and therefore in need of protection. Newcomers especially are subjected to behavioural and feeling 'rules' regarding citizenship, as they need to 'demonstrate feelings of attachment, belonging, connectedness and loyalty to their new country' (Duyvendak 2011, pp. 92–93). These 'rules' resonate with instructions for 'good black citizenship' in US civil rights movement protests, which Hohle (2013) describes as 'included instructions on how to speak, how to minimize emotional outbursts, how to sit, dress, walk, and respond to whites' (p. 1). Making claims can create a hyperawareness of a perceived need to act appropriately and adhere to societal norms to an almost extreme extent. Who is 'deserving' of speaking and making claims, and thus deserving of citizenship not only depends upon dominant moralities or values associated with citizenship, which are not only culturalised, but also highly *idealised.* Idealised citizenship refers not just to the values and believes of a nation but to the members of a nation prefer to see them. The 'good citizenship' of those worthy of being insiders is defined by the degree of which it reflects the idealised citizenship (Hohle, 2013, p. 5). This suggests that, in order to make legitimate claims to citizenship, non-citizens must comply with existing values of citizenship. Moreover, it shows how complying with existing ideas of citizenship can lead to increased recognition as a citizen.

2.4.3 *Visibility and spatiality of citizenship struggles*[*]

Cities play an important role as the site of the social movements of irregular migrants. Maestri & Huges (2017) argue that citizenship itself is fundamentally spatial. New and old political subjectivities are contested and resisted in spaces of encounter and struggle; spaces can generate opportunities to rethink political subjectivities. The city can be used to make irregular migrants visible, and to locate and substantiate their claims and demands (Borren, 2008; Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). It can be argued that migrants' ability to become political subjects strongly depends on their capacity to make themselves and their demands visible and audible in public space. Many scholars writing about irregular migrants, citizenship, and the political base their theories on readings of Arendt's work. Arendt's description of the political world as a 'space of appearances' reminds us that visibility is an important, if not crucial, aspect of being political. Borren (2008) reconstructs an Arendtian 'politics of in/visibility', deducing two pathologies of political action and citizenship: public invisibility and natural visibility. Borren argues that for political action one needs the opposite, namely being visible in public and gaining recognition for participation publicly; and on the hand being invisible privately. Not having visibility in public space so as to appear to others politically, and only being visible as a natural man (the 'nakedness of being') instead of as a political actor, reduces a person from a 'who' to a 'what'. This is a disabling condition of the stateless with regard to political participation (Borren, 2008). This bears a relation to Rancière's symbolic distribution of the sensible, which also concerns practices of sense-making: what do we understand as a voice and what as noise? What is seen and what is heard? What is possible and impossible, thinkable and unthinkable (Dikeç, 2013, p. 82). Visibility, then, says something about how migrants are perceived, but also about how they do or do not have the ability and potential to act. Being invisible or being kept invisible implies that one is incapable of action. This makes clear that there is a *politics of visibility.* When visibility comes with potential premium access to political contestation, becoming visible is a first step to political action. It is therefore worth

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[*] Parts of this paragraph were previously published in Hajer & Bröer (2020) "We Are Here! Claim-Making and Claim-Placing of Undocumented Migrants in Amsterdam." *European Journal For Cultural and Political Sociology.* 7 (4) 413–451.

examining how irregular migrants try to render themselves visible, through various forms of claim-making, so that they may be heard, and how, in doing so, they transform themselves into (political) subjects. Chauvin and Garces-Mascareñas argue, in this regard, that being visible can make undocumented migrants less illegal, 'if the "illegal" is believed to be invisible, then anyone who is visible is perceived as legal' (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014, p. 425). Therefore, visibility can be regarded from the perspective of points of rupture, as when irregular migrants 'step out the shadows' and present themselves as political actors. However, the visibility of irregular migrants and their presence in the city can also be used to connect, not only to existing discourses of good citizenship and deservingness, but also to existing meanings of places. This makes the spatial aspect of both mobilisations and citizenship struggles of irregular migrants not merely a background for claim-making, or a 'container' of activism (Martin & Miller, 2003). Rather, claims can be made *through* the city, using its urban spaces (Isin, 2002). In a similar vein, Tilly (2000) argues that locations and spaces in the city are important because they offer protection from authorities, in the form of visible safe places for claim-making, but can also become an important part of political contention itself, by using strategies of 'spatial claim-making'. In such cases, the 'changing locations, activities and spatial configurations of people themselves constitute a significant part of contention' (Tilly, 2000, p. 146). This role of urban space is widely recognised. Ataç, for example, describes the special strategies of a migrant protest movement in Vienna, where new political opportunities arrived though the transformation of particular locations into political spaces (2016, p. 643).

A spatial strategy allows irregular migrants to use the political, cultural, or historical meanings of spaces in their claim-making, a process that could also be referred to as *claim-placing* (Hajer & Bröer, 2020). Claim-placing shows how interstitial spaces generate opportunities for rethinking political subjectivities (Isin, 2012; Maestri & Hughes, 2017), as well as how highly visible and meaningful political spaces can be used as claims to citizenship. 'Claim-placing works by either connecting to the political and/or historical meanings of certain places (Yellow vests occupying Place de la République, for instance) or by infusing spaces with political meaning and turning them into places, spaces with political meaning (for example, occupying an empty factory building and turning it into a communal space)' (Hajer & Bröer, 2020,

p. 434. See also, Miller & Martin, 2000; Seamon & Sowers, 2008). In this way, the city provides an infrastructure for protest and claim-making and functions as a hub that supports both organisations and audiences for claims to citizenship. The city provides both the in-between or interstitial places to create new political subjectivities, as well as the meaningful and visible places to attach to claim-making i.e., claim-placing.

2.5 UNDERSTANDING THE CITIZENSHIP OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

In sum, while points of rupture are important for creating new political subjects or citizens, the above demonstrates that processes of political subject formation do not have to centre on points of rupture. Instead, irregular migrants may use existing ideas and frames of citizenship and political action, as well as the existing meaning of places in society in their struggle for citizenship. However, the above also raises fundamental questions regarding the ways in which scholars theorise the mobilisation and struggles for citizenship among irregular migrants. For instance, one wonders whether the struggles of irregular migrants have been understood in an over-politicised manner, or whether enough attention has been given to the (seemingly) 'non-political' aspects of their everyday lives.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCHING CITIZENSHIP AMONG IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

Irregular migrants constitute an interesting case for theorising the meaning of citizenship. They are not fully included; yet they also do not lead completely separate or excluded lives. This grey zone of citizenship between full inclusion and exclusion is invisible if we equate citizenship with nationality or understand it purely as official recognition by the state in the form of a passport or residence permit. Yet, it also is inaccurate to argue that citizenship is or can be fully an enactment. In light of this, one of the main arguments of this thesis is that in order to engage a better scholarly debate about citizenship than we currently do, including the claims irregular migrants make to it, we need to have a more in-depth understanding of the meaning of citizenship in the daily reality of irregular migrants. We need to know which claims they make, how they make them, and when they do or do not succeed. In other words, we need to understand the lived experiences of claim-making among those who make claims. For this, we need specific, local, and low-level knowledge that aims to connect the theoretical understanding of citizenship with the empirical reality of irregular migrants. Qualitative methods, in general, and ethnographic methods, in particular, are especially apt for obtaining this type of knowledge. In this research project, I will aim to critically reflect upon the concepts used in (critical) citizenship theory based on two cases, one in Amsterdam and one in Turin. By comparing local knowledge acquired in each location, this research project will present insights into understanding the general influence of social and political structures on the concepts of citizenship and claim-making.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

To understand the lived experiences of situations in which claim-making takes place, one has to be present where the situations are lived; one has to be there to observe people's body language, facial expressions, and emotions. This entails attending protests and hearing what is said on the way there and after the event; to visit squats during organised events, but to also visit on, for example, a regular Tuesday afternoon. Moreover, as the previous chapter explained, inclusive and performative approaches to citizenship often focus on acts and significant moments in which citizenship is performed or enacted or claims made. At the same time, arguments regarding the exclusion of irregular migrants often emerge from their everyday, lived reality. This project, therefore, incorporates both significant and everyday moments to close this theoretical and methodological divide.

This study is based on an ethnography that examines two groups of irregular migrants who live in squats and engage in claim-making practices. The first fieldwork period, from the beginning of March 2017 to mid-January 2018, was in Amsterdam, the Netherlands with the We Are Here group. The second fieldwork period, from the beginning of April 2018 to the end of October 2018, was in Turin, Italy at the Ex Moi. I made follow-up visits to both fieldwork sites multiple times and maintained contact with some respondents subsequently.

3.1.1 Participant observation

Participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Macionis & Plummer, 2008; Silverman, 2010), my primary research method, provided the opportunity to obtain data on the lived experiences of irregular migrants. Pader (2006) sees participant observation as 'the fine art of hanging out — with a difference', something we all do but some of us take notes and look for sociocultural patterns and meanings in seemingly mundane everyday practices (p. 163). Participant observation allowed me to witness and analyse the processes and development of acts of protest and instances of claim-making, instead of only witnessing these at protests or in the media, or only to hear about them in interviews. Just 'hanging out' allowed me to slowly

build rapport and over time gain the trust of irregular migrants and their support networks. But perhaps most importantly, it allowed me to become personally acquainted with the respondents. This gave me insight into their daily lives, experiences, and struggles, outside the narratives of their activism. It provided an opportunity to see and understand day-to-day activities in the context of the daily lives of respondents, with the aim of understand them from their perspective rather than from my own (Pader, 2006).

In Amsterdam, I already knew some people through a research project I conducted before starting my PhD; the Turin case was completely new to me. In both cases, I initially entered the field by just showing up to an event announced on their Facebook pages and then simply started chatting with people. During the fieldwork periods, I was present, chatted, shared coffee, tea, and food, and accompanied migrants and supporters during political activities. Yet, I did not play a very active role in organising or active protesting. I would help with small tasks like making banners and flyers since I have good penmanship. I would check spelling and grammar (only in Amsterdam). But I never decided what to write. I would go to gatherings, yet I did not actively share my personal opinions during discussions. I would lend support during evictions, yet would not let myself be dragged away by police as many supporters did. In Turin, I taught English at the school in the squat for a while. Therefore, on the scale between full participation and full observation, or as Gold (1958) describes it, the scale between involvement and detachment, my fieldwork would be somewhere in the middle, moving back and forth between 'participant-as-observer' and 'observer-as-participant' (Gold, 1958, as cited in Bryman, 2008, pp. 410 - 411).

In both settings, I blended in relatively well with the groups of supporters involved with the social movements. However, in Turin I was (almost) the only non-Italian. However, I did not experience this as a remarkable difference since I speak Italian relatively well and therefore my presence did not stand out that much. During the initial encounters, I would tell people I was a PhD student in sociology, that I studied migration and that that was why I was interested in We Are Here or Ex Moi. If I met and spoke with the same person a second time, I would explain more precisely why I was there and what I was doing. While contacting people, I did not use a specific sampling frame. I aimed for compiling as complete picture of the field as possible, one that encompassed the movements, their activities, those living

in the squats, as well as their visitors and supporters. Therefore, I tried to become acquainted with, or at least have a chat with, as many different people as possible and I tried to let contact develop organically. This mostly meant that I would spend time in the squats, just hanging around and trying to make small talk. Since the respondents in my study lived in squats, where there are often no doors, or no doors that close properly, this made it difficult to distinguish public and private space, both for people visiting the squats and for people living in them. The public quality of these squats as gathering places can make one forget that they are also the homes of the migrants living in them, and therefore very private spaces. To respect the home element of the squats, I was very attentive, perhaps at times too hesitant, to approach people. I would, for example, say hello and have a brief conversation. Yet if I felt that my interlocutor did not want to engage in a longer conversation, I would keep our exchange at the level of chitchat. While with some people, the exchanges remained informal chitchat, with others they evolved into chitchat more relevant to my research and, with some, eventually into interviews. Due to the sometimes personal and sensitive nature of many of the interviews, as well as the need to establish trust in order to generate valuable interviews, I did not push people to participate. Obviously, this led to a certain degree of selectivity in terms of respondents. There is an overrepresentation of individuals who were active in the movements, open to speaking to strangers, and who spoke a language which I also speak (English, Dutch, or Italian), and an underrepresentation of people who did not wish to participate in group activities, who did not spend a lot of time in communal areas but preferred to stay in their rooms, and who did not want to speak with strangers.

I recorded my observations in fieldnotes, mostly written down after the moments I observed. Throughout my research, as I gained a more specific understanding of the field and the scope of my project (Bryman, 2008, p. 417), my notetaking abilities developed and improved significantly. I improved my 'fieldnote-specific memory' and my methods for accurately transforming those memories into notes. Initially, I made my notes in a notebook, but later switched to creating notations on my mobile phone. These I typed, voice typed, or voice recorded and later transcribed. This tactic allowed me to easily take fieldnotes during long or complicated observations like an eviction or 'general assemblies', meetings during which participants discussed the ins and outs of the social movement. Moreover, I noticed that this method

produced longer and more elaborate notes than simply using a notebook. The resulting corpus of fieldnote data includes, in total: four A5 sized notebooks filled with handwritten notes, approximately 250 pages of typed notes, and 4.5 hours of voice recorded 'notes'. Beyond this, in Amsterdam, I made use of photos and videos to support my fieldnotes. In Amsterdam, it was common for people, migrants, as well as supporters, to take photos or make videos during events. Therefore, I felt comfortable also recording some moments in this way. In Turin, I did not do this. I noticed the presence of cameras was not common in the squats, and the people at Ex Moi were noticeably uncomfortable when there were cameras present. A possible explanation for this could be that the Ex Moi area is under constant surveillance, both by physically present police officers, Carabinieri, and soldiers, as well as by intelligence services using covert agents and hidden cameras. The images thus generated are used against the inhabitants in court cases.

3.1.2 Interviews

To complement my observations, I conducted 36 semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2010, p. 110), both with migrants and their supporters. Supporters I define as individuals or organisations who (intend to) help irregular migrants in a broad variety of ways. They can be seen as part of the wider categories of migrant intermediaries (Ambrosini, 2017). Yet, for this thesis, I distinguish supporters from, for example, migrant smugglers. The interviews were an important source of information; they gave me insight into the reasoning behind the acts and actions I observed, the motivations respondents had for doing the things they did, and their interpretations of situations. During the interviews with irregular migrants, we would speak about the respondent's own account of their daily experiences of being irregular, their status in society, and their activism. Beyond this, the interviews provided a more or less appropriate moment to ask questions about more sensitive topics that I thought would not be appropriate to discuss when others were present. These included the journey that ended with respondents living in a squat, how they felt about living there, as well as their dreams and aspirations for the future. I tried to keep the interviews open and informal, resembling a normal conversation (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 65), especially those I

conducted with migrants. In this way, I aimed to make sure respondents could speak freely and in their own words. This provided the opportunity to better understand how respondents attributed meaning to certain words or concepts they used (Schaffer, 2006; Soss, 2006). For instance, analysing the meaning of the concept of a 'normal life' comes directly from how respondents spoke about this, and what they understood a normal life to be. Informal and relatively unstructured interviews also gave respondents more 'agency' when discussing sensitive information and the ability to steer the interview in directions they deemed important. During the interviews, I did refer to a list with topics I wanted to discuss. Yet in practice, this served more as a mnemonic device than as an interview guide.

An additional function of the interviews that I came to notice was that they served as a reminder of my position within the field. A reoccurring doubt I had during fieldwork was whether respondents would remember that I was a researcher, and this evoked concerns about the issues concerning of informed consent that come with participant observation. Approaching people for an interview or referring to something someone had told me during an interview, in some cases, served as a gentle reminder of the fact that the research was still ongoing.

My initial aim was to record and transcribe all the interviews I conducted. However, I noticed that my respondents were hesitant to be recorded. This was the case for irregular migrants, as well as for supporters and especially for people with whom I had not often spoken before requesting an interview. This hesitancy was more common in Italy than in the Netherlands. Moreover, I had the impression respondents spoke more freely, especially about sensitive topics like group dynamics, when I only took notes. In such instances, I tried to make my interview notes as elaborate as possible. When I thought something was especially important, I tried to note it down as literally as possible. I tried to expand on my notes as soon as possible after interviews, often voice-recording notes on my way home from the fieldsite. The recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed. I conducted interviews in Dutch and English (Amsterdam) and Italian and English (Turin). In Amsterdam, I conducted 18 sit-down interviews, nine recorded interviews (four migrants, four supporters, and one municipal policymaker) and nine interviews where I took notes (six with migrants, three with supporters). In Turin, I also conducted 18 sit-down interviews, five recorded

(four migrants, one supporter), twelve where I took notes (four with migrants, eight with supporters), and one interview with a migrant during which I neither recorded nor took notes. I clearly noticed that respondents in Turin did not want to be recorded. Some told me they were afraid of possible consequences, despite my efforts to explain my purpose and intentions, and despite my promises of confidentiality and anonymity.

Initially, I had planned to focus mainly on interviews. However, during my first fieldwork period in Amsterdam, this changed. I would approach people and request to ask them some questions or have a conversation for my research, yet often they refused. Remarkably, refusing to be interviewed did not always mean that people did not want to talk. Many people did want to speak with me knowing I was a researcher, yet did not want to be interviewed. Moreover, those whom I did interview did not think anyone else would be open to a sit-down interview, making my efforts at snowball sampling unsuccessful. I should note that I did my best to avoid using the word 'interview', as it could carry connotations of the interviews the immigration/asylum agency carried out. Even so, some of those who declined to be interviewed went on to tell me many things about their lives anyway, often without me explicitly asking. Sometimes, this happened right away; more often, it occurred over time. I kept visiting the squats and having a lot of quotidian conversations, as well as conversations relevant to my research, during which I allowed people to learn about me, as well. Over time, I noticed that people felt more confident opening up about things that were personal of sensitive. Moreover, I noticed that people I interviewed at the beginning of the research periods started to 'adjust' things that they initially told me after we established a trusting relationship. One example of this is that, initially, many migrants spoke very highly of all their supporters, denying the possibility of struggles with them. After several months, however, and after I had witnessed some of their difficulties, those same respondents started to nuance their stories to include less-than-complimentary assessments of certain supporters. Likewise, many men initially did not want to speak about feelings or emotions.

During my fieldwork, I came to know many of the migrants and supporters in each group. Yet, making the step from informal contact to securing an interview remained difficult. After some refusals that surprised me, I noticed I felt hesitant to ask 'too soon' and risk breaking the trust that I

had built. I tried to bridge this step by casually mentioning 'others who had talked to me for my research', without mentioning any names, and talking more about my research; so that the question to interview would not catch people off guard. Moreover, when I then eventually did ask, I noticed that this still caused some uncomfortable moments, possibly because it reminded people I was with them primarily for research and not to be their friend or to help support the group.

My strategy for contacting supporters was more or less the same as for contacting migrants. The difference was that I also approached a number of supporters via e-mail, and I interviewed those who responded to me. Some supporters seemed equally hesitant to speak with me. However, they seemed to be less worried about what this would mean for them personally or regarding their position in the group, than about what I might write about the group and its actions.

3.1.3 'Other' sources of data

Before starting fieldwork, I looked for background information on the two groups in newspapers, on various websites, blogs, and social media. Over the course of my research, I kept collecting 'other data': documents, media performances, newspaper articles, pieces written on websites and blogs (approximately 450 pages), and posts on social media, which became part of the research project as secondary data (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, pp. 66 - 67).

I see the analysis of these other sources of data in this research as complementary to my observations and interviews. The overarching strategy in sampling was that these sources of data had a more or less direct connection to either my observations or to interviews. They included documents that I discovered during observations, and those sent to me by respondents, shared through social media, that came up in conversation, or that I encountered in the media. The media covered both movements relatively often, mostly in newspaper articles, but also in TV interviews or reports and, in Turin, even on a podcast. For example, during my observations, I found flyers and posters, which I used to find out about various events I could attend. Moreover, these flyers usually contained a brief statement about the group,

their action, and their problems; hence, they also contained instances of claim-making. However, I also found or was handed many flyers advertising events that, at first glance, had nothing to do with the course of these migrant groups, but later turned out to be relevant. Subsequently, I used the various flyers in my analysis to understand the 'network' of other groups, institutions, and organisations around the migrant groups. Moreover, various sources were useful during my research. For example, there were times when I could not attend events or meetings. When there was a livestream or minutes were made of a meeting, I would use those to keep up to date. Meeting minutes were also useful when I was in attendance, to see which points the people creating the meeting minutes highlighted. In other words, these documents supported the participant observation and interviews by providing background information and opportunities to ask further questions. But as there was no way for me to have control over potential bias in the selection of the documents (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 67), they were not considered a primary source of information.

While preparing for the fieldwork, I found that both groups were rather active on social media, seemingly as part of their overall strategies for increasing visibility and political recognition. Facebook data and, to a lesser extent, other social media and digital data seemed an easily accessible source for clear instances of claim-making and possibly even 'acts of digital citizenship' (Isin & Ruppert, 2015). Therefore, I initially planned to incorporate Facebook data much more than I eventually did. Using Netvizz (Rieder, 2013), I downloaded Facebook posts of various public pages related to both groups. In Amsterdam, this included the Facebook page, Wij Zijn Hier, with 12,795 likes,[*] the Facebook page of the group's We Are Here Academy, with 1,466 likes, the We Are Here Sport Club, with 170 likes. In Turin, this included the Facebook page, Ex Moi Occupata Rifugiati, with almost 4,000 likes, and various Facebook pages and groups, with smaller numbers of likes: Palazzine ex MOI e Villaggio Olimpico di Torino, with 129 likes, the Facebook page of the related Con Moi initiative, with 403 likes, and the Facebook page of the group's school, Scuola Zakaria Kompaore, with 317 likes. I performed preliminary analysis of instances of digital claim-making in all posts in the period from 1 November 2016 until 28 February 28 2017. However, during

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[*] At the time of downloading.

my participant observations and in interviews, I found out these digital practices were a lot less of a 'common message' than I thought. Contrary to the message formulations of, for example, banners or press releases, only a few supporters decided on the use of social media; sometimes, but not always, they did this together with one or more of the migrants. In Turin, it was even generally unknown who was posting on the Ex Moi Facebook page. Therefore, I did not perform a complete digital analysis of social media use as an equal part of this research. Yet, since the use of social media, especially in Amsterdam, was an important part of processes of claim-making, and during observations and interviews, people referred to things posted on Facebook or written statements on websites, I did incorporate an analysis of this to complement and support other findings.

3.2 CONSENT, PARTICIPATION, AND RESEARCH ETHICS

Over the course of the fieldwork period, I met many people who, in one way or another, were involved with the We Are Here or the Ex Moi, who helped shape my understanding of the groups and their contexts. I tried to be as open as possible about my research and my position as a researcher towards the migrants and their supporters. Generally, I made sure respondents did not feel pressured to participate in any way and invested in building relationships of trust with them (Silverman, 2010, p. 323). I made sure their comments and behaviour were kept confidential and that respondents knew and understood this. I tried to protect them from any potential harm my research could cause them, mainly by anonymising in various ways what respondents shared with me. I did this by using pseudonyms, occasionally changing their ages or countries of origin slightly or by being intentionally vague about this, by not sharing their whole story, or simply by using the data for my analysis, but not as quotes. Yet, potential harm could also lay in consequences within the group. Therefore, I would, for example, be open to meeting in different places or erase the history of my Whatsapp conversations with them, on the spot, if someone wanted me to do so. Moreover, since some kind of exposure is inevitable, I made sure what I wrote, and with it chose to expose, was also socially relevant (Swerts, 2014b, p. 51).

In terms of their capability to give consent, irregular migrants do not differ from other populations. However, for irregular migrants, in general, relatively small decisions can have great and unforeseen consequences. Therefore, it was especially important to keep the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of those participating in the research in mind. This is mostly related to the interest law enforcement agencies might have in these groups. Therefore, when conducting research, I was very cautious and made sure I did not make ethical choices lightly, often discussing them with colleagues beforehand. Moreover, this sometimes caused me to be more careful than respondents deemed necessary. Especially in Amsterdam, I met respondents who were not worried about anonymity at all, saying things like: 'You can use my name. Everyone can know this is what I think'. However, in these instances, I maintained anonymity to protect against possible unforeseen consequences.

During the interviews, I always explained the aim of my research (again) and promised the respondents anonymity. Then, I asked for consent verbally. I did not use consent forms. Consent for participant observation was difficult to define and obtain. In larger settings, it is inevitable there are some people who are not aware that the setting they are in is being studied, and thus have not given consent. Moreover, the two 'fields' in this research were complex, unstructured, and included different, various people coming and going, so much so that I deemed it impossible to inform everyone who might possibly end up contributing to my observations. Therefore, I chose to focus my efforts on those people I met often, to make sure they were aware of what I was doing, while maintaining an open dialogue and providing ample opportunities for people to inform me they did not want to be included (anymore). For the others, with whom I had no direct contact, I made sure to anonymise them well enough so they would not be recognisable. Yet, it was not only migrants who were hesitant. I also noticed supporters who did not want to speak to me or were suspicious of what I was doing; which I tried to respect as much as possible, likewise ensuring their anonymity.

My data is stored in a large plastic box, kept at a secret location. A digital copy of my data is stored on an encrypted hard drive, kept at a different location. As I promised respondents the data would be treated in a confidential way, it is not openly accessible.

3.3 ANALYSIS

When using ethnographic methods, a researcher is constantly surrounded by the object of research. Thus, data is not only collected, but also experienced. It would, therefore, be inaccurate to state that 'data collection' and the analysis thereof were two completely separate processes, or to claim to capture the analysis of ethnographic research in one clearly defined term. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) state, the analysis of data often is not a distinct stage, but happens in all phases of ethnographic research. To a certain degree, the analysis of data contributes to research design and data collection. Formally, they write, the analysis starts in analytic notes and memos; yet, informally, it is 'embodied in the ethnographers' ideas and hunches' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 158). Also, in this research project, the fieldwork, analysis, and writing phases cannot be clearly distinguished. I made fieldnotes of my observations and I conducted interviews about which I made notes and of which I created transcriptions, with these notes and transcripts functioning as a tangible product of the fieldwork. Yet, a true understanding of the field and the research subject came about through the process of doing fieldwork, through the experiences and the gradual access to the lives and meaning-making processes of the respondents. Fieldnotes are a record of this evolving understanding, but can never capture everything that happens. Therefore, I consider the process of sense-making that occurs during fieldwork also to be part of the analysis. My fieldnotes already contained many preliminary (theoretical) insights and ideas. This allowed for constant comparison of established theory, new theoretical insights that emerged from empirical material, and fieldwork.

I hand-coded fieldnotes, transcribed interviews, and acquired documents. intentionally kept the codes broad, e.g., 'citizenship', 'acts/claim-making', 'support(ers)', 'daily life', 'future'. I then elaborated upon these codes in mind maps and schemas, in which various aspects of the codes were charted, while sorting through the empirical materials. This helped to map relations and make sense of relations in the field, but also to a make links to theory. I began this process during fieldwork. Participant observation provided me with the opportunity to easily move back and forth between fieldwork and analysis. It allowed me to ask certain questions of respondents, look for particular situations, and check my preliminary insights with

respondents for validity. Towards the end of the fieldwork periods, I often discussed my preliminary insights during moments when I was just hanging out with my respondents or when we would be waiting for a meeting to start. In Italy, for example, I often did this when people were giving me a ride home or bringing me to the tram or bus stop. I would casually share some of my observations and ask them how they thought I should interpret them or ask if they agreed with my interpretations. The conversations I had with respondents regarding citizenship theory were particularly useful. The responses of respondents to my theoretical explanations of my research helped me to become critical of the theoretical foundations underpinning my project. Moreover, in both fieldsites, respondents showed remarkable interest in the other fieldsite and asked many questions about it. These conversations also provided opportunities to test some preliminary insights. Over the course of the fieldwork period, I acquired a quite elaborate sense of the fields. I moreover started writing early on during my fieldwork, first by extending my fieldnotes, describing situations and what I thought made these situations interesting, and later by writing preliminary versions of possible chapters, which forced me to formulate my thoughts.

Therefore, when I finished my fieldwork, I already had an overview of my findings and theoretical contributions. After I had decided upon a rough structure for the thesis, I revisited my empirical material to look for the specific concepts that emerged from my initial empirical analysis, such as: 'a normal life', the 'right degree of marginality', or 'safe places'. This specific round of analysis allowed me to review my insights in a structural way, and while actively seeking instances in which the concepts did not work, it allowed me to include necessary nuances to the concepts.

3.4 LIMITATIONS AND BIASES

The goal of this research project was to acquire a description of the situation of groups of irregular migrants that was as complete as possible. However, in practice, I was not able to see everything or speak with everyone. Some (groups of) people did not want to speak with me; to some places I did not obtain access; some events happened only when I was not around; with some

people I did not feel comfortable speaking, and certain places in the squats, like dark basements, I did not feel comfortable visiting. Therefore, it is inevitable that the results of this research project contain some biases. I attempted to bridge these holes in my observations as much as I could with interviews, in which I asked respondents to elaborate on historical events and how they influenced the present day, about things that happen at night, about people with whom I did not have the opportunity to speak.

One of the risks of letting the research develop organically was that I might only connect with 'active members', people who were actively involved in organising and participating in activities. I noticed that those who were active group members also tended to be more open to having contact with me than those who were not. Conscious of this risk, I put extra effort into approaching and speaking with those people who were not active or not visibly active; sometimes, people could appear to be passive yet express the feeling that they were deeply involved in an activity and the mere fact of showing up constituted a significant step for them. I put a lot of effort into becoming acquainted with non-active group members, building trust by chitchatting about non-political matters. Many people, for example, liked to talk about their countries of origin, or African food, culture, and nature; whereas with active group members, group activities were a good way to bond. In the end, I developed some valuable connections with people who were not actively involved, however, fewer than I did with active members. In my conversations with active members, we often discussed the topic of 'those who are not active', in the hope to learn more about the perspective of those who were not or less active. Connected to this, a clear limitation in my research findings is that I only managed to speak with a few female irregular migrants. Even though the majority of the irregular migrant in these types of social movements were men, I had hoped to include women and their perspectives as well. Especially in Turin, the women irregular migrants often would not participate in any group activities, such as Italian lessons or group meetings. Moreover, in the instances when I did manage to speak to female irregular migrants, I was unable to create a connection, and these informal conversations rarely led to interviews. This could have something to with the fact I interacted so often with the men. Another possible explanation could be that I could have been seen as one of the 'Italian activists'. Both male and female supporters told me of similar struggles in making contact with the

migrant women in the squat in Turin. Even though, in Amsterdam, I experienced less difficulty making contact with migrant women, there as well, the women in the group often lived separately from the men and would only be present at certain activities. In the end, and to my great regret, I decided to abandon the idea of creating equal representation of men and women in this study, for practical and planning reasons.

A second limitation of this research is my inability to recognise and adequately incorporate the importance of race and racism, about which I elaborate in paragraph 6.3. The level of attention to race and racism in migration studies, as well as in and outside academia, developed remarkably over the years of my doctoral study. As a result, I became painfully aware of how my position in the field as a white female researcher interested in citizenship and claim-making allowed me to largely overlook the role of race. Revisiting my empirical material following this realisation only confirmed this insight. Race played a latent role in many aspects of my research. But in many instances, I failed to recognize this in the moment, and likewise failed ask relevant questions. The relationship between race and citizenship is an important topic, which deserves due attention. Therefore, I made the choice not to incorporate a retrospective analysis of the role of race and racism in this research, and wrote about it sparingly, based on instances when I had good quality data on the subject.

3.5 THE RESEARCHER

In the type of research design I chose for this study, the researcher as a person plays an important role. As in all ethnographic study, the presence of the researcher changes the research setting. For example, the fact that I am a woman may, in some instances, change some of the behaviours of the predominantly male researched population and the ways in which they interact with each other in my presence. While I could easily be seen as one of their many supporters, since supporters engaged in the same activities as I did on many occasions (i.e., talking with people, just being present), I tried to avoid this confusion. In some instances, this worked. Once in Amsterdam

during an argument between migrants and supporters, the lawyer in the group asked:

> 'You do not want supporters anymore, then who is she?' And Hakim (Sudan, early forties) was silent for a bit, and then responded 'Well…she is…well that's just Minke'
>
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 11 January 2018)

In Turin, however, I entered the field together with a group of supporters, and, as a result, did not really manage to be seen as independent. Yet, I did not worry much about this as long as the people whom I actively involved in my research understood my position.

A notable difference between the two research settings is that in Amsterdam I am native and Dutch is my mother tongue. My fieldwork there took place in both institutional and cultural surroundings in which I have grown up and where I lived almost all my life. Perhaps, more importantly, Amsterdam is the place where I received my training in sociology. In the case of Turin, on the other hand, my position was not as clear-cut. I was not a native, but could also not a 'fellow migrant', even though respondents often joked about my migration to the south instead of to the north, and about me being 'just like them but blond'. During the research period, I spoke Italian at an intermediate level, and many aspects of Italian migration policies, as well as Italian society in general, were new and foreign to me. Therefore, in Italy, I invited more input from others, from respondents but also from other scholars, to help me to situate my findings in a wide Italian context. Moreover, admittedly, in Italy, I also purposefully exploited my 'foreignness', in the sense that I could more or less legitimately ask questions under the premise of not understanding Italy, Italian language, or Italian politics, and asking people explain things to me.

While conducting research, I tried to be as honest and open as possible. It seemed both unattainable and undesirable to create an artificial gap between myself as a researcher and myself as a person. However, this is also where participant observation becomes a bit 'messy'. The distinction between being a researcher and being a private person does not always remain clear-cut after entering the field and spending significant amounts of time with respondents. Moreover, creating a trusting relationship with

respondents is not a one-way street, but requires mutual investment. However, the line between establishing a good rapport and cultivating friendship is thin and difficult to define. The most difficult situations to mitigate during and after the fieldwork periods were instances in which I was accused of being a 'bad friend', for example, for not always answering phone calls (especially late at night or on the weekend) or not responding to texts. Respondents made accusations like 'You only want to talk with me when I can help you with your research,' which were difficult for me to deal with. Likewise, people did not always like me. For example, my 'curiosity' was not always appreciated. My questions were sometimes considered to be annoying. For instance, Mario in Amsterdam, one evening, called me out on my behaviour:

> One evening at the Zeebugerpad, I was speaking with Mario while he was drinking a half a litre can of beer. At some point, he looked at me annoyed and yelled: 'Minke, it's always you with all your questions, it gives me a headache! You always only ask questions!' I responded that that was sort of my profession, to ask questions. And that I thought the headache was probably due to his fourth half a litre of the evening. He seemed to be satisfied with this answer and changed the subject.
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam - 22 November 2017)

To Mario my behaviour was annoying. A real friend would probably not ask as many questions as I did, at least not while drinking beer. At the same time, this served as a moment in which I could remind him of the fact that I was a researcher and what that meant to me. Beyond this, I was happy with this encounter because I felt that at least he trusted me enough to feel comfortable telling me he was tired of my questions.

At the same time, there were also instances when respondents arguably liked me a bit too much. Throughout my research, I had to 'negotiate gender relations', being a female of roughly the same age as my respondents, yet not interested in romantic or sexual relations. As a woman in a mainly male research environment, I noticed that there were moments when respondents sought to impress me and therefore adjusted their stories to appear happier, richer, more or less involved in political activities than they

actually were. Some respondents would tell me stories about other respondents, perhaps in an attempt to make themselves look good in my eyes. Furthermore, invitations for interviews over coffee were more than once 'confused' with going on a date, even though I do not believe I gave anyone reason to think our meeting would be anything other than an interview. I also had to find ways to cope with and mitigate situations with a more explicit sexual load, for example, questions about my personal life, my relationships with men, my sex life in general, and whether I had ever had sex with a black man. I also endured explicit sexual advances and proposals. Moreover, I had to hear jokes and gossip about me, about how I allegedly had (sexual) relations with other respondents. It was difficult to navigate these situations because I did not feel comfortable, yet I did not want to offend or upset any respondents. Therefore, I tried to remain friendly; often, I tried to brush off such uncomfortable moments with a joke. At the same time, I tried to be very clear in communicating that I did not feel at ease with such remarks and that this was not why I was there. Most of the time, respondents respected this. However, there were some instances of harassment which caused me to completely break contact with a respondent. For example, one respondent stated that since I never invited him to my home, he intended to find out where I lived and to visit me there. On other occasions, respondents crossed or made attempts to cross my physical boundaries. These types of situations made conducting fieldwork difficult.

Inspired by feminist approaches to ethnography, I tried to keep the relations with respondents equal and reciprocal (see, for instance, Huisman, 2008). I was open to respondents asking me questions and did my best to make them feel at ease. However, I found that an unintended by-product of equal relations is that the researcher and respondent have to create new behavioural rules. In a traditional interview setting, where there is more 'professional' distance in the interviewer-interviewee relation, it might be easier to know what kind of behaviour is expected in the role of the respondent. When interviews start to resemble a quotidian conversation, they are open to more quotidian than 'professional' behaviour. One might wonder whether this method, which is designed to do less harm to respondents than traditional methods, by obviating a one-sided information flow, does not also cause harm by unintentionally encouraging mistaken expectations of long-term friendship or building a trusting relationship only to 'abandon' it

afterwards (Bloom, 1997; Huisman, 2008; Stacey, 1988). After each fieldwork period, I received messages from respondents asking whether I had forgotten about them and when I was coming back, or from respondents who told me that they missed me. I occasionally kept in contact with some respondents and tried to slowly let this contact become less and less frequent over time.

However difficult all this was, in the end, many of these personal encounters helped me uncover some underlying realities. For example, the romantic advances male respondents made gave me insights into how male migrants and female supporters tended to interact, and about the strategy of escaping the migrant squat by finding a native girlfriend (Chapter 6). Or, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, the more or less judgmental remarks concerning my unmarried and childless way of life eventually helped me understand the ideas behind the claim 'I need a normal life'.

3.6 RESEARCH POPULATIONS AND CONTEXTS

The choice of the Netherlands and Italy was initially mostly strategic and practical, due to my joint PhD position in Milan, Turin, and Amsterdam. I wanted to benefit from the proximity of the fieldwork sites to the universities. It also provides an interesting comparison of claim-making contexts, bringing together both two different urban contexts, as well as two different national contexts, in both of which irregular migrants make claims. During the case selection, some aspects the two cases seemed to be rather similar; both are groups of irregular migrants, which squat buildings, occasionally protest, and collaborate with local citizens and other activist groups, with a social media presence. However, claim-making takes place in different contexts. The cases show a lot of similarities, yet there are important structural differences, both on the urban and the national level. This could have been the beginning of a comparison between 'similar cases'.

Yet, this does not accurately describe the research design, as the intention of this study was not to make a comparison between two groups to test the concepts of citizenship and claim-making, but to use the comparison to better understand the concepts, to gain more insight into the concepts at play, as opposed to focusing on the specific outcome of these concepts in one

specific setting. A comparison can act more as a 'springboard of theoretical reflections' (Bryman, 2008, p. 61). Moreover, a pure comparison might have resulted in an oversimplification of these two research sites, as they are similar in some aspects but quite different in others. This pertains to some extent to the reluctance of qualitative researchers to frame their research according to methodological comparative research designs, as the meanings that emerge from qualitative research should not be confused with the outcomes of statistical variables (Simmons & Smith, 2019, p. 352). Consequently, this research used insights from both sites to understand the situation of irregular migrants and how they relate to debates about (substantive) citizenship. That is not to say that, as in many qualitative and ethnographic studies, certain comparisons between research sites, or between sites and the researcher's own life are absent (Simmons & Smith, 2019, p. 349). However, comparison was not the primary perspective used in analysis.

In qualitative research, 'multi-sited ethnography' can refer to studying 'just' two sites, although researchers seem to have the aim to study the relations and connections between sites (Burawoy et al. 2000, p. xii; Marcus, 1995). The comparative aspect of my research is well captured by Simmons and Smith's (2019) definition of 'comparative ethnography': 'Ethnographic research that explicitly and intentionally builds an argument through the analysis of two or more cases by tacking back and forth between cases to identify either similarities or differences in the processes, meanings, concepts, or events across them *in the service of* broad theoretical arguments.' (Simmons & Smith, 2019, pp. 341-342. Emphasis added).

Both Amsterdam and Turin provide fruitful grounds for migrant social movements. The one in Amsterdam was, at the time of the research, the only well-known movement in the Netherlands. Where there had been beginning movements in other Dutch cities around 2012, these other movements did not stand the test of time. While the Italian movement I studied was definitely not the only one, but among the largest in the country. Amsterdam is the Netherlands' capital, while Turin is an industrial city (famous for producing Fiat cars). The Netherlands is a relatively small country; Italy is significantly larger and sits on the border of the EU. Moreover, Italy in recent years has had to absorb large numbers of migrants who have arrived on its shores, whereas, in the Netherlands, the number of recent migrants has been relatively limited. Both countries have a different

make-up of the migrant population, as, in the post second world war period, the Netherlands has largely been a migrant receiving country and Italy has long been a migrant sending country and has only relatively recently turned into a majority migrant receiving country.

According to the most recent numbers of 2021, of the Dutch statistical agency (CBS), there were 4,306,295 persons living in the Netherlands with a migration background, comprising 24.6% of the total population, meaning that either they or one of their parents was born in a foreign country. This includes 2,314,622 first-generation regular migrants (CBS, 2021). The estimation of 'illegitimately residing aliens' in the Netherlands between July 2017 and July 2018 is between 23,000 and 58,000 (WODC, 2020). For various reasons, it is difficult to ascertain an exact number. The two methods used to estimate the irregularly residing population are the 'Poisson regression', which is based on the 'catch and re-catch' principle, accounting for irregular migrants stopped and released by the police, and the dual systems estimate (DSE), according to which the numbers the police provide are combined with data provided by the international organisation for migration (IOM). To interpret the accuracy of these numbers, it is important to note that the estimates these two methods provide differ by approximately 35,000 irregular migrants (WODC, 2020). In Italy, there were 5,065, 000 non-Italian persons living in the country in 2018, which represent 8.4% of the total population, according to the Italian statistical agency (ISTAT, 2018). Italy's ISMU (*Iniziative e studi sulla multietnicità*) foundation estimates the number of irregular migrants residing in Italy on 1 January 2018 at 533,000 (ISMU, 2019). However, the fact that the most recent round of regularisation of irregular migrants received 207,542 applications, despite being highly restrictive and limited to only three employment sectors (Ministero dell'Interno, 2020), gives reason to believe the number of irregular migrants in Italy is a lot higher than the ISMU foundation's estimation.

Moreover, at a national level, in both countries, there are important differences in laws and policies for admitting migrants, as well as policies that influence the general condition of (irregular) migrants. The existence of a subsidiary status for migrants subordinate to a regular residence permit in Italy is perhaps the best example of this. Moreover, there are significant cultural differences between Italy and the Netherlands that turned out to be important when studying irregular migrants' claim-making practices. For

example, there were differences in the relationship between citizens and government, general level of trust in the (welfare) state and other institutions, like civil society organizations and the media, and the functioning of bureaucracy that turned out to be relevant to this research project. Another example is the extent to which the incorporation of irregular migrants is prevented or normalised. Where in the Netherlands, the incorporation of those without a valid residence permit was prohibited to a large extend by law, the Italian welfare state depends for a large part on the labour of irregular migrants. The below will give an introduction to these different contexts.

3.6.1 The Netherlands

Irregular migrants may exist in all times and places, but the particular way in which the legal system works may, deliberately or inadvertently, contribute to the number of people who are classified as such. Most of the respondents of We Are Here were rejected asylum seekers; yet, there were also some that had never applied for a residence permit. In the Netherlands, the policy regarding the admission of migrants causes, again deliberately or inadvertently, those who are denied asylum to end up living on the street and in squats. Dutch procedure requires that newly arrived migrants should be transported to a single reception centre, which is located in Ter Apel, in the province of Groningen, in the remote northeast of the country, close to the German border. Once registered, they are distributed across multiple asylum seeker centres in various parts of the country, where shelter is provided to those who are awaiting the outcome of their asylum requests. When asylum or a residence permit is not granted (a procedure that officially may take six to 15 months, but in practice waiting times before the start of the asylum procedure can make the total amount of time spent waiting for a residence permit much longer), the asylum seeker is transferred to a separate location, where they have 28 days to arrange their (voluntary) departure. After this period, rejected asylum seekers are not allowed to remain in an asylum seeker centre. When a residence permit is issued, a separate system provides social housing, an income in the form of social benefits [*uitkering*], and various programmes aimed at 'integration' in society, for example, to aid in finding work and learning the Dutch language. Until social housing is arranged, the

accepted asylum seeker may stay in an asylum seeker centre.[*][†] Even though the Netherlands' integration system for accepted asylum seekers and its implementation have been criticized by many, it continues to exist. Therefore, only those who have been denied or who have not applied for asylum are left outside the system and often end up on the street. The Netherlands has a strict, dichotomous admission policy towards migrants. Those who obtain legal status are immediately entitled to the full range of benefits of the Dutch welfare state. Those who are not granted residence permits are officially excluded from access to the welfare state, with a few exceptions like, for example, emergency medical care (Biswas, Toebes, Hjern, Ascher, & Norredam, 2012). Those who are not granted a residence permit have no access to the labour market and cannot rent a place to live. Excluding irregular migrants by creating internal borders or 'borders to the system',[‡] part of a policy to discourage irregular migration, is arguably most beneficial to strong welfare states and states with open borders (Van der Leun, 2004; Van der Woude & Van der Leun, 2014). Moreover, the Netherlands, contrary to Italy or Spain, does not have a history of 'regularising' hundreds of thousands of irregular workers all at once. Past regularisations in the Netherlands have concerned small, particular groups of irregular migrants; even 'general pardons' have excluded certain groups.[§]

Besides the official exclusion of irregular migrants from rights and entitlements, the Dutch policy also aims to exclude irregular migrants from informal forms of inclusion or citizenship from below. The Dutch *Vreemdelingenwet* (Aliens Act) has as its explicit goal preventing irregular migrants from even being able to keep up the 'appearance of legal presence':

> That illegals and the not (yet) accepted acquire the *appearance of full legality* must be prevented. Here, we primarily refer to the phenomenon that most aliens <in process> appear to have been able to build a such a strong legal position over time—or the appearance

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[*] https://www.coa.nl/nl/asielopvang/asielprocedure
[†] https://ind.nl/Paginas/Verlengde–asielprocedure.aspx
[‡] Dutch: Systeemgrens
[§] The term 'general pardon' does not really apply to the Netherlands, as the pardons often target specific groups of irregular migrants, who have to meet specific criteria (De Boom, Weltevrede, Snel, & Engbersen, 2006, pp. 22-23).

of such a position—that, after the completion of the process, they appear to be virtually undeportable, for example, because they have been able to secure employment contracts, entered into obligations with third parties, etc. Something similar is also occurring with regards to those who have deliberately stayed outside the admission procedure and have managed to gain access to *normal society* through license permits.[*]

(Linkage Act: explanatory statement,[†] emphasis added)

This act explicitly targets citizenship from below. By preventing access to certain key attributes of citizenship, like participation in the labour market and engagements with 'third parties', e.g., citizens and institutions, the legislation aims to exclude irregular migrants from participation in 'normal society'. As prominent immigration lawyer Pim Fisher puts it, the Linkage Act:

is about exclusion and it is about this being visible. 'Normal society' has to think this [exclusion] is normal. This is the core of the project, exclusion from civil society [*burgerlijke maatschappij*]. Access can only happen after successful integration [*inburgering*]. What follows is the right to participation (2019, p. 2[‡]).

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[*] Original text: 'Voorts moet voorkómen worden dat de illegalen en (nog) niet toegelatenen een *schijn van volkomen legaliteit* kunnen verwerven. Hier doelen wij vooral op het verschijnsel dat met name de vreemdeling «in procedure» gaandeweg in staat blijkt een zodanig sterke rechtspositie op te bouwen—of de schijn van een dergelijke positie—dat hij na ommekomst van de procedure zo goed als onuitzetbaar blijkt, bijvoorbeeld doordat hij arbeidscontracten heeft kunnen sluiten, verplichtingen met derden is aangegaan enz. Iets vergelijkbaars doet zich ook voor ten aanzien van hen die zich desbewust buiten de toelatingsprocedure hebben gehouden en zich via vergunningsbewijzen toch een toegang hebben weten te verschaffen tot de *normale samenleving*.' (Koppelingswet, Memorie van toelichtingen)

[†] Kamerstukken II 1994/1995, 24 233, 3 blz. 2. (Memorie van toelichtingen)

[‡] Fischer, p. 2 (2019) Lezing: *We hebben geen plek voor deze man.* Retrieved 4 September 2019 from:
http://www.amsterdamcityrights.org/lezingpimfischer/?fbclid=IwAR2bkMAWebv
xrvuOOj0bmH8xDX8kls_hc4Twj8BHNdvaomEGjlEJtvJY910.

Restricted access to welfare services is a form of post-entry migration restriction (Hollifield, 2000). In fact, the Netherlands' Linkage Act is one of the best-known examples of post entry migration control internationally (Ataç & Rosenberger, 2019; Biswas et al., 2012; Kos, Maussen, & Doomernik, 2016; Van der Leun, 2006). The Dutch policy is likewise explicitly designed to influence the everyday practices and social aspects of citizenship, to establish the complete formal exclusion of those without valid residence permits, while also excluding irregular migrants informally. It thus not only governs direct access to citizenship, but also attempts to govern citizenship from below. Yet, while this restrictive policy is intended to strongly discourage irregular migration, it does not have that effect. Here, the pragmatic combination of restrictive policies, on the one hand, and a constant demand for informal and flexible labour, including a supply of 'illegal workers', on the other hand, has complicated the conditions under which illegal labour occurs rather than making it disappear (Van der Leun, Rusinovic, Chessa, & Engbersen, 2002; Van der Leun, 2003; Van Meeteren, 2014). Furthermore, while irregular migrants can no longer rent a home in their own name, they can still live in houses rented by NGOs (Van der Leun et al., 2002). In other words, despite the Linkage Act's restrictions and the goal of full exclusion, there still is room to wiggle and manoeuvre, live a life, and create citizenship informally in between laws. Having said that, the example of the Linkage Act provides a clear image of the difficult context in which irregular migrants in the Netherlands have to live every day.

3.6.2 Italy

The Italian asylum and migration system differ from those in the Netherlands. Italy has an elaborate system for the reception and registration of migrants and refugees who seek asylum, yet lacks a coherent asylum law and policy, since fragmentation characterises Italian legislative activity (Ambrosini & Triandafyllidou, 2011; Bianchini, 2011; Marchetti, 2014; Marchetti, 2016).

Among the people whose lives I studied, most had had an experience with Italy's migrant reception system before ending up in the Ex Moi squats. For immigrants who want to seek asylum or obtain legal residence on humanitarian grounds, the overall steps are as follows: (1) arrival at a

reception centre where a differentiation is made between those who are seeking asylum and those who are not. Beginning in 2015, these were EU 'hotspot' centres, where the fingerprints of all arriving asylum seekers were taken as the initial step of migration to Europe. However, this policy has since been abandoned. (2) Those applying for asylum are moved to a *Centro di Prima Accoglienza* [First Reception Centre] and those who are not to *Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione* (CIE) [Identification and Expulsion Centres] for deportation within seven days. With a total of 2000 CIE places in all of Italy, these centres are not able to accommodate even a fraction of all irregular migrants. In theory, at the time of this research, those who had applied for asylum moved to the 'second reception', in a programme called *Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* (SPRAR) [System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees], which is oriented to socially integrate migrants. However, in practice, most asylum seekers go to 'emergency' centres.

Italian migration policy is characterised by its almost systematic use of 'emergency policies'. For example, Marchetti (2014) argues that in periods when there is an 'ordinary' influx of asylum seekers, Italy is unable to establish a coherent system and, when the influx of migrants intensifies, the state almost automatically declares an emergency situation (Marchetti, 2014, p. 67). Therefore, in addition to the 'normal' system, there is also an extraordinary path on which migrants can end up. This emerged during periods when large numbers of asylum seekers entered Italy, which the 'normal' system could not accommodate. *Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria* (Extraordinary Reception Centres) or CAS are temporary shelters that have become permanent and may be managed by both non-profit and for-profit organisations. In terms of the above classification, CAS can be a hybrid of both first and second reception, where asylum seekers can arrive immediately after setting foot in Italy and in practice stay for longer periods.[*][†]

There are two separate classes of acceptance in the Italian system: those who obtain refugee status obtain a five-year residence permit; others receive one- or two-year subsidiary or humanitarian protection status (*titolari*

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[*] (https://www.lenius.it/sistema-di-accoglienza-dei-migranti-in-italia/)

[†] For a more elaborate explanation of the current asylum system in Italy, see for example, (Ambrosini, 2019, Bianchini, 2011, Colloca, 2017, Finotelli & Sciortino, 2009, Marchetti, 2016).

di protezione sussidiaria o unanitaria) and can stay in the reception centre for six months, which afterwards may be renewed for another six months. After that time, it is up to the migrants themselves to find accommodation.[*] In 2018, during my fieldwork period in Turin (Chapter 6), then Interior Minister Matteo Salvini abolished the humanitarian protection status by security decree (see also, Ambrosini, 2019).

In the Italian system, a *terza accoglienza* [third reception] is largely absent. After migrants obtain a residence permit in some form, they are largely on their own. When migrants have been denied one of these statuses, they have to leave the reception centre and are supposed to leave the country within seven days, but there is, similar to other European countries, no policy of actively expelling migrants who have been denied status. Hence, many actually stay. In this respect, it is important to recognise the role the CAS play. These centres can be opened as well as closed in an ad hoc way. The beginning of the Ex Moi squat in Turin is an example of this. In 2013 a large number of migrants suddenly needed a place to live, after the discontinuation of the *Emergienza Nord Africa* [North African emergency] policy, which started in February 2011 during the war in Libya and ended in 2013 (see, for instance, Bracci, 2012). As a result, in Italy, not only rejected asylum seekers ended up on the street or in a squat, but also those with residence permits who do not manage to find housing or whose shelter was suddenly terminated.

Italy does not have a broad system of social benefits like the Netherlands does; nor does it have a minimum wage or accessible social housing. Italian welfare policies are in many ways also problematic for young Italians, as many rights and provisions are biased towards pensioners (see, for instance, Ascoli & Pavolini, 2015; Ferrera, 1996; 2005). Due to a combination of Italy's Mediterranean welfare system and the general bureaucratic difficulties of obtaining rights, even those migrants in possession of a residence permit are essentially left with nothing more than the right to stay. Until 2012, obtaining legal status and accessing the (formal) labour market was relatively easy. Moreover, large, general regularisations of irregular migrants were a frequent occurrence. Besides, in Italy migrants are excluded from politics, political discourse, and policy, but included economically. Italy's historically large informal sector provides labour market opportunities

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[*] (https://www.lenius.it/sistema-di-accoglienza-dei-migranti-in-italia/)

for both regular and irregular migrants, mostly in sectors with high labour intensity and low-skill work, such as agriculture, construction, elder care, household services, hospitality, and the sex industry (Ambrosini, 2013; Reyneri, 2013; Vianello & Sacchetto, 2016). In recent years, a strong political discourse against 'clandestine immigration' has gone hand in hand with the widespread incorporation of migrants in both the formal and informal economies. Moreover, while right-wing governments have aimed for years to restrict inclusion of irregular migrants, migrants' contribution to maintaining the Italian economy constitutes the core of their political legitimacy (Ambrosini, 2013), meaning that immigration is tolerated under the condition that immigrants fill the gaps in the Italian labour market (Ambrosini & Triandafyllidou, 2011, p. 264). A clear example of this is the case of migrants, mainly women, who work as live-in care workers for elderly Italians. These migrant care workers are widely considered as deserving migrants, and accepted even when they are irregular, as the entire system of elder care depends upon them (Ambrosini, 2016b; 2016c; Bonizzoni, 2017; Hajer & Zilli, 2020). While this creates a contradictory situation of practical economic openings in a system of political closure (Reyneri, 2013; Ambrosini, 2013), it creates an 'economy of otherness' which benefits from migrant labour, yet in return bestows very limited rights upon migrants (Calavita, 2005; Ambrosini & Triandafyllidou, 2011).

3.7 RESEARCHING THE CITIZENSHIP AMONG IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

The situation of irregular migrants challenges scholars of citizenship to constantly rethink the concept of citizenship, in light of the claims irregular migrants make to it. As I have argued in this chapter, in order to better understand these dynamics of claim-making we need more specific, local, and low-level knowledge, so to connect the theories of citizenship to the empirical context of irregular migrants. This chapter presented the methodological considerations, and choices that form the basis of the research. Moreover, it presented information on the context in which the research took place. The empirical chapters of this thesis will reflect these methodological choices.

The use of ethnographic methods and by focus on the everyday realities of irregular migrants, instead of a focus on instances of claim-making, allow me to present the more nuances and dynamic relation irregular migrants have with citizenship. Moreover, by describing these realities in different contexts detach these insights from context specific understandings of citizenship and claim-making.

CHAPTER 4

HOW DO IRREGULAR MIGRANTS MAKE CLAIMS TO CITIZENSHIP?

A central question in this thesis is: How do irregular migrants make claims to citizenship? This chapter will describe claim-making practices observed during fieldwork in Amsterdam and Turin and show how irregular migrants manage to make claims to citizenship. Moreover, it demonstrates how, in line with critical citizenship studies, some irregular migrants create citizenship from below rather successfully.

Zivi (2005; 2011) conceptualises rights claiming as a political performative (speech) act in which the claimant does not simply describe a potential reality, but through the claim, calls that very reality into being. By using the language of rights, claimants influence and construct how they relate to political communities, challenging relations of power (Zivi, 2005, pp. 1-2; 2011). Rights, according to Zivi, then become 'more than just words or artefacts, more than just descriptions of moral, legal, or political realities' (Zivi, 2005, p. 1). A claim to citizenship creates an alternative imaginary in which the inclusion of the irregular migrant becomes possible. Isin (2017) elaborates upon this in his writings on performative citizenship. He argues that: '*because* citizenship is *constitutive* of rights and who can claim these rights is itself contested, citizenship is defined not just by having these rights, but also by *claiming* them' (Isin, 2017, p. 515. Emphasis in original). Citizenship in the performative sense is as much defined by those who are not citizens, but make claims to citizenship, as by those who are considered citizens. The boundaries of citizenship are under constant negotiation.

Yet, these specific realities are not only brought into being by speech acts or making claims by using the language of rights. According to critical

citizenship studies and acts of citizenship theories (e.g., Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin, 2009; Neyers, 2008) these alternative realities can also be brought into being by certain acts or modes of conduct. By behaving as individuals to whom the right to have rights is due, people can constitute themselves as citizens (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). Rights claims through conduct or action are especially important to those who do not automatically have the right to claim rights, who do not naturally have a legitimate political presence or voice to make performative rights claims through speech acts, since people do not necessarily listen to someone without a legitimate position in society or politics. Following this line of argument, claims to citizenship can come in many different forms. They can be direct, by making clear statements about a situation as irregular migrants do on banners, in press releases, in rap lyrics, and during theatre performances. But claims can also be indirect, by acting as a citizen or as if their irregular status does not restrain them, for example, from opening restaurants, shops, and hair salons in squats or by creating a collective for (non-)citizen journalism.

Irregular migrants in the urban contexts of Amsterdam and Turin make claims through extensive processes of constructing relations. These relations are with local citizens, as well as institutions: with (local) politics (politicians, political parties, and local government), activists, and existing activist networks by lobbying and demonstrating; with neighbours and neighbourhoods by occupying buildings; and with artists and the (local) cultural sector by creating art and participating in cultural activities. Moreover, both groups have a network of (native) supporters (see, for instance, Nicholls & Uitermark, 2015) around them. These supporters help legitimise claims and use their legitimate position as citizens to advocate on behalf of irregular migrants.

4.1 MAKING CLAIMS TO CITIZENSHIP

The chapter will follow the stories of two respondents, Mahmud (Amsterdam) and Samba (Turin), each of which provides insight into how irregular migrants, within their precarious positions, can find and use opportunities to integrate into and create a place in society through claim-

making and practices of citizenship. Mahmud and Samba participate in society as much as they can, try to work and earn their own money, and try to change the situation in their squats, either collectively by participating in instances of political protest or individually by finding ways to leave the squats. Both have many connections with (local) citizens. They have created networks of friends and acquaintances through which they can obtain help when they need it. Their stories demonstrate how one can make claims to citizenship through speech acts, by stating something like 'I/we have/should have the right to something' (Benhabib, 2002) for example, during demonstrations or in posts on social media. However, a large part of making claims to citizenship is not this obvious, but rather occurs through behaviour aimed at making people recognise one's citizen-like abilities. By acting in certain 'legitimate' ways or by pretending to be a citizen, claims to citizenship can be made through conduct or action. A claim to citizenship is always a trade-off between conforming to existing norms, values, and notions of citizenship in order to fit in, to be accepted and recognised (cooperation), and striving for change. To broaden existing notions of citizenship, a certain degree of disruption is required, to expose injustices or faulty categorisations and to extend the notions of citizenship to include the claimant.

Mahmud and Samba could be seen as two 'poster boys' of citizenship from below, examples that show how acts of citizenship can lead to inclusion in substantive citizenship. However, their stories are particular. While there are other irregular migrants like them, creating citizenship often is not as 'easy' as the stories of Mahmud and Samba might make one believe. Chapters 5 and 6 elaborate upon this. The forms of claim-making irregular migrants perform fall into three general types: 'political' claim-making,* cultural claim-making, and claim-making in everyday life.

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* I use the term 'political' to indicate practices generally seen as political, like demonstrations and other forms of protest. I use quotation marks as a reminder that other definitions of politics (see Chapter 2) are much broader and includes practices that are not traditionally seen as political.

4.2 WE ARE HERE – AMSTERDAM – THE NETHERLANDS

We Are Here is a group of migrants in Amsterdam since roughly 2012. The group was formed when a couple of irregular migrants started a tent camp in the garden of the Protestant Diaconate in Amsterdam's city centre. They soon began to attract other migrants who were *uitgeprocedeerd*, out-of-procedure, meaning that they had exhausted all means for seeking asylum and were expected to leave the Netherlands on their own recognisance, since the government does not often actively expel denied asylum seekers from the country (e.g., Kalir & Wissink, 2016). Soon after its formation, the group grew so much it had to move, creating a larger tent-camp in the western part of Amsterdam. Later, members squatted a church, which turned out to be the first of many squats scattered around Amsterdam and in some neighbouring municipalities. In the beginning, empty buildings that We Are Here could squat were widely available; due to the economic and real estate crisis at the time, there were a number of office buildings available to squat, often for long periods of time, often several months or up to more than a year. In recent years, this has become increasingly difficult. The squats were smaller and often in poor condition. The length of time the irregular migrants were allowed to squat were shorter, weeks to months, and evictions have become more frequent than previously. Over time, the group split up into several groups, due to the smaller squats and internal conflicts. Altogether, We Are Here consisted of 200 to 300 people, a majority of which were men between the ages of 22 and 35. There were also women and some older men. There were no families or small children since these are usually entitled to a place in an asylum seeker reception centre (AZC).

The group mostly lived off donations and aid provided by churches and NGOs. Regular food donations from neighbourhood people and local companies like bakeries created a relatively stable food supply. Occasionally, We Are Here organised benefit parties to collect money and other contributions. Due to the koppelingswet [The Linkage Act] of 1998, which links almost all aspects of life to a residence permit (e.g., Van der Leun & Kloosterman, 2006; Van der Leun & Bouter, 2015) irregular migrants were not allowed to work. Nor could they obtain health insurance or other forms of social assistance. The only form of legal work irregular migrants were allowed to do was to sell the *daklozenkrant* [homeless newspaper]. Yet, to obtain this

position one had to jump through all sorts of bureaucratic hoops. Undocumented work was not as widespread in the Netherlands as it was, for instance, in Italy, for which the fact that, under the *koppelingswet*, employers risked a hefty fine if they employed an irregular migrant is just one explanation. Consequently, the vast majority of We Are Here members did not work. Some did odd jobs, like gardening, cleaning houses, or informal catering, to earn some money. Some did manage to find undocumented work. Others were financially supported by people in their (co-ethnic) networks.

One of the main messages of the group, portrayed in both its cultural and political activities, concerned their lack of deportability. We Are Here claimed that many of its members simply could not be deported because their countries of origin are either not safe or uncooperative, for instance, because the necessary laissez-passers, documents that would allow them back in the country of origin despite the lack of formal travel documents like a passport, were not granted. Spijkerboer (2013), for instance, describes this uncooperative stance by the Somalian government in the case of 'undeportable' Somalian migrants in the Netherlands (Spijkerboer, 2013). Meanwhile, these migrants were in a 'legal limbo', as they call it, in which their status is unclear, because they have not received asylum in the Netherlands, yet also could not return to their countries of origin.

From the beginning of the group's foundation, cultural activities were important. Almost immediately after gaining attention in the public sphere, the group started to attract artists and other people from the cultural sector. Over the years, the group has created various art and cultural projects. Members have likewise participated in projects organised by others, including various theatre productions, conceptual art installations, photo exhibitions, video screenings, documentaries, debates, et cetera. At the beginning of its existence, the group was quite active politically. It managed to reach national politicians willing to take up their cause; its juridical strategy seemed to work in many regards. We Are Here attained a significant victory with the European Court's Bed, Bath and Bread ruling[*] in 2013, which caused a governmental crisis which caused a governmental crisis as the parties in the government coalition disagreed on the consequences this ruling should have.

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[*] (CEC v. the Netherlands, 90/2013; CEC v. the Netherlands, 90/2013: Decision on the merits).

After several years of lobbying local and national politicians and governments concerning the problematic situations of irregular migrants, We Are Here achieved some successes. One example of this is the increase in the number of shelters for irregular migrants in Amsterdam. However, not everyone was satisfied with We Are Here's successes, either because there were still migrants who fell between the cracks in the system, or because the proposed solutions were only temporary or not real solutions for the issues at stake.

In 2017, five years into the organisation's existence, political activity decreased significantly. It had (almost) exhausted its strategies for judicial activism, which was a key component in the group's (political) achievements. During the fieldwork period, the group faced a situation such that most members indicated that they were tired of 'fighting'. However, now and then, there would be a surge of moral strength when faced with eviction or an opportunity to protest, for instance by trying to get their issue to be a topic for the local elections.

4.2.1 How Mahmud creates citizenship

Living in Amsterdam, Mahmud is someone who shows how irregular migrants can successfully make claims to and create forms of citizenship.

> *Mahmud's vignette*
> Originally from Somalia, Mahmud had a brother who migrated to the Netherlands years before he did. After 'bad people' attempted to recruit him, and his father was murdered in front of his eyes, he decided to flee to the Netherlands as well. Mahmud rarely spoke about this period in his life. At the time of my fieldwork, Mahmud had been in the Netherlands for about seven years.
>
> At times, Mahmud considered himself one of the leaders of We Are Here. He actively participated in demonstrations and the political meetings of various action groups and NGOs. Mahmud called himself an honorary member of the Green Left Party [*GroenLinks*], where he did some voluntary work and participated in events. He was accepted to such an extent that he would wear a Green Left jacket during demonstrations. Moreover, he often took on the

task of creating banners with catchy slogans and other supporting materials. During demonstrations, he was often the one that reached out to people and explains We Are Here's situation. This made him one of the group's recognisable figures. During my fieldwork period, he only lived in the squats sometimes. He would often live with friends for periods of time. At one point, he lived in a friend's room in an asylum seeker reception centre in Amsterdam, because 'the people who work there cannot tell two Somalis apart' anyway. Most notably, for several months he obtained a bed in a night shelter, also known as the BBB, when he told officials that he was willing to return to Somalia. When his deportation fell through at the last moment, a course of events Mahmud already anticipated, he lost his bed in the shelter. Because of his knowledge of the Dutch asylum system and his own case, he knew the government would most probably be unable to send him back, which was the only reason he declared himself willing to return to Somalia in the first place. After this happened, he assumed a leading role in We Are Here. At one point, he even took a leading position in squatting a new building, something that previously only supporters from Amsterdam's 'squatters' community' did. The newfound proof that he could not be deported gave him the extra confidence to act.

Mahmud often participated in cultural activities; he had many connections with artists and often got invited to cultural events or received free tickets for plays and exhibitions. Moreover, he gladly participated in cultural courses and activities organised for We Are Here's members. On many occasions, he proudly showed me pictures of him in his role as an asylum lawyer in a big theatre production the group produced in Amsterdam's Frascati Theatre. Mahmud dreamt of going to university. One time, he was almost allowed to take an entrance examination but was unable to do so because he could not show a valid ID.

About a year after my fieldwork ended, Mahmud obtained a residence permit. Some months after he received his residence permit, he obtained an apartment in a social housing flat.

Mahmud's vignette shows how, even though he was in the Netherlands illegally, in fact, denied permission to reside there multiple times, Mahmud still managed to live a life that entails a lot more than the mere survival that is often assumed to be the lives of irregular migrants. He obtained various forms of inclusion, for example, through his participation in political initiatives. As he became a frequently seen participant, people began to perceive it as natural that he was there or even perceived him as an equal. Through this he became 'normal' or citizen-like to such an extent that, in certain areas, he was seen as someone to whom the right to has rights is due (Isin & Turner, 2002) or as a de facto citizen. Mahmud's story reveals various forms of claim-making, both in what his participation in protests or political meetings, but also in his participation in society, finding and using loopholes like secretly sleeping in a state asylum seeker centre, and being visible, for example, during demonstrations. Moreover, Mahmud had numerous connections with local citizens, participated in politics and culture, had enough knowledge of Dutch society to find gaps in policies, and was thus able to arrange things in his life the way he wanted up to a certain degree.

His story shows that the creation of citizenship from below is possible to a certain extent, yet his is also an extreme case. While there were some others like him, there were many more irregular migrants who did not succeed at creating citizenship or who managed to make claims and create citizenship to some extent, but not to the same extent as Mahmud. While this chapter focuses on moments in which claim-making was successful and aims at describing how that happens, the coming chapters explain why successful claim-making and creation of citizenship from below more often does not happen.

4.2.2 Practices of citizenship of We Are Here

The following sections discuss We Are Here's practices of citizenship. They describe political and cultural claim-making, as well as practices of homemaking and earning a living as claim-making.

4.2.2.1 Political claim-making

Karima (Somalia, mid-twenties) stands on a stage at the Museumplein in Amsterdam. She gives a fierce speech to a crowd of people while showing the palm of her hand on which is written, 'I am here'. Throughout the speech, people clap, whistle, and cheer her on. She finishes by saying:

'So, I will ask you something. What is the difference between a person, a man, or a group of people who put a gun to your head and tell you, I will kill you, or the other one who tells you because you do not have a paper, because you are illegal, that you do not have the right to live? What is the difference? Tell me!'

(Fieldnotes & fragment of a documentary on We Are Here website - 7 February 2015)

The above is a clear example of political claim-making. In a setting commonly understood as political, a demonstration, Karima made claims for rights she, and people like her, ought to have: the right to live, even though she does not have the right documents. She claimed the right to have rights and to be treated as if her life matters. She made claims by using language that appeals to emotion, by using the powerful image of having a gun pointed at her head. This can be seen as a claim in the classical sense, a claim through a speech act, claiming she should have the right to live. But she also makes claims through what she does, by being visible where irregular migrants are expected to be invisible and remain on the margins of society (Isin & Rygiel, 2007) by speaking where she is supposed to be silent, by presenting herself and her claim in a legitimate setting, showing she can participate in politics. She participated in politics in all the right ways, made statements that are acknowledged by an audience through applause. For irregular migrants like Karima, stepping out of the shadows can be a way to appear less illegal (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Because of her participation, people can see her as an insider. This in itself can, therefore, be seen as a claim to citizenship. In Amsterdam, We Are Here occasionally organised demonstrations during which it sought attention for issues affecting irregular migrants by marching to or demonstrating in front of city hall or other important landmarks. The group thus invigorates its claims to citizenship, not

only by engaging in legitimate protest that mimics the protests of recognised citizens, but also because of claim-placing (Hajer & Bröer, 2020) by using the existing meaning of these urban locations to emphasise its own (political) message. Pending evictions or deportations often prompted the demonstrations, which were often announced on Facebook. These announcements would mobilise sometimes 20 people, sometimes 50, or, when We Are Here teamed up with other organisations and causes, hundreds of people. During demonstrations, irregular migrants and supporters would make speeches; people would hold banners; and migrants would play drums.

We Are Here manifested itself as political through demonstrations, as well as other practices. The group's main practice, squatting, is in itself a political act. By squatting, squatters occupy a place in society, neither given to them nor allowed for them to have. Moreover, the physical space of the squat is used as a place to make, but importantly, to develop claims. Squatters make claims by hanging banners on the outside of the buildings. In this way, the squat functions as a canvas upon which political claims are made. Almost all squats were decorated with banners displaying all sorts of statements immediately after squatting. Since the squats changed frequently, the banners were a way to draw attention to the squat and inform the neighbourhood about it. Beyond this, sometimes posters would cover the doors and windows of the squats, informing the interested passer-by about what was going on in the squat. These posters advertised upcoming events, but often also included descriptive stories about irregular migrants, as was the case when the group squatted an abandoned second-hand shop in the east of the city:

> An asylum seeker had written the story on the windows in Dutch. The story details his arrival in the Netherlands, his expulsion from the asylum seeker reception centre because of lack of evidence to support his asylum request, his survival on the streets and the couches of acquaintances, his experiences with alien detention, and his failed attempts of deportation. The story ended with how he came to be in Amsterdam.
> 'There, you meet other people who are in the same situation as you. You are somewhat relieved that you are not the only one. Until now, you have been hiding as much as possible. However, these people are not hiding. You think about it: hiding has not led to anything all this

time. Maybe it is better to tell people about your situation. If people hear your story, then they will understand and something will change. You hear that a lot of these people have, with the help of supporters, collected evidence and been able to prove that they are entitled to a residence permit – a right that has been denied for many years…. Together with the others in the group, you try to make apparent that there is something very much not right in Dutch asylum policy. You talk to the media. You talk to politicians. You talk to all sorts of people. You notice it is sort of working because an increasing number of people agree with you'

(Description and quote from a picture taken by the author – 2 December 2017)

The example shows how We Are Here irregular migrants used stories to frame their situations in certain ways. For example, they made claims regarding the asylum system by portraying themselves as its victims, since others have been able to prove they are entitled to a residence permit even after being denied. They made claims about the causes of their situation by explaining the circumstances that resulted in them step by step. They gave inside views of the thought process. Their stories gave human faces to the abstract idea of irregular migrants so that people will identify with them. Perhaps if they had been in similar circumstances, they would have done the same. This and analogous stories aim to make people understand the situation of irregular migrants. Moreover, like the above story, many stories tried to make people understand that irregular migrants were not radical activists but people, like everyone else, whose circumstances were different. To professionalise the storytelling practices used to make political claims, supporters and migrants started the We Are Here media team. The media team combined personal development in the form of courses in varying subjects related to media like photography and writing articles for a website with the political message that irregular migrants could create their own news about themselves without depending upon a 'professional' journalist. While the media team's professional platform failed to materialise, the group uses its public social media accounts regularly to tell members' personal stories, thus making political claims. This digital storytelling consisted of various initiatives on multiple digital platforms, like Facebook, Instagram, and

YouTube. Along with pictures or articles about refugees and migration, group members posted brief stories about personal experiences and goals providing alternative explanations for the situation of irregular migrants. On these platforms, personal experiences with irregularity were shared both anonymously and with names and pictures. The group also used social media to try to attract attention to specific situations or developments.

> On the evening before the eviction from the big squat in Diemen, a group of migrants decided to make a video call for support. One of them had arranged for a supporter, who was also a professional photographer, to come and film a video to post on Facebook and Instagram. They spent some time finding the right place to film (in front of a large banner reading: 'We need a normal life, we need solutions'), the right people to speak on camera, and the right clothes to wear, 'If you are going to film like that [vertically] then I need to change my trousers. I cannot be with sweatpants, do you agree?' Then, it was time to prepare the message.
>
> The photographer took charge of trying to make the message as concise as possible, summarising the assignment beforehand:
> 'So first you tell about yourself, how long have you been in the Netherlands, etcetera. Then remember to talk about why, about the past five years and the 29 buildings you had to leave, and that again just before Christmas you have to leave the building. And remember that you have to say like "Are you going to feel good that maybe tomorrow we are sleeping in the street?" Remember to say like something hard'
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 16 November 2017)

This illustrates how irregular migrants develop and make claims by storytelling. They aimed to presenting themselves as eloquent by telling structured stories, well dressed (no sweatpants), deserving of empathy because they have moved around so many times and will be on the street during the Christmas holiday.

Image I: filming of the Facebook message. Photo by author.

One also may observe that supporters play an important role in irregular migrants' political claim-making. They helped to organise, mobilise, and make effective claims. In addition to this, supporters also advocated for irregular migrants by making claims on their behalf. Supporters would, for instance, lobby at churches, hoping parishioners would help irregular migrants, and establish connections between (groups of) citizens and the groups of irregular migrants. Moreover, in Amsterdam, supporters would actively (help to) approach local and national politicians. Both irregular migrants and supporters would use their right to speak in public meetings of the municipal council to address current issues, to ask the municipality for help, and to plead for policy changes. Many supporters of irregular migrants in Amsterdam were active for the (local) Green Left Party and tried to lobby local politicians through networks they have established. Moreover, irregular

migrants like Mahmud make political claims by participating in Green Left political discussions. Supporters also tried to approach national politics they knew personally, whom they knew they had supported irregular migrants in the past, and wrote 'incendiary letters' [*brandbrieven*] to parliament and the municipal council.

4.2.2.2 *Cultural claim-making*

In Amsterdam, We Are Here often used art as a way to gain visibility concerning the problems of irregular migrants, making a name for itself in certain left-wing circles and the cultural sector. The group made frequent appearances in, for instance, places where debate takes place like De Balie, Pakhuis de Zwijger, and StudioK, and were part of various art projects and exhibitions. Members participated in others' art projects, as well as creating their own art projects. These included a play called 'Labyrinth' about the Dutch asylum system and issues of undeportability, in which Mahmud played the important role of an asylum lawyer.

During the play, the audience literally walked through a maze on stage, which represented the asylum system in the Netherlands. In the end, the audience members became irregular migrants. The claims that We Are Here made through this performance included, most importantly, that they were irregular due to no fault of their own, but also that they were capable, creative, smart, honest, fun, nice, normal people deserving of a better position in society than they had, to whom 'the right to have rights should naturally be due' (Isin, 2008, p. 18)

Moreover, some migrants started the We Are Here band, which performed during activities organised by or for We Are Here, as well as at neighbourhood festivals and once played at Paradiso, a famous pop music venue in Amsterdam. Being present and visible in society outside the realm of 'political problems' is a claim through conduct. By showing irregular migrants can and do, in fact, already participate in society, they appear as citizens to their potential fellow citizens.

Besides participating in cultural activities and art projects, We Are Here also used 'their culture' as a way to connect to (local) citizens interested in learning about other cultures. For a while, part of the group in Amsterdam that lived in a legal squat, started organising 'living room restaurants'. During

these evenings, interested people could come and enjoy Eritrean food and participate in cultural activities like a traditional coffee ceremony, dancing, and Eritrean poetry recitals, in exchange for a minimum donation of 15 euros. This was a successful way for the group to earn money, extend its network, and spread its message. The activities were framed through culture, in explaining Eritrean traditions, dance, music, and poetry. However, between the lines, claims were made about the (political) situation in Eritrea, and consequently also about the migrants' position in the Netherlands, which is they cannot be deported because of the situation in Eritrea, but are not allowed to stay in the Netherlands. These and other activities allowed local citizens to see and experience the situation of irregular migrants.

4.2.2.3 Claim-making through homemaking and earning a living

In Amsterdam, the living situation in the squats depended heavily on the squatted building and therefore changed constantly. A common topic of conversation was to compare current squats to previous ones. As my fieldwork progressed and I was invited to the private areas of the squats, I noticed that respondents often took good care of their rooms or shared living spaces. Despite everything going on around them, and the fact that common areas that were not always particularly organised or clean, in private areas, beds were neatly made, shoes polished and placed neatly in a row, and dishes washed. Through these actions, irregular migrants made the squats into places they could live a normal life, despite their precarious situations.

> 'We have to be inventive you know', Hakim says to a group of students he is showing around the squat. 'Look this coffee table. I made it from a plastic crate and a piece of wood. We do not have a lot but I like to make it like a home. I made shelves from boxes. The art on the wall I made myself as well'
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 25 October 2017)

Moreover, those who managed to obtain (semi)-private rooms often decorated them extensively. They saw their rooms as personal sanctuaries, places to feel at home. This hominess presented an example of how irregular migrants live beyond the level of mere survival. The squat is not just a roof

over their head but also a place to call home (for an elaborate analysis of migrant home-making see also, Boccagni, 2017).

The squats, besides being homes, have political value. Their claim-making element became evident when, both in Amsterdam and Turin, when migrants invited local citizens to them and showed them their homes; this could be seen as a way of 'homemaking in public' (Boccagni & Duyvendak, 2021). Living in a squat is a performative claim to citizenship, enacting a normal life like a local's, even one's 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 2003) by using urban space regardless of citizenship status, since 'new forms of political subjectivity are enacted by *making space*' (Dadusc, Grazioli, & Martínez, 2019, p. 523. Emphasis in original). Moreover, the use of urban interstitial spaces to make new meanings can add weight to claim-making by 'claim-placing' (Hajer & Bröer, 2020). For example, Hakim, who gave tours of the squats to groups of interested students, shows how We Are Here already live in the Netherlands. This made it imaginable that they would actually live in the Netherlands, since they are already doing it. Why would it not be possible or why would it be illegal? The many housewarming parties organised in Amsterdam after the group moved into a new building provided another example. It was almost standard practice, when We Are Here members occupied a new building, to make flyers providing an explanation of the situation of irregular migrants and distribute them in the neighbourhood along with an invitation to come to the squat and become acquainted with them. By inviting people to the squats, they tried to create awareness of their situation, by letting people experience it. These events were, moreover, a way to build relations with interested local citizens. This networking is an important strategy for both spreading We Are Here's message, as well as for future mobilisations. Frequently, visitors were persuaded to follow the Facebook page, to come back another time and/or to keep in touch. Building these networks was also practical. In Amsterdam, irregular migrants mostly lived off donations of food, clothing, or money from supporters or NGOs. Beyond this, these kinds of events provided the kinds of contacts they needed for the odd jobs they did.

> [During a 'living room dinner', where locals were invited to the legalised squat for an Eritrean dinner and dance party], Tekle comes up to me and says: 'Take my number. I can do many things!' Then he

starts to sum up his skills: cleaning, gardening, painting, and laying laminate. 'Take my number and call me if you need any jobs, ok?' (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 20 October 2017)

Some irregular migrants in Amsterdam managed to find undocumented work, for example, in construction. But it was not common practice as in Italy. In Amsterdam, irregular migrants would talk about work as something they would love to but were not allowed to do. Or they would talk about having a job in the context of what they would do after they had received legal status, even though some of them already worked undocumented. It was more important to be considered a 'rule follower', than it was to work.

4.2.3 Supporters

In Amsterdam and Turin alike, supporters[*] played an important role in irregular migrants' claim-making. All the practices described above were made possible because of support networks. Supporters provided help necessary for survival, as well as political mobilisation when the state refuses to give help or actively attempts to sabotage irregular migrants' arrival and settlement.

Supporters were a diverse group consisting of: established non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), activist networks, as well as individual citizens. They played a significant role in helping irregular migrants attempt to create citizenship. They formed the first connections between the irregular migrants and general society. They provided migrants with knowledge about language, cultural specificities, and legitimate political practices, necessary to make powerful claims to citizenship. Supporters can also played an important role in developing claims (to rights) and delivering them effectively, by using emotion and playing into sentiments of solidarity and charity, during the Christmas period, for instance. Furthermore, they help strengthen claims by helping

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[*] The parts about supporters in this chapter appear, in large part, in Hajer & Ambrosini, (2020) 'Who Help Irregular Migrants? Supporters of Irregular Migrants in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and Turin (Italy)'. *Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*. 28(59): 151–168.

irregular migrants understand cultural codes of conduct in specific situations, as well as how to attach their claims to local historical events or politically meaningful places in the city. Moreover, in both fieldsites, activists played an important role in helping irregular migrants contact governments, by conveying their specific experiences and knowledge.

They would evaluate and explain legal opportunities for protest, the strategies and behaviour of the police and the state/municipality, predominantly related to squatting and demonstrating.

> During a meeting in one of the only remaining historic squats in Amsterdam's city centre, two supporters explain to a new group of irregular migrants how they can squat a building. In French, a supporter explains that the law works in funny ways, how squatting is officially illegal, but once you're in a squat, the state cannot simply evict you: 'Once you're in, you have rights'. But opening the door [to a building] is illegal, so we [supporters] will do it for you.
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 2 November 2017)

As the above shows, in certain cases, supporters were even prepared to break the law for irregular migrants, since doing so did not have serious consequences for them. Likewise, when a group of irregular migrants in Amsterdam decided to resist eviction from their occupied building, they could count on activists to help block the entrances and resist the police. Supporters would also help practically, with maintenance of squatted buildings: fixing broken electric wiring, changing locks, and building showers in office buildings or churches. Although squatting is inherently political, it is also a practical way of helping irregular migrants in need of shelter.

Beyond all this, interactions between irregular migrants and their supporters could lead to forms of inclusion. During these interactions, many friendships, romantic relationships, and family-like relations were constructed. Many We Are Here members were young adult males, which gives rise to frequent mother-son bonds with middle-aged female supporters. Often, they introduced supporters as 'my Dutch mother' or referred to them as 'Mama Ingrid' or 'Mama Karin'. Moreover, occasionally, irregular migrants would start romantic relationships with young female supporters. Some even had children with Dutch women. Constructing relations with supporters,

who were almost all local citizens, can be seen as a way of establishing belonging. Likewise, their inclusion in local activist networks and cultural scene were the first steps to integration.

Supporters of irregular migrants in Amsterdam and Turin, had a variety of motivations to help. Those affiliated with the squatters' movement, various left-wing movements, or in Italy social centres helped irregular migrants from clear political convictions. Others started by providing practical help like donating food or clothes and were politicised overtime, once they learned more about the situation and problems of irregular migrants.

An interesting difference between the Netherlands and Italy is how supporters saw the role of the government and how general trust in government and its capacities influenced supporters' motivations to help irregular migrants. Most supporters in the Netherlands shared feelings of surprise, astonishment, disbelief, and betrayal regarding the Dutch government's treatment of irregular migrants.

> When I first heard of it, I just could not believe this happens in the Netherlands!
> (Christien, late forties, supporter – Interview – Amsterdam – 16 August 2017)

A sense of disbelief and disappointment in the government became part of the motivation to keep helping irregular migrants for many supporters. Whereas in Italy, it was quite the opposite: there all my respondents indicated that, of course, they needed to help irregular migrants because the government obviously would not do anything.

4.3 EX MOI – TURIN – ITALY

The Ex Moi *occopata rifugiati* [Ex Moi refugee occupation] referred to four buildings squatted by migrants in the Ex Moi area, the former fruits and vegetable wholesale markets, *Mercati Ortofrutticoli all'Ingrosso*, in Turin. Ex Moi is on the outskirts of the city in a traditionally working-class

neighbourhood, built to house Fiat factory workers. It is an area where traditionally migrants from the south of Italy have come to live when landlords refused to rent flats to them in the city centre. Ex Moi is slightly isolated from the rest of the neighbourhood due to a wide and busy road. In preparation for the 2006 winter Olympics, the former market area was transformed into an Olympic village to host all the participating athletes. After the Olympics, the village was left abandoned for years.

When the war in Libya began and migrants started to cross the Mediterranean Sea in large numbers in 2011, the Italian government responded with the North Africa emergency plan (*Piano Emergenzia Nord Africa* or PENA) to shelter them. When this plan was cancelled rather abruptly in 2013, many migrants ended up on the streets. Faced with a need for housing, a collective of various activists including activists from the two large social centres[*] in Turin, squatted two buildings in the abandoned Olympic village. The squat was later enlarged with two other buildings. Over time, the buildings not squatted in the village were turned into emergency, social, and student housing and a youth hostel by the municipality and private developers.

The squatted buildings were positioned in such a way that in the middle there was a courtyard. In the ground floor rooms and self-built shacks in the courtyard, people had opened little shops selling a variety of items (rice, pasta, canned tomatoes, cold drinks, and (single) cigarettes) and restaurants providing foods ranging from sandwiches to fries to barbequed fish, and a variety of traditional African dishes. With this, the shops and restaurants catered mostly to the inhabitants of the squat and the supporters. However, their long opening hours and especially the sale of single cigarettes, instead of entire packs, attracted the occasional customer from the neighbourhood.

The majority of the inhabitants of the Ex Moi squat were young African men. There were also young women and several families with small children, some of them born in the squat. The inhabitants had a variety of legal statuses, some had residence permits or refugee status, but most had either a precarious legal status like humanitarian protection or no legal status at all, while others were still waiting for the results of their asylum applications or

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[*] Social centres or *centri sociali* are an Italian phenomenon where alternative and left-wing activist groups occupy buildings not to live in, but to organise activities and create a community (Berzano & Gallini, 2000, Ruggiero, 2000)

had not applied for asylum. There were also those who live at Ex Moi temporarily before migrating to Germany or France.

Most of the inhabitants did not have a (stable) source of income. Some had a job. Most of their work was undocumented and in the informal economy. Some had internships [*Tirocinio*], according to which employers received subsidies to hiring them for a limited period, for example, to wash dishes at fast-food chains like Kentucky Fried Chicken. Some migrants, especially those with high proficiency in Italian, worked some hours a week for NGOs as cultural mediators. Others searched the neighbourhood's garbage, looking for usable or reparable goods, like car parts, household appliances, or old iron that they could refurbish and sell. Others found seasonable work during the tomato harvest in southern Italy or in the nut and fruit harvests in the region of Piedmont. The work was often entirely undocumented or the migrants had a work contract for one or two days per week and worked undocumented the rest of the time. The absence of a minimum wage in Italy causes most of the exceptional few with a regular job to work six days a week for 5000 euros a year. This instability in terms of income sources caused many to be food insecure and without any hope of leaving the squat for a 'normal' house. However, the adversity did create internal solidarity and promoted sharing of food and other resources.

A variety of social cooperatives, NGOs, CSOs, social centres, activists, and individual citizens help those living in Ex Moi. They arrange for donations and manage the stockroom with clothes, shoes, towels, and sheets, as well as school supplies for the children and for those who attend adult education. They organised an informal school with Italian lessons, math lessons, and driver's licence lessons. Beyond this, they assisted the unemployed inhabitants with finding work or a school to obtain a middle school equivalent [*terza media*] or vocational training, and helped them to find odd jobs they could do. Additionally, they accompanied migrants to all kinds of appointments and aid in tackling Italian bureaucracy. Supporters also organised cultural activities, often aimed at cultural exchange, personal and artistic expression, and being together with likeminded people. Moreover, some migrants of Ex Moi, together with supporters, formed a music group called Re-Fugees, which performed at various locations in the city and together with other local artists.

In the first years of the squats, the inhabitants and their supporters were also active politically in demonstrations, with some success. For example, they fought for the right to register their address at the squat with the municipality. This is important because in Italy many social services are tied to address registries. After significant political action, while they were still not allowed to register using the squat's address, they were allowed to register at the fictional 'Via della Casa 3', and can thus qualify for social services like healthcare (see also, Belloni, Fravega, & Giudici, 2020). During the research period, the energy and courage for demonstration was no longer widespread. There were still people who wanted to protest specifically for Ex Moi, yet this has failed to materialise. Many stated they were tired of fighting for their rights or too afraid of the police to demonstrate. The few who still sought to be politically active did so by presenting Ex Moi's cause in demonstrations other people organised. An example of this was the October 2018 Reclaim the Street protests, which included some issues affecting irregular migrants, specifically evictions from Ex Moi and the abolishment of the humanitarian protection legal status, were incorporated into a larger anti-racism, anti-government, pro-migrant, pro-worker, pro-unemployed, pro-student, pro-LGBT, trans-feminist 'reclaiming of the street' message. Building these kinds of discourse coalitions with other activists, even if Ex Moi residents do not protest 'on their own', provided opportunities to make and spread their claims among the public.

4.3.1 How Samba creates citizenship

The case of Samba provides an interesting example of irregular migrants' citizenship in Turin.

> *Samba's vignette*
> Samba grew up as a political refugee in Senegal. When he was in his twenties, he migrated to Libya to find work. During the war, when the bombs also started falling on the village where he was living. He eventually decided to 'get on a boat', even though he had sworn he would never do that. After some time in the south of Italy, he migrated to France where his aunt lived. Eventually, he moved back

to Italy because 'France was too strict' for him. Samba lived at the Ex Moi for many years and still considered it his home. Yet, halfway during my fieldwork, he moved to a flat on the other side of the former Olympic village area, about 400 meters away from the squat, which was far enough so he could say he did not live there anymore, but close enough so he did not lose his home. He worked for an NGO, providing afterschool activities for children from the neighbourhood, through which organisation he received the housing. He shared a two-bedroom apartment with his three co-workers, who all used to live in the Ex Moi squat. They had many connections with local citizens. During their apartment housewarming, their living room was packed with young, mostly female, Italians. Since then, when I visited the house, there were often Italian students around. His roommate, who frequently cooked for events organised for or at the Ex Moi, had people over who wanted to learn to cook certain African dishes they had tasted at Ex Moi events.

Samba met 'locals' through activities like *Arte Migrante*, an initiative for migrants and local citizens to share evenings with cultural exchange and self-expression, in which he took an organising role. But he also met 'locals' when he frequented student-organised lectures at the university, or when he just hung around the campus, and through his work for the NGO, but also through his previous work, an internship at a fast-food restaurant. The extent of his network becomes clear when, one day, we went to the city centre together. In our 30-minute walk, we met five different people he knew or who knew him: fellow Wolof-speaking Africans, migrants he met at *Arte Migrante* events, an Italian woman in her mid-twenties, and a local rapper. Each time, we needed to stop and have a chat.

After 5 years in Italy, Samba decided to become serious and pursue an education. He learned Italian from speaking with locals in the village in Puglia where he waited for his asylum claim to be processed. His level of Italian was high enough for daily life, but proved to be not advanced enough to enrol in vocational schooling. Through his connections, he managed to obtain free private Italian lessons from the mother of a supporter. He attended the Italian school

organised in Ex Moi almost every evening and often complained that the volunteers did not take the lessons seriously enough.

Samba wanted to be more politically active than he was. Every now and then, he tried to revitalise Ex Moi's political activism. Additionally, he took part in activism at the border between Italy and France, where he helped activists by gaining the trust of the migrants who were trying to cross. At the end of my fieldwork period, Samba's humanitarian protection permit was only valid for a view more months. In light of Interior Minister Salvini's decree *Decreto di Accoglienza e Siccurezza*, that abolished humanitarian protection in almost all circumstances, it was unknown if and how he would be able to renew his residence permit. Still, Samba considered himself to be in a privileged position. Through his connections, he saw many opportunities. He had connections with co-ethnics who helped him to apply for a passport in his country of origin, necessary to apply for a regular residence permit. Moreover, he thought that, if necessary, he knew people who would be prepared to provide him with false documentation, like employment contracts. He, for example, already has a 'false' registration with the municipality in a regular house where he does not live. Unlike many of his peers, a mother of a friend had a spare room in which she allowed him to register.

Samba created citizenship through participating in society: by being included in cultural activities and the organisation of events, by working, by living in a regular house, and by attending school. Like Mahmud, Samba had many connections with local citizens. Through this network, he obtained both practical opportunities for improving his position, as well as recognition that he could be included in certain settings. His participation and the recognition he received by participating and creating relationships with various local citizens provided Samba with a sense of belonging and a position such that others see him as someone to whom the right to have rights is due (Isin & Nielsen, 2008).

4.3.2 Practices of citizenship of Ex Moi

The following paragraphs discuss the practices of citizenship among Ex Moi irregular migrants. It presents instances of political and cultural claim-making, and practices of home making and earning a living as claim-making.

4.3.2.1 Political claim-making

On Ex Moi's Facebook page, one can still find pictures of large past demonstrations. One picture shows Samba with a big smile and a large cardboard sign in black letters. It states: 'protect people, not borders'. Another photo displays Tommy (Cameroon, mid 30s) holding a sign reading: 'A house is a fundamental right for life. Housing for everyone. We are also citizens. Rights for everyone'.[*] Both statements are recognisable as claims to certain rights: protection, housing, citizenship, or human rights in general. As part of a demonstration, the form of these claims is clearly political. These were claims in the classic sense, made via speech acts. But they were also claims the irregular migrants make through conduct: by being visible, by speaking up, by presenting themselves and their claims in a legitimate setting. The possible reality established or that becomes imaginable through claim-making occurs not only as a result of what is said or written, but also through the conduct of visibly participating in a demonstration.

Additionally, squatting was still an important means of political claim-making and the squat in Turin was used to communicate political claims. On the middle building, clearly visible from the street, hung a banner from the first-floor balcony which stated: '*no al progetto fregatura*' [no to the scam project]. The 'project' refers to an offer made in negotiations between the municipality, the prefect, the police, the Intesa Sanpaolo Bank,[†] and the irregular migrants living at the Ex Moi about evicting them from the squat. When three men were arrested during a spontaneous protest at the headquarters of the 'project', their names were spray-painted on the front of the building along with a statement to the effect that they should be freed. Moreover, the squat was a visible reminder to the city of the problems of

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[*] The original texts read: '*proteggere le persone, non i confine*' and '*la casa è un diritto fondamentale per la vita. Casa per tutti. Siamo anche noi cittanini. Diritti per tutti*'.
[†] The official owner of the squatted buildings.

irregular migrants. When certain areas of the Ex Moi were cleared out one by one, and officials tried to house those evicted in migrant shelter dormitories or church shelters, many irregular migrants returned to (other parts of) Ex Moi. The continued existence of the squat was a visible reminder to those in the neighbourhood that the problems were not solved, and may even be worsening.

As in Amsterdam, in Turin, Ex Moi had a Facebook page, though supporters mainly used it, and less for claim-making than for arranging clothing and other donations or announcing events. By contrast, irregular migrants used their personal social media profiles to voice opinions and make claims. Active migrants would share links to articles, political songs, quotes, videos of other activists, and make claims themselves.

> An Instagram story shows Mamadou (Senegal, early thirties) as he moves the camera around a crowded bus, then he zooms into the empty seat beside him. His story features a poll with the question, 'What do you think? Is this racism?' In his next story, he is walking down the street and explains to the camera that he does not know if that was racism or not, but he just wants to feel included.
> (Fieldnotes – Turin - April 2019)

Mamadou used Instagram to make claims to his followers about his position in society, stating that all he wants is inclusion. He involved his followers by asking them to rate his experience. By filming, he appealed to their empathy, literally showing them his experience, making it easy to understand that he felt excluded but wants to be included.

Personal social media profiles were a place where migrants could both make political claims to their connections, mostly group supporters, but also share opinions, experiences, and information with fellow irregular migrants. However, these claims remained behind 'closed doors' because their social media profiles were only visible to their connections.

In addition, traditional media covered the migrants from time to time, sometimes because something newsworthy happened or when the groups sent out a press release, and at other times without an immediate reason. When this happened, it provided an opportunity for both the irregular migrants and their supporters to make claims. For example, after a murder

happened in one of the squatted buildings, a camera crew from a news outlet came and interviewed three men. The men took turns talking to the camera, making use of the opportunity to share their feelings about Ex Moi, and attempting to steer the narrative away from presenting them as all potentially dangerous people, towards living conditions in the squat and how they are also afraid:

> All the Africans who live here have a lot of fear. About how we have to sleep. What do we have to think? There is nothing to do. For one week I have not taken a shower. There is nothing to eat. For five days I have not eaten…. we need help.
> (YouTube video of news outlet – 18 January 2019)

While the irregular migrants living at Ex Moi were not mainly focused on political action or claim-making, many of their supporters saw their collaboration as political action. Political convictions clearly motivated many supporters, who were keen to include the political members of Ex Moi in their own demonstrations or demonstrations organised by others. Moreover, supporters often lobbied on behalf of irregular migrants. In Turin, they would sometimes do what they called a '*giro parrocchie*' or a round of parishes. During these rounds, they would visit churches and mosques and inform them about Ex Moi's situation, in hopes that they would empathise with the migrants' plight and provide some sort of help in future. By informing churches and other civil society organisations, supporters tried to build connections to help Ex Moi.

4.3.2.2 Cultural claim-making

In Turin, many young men from Ex Moi regularly attended *Arte Migrante* meetings. Some, like Samba, were even involved in organising local meetings. *Arte Migrante*'s weekly or biweekly meetings took place in various Italian cities. During these evenings, a range of different people – Italians, migrants, teenagers, students, and middle-aged people – convened in the lounge of a church in the city centre to share a meal and make art. Former Ex Moi inhabitant and local artist Muso sings about *Arte Migrante*:

I bring fun art to *Arte Migrante*, where all opinions are important. Here the person counts and not where you are from. You reach the goal by walking all together. We look each other in the eyes and shake each other's hands. We plant this seed to arrive far. At *Arte Migrante* the world is in one room. We believe that in the end life has importance. Here we feel like brothers of Italy, that we want to unite Italy, we do not give up. We love Italy. We are the ones who suffer when the state is wrong.[*]

Although *Arte Migrant*e meetings were not meant to be political, claim-making occurred at the meetings. They create a safe space, a place where irregular migrants find a benevolent audience, where people can speak out and express themselves without fear of repercussions[†]. At *Arte Migrante* events, irregular migrants make statements about their lives, status in Italy, or the political situation in 'Africa', through forms of cultural expression. They could also meet citizens and establish relations. Perhaps most importantly, at *Arte Migrante* events, everyone was welcome and everyone was valued. At such events, 'we are all brothers of Italy' and 'all opinions are important'. This in itself was a claim by irregular migrants and supporters. *Arte Migrante* meetings allowed irregular migrants to feel like citizens, to be judged and valued based on their talents for rapping, singing, dancing, playing the drums or juggling the Diabolo. It enabled them to be seen as something other than migrants, where they did not only have to make claims to citizenship, but where they were citizens. *Arte Migrante* meetings were most frequently mentioned by respondents when speaking of cultural activities, but Ex Moi supporters also organised a variety of cultural activities in the squat, like parties and film screenings in the courtyard or communal dance therapy [*danzaterapia*] sessions in the school. Cultural practices created interactions

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[*] Original text: '*porto arte divertente ad arte migrante, dove le opinioni sono tutte importanti, qua conta la persona e non da dove viene, l'obiettivo si raggiunge camminando tutti insieme, guardiamoci negli occhi e stringiamoci la mano, piantiamo questo seme per arrivare lontano, ad arte migrante il mondo è in una stanza, crediamo fino in fondo che la vita ha importanza, qui ci sentiamo Fratelli d'Italia, ciò che vogliamo è unire l'Italia, non ci arrendiamo amiamo l'Italia siamo noi che soffriamo se lo Stato sbaglia siamo noi che soffriamo se lo Stato sbaglia*'.

[†] Chapter 5 elaborates upon the importance for claims to citizenship of such 'safe spaces', sheltered and semi-public spaces where irregular migrants feel free to share their views and feelings without consequences.

between irregular migrants and citizens, in which citizenship could be practiced both through the development of claims (trying out songs, poetry, or raps containing claims) and because irregular migrants were considered equals.

> When I go to Migrant Art, I feel that I can be myself. I feel integrated you know, because people treat me as equal
> (Samba, west-African, early 30s – Fieldnotes – Turin – October 21st 2019)

The motivations for organising these events were not necessarily only political or to stimulate integration. Many of these activities were parties and other 'fun' activities. They were also organised as a distraction from the difficult situations many were in and to lift morale, create solidarity, and improve group spirit. The cultural practices often had a self-selected audience that is at the very least somewhat benevolent to (irregular) migrants or interested in learning about other cultures. Because of this, cultural activities are not only a good place to make claims 'safely', but also a good place to make connections with citizens, to expand one's network or to find an Italian or Dutch girlfriend.

4.3.2.3 Claim-making through homemaking and earning a living

Entering the Ex Moi squat for the first time, one would see rundown, dirty, dark buildings. It was a place where one really had to watch one's step because of the many holes in the ground, which used to be power outlets. However, due to years without maintenance, the plates covering them were almost all broken or broke when you step on them. When invited to the upstairs 'apartments', one would see that conditions are not much better. Most rooms I saw were dirty, with the stacked-up mattresses in the corners indicating many people sleeping in them at night. Inhabitants complained of fleas and bed bugs. The rooms of long-term residents were an exception to this. Like in Amsterdam, the private rooms were, over time, turned into little sanctuaries of hominess.

When I entered the room, I was overwhelmed by the decorations. All the walls and even part of the ceiling were covered with pictures cut out of magazines, paintings, pictures of saints, and a reproduction of the Last Supper. On the roof terrace outside his room was his garden where he grew plants that he occasionally sold or gave away. Then, when I sat down, a cat jumped on my lap. It was his pet.
(Fieldnotes – Turin – 18 July 2019)

Rooms were often decorated with homemaking symbols (see, for instance, Boccagni, 2014), mostly symbols of Africa, such as flags from African countries, depictions of the African continent, African art, or fabrics with African prints. These depictions of Africa symbolised both individual connectedness to country of origin. At the same time, Africa was a common symbol for all the inhabitants, since almost all were originally from that continent.

Matthew showed me a mural in his room a friend of his made for him. He said it meant a lot to him. 'It gives me strength, you know'. The mural is in the shape of Africa. In it an old man was holding a sort of sceptre and a quote stated in French: Every pain makes you stronger, every betrayal smarter, every disillusion cleverer, and every experience wiser.* Then in Italian: *Africa Mia*.
(Fieldnotes – Turin – 19 April 2018)

Even though this mural is in Matthew's bedroom, many of his friends liked it so much they shared pictures of themselves with it on social media. Many respondents who had a 'nice' room, like Matthew and Tommy, indicated how important it was for them to have their space, and those who did not have it spoke about how much they wanted it. The division of rooms at Ex Moi occurred mostly organically according to 'seniority'. When the squat was founded, there were few people and the buildings were large. As the squat's population grew, those who were already there kept their rooms. When someone left, he or she would transfer the room to friends. This meant that

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* Original text: *Chaque douleur te rends plus fort, chaque trahison plus intelligent, chaque désillusion plus habi* [sic]*, et chaque expérience plus sage. Africa mia.*

new people had to share rooms, sometimes with many others, or have rooms in the basement. These rooms were definitely less 'homey'.

Homemaking is also a form of claim-making. Because irregular migrants are not 'allowed' to live in Italy or to have their home in Turin, occupying space and making a home anyway can be seen as a political act. As in Amsterdam, Ex Moi migrants would occasionally organise parties or other events during which outsiders were invited inside the squat. By inviting people to the squat they attempted to create awareness of their situation. By letting outsiders experience the squat, the political act of taking and claiming space gained visibility.

> I think we need to organise a party again.…We need to invite people, they need to experience it, people need to feel it, they need to touch Ex Moi (Supporter – Fieldnotes – Turin –11 October 2018)

These events not only created awareness about the situation of irregular migrants in the squat, but also circumstances in which citizens and irregular migrants could meet, share food, tea, experiences, and create social relations. They constituted instances of claim-making, without obviously being so. By inviting people into their lives, engaging with them, letting them experience the situation in which they lived, irregular migrants could make claims without directly, verbally stating something like: 'We are normal human beings just like you. We are friendly. We live in the same neighbourhood. Therefore, we should have the right to have rights'. Yet, this message could still come across performatively (Isin, 2017). This form of claim-making allowed irregular to use the 'interstitial' character of the squat, an in between space of the city, a sort of blank canvas on which to create new meaning, a reality in which irregular migrants are included, in which they construct citizenship. In other words, it comprises a means of using particular urban spaces for claim-making (Hajer & Bröer, 2020).

In Italy, irregular migrants had more freedom to find work in one way or another than they did in the Netherlands. Even though it was possible to work, either because respondents had a precarious legal status or they managed to find undocumented work in the informal economy, jobs were scarce and paid very little or sometimes not at all. Respondents held jobs working in (fast-food) restaurants, factories, or bakeries, on nearby farms or

would do seasonal agricultural work in the fruit, nut, or tomato harvests, in Piedmont or southern Italy. Moreover, NGOs would provide opportunities for certain migrants, those who managed to integrate well, speak Italian, and without their own problems, to work for them as cultural mediators. Moreover, the fact that the squat was a relatively stable place for many years provided the opportunity for those who did not find formal or undocumented employment to start businesses. In and around the Ex Moi squat, in the hallways and stairwells, and little shacks in the 'courtyard', irregular migrants opened restaurants, barber shops and hair salons, and little shops selling a variety of things.

Image II: Restaurant at Ex Moi. Photo: Federico Tisa

While these mostly catered to the people living in the squat, some were oriented towards people from outside the squat. For example, Johnson (Ghana, late twenties) started an informal bicycle repair service. He had developed a network of people who knew about his service and took pride in the fact people brought their bicycles especially to him and not to a regular bicycle shop:

> Everyone [from the neighbourhood] brings their bike to me. They know I can do it better, faster, and cheaper. Ok maybe not better, but do you know how much it costs to repair a bike in a normal shop? (Fieldnotes – Turin – 12 October 2018)

Others would roam the neighbourhood looking for reusable, reparable, resalable goods, carrying them in carts they pulled behind bicycles. In the basement, there was a large collection of broken household appliances, furniture, and old iron. After repairing items, they tried to sell them, for example, at the weekly informal street market near *Porta Palazzo* (for an elaborate description of the market see, for instance, Black, 2012). Work and earning a living are ways of creating citizenship, by behaving as if one were a citizen, carving out a life, maintaining oneself and by participating in the (informal) economy, of Ex Moi, the neighbourhood, or the city.

4.3.3 Supporters

While the role of supporters was discussed above in section 4.2.3, in Turin, their role was somewhat different from in Amsterdam. As in Amsterdam, irregular migrants in Turin benefit from the help of (native) citizens in making claims to rights. Supporters functioned as brokers to political action. They helped develop (rights) claims and with effective delivery, for example, by demonstrating how to follow specific norms and values, how to attach claims to local historical events or politically meaningful places in the city. Beyond this, before demonstrations or evictions, supporters would guide the irregular migrants in understanding how far certain laws could be stretched, what kind of legal loopholes existed, what kind of tactics police forces might use, and how to avoid arrest.

As mentioned above, contrary to the situation in the Netherlands, in Italy supporters expected very little help from the government. Moreover, in Italy there was more organised left-wing, anti-government, even anarchist activism than in the Netherlands, of which the social centres are an example. From this base, people could be mobilised for support during evictions. Supporters sometimes would include the cause of irregular migrants in demonstrations organised by parts of their networks or shared information

about irregular migrants through their (social) media outlets. In practical terms, supporters also helped organise events and provided goods, like the speakers for the demonstrations. Moreover, one social centre also organised consultation hours for legal and medical problems, which were available to everyone, including irregular migrants.

In Italy, the majority of the supporters stated that they felt a special solidarity with irregular migrants because of their own life histories. A majority either came from southern Italy or had families from southern Italy. They linked the experiences of the first-generation migrants from southern Italy, who experience racism and social exclusion when they arrive in the north, to the experiences of migrants to Italy:

> Many people at Ex Moi [supporters] are from the south, I think almost everyone…I think it is because we know what it is like…it is the same really. Before they said the *terroni*[*] were lazy and dirty, and that was why they did not want to rent houses to them. They even had signs outside the houses. And now they do not want to rent to Africans because they are dirty and lazy', (Manuela, late forties, supporter – Interview – Turin – 19 October 2018)

4.4 IRREGULAR MIGRANTS MAKING CLAIMS TO CITIZENSHIP

This chapter shows acts of claim-making by individual irregular migrants, like Mahmud and Samba, as well as by groups of irregular migrants collectively. They make claims for inclusion and citizenship, and can create citizenship, despite being formally excluded from certain rights or inclusion in general. Some irregular migrants become stuck in their irregular position and are mainly focused on survival. However, there are also ways in which irregular migrants can create a life for themselves that is more than just surviving. Indeed, some irregular migrants, like Mahmud and Samba, are so

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[*] *Terrone* (plural: *terroni*) is a term that indicates people from southern Italy, often used in a derogatory way.

successful at creating their life, it could be said they manage to create citizenship from below.

An important aspect of the practices described above are the relations irregular migrants establish with (local) citizens. In these relations, belonging can be negotiated and established when local citizens acknowledge the claims of irregular migrants and the latter receive recognition as (substantive) citizens. Recognition as an equal by some citizens or in some settings can be the first step towards inclusion or (substantive) citizenship. The stories of Mahmud and Samba show how participation in all sorts of activities and a network of friends and acquaintances can help irregular migrants advance. From these connections, which contributed to the integration, despite exclusion, of the irregular migrants, many friendships and even romantic relations arose. Having connections with citizens is useful for obtaining clothes and food or having a place to take a warm shower. These citizens also help by translating documents, accompanying irregular migrants to official appointments, or finding them (informal) jobs. Beyond these personal ways of constructing belonging, there are also instances when relations are collectively constructed, and not necessarily with persons but also with abstract entities, like (municipal) politics or the cultural sector. Both groups use the city as part of their struggle. Especially by squatting, they use the interstitial urban spaces to create places where new meanings can emerge and new realities can be enacted. Additionally, they use the pre-existing meanings present in city squares (e.g., *Piazza Castello*, *museumplein*, or the *Dam*) or physical spaces in front of institutions (e.g., *the prefettura*, which happens to be also at *piazza Castello*, the municipality or mayor's office). In other words, alongside claim-making there are practices of claim-placing (Hajer & Bröer, 2020).

While there were many similarities between Amsterdam and Turin in the ways irregular migrants made claims, there were also significant differences. In Amsterdam, irregular migrants are more prone to demonstrate or to make claims about their situation as irregular migrants very explicitly than are irregular migrants living in Turin. In Turin, irregular migrants made more claims to citizenship through everyday life than in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, irregular migrants had more political opportunities or freedom to make claims in a traditional political manner. In Turin, irregular migrants had more opportunities for everyday forms of claim-making and freedom to

build a life for themselves despite their formal exclusion. Moreover, in these practices of citizenship, claims were made not only by the message that is purposefully crafted and intended to bring over to the audience of the claims, but also by behaving in certain ways. By showing that they can or already do participate in society in legitimate ways, that irregular migrants demonstrate that they are people capable of action, in the Arendtian sense. During these claim-making interactions, which show irregular migrants to be just like citizens, their inclusion becomes imaginable. Both groups of irregular migrants comprise people that formally do not have a political voice, yet try to make themselves visible and audible anyway. The fact that they are not only present, but also active in the societies from which they are formally excluded, could be interpreted as an act of resistance against exclusion. It is this that scholars working in autonomy of migration and critical citizenship studies interpret as the inherent political nature of irregular migrants' activities. From this perspective, creating a home in a squat or running an informal restaurant from a squat can be seen as a political act.

This chapter shows how theories from critical citizenship studies, such as acts of citizenship and citizenship from below, have an empirical basis. My criticism is not that the theories are wrong, but rather that the cases to which they fully apply are rare. Successfully creating citizenship from below is exceptional. These theories do help understand irregular migrants' struggle for citizenship, but they do not reveal the whole story, as this struggle entails many more aspects than this perspective admits.

In the next chapter, I start by showing the (pre-)conditions required for irregular migrants to make claims to citizenship.

CHAPTER 5

(PRE-)CONDITIONS FOR CLAIM-MAKING

The previous chapter described practices of claim-making by irregular migrants in Amsterdam and Turin. It demonstrates that it is even possible to state that irregular migrants, like Mahmud and Samba, create forms of citizenship from below. This chapter demonstrates that despite the existence of claim-making in both Amsterdam and Turin, the practice remained rare. In both cities, short periods of activity alternated with long periods of relative inactivity. Moreover, the irregular migrants who made claims to citizenship were a small, select group. The question that arises is how and under which circumstances claims to citizenship come into being? In other words, what conditions have to be met for claim-making to occur?

Why people demonstrate is a question commonly asked in social movement studies. Klandermans and Van Stekelenburg (2013) state that classic social movement theories often assume that expressing grievances due to relative deprivation, frustration, or perceived injustice is why people participate in protests. However, they argue that the actual question to be answered is not 'whether people who engage in protest are aggrieved', but rather 'whether aggrieved people engage in protest' (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 887). People confronting injustice often do not respond with political action at all. Additionally, those most marginalised are often the least prone to mobilise. Moreover, social movement studies do not generally concern the mobilisations of marginalised groups, such as irregular migrants. Some argue that this is because classic social movement theories, for example, resource mobilisation theory, cannot account for the mobilisation of groups that are largely marginalised (Steinhilper, 2018).

To account for this, Della Porta (2018) compares social movements of migrants with 'poor people's movements', as described by Piven and

Cloward (1979). Poor people's movements can refer generally to political mobilisation of marginalised groups. Piven and Cloward (1979) write that, while inequality is constant, rebellion is infrequent. Those most oppressed by inequality are mostly acquiescent. Only under exceptional circumstances are the poor presented opportunities to protest. The question then is: What are the circumstances under which the marginalised mobilise? Piven and Cloward (1979) argue that in order to take action or protest, people have to perceive their experiences as both wrong and something that should be 'corrected' (Piven & Cloward, 1979). This could, for example, be understood according to the theory of relative deprivation, which holds that people's perceived deprivation stems from comparing their life circumstances to those around them, instead of from, for example, the material threshold for poverty (Giddens, 2009, p. 27).

This chapter thus demonstrates that to make claims irregular migrants need the 'right degree of marginality'. They need to be not so marginal that their primary concerns pertain to the basic necessities of life, yet, at the same time, there has to grounds for making claims. Hence, their living conditions should not be so good that there is no reason to demonstrate. Lefebvre (1971) argues that 'a revolution takes place when and only when, in such a society people can no longer lead their everyday lives; so long as they can live their ordinary lives relations are constantly re-established' (Lefebvre, 1971, p. 32). Applied to the situation of migrants, Chimienti (2011) states that people suffering disruptions in everyday life caused by a shift from (relative) tolerance to restrictiveness, for instance, asylum seekers who are rejected or students whose residence permits expire, can mobilise against the change in their status (Chimienti, 2011). To protest, they should be marginal enough not to be able to live their ordinary lives so as not to put them at risk. For irregular migrants, these risks could include detention or deportation. Therefore, for claim-making to occur, one has to have the right degree of 'nothing to lose'. If there is too much at stake, the risk of being visible and making claims might be too great. This echoes the preconditions for migrating: not too poor, in which case there are no resources for migration or migration is not on one's horizon of imagination, but also not too wealthy or living in comfortable conditions, or there is no reason to move.

Tarrow (1990) argues that protests are not only more likely to occur in times of relative prosperity, but that the protests of poor people's

movements often involve people who are relatively well off. The strength of poor people's movements often comes from the networking with a variety of other activist groups (Tarrow, 1990, p. 31; Della Porta, 2018, p. 13). In addition to the 'right degree of marginality', I identify the presence of support from (native) citizens and organisations as an important precondition for irregular migrants' claim-making. Many social movements are partly made up of 'supporters' who take up the causes of groups of people, like irregular migrants, to which they do not belong themselves out of a sense of solidarity (Schwiertz & Schwenken, 2020). McCarthy and Zald (1977) argue that the success or failure of a social movement has (partly) to do with the involvement of individuals and organisations that are outside the immediate collective the social movement represents. These supporters can play a large role in resource mobilisation, as they provide money, facilities, and/or labour (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1216). Others argue that supporters not only bring material resources to a social movement, but also play an important role in mobilising symbolic resources (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2015). They can prove crucial allies when it comes to seeing political opportunities for protest, as irregular migrants often lack a sense of place-specific activist knowledge, which is necessary to respond to the niche political openings that might present themselves (Nicholls, 2011, pp. 614-615). Supporters can function as the connection between irregular migrants and society, and help make claims more effective by sharing their local knowledge (Nicholls, 2011; Nicholls, 2013b).

Furthermore, how governments, both local and national, respond to political claim-making has a large influence on claim-making among irregular migrants. Earl (2013) describes how the tactics individuals, groups, and state actors, like the military and police, use to control, restrain, and prevent protest often include 'increasing the costs associated with social movement participation' (Earl, 2013, p. 1). Social movement literature describes repression of social movements according to a four-part distinction between overt repression, e.g., visible police action and/or violence, which includes arrests of activists, and covert repression, e.g., infiltration of social movements by informants; coercive repression e.g., violent police action like sending tanks to Tiananmen Square; and channelling, when laws, policies, or actions reward certain types of tactics, typically more institutional or nonviolent ones (Earl, 2013). The police are the most important influence on the nation-state. I

will describe how the nation-state influences practices of claim-making through different kinds of surveillance and policing of irregular migrants and their supporters. I will also outline how different state practices aim to undermine the collective action of irregular migrants and activists. The most prevalent are attempts to individualise the problems of irregular migrants, among others, by the strategically issuing residence permits to key players.

Lastly, the chapter describes how, in order to make claims, there need to be (physical) places where irregular migrants are relatively free to express themselves. The city is an important place for renegotiation of citizenship (rights). It provides an urban political opportunity structure from which irregular migrants can benefit. Swerts (2017), for example, calls for both a theoretical and empirical focus on the urban level as a key to understanding irregular migrants' political subject formation. He describes the role of the 'urban interstices' as places that allow unrecognised political subjects to 'simultaneously stay "out of sight" and "be seen"' (Swerts, 2017, p. 380). I describe this as a need for relatively 'safe spaces' for claim-making. Among others reasons, to create citizenship through claim-making, claims must be recognised. This requires a relatively safe space that, on the one hand, contains potentially benevolent audiences and, on the other, irregular migrants are safe to make claims without repercussions like arrest. Cities provide relatively safe spaces for claim-making, like cultural associations and social centres in Turin or centres for debate in Amsterdam, as well as interstitial spaces, like squats, for instance.

5.1 THE RIGHT DEGREE OF MARGINALITY

What could be observed in both groups of irregular migrants in this study is that the majority of them were not occupied with politics or claim-making at all. Most, actually, did nothing other than hanging out, smoking, listening to music, playing with their phones, or perhaps performing some small chores around their squats. Many of these irregular migrants could be said to be too marginal to become political. People whose minds are occupied all day with arranging the necessities of survival, like food and shelter, do not prioritise or even think of claim-making or political action. Or, crudely put, if you drink a

bottle of vodka a day, the likelihood of successfully making claims to citizenship is slim. Examining the conditions in which many irregular migrants live, and considering of how often large portions of their days must be spent in achieving a basic standard of living, engaging in activities connected to making claims to citizenship can seem, and often is, improbable. When questions such as: 'Where do I get food today? Where can I use the toilet? And where can I sleep tonight?' occupy your mind, your (political) inclusion in society may not be a top priority. Stress, sleeplessness, serious psychological conditions, as well as substance abuse, were omnipresent among the migrants I encountered in squats in both Amsterdam and Turin. The troubles of their daily lives were too all-encompassing to think, let alone do something about, their situation. They spend their days waiting, and did not choose (political) visibility. However, this 'political inactivity' is hardly described in studies detailing the social movements of irregular migrants, either because researchers focus empirically only on instances of political activity, or because they consider irregular migrants' physical presence to be 'extracting themselves from hegemonic categories' of political subjectivity (Neyers, 2008, p. 177) and therefore consider their political inactivity political activity. I argue that understanding the dynamics of irregular migrants' claim-making practices requires recognising that these are relatively rare phenomena.

5.1.1 Too marginal for claim-making

Irregular migrants endure a variety of marginality. One could argue that the worse living conditions are, the more prone one would be to change them, presumably because one has nothing to lose. However, my research shows that those actively trying to change their situations were not the ones who had the least to lose, because irregular migrants who really had nothing to lose were too marginal to occupy themselves with politics.

The most marginal irregular migrants were arguably those who lived on the street. They slept on the street, sometimes in homeless shelters, or on the couches of acquaintances, and roamed the streets during the day. They wanted to be invisible in order not to attract the attention of the police, for example. Yet, remaining invisible is difficult if you do have nowhere to go.

These migrants were basically in survival mode, without the peace of mind to think about let alone do something to improve their circumstances. During my fieldwork, I encountered these irregular migrants, not in the squats or at social movement activities, but, for example, at the Wereldhuis[*] in Amsterdam. They often were unable to organise their lives and did not want to be visible, though in many cases they simply were not able to think about things like political action. Stress, sleeplessness, and serious psychological conditions were omnipresent among the migrants I encountered at the Wereldhuis. One day, an employee at the Wereldhuis shared that she had recently found out what some of the people who visited the Wereldhuis did when the Wereldhuis closes at night:

> They walk all night, literally all night. They go in groups and walk in circles while one or two sleep on a bench. The others walk around them and are on the lookout for police…. Now I see why they just sit here and stare in front of them or play on their phones. They just never sleep.
> (Joke, Wereldhuis employee – Fieldnotes – 11 November 2017)

A place to rest and to sleep is important. A squat or a stable bed in a shelter can offer a solution to this. Yet, a bed in a shelter or squat alone is not enough. In Turin, some slept in the squat's damp, cold basement or shared a room with 25 other people or slept on the balcony. Some slept on a mattress without sheets, covered in bedbugs and fleas. Such conditions can also render people too marginal to make political claims.

In Amsterdam, the first point at which irregular migrants found the (relative) peace of mind to consider their situations and become dissatisfied and then try to do something about them was often after they had spent a while in a Bed, Bath, Bread shelter (most frequently referred to as BBB). The BBB, even if temporary and insecure, met their basic needs. Irregular migrants staying at the BBB could be seen to shift back and forth between invisibility and visibility because even though the shelter offered them very minimal

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[*] The Wereldhuis is a project of the Protestant diaconate. It is a place in Amsterdam where irregular migrants can come during the day to have a place to stay and to enjoy a warm meal, and where different forms of counselling, lessons, and services were available.

provisions, they often were afraid to lose their place. When a group from the BBB began a squat together with We Are Here, most tried to hold on to their beds in the BBB by organising a rotating scheme of who remained in the squat and who went to the shelter.

5.1.2 Not marginal enough for claim-making

There are also irregular migrants who are not as marginal as those described above. Andrikopoulos (2017), for example, describes, how West African migrants who have irregular residence status in south-eastern Amsterdam make use of the presence of other West Africans with residence permits to carve out their existence in society, for example, by borrowing their identity papers. Both in the Netherlands and Italy, many irregular migrants manage to live their lives (see, for instance, Van Meeteren, 2012). They construct everyday lives in a network, which provides them with informal work and housing. As long as this everyday life is satisfactory to them, they often have no reason to strive for political inclusion, not least because visibility and people discovering their irregular status might be a threat to their everyday life. The irregular status often only becomes a problem when they cannot work anymore or are not of use to their network. That is when they need help from NGOs, an employee at the Wereldhuis told me. Irregular migrants who manage to live their lives relatively comfortably are not marginal enough to actively seek visibility and aim to change their situations. This was also the case for those who lived in squats and did not want to risk losing what little they had.

> During an Iftar celebration at the squat I made small talk with a supporter. I said that I thought this was one of the nicer squats, where they can live relatively comfortably, and how that must be nice. But he interrupted me, 'It's too nice!' I asked him what he meant. 'It's too comfortable. They have no reason to go outside anymore. This building makes them inactive.'
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 6 June 2017)

In this case, according to a supporter, the migrants' living conditions were too good; therefore, many experienced no urgency to change their situations. Moreover, those who managed to obtain a job, for example, could not go demonstrate at any given time. Work is important. Because work was often undocumented and thus without a contract, many respondents indicated that it was important to always go to work, even if they were not paid the last time they worked, because otherwise they risked losing the job altogether.

> After school Romeo [supporter] took a moment to speak to everyone in the classroom about the upcoming demonstration. He told them the demonstration was also for them, that it was important to come. Afterwards, I asked Omar if he was planning to go. He was not. He had to work at the farm all day.
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 23 October 2018)

Omar (Mali, late thirties) was very happy with his job at a local farm. Even though he had already worked on the farm for five years six days a week, for a yearly salary of approximately 5000 euros, he still feared that asking his boss for a day off would endanger his position. While some might still consider Omar's position pretty marginal, in this case, his (relatively) stable job made him consider the risks that can come with demonstrating not worth taking. Work in this sense could be seen as something that underpins stability. Piven and Cloward (1979) state work provides a stable routine, and that it is only when people can no longer provide or are unable to find work for a for long period that this loss of regularity makes them prone to demonstrating (Piven & Cloward, 1979, p. 11).

5.1.3 The right degree of marginality

Thus, in order to make claims, irregular migrants need to be marginal enough to have reason to want to change their situation, not too afraid that (political) visibility will risk the lives they have carefully constructed, and not so marginal so that they are preoccupied with survival. In this case, living conditions are not the only indicator for marginality. Among those living in

squats there was a rather small subgroup of people who were aware and actively involved in creating visibility and claim-making. Those who, for example, maintained contact with supporters and the media to organise opportunities for public visibility had additional certainties in comparison to other irregular migrants: this includes a lower risk of deportation and more social and cultural capital.

5.1.3.1 Undeportability

Undeportability denotes the situation of irregular migrants who are not at immediate risk of deportation, either because they have proven to be undeportable or previous attempts to deport them have failed – this was mostly the case in Amsterdam – or, they have (the prospect of) legal status: pending legal procedures or humanitarian protection (only in Italy). Mahmud (see Chapter 4) proved to be undeportable. With a big smile on his face, he told me:

> Mahmud: 'Well you know I was in there [BBB shelter] because I said I wanted to return, I told you right? …. Yes well they found out that, you know, they cannot deport me to Somalia. Something I've been telling them for many years, but now they found out themselves again and so they kicked me out of the shelter.… You know, it's been like this many times. They try to deport me many times but I cannot be deported.… I just tell them I want to go back. I really do that, but I know that I cannot. This time, they even booked me a plane ticket already, to Somalia, for the 27th. But then someone from the ministry said: no, we cannot deport to Somalia. It's dangerous, and we cannot be responsible for it. So, it fell through again. But I've never been in detention ever, because every time they arrest me or the police stop me they see that I have cooperated always. They see that they just cannot do anything with me so they let me go.'
> Minke: 'So, you sort of get a free pass on things?'
> Mahmud: 'Well yes, I'm lucky in that regard.'
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 7 December 2017)

Knowledge of being undeportable gave Mahmud a sense of freedom to do what he wanted without fear of arrest and its consequences. This experience of freedom, together with a sense of having nothing to lose, made it easier for him to find out how far he could push boundaries than it was for other irregular migrants. Mahmud, for example, did not pay for public transportation, a definite no-go for many of his peers and a known cause for ending up in alien detention. Moreover, knowledge of being undeportable made him unafraid to be at the front of demonstrations, or even to tease police horses during an eviction when riot police entered the building.

5.1.3.2 Cultural capital

Acquiring cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) benefits irregular migrants' claim-making efforts. In practical terms, for instance, being able to speak or learning to speak a language understood in the country in which one is making claims can be of great benefit. Besides being undeportable, many respondents actively involved in organising group activities indicated that they came from middle- or high-class backgrounds and were relatively well educated. For example, Mahmud was ready to enrol in university, but was not allowed to take the entrance examination because he could not show any identification. Similarly, Samba (Chapter 4) comes from a high-class background: one of his brothers is a pharmacist in Senegal; another works for the Senegalese government; and a third brother is a police officer. Aziz (Sudan, mid-twenties) also possessed significant cultural capital. I came to know Aziz as someone who was always extremely busy, had many friends, and made connections very easily, partly due to his smile, which was (almost) always on his face. He spoke Dutch, though he did not like to speak it, probably because his English was better. He was also generally more highly educated than most of his peers, who migrated irregularly at a younger age than he had. Even though he did not manage to obtain his degree in computer engineering, he was determined to finish someday. Over the course of my fieldwork period, but especially in the beginning, Aziz played an active role in the Sudanese community and tried to create a bridge between Sudanese in possession of and without residence permits. He organised fundraising evenings for his Sudanese peers in collaboration with an anti-food waste initiative for which he volunteered for many years. He acted in multiple theatre plays. He

sometimes worked (informally) in construction after a neighbour discovered his talent for electrical work. Moreover, he also found time to work on a repeat asylum application by obtaining important documents from Sudan. One day, I ask him:

> Minke: ' You are very active, Aziz. I do not think everyone is active like you. What about the others?'
> Aziz: 'There are others also very active. Of course, there are.'
> Minke: 'But also active like you?'
> Aziz: 'No, not everyone is active like I am, but that is always the case, right? Even back home in my country. I'm from a rich family, you know. I mean, we had more than 40,000 cows and land as big as Slotervaart, and even then [I was] always busy. But other people, you know, they are just happy to sit in their house or not even a house actually. They do not do anything. But we were always busy, you know, before all the shit happened.'
> (Aziz, mid-twenties, Sudan – Interview – Amsterdam – 20 May 2017)

Irregular migrants with cultural capital often saw activity as something given to them through upbringing or family background, and these were common ways they rationalised why they were active. But Mahmud, Samba, and Aziz are not the only ones. Many who managed to be active in the group and in society as a whole, who were able to create citizenship from below to certain extent, could be said to have higher levels of cultural capital than those who did not manage as well or were not as active:

> I come from a family where education was very important. I went to school a lot when I was young. My parents always told me to work hard in school. Education helped to be sympathetic; you know how to speak with someone to get respect…. I can live everywhere. I know how to control myself. I know how to talk to you. You need to know how to adapt yourself to the situation.
> (Matthew, early thirties, Cameroon – Interview – Turin – 13 October 2018)

Cultural capital helps irregular migrants create citizenship. Having the ability to make personal connections, to learn a new language, to be friendly and likable, makes performing acts of citizenship that are rooted in interpersonal contact much easier than not having those skills does. But it can also influence how enticed they are to demonstrate.

5.1.3.3 Right degree of marginality over time

Considering all the conditions that have to be met to create the right degree of marginality, it is no surprise that this state is not fixed over time but rather temporary. Some irregular migrants were actively involved in group dynamics, politics, and claim-making. But, at some point, long-term insecurity, bad living conditions, and absence of success would cause hopelessness and, for example, make them prone to the temptations of drugs and alcohol, or cause or reveal psychological problems in them. Aziz also provides an example of this.

When I met Aziz for the first time, during a research project before starting my PhD, he was a vibrant young man, 20 years old, actively involved in the We Are Here group. He was photogenic and easily made contact with others, and was therefore asked to participate in many cultural projects. He had many connections with local citizens, friends, and girlfriends. When I met him years later, for this research project, he had changed considerably. He had lost weight. He looked very pale, and the sparkle had left his eyes. He drank and smoked marijuana often. A scar on his head showed where he had had brain surgery. At the beginning of my fieldwork period, he still tried to be as active as he could and he still was invited to cultural events. But, then, people started to complain about his behaviour. Mahmud told me Aziz showed up at the theatre drunk and made a scene, that his drinking was a problem, and that he was not supposed to drink because of his brain condition and medication. Towards the end of my fieldwork period, other migrants in We Are Here asked him to leave and not come back, after he started a violent fight. This 'decline' shows how someone can be a prime example of an active group member one day, but overwhelmed by problems the next. Aziz's case provides an example how the line between actively creating citizenship from below and being too marginal to make claims can be thin.

Tommy provides another example of how a changing amount of marginality influences political activity:

> From a distance, Matthew and I look at Tommy, a family member of his. Tommy sits on a little wall outside the squat, he looks confused; his jeans are open, his buttocks exposed, and he mumbles to himself. I ask Matthew how Tommy is doing. Matthew sighs, and then he answers: 'I do not know what happened to him, he used to be so actively involved at the Moi, he used to do everything around here. But look at him now…really I do not know what happened.'
> (Fieldnotes –Turin – 9 October 2018)

Aziz and Tommy are two examples of how the prolonged precarious situation in which many irregular migrants live can bring them in a downward spiral, causing them to become too marginal to make claims. Conversely, the situation of irregular migrants can also improve, causing them to not be marginal enough anymore to make claims. In Amsterdam, for instance, the many irregular migrants who have obtained a legal status often left the group as soon as they received the news of their new status. From that moment they were entitled to a bed in an asylum seeker centre, but they also, for example, rarely returned to support the group during demonstrations during or afterwards. Other examples include those who find a girlfriend with whom they can live (also see Chapter 6) or other ways to improve their lives, which by and large caused them to be cautious. This improved life can make them afraid to lose what they have achieved and perhaps because of this they lose an immediate incentive to demonstrate. The situation Asse (Senegal, mid-thirties) provides an example of this. At the time of our interview, he indicated that he was not at all satisfied with his current life, as he used to have a high-status job in Senegal, he worked for the president, but now works in a Grissini factory. Moreover, his housing is in his partner's name and his residence permit status is still precarious. However, after our interview, he indicated that his political days were over, indicating his fear of repercussions.

> Asse: But now I do not do that [demonstrating] as often anymore. I have my son and Valeria [his Italian partner and the mother of their child]. It's too big of a risk. Valeria is a teacher, you know, and you

have seen what happened to the other lady. [A local teacher had lost her job after making extreme statements during an anti-Casapound* demonstration].

Valeria (from the other side of the room): But she made the statements herself, not her partner.

Asse: Yes, but still I think it's a risk.

In other words, the right degree of marginality is influenced by so many different factors can be difficult to find the right balance.

5.2 SUPPORTERS†

According to classic social movement theories, like resource mobilisation (see, for instance, McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Klandermans, 1984; Edwards & Kane, 2007; Jenkins, 1983) and political opportunities approach (see, for instance, Tilly, 2008; Giugni, 2011; Kriesi, 1989; Della Porta, 2013) theories, irregular migrants are a group unlikely to mobilise politically. As described above, the marginal situation of many irregular migrants causes them to be confronted with a lack of material and immaterial resources for mobilisation and knowledge to identify political opportunities (Nicholls, 2011). Local supporters can therefore be crucial allies in irregular migrants' mobilisation, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. These supporters include non-governmental organisations (hereafter NGOs), like Doctors Without Borders, and civil society organisations (hereafter CSOs), like churches or local grassroots initiatives.

Due to their irregularity, irregular migrants rarely can rely upon help from the state or local public authorities; most of the help they receive is informal and they rely more on their networks than people with regular status do (Bloch, Zetter, Sigona, & Gamaledin-Ashami, 2007). Restrictions on the

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* Casapound is an Italian (extreme) rightwing movement (see, for instance, Froio & Gattinara, 2015).

† Parts of the following section have been published in: Hajer & Ambrosini, (2020) 'Who Help Irregular Migrants? Supporters of Irregular Migrants in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and Turin (Italy)'. *Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*. 28(59): 151–168.

public provision of support to migrants in irregular or uncertain conditions leaves space for other providers to provide services (Ambrosini, 2016b; 2017). The agency of irregular migrants often consists of finding possible supporters and obtaining their help or protection. Increasingly, European governments target people who help migrants as lawbreakers, a case in point are the NGOs involved in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea. That local supporters become involved in such matter, despite the legal risks, contributes to understanding the interplay between migration policies and social action.

In recent years, non-public actors have developed several forms of reception activities. Supporters may be 'ordinary citizens' who mobilise spontaneously, for example, the German mobilisations in the autumn of 2015 in support of asylum seekers (Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Kleres, 2017). Support may also be organised. Leerkes (2016), for instance, describes how, in the Netherlands, non-governmental actors structurally finance a system of 'secondary poor relief'. These are comparable to historic 'poorhouses', as they provide 'elementary' poverty relief to rejected asylum seekers and other unauthorised or destitute migrants, which are aimed to control 'pauperism', but intended to be unattractive. These non-public actors can provide help themselves or, as Schweitzer's (2018) study of Barcelona and London highlights, they can play a relevant role in granting irregular migrants access to (public) services to which they are formally entitled. Beyond this, some social movements have evolved their support actions while engaged in the struggle against borders and in political protests in favour of migrants' rights. Some activists have also started to organise social services for the migrants for whom they advocate politically: shelters in squatted buildings in Rome, but also language schools, health and legal advocacy services, and assistance navigating bureaucracies, as forms of 'welfare from below' (Belloni, 2016, p. 520).

Table 1 below provides an overview of the different types of supporters of irregular migrants and the activities they perform. Aid to irregular migrants exists on a scale ranging from practical help, supporting survival and basic needs, to very political help, mobilising and organising social movements, and various activities in between, hybrid help. Although discussed separately, the types of help to migrants should be seen as continuous. Supporters' aid can bolster claim-making in various ways by

reducing marginality, mobilising resources, and recognising political opportunities. For instance, the ASKV–*steunpunt vluchtelingen*, *het Wereldhuis*, *Dokters van de Wereld* (Doctors of the World) in Amsterdam or *Medici senza Frontiere* (Doctors Without Borders), various social cooperatives, schools for adult education, and church-based initiatives in Turin. They often use their 'professionalism' to organise structural forms of support and forms of support that require professional competences like medical care. CSOs, like churches and migrant associations, can use their networks of volunteers to organise (cultural) activities. Churches, for example, provide their places of worship as ad hoc shelters. As described in the previous chapter, grassroots initiatives and independent supporters, organised less 'professional' services, or helped individual irregular migrants with personal problems. Both groups' grassroots supporters shared significant overlap with supporters from social centres or activist networks. Those involved in supporting the irregular migrants at We Are Here and Ex Moi were often also active in left-wing politics and other related initiatives like anti-racism campaigns or help to Sinti and Roma people. Yet other activists participated in, for instance, the anti-fascist and the squatters' movements.

Because of the specific focus of this research project, I encountered mostly social centres/activist networks and independent supporters during my fieldwork. I recognise that their activities cannot be understood without the presence of CSOs and NGOs and, which tend to remain in the background. Moreover, activists and independent supporters collaborate with organisations and align their activities to the aid these organisations provide, and they continuously inform and learn from each other. Belloni et al. (2020) describe this situation in Turin, emphasising that the heterogeneous group of supporters consisting of people from churches, students, activists, and others collaborated under the loose guidance of experienced activists coming from the social centres (Belloni, Fravega, & Giudici, 2020). Examining individual supporters reveals overlaps in categories over time. For example, supporters may come into contact with irregular migrants through a volunteer mission via their church, yet remain to help the group once that specific activity is over. Or, supporters may start by helping individually, yet, after some time, organise professionally and start a grassroots civil society organisation.

*Table 1: Overview of actors providing aid to irregular migrants according to type**

Aid	NGOs	Other CSOs	Social centres/activist networks	Independent supporters
Practical	(Long-term) shelter Medical help Juridical help	Night shelter Day shelter Moral or religious support	Juridical & medical help (IT)	Formal & informal buddies Moral support Guiding through bureaucracy
Hybrid	Courses Help with employment (IT)	Activation activities Cultural/art projects	Shelter (through squatting/occupying) Facilitating political activities	Language courses Integration through courses and interaction
Political	Official rapports	Lobbying 'Keeping an eye on things'	Demonstrating Help with government contact Informing the public (through alternative† and social media)	Lobbying Demonstrating Informing the public (through official and social media)

* (Hajer & Ambrosini, 2020, pp. 205-206)
† Here, the term 'alternative media' indicates alternative or left-wing media outlets like Indymedia in the Netherlands or Hurreya in Italy.

5.2.1 Practical help

> Once a week the *zorgbus*, a bus with a mobile medical clinic that
> Doctors of the World operates, visits squats in Amsterdam. Anyone
> is allowed to board and have a medical examination or discuss health
> issues. In a promotional video[*], a medical volunteer who works in the
> *zorgbus* states: 'This volunteer work gives me a lot of gratification. I
> know that for this target group [undocumented migrants] we can
> really make a difference with the care bus and Doctors of the World,
> because, in the area of medical help, if we do not visit these people,
> no one visits these people. And often then they will be left to their
> own devices medically.' (Fieldnotes & fragment from Youtube –
> Amsterdam)

A substantial portion of aid to irregular migrants is practical help. Its main
focus is to help irregular migrants survive or to improve their living
situations, such as making sure those who are ill receive medical help or
providing shelter. Any potential political message or reasoning is of
secondary importance. Practical help is mostly provided by established NGOs
or CSOs. They have the resources to provide long-term, structural help, which
can be of vital importance to irregular migrants in whose live so many things
are fundamentally insecure. They are, for example, able to provide adequate,
long-term shelter for those in extremely vulnerable situations, as well as
medical care and professional psychological support. For example, the
Wereldhuis in Amsterdam runs a 'day shelter', where all irregular migrants,
those who live on the streets, those who have a bed in a shelter, and those who
live in squats, can come during the day. They can eat a hot meal, recharge
their phones, and access various services and courses. Another example is the
Doctors without Borders helpdesk in Turin, which visit squats every week on
set days. Moreover, churches, in particular, migrant churches like the Eritrean

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[*] The promo video was filmed in front of one of the squats during my fieldwork
period and can be found on YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFwmh65bsLQ&ab_channel=DoktersvandeWereldNederland

Orthodox Church, and mosques play an important role by providing religious guidance. Many irregular migrants attend services regularly and find support and comfort in them.

Independent supporters mostly help by functioning as personal buddies to irregular migrants, either formally for a specific period of time through an NGO or CSO, or informally. In Amsterdam, there was 'buddy project' such that an irregular migrant was linked to a supporter for a specific period of time, with the supporter receiving training from experienced supporters. Migrants' everyday lives consist of an accumulation of struggles, large ones like their legal status and an array of smaller ones like having a toothache. Bureaucracy is difficult for them to navigate, and as the fragment above indicates, local supporters can be of great use in tackling it. Both in Turin and Amsterdam, migrants have the right to certain (mostly medical) facilities regardless of status, on paper. However, in practice, it is often so difficult to access these state services that irregular migrants end up seeking help from NGOs, CSOs, or other supporters. It was a common practice for supporters or experienced migrants, who became cultural mediators, to accompany irregular migrants to all sorts of appointments. They spoke the local language both linguistically and culturally, knew how to gain access to necessary information, and when to make a fuss and when not to make a fuss. Having their company proved a lot more effective in terms of achieving results than when an irregular migrant would go to an appointment alone. Buddies also tended to help irregular migrants find odd jobs, so they could earn some money working in the garden of an elderly family member or cleaning the houses of other parishioners. Moreover, buddies provided moral support and informal counselling. In Amsterdam, buddies played a significant role in (renewed) asylum procedures, and information spread among irregular migrants about which buddies were the best or most effective. Moreover, in both settings, though more prevalently in Turin, there were also one-time buddies, where a supporter would accompany an irregular migrant to an important appointment, for example, to handle residence permit applications, to resolve a problem with the Questura[*], or to a medical appointment. Social centres and activist networks helped irregular migrants not only politically. In Italy, social centres were also places from

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[*] The Italian state police issues residence permits.

which to borrow resources, like extra chairs for a meeting, megaphones for demonstrations, or large pans for a solidarity meal. In Amsterdam, the squatters' movement provided locks that could be used to secure rooms in squatted buildings.

5.2.2 Hybrid forms of help

> [Supporters who organise the school within the squat broadened the curriculum to be of more use in everyday situations.] This week, Manuela (teacher) pretends to be a civil servant sitting behind a makeshift service desk. 'Ask me for something.' Someone asks something. Manuela looks at him with an angry expression. Then, with a long sigh, she nods her head in a what-do-you-want kind of way. He asks again. Another sigh. Then she jumps out of her role and says: 'I'm not being racist here! This is how they treat everyone! Also us!' and she points around the room to the Italians. They nod. 'Civil servants are just like that, like they do not want to help you, but they are not racist, or maybe they are. But eh… well. But they treat everyone like this! The important thing is that you remain nice and composed.'
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 17 October 2018)

Many supporters' activities were not clear instances of either political or practical help, but rather hybrid forms, such as the lesson in the school at the squat in Turin above. Several weeks before that lesson, the teachers decided the school could teach much more than just language, since things like grammar were also taught at the schools for adult education that many of the migrants attended. Mostly individual supporters who started organising lessons together, the teachers decided to add more practical knowledge about society to their lessons, which could be equally important as speaking Italian. Yet, these lessons simultaneously had another function. By teaching irregular migrants how to deal with society, they could be serve to integrate people who ought to be excluded, by transferring the local knowledge needed to be

able to enact the modes appropriate to being a citizen (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). By helping to integrate those who were excluded, these lessons contradicted the dominant order. Helping irregular migrants navigate bureaucracy or teaching them how to do it themselves, as described above, contravenes a system that benefits from irregular migrants lacking the ability to obtain basic services. Therefore, these actions are between practical and political, often intended to be practical (language classes, company at a doctor's appointment) or fun (cultural evenings).

The help NGOs and CSOs provided often was also hybrid. They would organise language and vocational classes, art projects, and meetings for cultural expression. Two aims of these projects are to activate or re-activate irregular migrants and to facilitate contact between irregular migrants and citizens, thereby helping them create their place in society or to integrate themselves. They create spaces of hospitality in an environment otherwise hostile to irregular migrants.

> They have lost their Mama Africa, and now they are looking for a new frame of reference. We help them with that.
> (Beppe, mid-sixties, supporter – Interview – Turin – 24 October 2018)

Irregular migrants considered these safe places valuable because they could let their guard down and feel accepted and even integrated for the duration of the activity.

> I'm an actor now; I'm part of a theatre group. So I'm no longer only undocumented.
> (Aziz, mid-twenties, Sudan – Interview – Amsterdam – 20 May 2017)

Generally, social centres and activist and squatters' movements are primarily focused on the political side of providing support. However, they also provide important practical help, namely housing, which makes their aid hybrid. For the irregular migrants living in these squats, their aid was vitally important since, otherwise, they would sleep on the streets. While, for the migrants, squatting was a practical solution first and only secondarily a possible political statement, for activists, squatting was a primarily political act, making a political statement by 'reclaiming' space for marginalised

groups. As Zamponi (2017) states while describing direct social action, activists often do not distinguish between political claim-making and the help they provide to migrants. Many supporters indicated that, while their help might not be directly political, their motivations to help were. Hybrid forms of aid indicate that support can appear practical but still have a political meaning and function.

5.2.3 Political help

> We stood in one of the main squares of the city; the turnout to this demonstration was low. About 30 people stood in a circle. In the middle was a speaker. One by one people spoke into a microphone…. After 45 minutes, the demonstration was about to end. 'How do we end the demonstration?' someone asked. 'I think we should sing "Bella Ciao"', someone else responded. Everyone agreed this was a good idea, yet no one seemed to know the lyrics. After a quick internet search, they sang the song while reading from a phone. Afterwards, a man with a ponytail helped pack up the speaker system he had lent them and said, 'You know, for the next time we will practice the song, because well…' 'But we managed in the end, right?' 'You should really learn the lyrics. We should make it more fluent'
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 21 October 2018).

How people protest is culturally determined. Therefore, to make claims to rights and thus to citizenship, irregular migrants benefit from citizens' help. In this way, supporters function as brokers to political action. This kind of political help is the main activity of activist networks and in Italy, as well as of the *centri sociali* that help irregular migrants.

Activists occupied themselves with transferring protest-specific local knowledge. They also helped organise demonstrations, make banners, advertise demonstrations, formulate messages, and facilitated by bringing the appropriate equipment like megaphones. During this process, they helped immigrants develop (rights) claims and gave advice as to how to deliver them effectively, for example, how to follow norms and values, how to attach their

claims to local historical events or politically meaningful places in the city. But, political actions like demonstrating and occupying often involve some form of civil disobedience. Therefore, one needs a lot of specific knowledge to be able to stretch the law while keeping some legitimacy. In the excerpt above, one can see how the man with the ponytail (who was from one of the centri sociali) helped the demonstrators with both sound equipment and advice regarding how to make their political acts more culturally legitimate next time. Because singing "Bella Ciao" is an almost-necessary part of a (left-wing) demonstration in Italy, to make it a part of their message they needed some help from an Italian activist. In the Netherlands, for example, Dutch activists guided irregular migrants through the processes of applying for demonstration permits and taught them how to apply themselves. While a small group of activists would help with organising and preparing political actions, both groups could count on the networks of the activists to attend the events they would organise. For example, if a group of irregular migrants in Amsterdam decided to resist eviction from their squat, they could count on activists to help block the entrances and resist the police.

Moreover, in both cities, activists played an important role in helping irregular migrants with contact with the government. More specifically, they helped to estimate and explain the legal opportunities for protest and the strategies and behaviour of the police and the state/municipality, mostly with regard to to squatting and demonstrating. This knowledge proved useful and quite often estimations of how police would respond to certain situations were correct.

As with other types of aid, political help was various. NGOs and CSOs could not be seen to be visibly political. Yet, behind the scenes, they would advocate and lobby on behalf of irregular migrants in local politics. Moreover, NGOs like Doctors of the World and Doctors Without Borders would help quasi-politically, by using their status as established NGOs with the expertise to bring the situation of irregular migrants to the attention of politicians and the general public: for example, by publishing official reports about the living conditions and general situation of irregular migrants; or by using their expertise to speak directly to politicians. CSOs would engage in politics by generally 'keeping an eye on things'. Church networks collaborated with activist networks and independent supporters by keeping themselves informed about the situation of irregular migrants in their city,

activists played in to this during their 'round of parishes' and maintained contact or ask for specific support from churches. Sometimes, churches actively reached out to activists, for example, to ask them to come brief them about a current situation. A few times a year, they would use this information to lobby politicians and political parties regarding specific causes, for example, the need for adequate shelter.

5.2.4 Relations between irregular migrants and supporters

Over the years in the course of numerous activities, irregular migrants and their supporters formed strong bonds; many friendships, romantic relations and other family-like relations resulted. Young migrants, for instance, often referred to older female supporters as 'mama', an indication of both closeness and respect. When I spoke to irregular migrants about supporters, the majority of them made positive statements about the presence of and collaboration with supporters. Migrants shared with me how grateful they were, how much certain supporters had helped them, and how they would have never been able to manage on their own. However, as in any constellation in which a large number of different people have to collaborate, problems sometimes arose. The problems ranged from minor issues due to personality clashes, to larger problems and fights over scarce resources like money. In most instances, problems resulted from either differences in motives or motivations or power differences. Problems often occurred due to mismatches between what supporters perceived as help and what the irregular migrants considered help. The question of how help relates to politics is important here. Many supporters stated that their presence in itself was help, as it shows 'solidarity'. They considered that demonstrating that not everyone is opposed to migrants, by interacting and collaborating with those who are formally excluded, constitutes an important type of help for irregular migrants. Supporters often just came to the squats to chat or drink coffee or tea or have a smoke. They considered the mere fact that they spend time in a squat, showing they are not afraid of migrants and displaying their solidarity, a political act and therefore of help to migrants. However, for the irregular migrants, these practices sometimes seemed puzzling, since they often envisioned help or solidarity in more practical terms. The interaction below

shows how Samba sees help as something concrete, like clothing or lessons, preferably Italian lessons; he considered solidarity or information sharing 'doing nothing'. By contrast, most supporters found these meetings meaningful:

> I told Samba after class I was going to the meeting of supporters in the other room. He asked me why I was going there and if I would not rather go have something to eat together. I told him I was interested in what they were going to say and do. Samba said he did not think they were going to do anything, because they never do anything. 'They just talk, talk and talk; but what do they do? Some whites actually do things like the women that organises the clothes, or you, I mean, you teach at the school; you guys do something. But what do they do? They just talk.'
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 25 October 2018)

Additionally, how supporters perceived the issues irregular migrants faced influenced what kind of help they gave. In this as well, what supporters thought the migrants needed did not always match with what the migrants thought they needed. For example, in Turin, a supporter who was motivated by his Christian faith to help migrants, organised spiritual meetings as part of the help he gave. He told me:

> These boys are so strong… they can also go without food, they do not need to eat every day, like us. They are strong, we can learn a lot from them.
> (Beppe, mid-sixties, supporter – Interview – Turin – 24 October 2018)

Consequently, during his spiritual meetings, he sought to share ideas and beliefs about mental strength. His help did not include food, even though many irregular migrants considered food and the occasional lack thereof a problem (see, for instance, also the quote in Section 4.3.2.1). Similarly, political activists' interpretations of irregular migrants' problems influenced the kind of help they provided. Many perceived irregular migrants purely as a political issue, and thus they provided political help. While prepared to attend demonstrations, they could be against providing practical help. However, the

positions of political activists usually were more diverse than this. In Turin, for instance, at the beginning of the Ex Moi squats, political activist from two of the city's large social centres actively supported the irregular migrants. At the time of my fieldwork, support from political activists predominantly came from just one social centre. Respondents explained how this was due to a difference in opinion concerning precisely whether providing practical help could be considered political or not. The political activists who remained were from the social centre that organised a variety of services, ranging from legal advice, to help finding a house, and to providing food. They, sometimes jokingly, stated that the activists from the other social centre would always support you as long as you wanted to fight with the police, since fighting with the police, and consequently against the state, meant 'real political action' to them.

However, divergent opinions concerning what constituted (political) help were not the only points of divergence. How supporters provided (political) help, was also influenced by how they interpreted irregular migrants' struggle. Some were only prepared to provide political help in militant ways. In a few instances, activists' anarchist or anti-establishment political struggle gained the upper hand over the irregular migrants' struggle. Some activists were not afraid of being perceived as troublemakers by the police, the authorities, or the media, and did not modify their behaviour when teaming up with irregular migrants. This caused discontent among many irregular migrants, who tried their best to stave off the image of being troublemakers, despite their stigma.

> I heard screaming from a distance and when I walked towards it, Joan [supporter] yelled at me: 'He hit him!' I saw a group of migrants around a cameraman from Pownews*. When I came closer, I could hear them apologising profusely. Hakim told me one of the activists did not want them [the camera crew] there, and tried to break the camera.' He shook his head. 'Later, Joan told me she told the activist to leave.'
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 17 November 2017)

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* Pownews is a populist, right-wing media outlet.

Jasper (2004) describes how 'powerful allies' of social movements can subordinate the ways of thinking or goals of the group they support to their own, which can occur when, for example, celebrities join the cause of a movement, when small groups join a larger federation, or when experts become involved. This is part of social movements' 'extension dilemma'; the more a group extends, the less cohesive its message or goal can become (pp. 7-8).

In general, as established citizens, supporters have more power than migrants: they have more knowledge about society; they speak the language; and they have a natural legitimate presence in public space. Irregular migrants do not have these things, and, as described above, can benefit from this power by proxy, when they team up with citizens. However, this difference in power also plays out in the relations of irregular migrants and the citizens who help them. Tarsia (2018), for instance, describes this power dynamic between migrants and, in her case, reception centre social workers and the conflicts that can arise, using 'transcend theory' and the majority-minority (m-M) model (Tarsia, 2018). Supporters have the power not to share information or to do something without telling. For irregular migrants, it is very difficult to counteract this power. Nicholls and Uitermark (2015) describe how, related to the 'powerful allies dilemma', according to which allies use their power *over* the movement, there also exists a 'power of representation dilemma', whereby those who have superior representation skills risk marginalising others in *within* the movement if they use their skills *for* the movement (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2015, p. 189). In most observed instances, the supporters took great care not to misuse their power. However, when problems between migrants and supporters occurred, the power imbalance and misuse of power played a role. One afternoon I spoke with Mahmud, who was visibly frustrated by a recent incident, in which a supporter refused to share the time and location of a meeting with the new interim mayor of Amsterdam:

> When I asked him why he did not just go to the meeting, Mahmud responds: 'You know I thought about that and I wanted to do that. But they did not want to say where the meeting was and also not at what time, so I could not come. But it really makes me angry because it is my life. I want them to talk to me about myself. But then I ask if I

can be included. But then they do not let me because I'm not a professional. I do not understand. I do not need them to speak for me. I want to speak for myself but they do not let me.'
(Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 23 December 2017)

The fragment shows the unequal power relations between supporters and migrants.

5.2.4.1 Tactics for resisting supporters

Despite being on the weaker side of an unequal power relation, migrants had tactics for resisting supporters. Their resistance most often was not confrontational, but implicit, as many migrants did not want to unnecessarily make trouble with their supporters, since they knew they were dependent upon them to a large extent. Moreover, relations between migrants and supporters genuinely were quite good. Yet, as described above, there were instances of friction nevertheless. Gossip, for instance, was a common occurrence, as a strategy of implicit resistance. I frequently heard gossip regarding supporters' ulterior motives, that supporters made money helping irregular migrants, that supporters wanted sexual relations with migrants, or that they were simply crazy. When dealing with 'crazy supporters', migrants would often laugh at or make fun of them:

> During a movie screening in a neighbourhood centre, a supporter insisted she was fine sitting on the lap of Abdi, one of the migrants, refusing his offers to go get her a chair. After some time, Abdi decided he had enough of it and stood up, insisting, in his turn, that he would rather stand, turning to his friends who started laughing and teasing him: 'Ooooh, she loves you Abdi… hahaha.'
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 21 October 2017)

Another strategy was just not to listen to supporters. In Turin, resistance to supporters mostly consisted of not participating in or withdrawing participation from the activities they organised. Some migrants continuously referred to the general meetings with supporters at Ex Moi as *their* meeting, the supporters' meeting; or when discussing the meetings with supporters,

they called them *your* meetings, and not *our* meetings, showing they considered themselves not to be part of these meetings. A third form of resistance was to participate in meetings, agree upon a course of action, yet do something else. This was, for instance, the case with the eviction from Ex Moi's first building in the summer of 2018.

> One of the leaders of the Somali group stands up. From the middle of the circle formed by migrants and supporters sitting on the grass, he spreads both arms in the direction of one of the buildings, and states, 'We can make a banner for the building, writing 'We will not leave'. So they know were are not leaving the building.
> (Fieldnotes – Turin –10 July 2018)

However, after this statement, the banner was never made. Some days later, when I joined a group of supporters that went on a mission to inform inhabitants of the building about the possibilities of resisting the eviction and to announce the nest meeting, I go the impression the inhabitants did not have many intentions to resist their eviction. Moreover, as Section 5.3.2.1 will demonstrate, the inhabitants vacated the building without much opposition. The only confrontational moment of resistance I observed was in Amsterdam, when a sub-group of migrants sent some supporters away and squatted a building against their wishes. The conflict that erupted brought many tensions to the fore, and caused wide speculations about supporters' possible ulterior motives, as can be seen below:

> Mahmud: They want to give this building to Dutch squatters, not to migrants. The Dutch squatters just want to keep the building for themselves and they want us to be in short-stay buildings because they want us to move around every two months. But we do not want that anymore. We want to be somewhere for a longer time, a long time in a row not to have to move every two months.
> Minke: But why do they want you to move around so often?
> Mahmud: Well, for the money.
> Minke: And that's what I do not understand. What do you mean with that?

Mahmud: Well, every time when we get evicted, they are going to call for donations and we're so tired of that because we never see it. They want to keep the money for themselves and they want us to be in bad conditions and move around a lot. But we said no. We do not want that anymore. We want just to be somewhere for a long time. We want one year, two years maybe… it's like they do not want us to have stability.

Jacob (Sudan, mid twenties): Every time they ask for donations and people give. So there is a lot of money, but we do not see it.

….

Mahmud: So we did this alone. Now none of the supporters came and no one came to see how we are in this building. You know, they just stopped supporting us when we disagree with them. But you know they're supposed to be supporting us, not that we do what they say. And that's how it's been for five years. And it has been five years and they taught us how to do everything. We did not know how to do everything ourselves. But now that we have an opinion of ourselves. Then they say, oh, now you do something I do not agree with, I'm out. (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 11 January 2018)

Viewed as a move of emancipation, many migrants felt that this was a moment to stand up against supporters who wanted to control them. The situation revealed issues and tensions. Up until this moment, migrant respondents tried to pretend everything was fine. Yet, breaking with supporters also meant that many migrants discovered all the things the supporters made possible. For example, the day after the fight, the squatters came to request the return of the locks which they had lent the migrants. Suddenly, the migrants themselves had telephone the electricity company in order to reconnect the building to the power grid, and, consequently, ended up in a bureaucratic maze among various energy companies and the housing cooperation that officially owned the building. Moreover, they were supposed to meet with a lawyer, but now feared he would not attend the meeting because he was a good friend of the supporters.

Mahmud: Is he not coming? Hakim, call him. Tell him we do not need him. We have another one. No games!

> Hakim: He said five minutes. If he does not show, we call the other
> one.
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 11 January 2018)

While many described turning away from the supporters as a great moment of independence and emancipation, there was growing awareness that supporters might also be necessary. As a result, plans were made to organise some demonstrations in order to attract new supporters who would join the group on the migrants' terms. The squatters were evicted from the building in question, and it was subsequently demolished, rather soon after its occupation. It remains unclear whether the supporters had information about the pending demolition of the building that the migrants did not have. Two months later, however, the situation seemed to have returned to 'normal', with the same supporters spending time with We Are Here members. When I spoke with Mahmud about this and the incident, he told me that, in retrospect, he had been too negative about the supporters.

> Mahmud: Yeah, but we made it good again. There are some new
> [supporters] and with others we made up. I know last time I was very
> negative. So maybe you should not write that anymore.[*]
> Minke: But that's normal, right? Cooperation always goes with ups
> and downs.
> Mahmud: But, you know, I do not want war after the peace.
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 18 march 2018)

In sum, the preceding shows how supporters can benefit irregular migrants' claim-making. Yet this last example reveals that the dynamics can also be detrimental when power differences lead to internal conflicts.

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[*] With all respect to Mahmud I decided to write about this incident, because it shows an important aspect of migrant–supporter relations. However, I decided to also include this remark, to show that he himself thought he had been too negative with regard to the supporters and that relations improved later.

5.3 STATE CONDITIONS

Cities, and mayors, in particular, play an important role when it comes to irregular migrants (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2016). Governments can have a profound influence on social movements, mostly through the (national or local) police. Both Amsterdam and Turin provided openings for making claims in a relative safe environment. Even so, below I describe how, in both research settings, police used a variety of tactics to surveil, control, and influence irregular migrants. The influence of police on social movements is referred to in social movement studies as both 'police repression' (Earl, 2013; Marx, 1974), as well as 'police handling' of social movements (Della Porta & Reiter, 1998). Police influence is described in terms of actual police actions and the more general influence of the state on social movements (Della Porta & Reiter, 1998).

In my field sites, these tactics varied from what one might call overt repression, in the form of police actions during demonstrations, to covert repression in the form of infiltration of police into the movements, to forms of channelling or coercion aimed at disrupting collective action, for instance, by selective issuing of residence permits. The difference in police tactics also shows significant differences between the two sites of this research project.

5.3.1 Police action

In Turin, the squat was extremely policed. A collection of different police forces and the army maintained a continuous presence on the corner of the street where the squat was located. Moreover, through hidden cameras from the windows of the hotel across the street and the off-and-on presence of undercover agents, the squat was watched constantly:

> [After a lesson at the school I chatted with some teachers and students outside the building where the school is, when a car drove by slowly.] Manuela asked, 'Who are they? Do we know them?'

No one knew who they were, and then someone mumbled, 'Probably Digos [undercover police].'* Everyone seemed to agree that there was a high probability that they were Digos. I responded with surprise and Manuela explained to me: 'They keep a very good eye on what is going on here. They keep track of everyone who enters and exits. After the incident that got three arrested, a fourth one had not left the MOI for months. The second he stepped on the sidewalk because something happened on the street and he wanted to have a look, they arrested him.'

'But, how?' I asked.

Manuela said, 'They keep watch from the hotel.'

'Which one? The hotel across the street or the hostel in the back,' I asked. Fabio responded, 'The hotel here, but now that you ask probably the hostel as well.'

To this, Ali reacted by shouting, 'They have a camera in the hostel? But from there they can really watch inside!'

(Fieldnotes – Turin – 9 October 2018)

People at MOI had many different opinions regarding and experiences with police surveillance tactics. Some were convinced the Digos tapped their phones. Others assured me people were just trying to scare me. This surveillance worked to such an extent that it probably did not matter whether all suspicions were legitimised. The thought of being under constant surveillance had the effect that people felt the constant presence of the police and government. At the same time, many respondents pointed out that when there was a fire in a part of the building and they really needed help, all of a sudden, the police were nowhere to be found.

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* Divisione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Speciali (General Investigations and Special Operations Division) is the investigative unit of the Italian state police charged with intelligence and antiterrorism. They are moreover active in maintaining public order during political demonstrations and sports events like football matches. (https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/23277. Viewed: 21-7-2019).
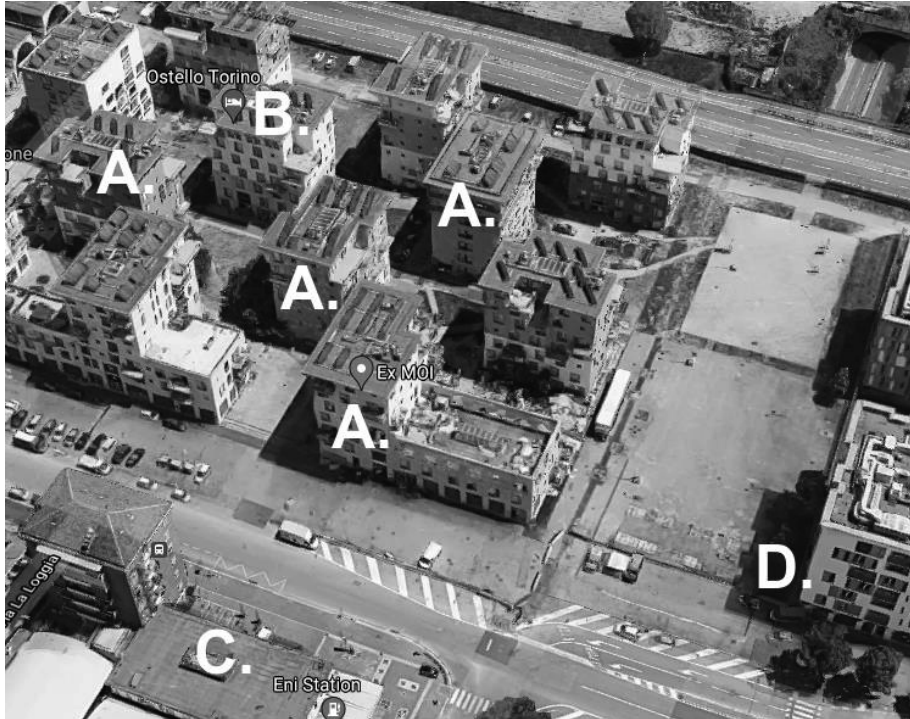
Image III: Aerial photograph of the Ex Moi area.
A: Squat; B: Hostel; C: Hotel; D: Police/army post
Source: Google Maps & Author

This practice of 'active ignoring', maintaining a constant presence without really doing anything, sends the message to irregular migrants that they are both left to their own devices, as well as not free to do as they please. This is a sort of overt covert repression, according to which police use covert tactics in such a way that their presence is known or strongly suspected. Related to the need for safe places as a prerequisite of claim-making, these police surveillance tactics influenced how people felt in the squat. The surveillance made the squat an unsafe place for the development of claims and fostered feelings of mistrust among the inhabitants. In other words, both the surveillance and the feeling of being watched made the squat less of a safe 'backstage' (Swerts, 2017) for the development of claims and social movement activities than it would have been otherwise. Moreover, this continuous

surveillance and multiple unfriendly interactions with the police in the past made many express uneasy feelings towards the police. Just before and during the fieldwork period in Turin, there had been several violent police interventions during non-related demonstrations, for example, against the TAV high-speed railway between Italy and France, which influenced the image of the police respondents had:

> Samba and I were walking towards the demonstration when he said, 'If things go wrong, we have to run. You can run in those shoes, right?' I asked him what he meant. 'We need to run from the police. When things go bad, I'm out of there.' I responded, 'But would it not be suspicious if you start running. Maybe walking away is better.' 'I do not know, but I'm afraid of the police so I will run'
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 21 October 2018)

Samba estimated the chances of 'things going wrong' were high enough to warn me in advance that if things should go wrong, in his opinion, the police would be his main cause of concern.

Compared to Turin, police surveillance in Amsterdam was much less. But also in Amsterdam the neighbourhood police officer [*wijkagent*] made frequent visits to the squat. However, the migrants' relation to the officer was not one of fear. Group leaders jokingly referred to the *wijkagent* as 'their blond friend' (*onze blonde vriendin*) or their 'honey' (*schatje*) and they discussed things with her:

> The evening before squatters were evicted from one of the squats, Mario, Hakim, and I sat in Hakim's room and talked about their pending eviction. Then, Mario said to Hakim: 'By the way, our honey [schatje] has passed by again.'
> 'Who is your honey?' I asked.
> Mario, 'You really want to know everything, do not you?'
> Minke: 'Well, it is sort of my job, is it not? Also, I'm a curious person'
> Mario: 'You always ask questions… always want to know everything…' Minke: 'True, but who is your honey?'
> Mario: 'Yes, the neighbourhood police, right.'
> Minke: 'Hahaha. That's your honey?'

Mario: 'Yeah, definitely. She comes here often. She is nice, she is blond… we do not have problems with the police. We only have problems with …'

[Mario points a finger towards the ceiling].

Minke: 'With whom? With god?'

Mario: 'Noohoo… why do you not listen? We have no problems with the police but with the minister, with the government, with policy. Not with our honey.'

(Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 16 November 2017)

The migrants did not see the police as a problem or something to fear. It seemed also as if police tactics in Amsterdam were aimed at de-escalation and avoiding problems. The police invested time and energy in establishing connections with the migrants, like the *wijkagent* mentioned above. Beyond this, during evictions, there was always the same middle-aged Arabic- and French-speaking police officer with a recognisable moustache who would speak and reason with the migrants in Arabic and French to make the process go smoothly. Fear of the police was not a major concern when planning demonstrations or contemplating other forms of visibility. This was a clear difference from Italy. In Amsterdam, two men, both called Abdel, who arrived from Campania, Italy less than a year before I met them, responded in disbelief when I told them I was going to research a group somewhat similar to We Are Here in Italy:

'In Italy…no, no, no. It is not like here. If you squat a building there like we did here, I swear the police comes after you and kills you!' He turns to the other Abdel and tells him about my research in Italy.

'I do not believe it either. It is not like here.'

(Abdel, early twenties, Gambia – Interview – Amsterdam – 18 January 2018)

The above excerpts reveal the different sentiments towards police among irregular migrants in Turin and Amsterdam. While, in Turin, the police were feared, in Amsterdam, irregular migrants felt comfortable enough to speak with officers and make jokes with or about them. While, in Amsterdam, irregular migrants were sometimes arrested, and sometimes even ended up

in alien detention for long periods of time, there was a general understanding among them that as long as they behaved the right way (following laws, rules, and police instructions), these things would not happen. That is not to say that in Amsterdam police tactics did not aim to influence the social movement. Rather than overt and covert repression, Dutch police tactics involved more persuasion for instance, to endure an 'orderly' eviction, channelling behaviour to be less radical than it might otherwise be and non-violent. Attitudes towards the police influence how people move and act in public space. In terms of being visible and making claims in public, specifically, being afraid of the police is not beneficial.

5.3.2 Disrupting collective action

State agents actively tried to disrupt the collective action of the irregular migrants and their supporters. Two strategies for disrupting collective action are identified here: individualisation of irregular migrants and re-invisibilising of their movements.

5.3.2.1 Individualising collective action

The clearest example I encountered of an attempt to disrupt irregular migrants' collective action through individualisation occurred when Turin's local government, pressured by new Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, started the process of expelling squatters from one of the Ex Moi buildings. In the months before evacuating the building, state officials engaged in various practices to obtain information about its inhabitants. Postcards with the words 'Do you need a job? Come and speak with us!' printed on them appeared in the squat. Those who went to the address on the cards were questioned regarding the documents they required to remain in Italy and who lived with them, and if they needed any documents. Supporters, aware of these kinds of tactics, warned against these practices:

> During a meeting among migrants and supporters, Patrizio said: 'They just want to know what you need. As long as you say it will make you leave [the squat], they will give it to you. I swear, if you say

you need a pretty wife who will give you many children, they will try
to find that for you! So, if you want to stick together and not leave the
building, do not tell them what you need!'
(Fieldnotes – Turin – 31 July 2018)

Not coincidentally, the state officials who tried to negotiate with the migrants
did their best to keep the supporters away. If there were a meeting scheduled,
and they saw Italians present, they would reschedule the meeting. In the end,
their tactics worked. The eviction of the first whole building, before they had
already tried to evict squatters from just the basements of the building, took
place in August 2018, a time of year when many supporters were on holiday
outside the city:

> Patrizio and Romeo update other supporters on the eviction.
> 'At first no one wanted to leave the building. They said they were
> staying. But then, they [the police] went in and started knocking on
> doors, calling individual names.' He mimics: '"Is there a Mohamed
> Bishalla here? Who needs a residence permit? We have it for you
> downstairs. If you leave this building, you will get it." That is how
> they went by all the doors. Then people started leaving.'
> Romeo adds: 'They had a list of what everyone needed and
> downstairs a box of documents: residence permits, travel permits,
> everything.
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 25 September 2018)

What becomes apparent from this example is how the state tries to disrupt
collective action by monitoring situations and tactically gathering
information, and by keeping supporters, who are a valuable asset in political
struggle, away from those they support. Overall, it demonstrates how
individualisation works. In Amsterdam, similar individualisation occurred,
albeit less obviously. For example, over the years, almost all group leaders
received a residence permit. The group's most prominent spokesperson in
2018 texted me that he received a residence permit after 16 years of being

irregular just a week after *De Volkskrant*,[*] one of the Netherlands' largest national newspapers, called him the number one challenge for the new mayor of Amsterdam. When an active, prominent member of We Are Here suddenly obtained a residence permit after many years, it was difficult to pinpoint the immediate reason. On the one hand, those who were active in the group were usually also active in pursuing their own (renewed) asylum requests, and often worked together with lawyers to find new opportunities. On the other, for some, sudden and sometimes surprising victories in their asylum cases coincided with periods in which the group was active and present in the media, causing suspicion that the latter might have influenced the former. Contrary to Turin, I did not observe a direct link between disrupting political action and the issuing of residence permits. However, in Amsterdam, there were other attempts to stop collective action by framing individual solutions as the only true solution to their 'collective and shared problem'. During a demonstration in front of the residence of the mayor in 2014, Mayor van der Laan addressed the group:

> As a group, there is a need to find solutions. What we try to do in the Havenstraat [municipal pilot project combining shelter and counselling] is to individualise everyone, to find individual solutions for individual problems. And when you say as a group, we want to be individualised and you can talk with us, Mayor, about individual problems and individual solutions, then you are welcome to talk with me, but only then.
> (Quote from Youtube video of demonstration – Amsterdam[†])

5.3.2.2 Re-invisibilising collective action

We Are Here and Ex-MOI constitute visible representations of a structural problem regarding the lack of viable solutions for irregular migrants in Amsterdam and Turin, respectively, and both groups make political claims to address these problems. My observations reveal that governments respond

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[*]https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/deze-zes-mensen-worden-de-grootste-lastposten-voor-burgemeester-halsema~b3365461/
[†] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U68elMbYPDg

by semi-solving problems. The effect of this is that irregular migrants encounter difficulty making effective claims based on their problems, because a solution to part of their problems or a partial or temporary solution to their problems is represented as a solution to all their problems. This, in turn, increases the difficulty of addressing the problem because the general opinion among the public is that the problem has been solved. This is, for example, what happened when municipalities provided shelter to irregular migrants as a response to political claims made by squatting. In Amsterdam, the city established BBB shelters for irregular migrants. Thereafter, public opinion was that the (housing) problems of irregular migrants were thus solved, causing squatting to lose (some of) its legitimacy. Yet, the problem with the BBB shelters was that, during my fieldwork period, they were only open at night. During the day, the migrants had to leave. Moreover, there were not enough places for everyone, and there were conditions for entering the shelters, like cooperating with returning to one's country of origin, that irregular migrants considered unreasonable. This made them reject the BBB shelters as a solution and continue squatting. Likewise, in Turin, the sequential evictions of inhabitants of Ex Moi from building after was called soft eviction (*sgombero dolce*) or third welcoming (*terza accoglienza*), as part of the MOI: Migrants an Opportunity for Inclusion (*Migranti un'Opportunità d'Inclusione*) project. In their communications, MOI made it seem that there was a very generous plan for everyone living at Ex Moi, providing housing, education, job offers, and 'guidance towards autonomy'.* This created the impression that all the problems of those living at Ex Moi were solved. However, this project only lasted for several months. Afterwards, migrants would be put out on the street. Many returned to Ex Moi, some, after some months at MOI, others because they were housed far outside the city, even if they had a job in Turin. Others returned because the project housed women and children separately from men, which separated families. However, even though the 'solution' was not a solution for the irregular migrants themselves, it was presented as such to the outside world. In Amsterdam, We Are Here had to constantly respond to the question, 'But why do not you just go to the BBB?' and in Turin migrants had explain how the solution was only

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* Press release by *compagnia di San Paolo* (building owner and part of the project) https://compagniadisanpaolo.it/ita/News/MOI-Migranti-un-opportunita-di-Inclusione (last accessed 30-07-2019).

temporary or partial. The problem for the social movements was that after the housing problem is 'semi-solved', squatting becomes a much more difficult claim to communicate legitimately. Moreover, clearing out squats and thus physically disrupting irregular migrants' collective action are ways to re-invisibilise their visible manifestation in the city.

5.4 SAFE PLACES

Claim-making contains a rather large paradox for irregular migrants, one of visibility. Commonly perceived as 'illegals', irregular migrants need to stay out of sight and not to attract too much attention, mostly in order not to be arrested and possibly deported. Yet, to be effective in making collective claims to citizenship, they need to be visible. Cities, therefore, are important places for claim-making to citizenship. Not only do cities provide an urban political opportunity structure from which irregular migrants can benefit, but they also have safe spaces for claim-making.

To make claims to and create citizenship, one needs a place in the world where one has agency and where one's voice is heard. Hannah Arendt understands the right to have rights as having a place in the world, which makes opinions significant and actions effective (Arendt, 1951/1958, p. 296). Subsequent scholars interpret 'place in the world' as either as a place of lawful residence, that is, a place where one has agency, voice, and political status, or as a site or sphere of right-holding, where one is recognised as someone with rights, a place where one can be 'in place' instead of 'out of place' (Kesby, 2012, pp. 6 &16). Arendt and scholars following her line of thinking often interpret this place as one within the international legal system. In line with the concept of place in the world as one that entails recognition as a right-holder, I consider this concept also valuable on a small scale, for example, in the city or the neighbourhood. Empirically, we can observe places where irregular migrants are recognised as equals, places where their voices are listened to, whereas in other places they would easily be considered noise, and their actions are effective. These places exist in both Amsterdam and Turin. Irregular migrants may be considered as outsiders in general, but there

are places in which they are insiders. These places are important for the creation of substantive citizenship.

Swerts (2017) makes a distinction between safe spaces and public spaces, where safe spaces function as an invisible backstage for innovation, training, and self-organisation of irregular migrants and public spaces are the visible 'front stage' for mobilisation, occupation and performance of citizenship (rights). The safe places I discuss here can be both front- and backstage. The defining element is that safe places are ones where irregular migrants can be relatively sure they can act without (too much) risk of negative backlash, like being arrested. Thus, squats can be safe places, functioning as a backstage for developing claims, but this is not necessarily the case. Conversely, (semi-)public spaces, like city squares or theatres, can also be safe places for claim-making.

Different places can be safe to various degrees. Safe places can be private and closed off, like the locations where *Arte Migrante* in Turin takes place, or open like theatre performances and debates in Amsterdam. Places can be safe one moment and not the next, like the squats, which are private, but can be infiltrated by police as in Turin or cleared out often like in Amsterdam. Moreover, the extent to which the city proves a safe place for irregular migrants influences claim-making.

5.4.1 Cultural activities

The previous chapter described cultural practices of claim-making. While cultural activities in Turin generally included small groups of people and focused on personal contact between irregular migrants and citizens, in Amsterdam they were professionalised and reached large audiences. What they had in common, however, was that these claim-making practices took place in settings where irregular migrants were free to express themselves and audiences were willing to hear and recognise their claims to inclusion. Irregular migrants in Turin frequently mentioned *Arte Migrante* as a place where they felt accepted, a place where people treated them as equals. During those meetings, the organisers actively tried to make everyone feel welcome. Along with the other Italian participants, they would actively approach new participants, something I experienced myself when Samba took me to my first

meeting and introduced me as 'his friend from Holland'. The organisers responded by asking if I spoke Italian, how long I had lived in Italy, whether I needed help with anything, and if I missed my home, placing me in the 'migrant category', an approach that diminished somewhat after I told them I was conducting research for my PhD. The aim of making everyone feel welcome and free to participate was reinforced during the meetings, at which every performance was received with (a lot of) enthusiasm, by people cheering, clapping and/or dancing. All performances finished to loud applause:

> The evening took place in a side room of a church in the city centre of Turin. All the furniture in the room had been pushed against the walls and everyone sat and stood in a big circle. One by one people, stepped to the middle to perform a song, to say something, or perform a traditional dance from some part of Africa. People made videos of the performances on their phones….After a while, it was the turn of a shy young man from Senegal. He wanted to say something. Everyone shushed for silence. Then softly he said, 'No phones, please.' An Italian girl stood up and repeated loudly, 'Everyone, no phones please. No phones for this performance. Let's make everyone feel comfortable!.' The man took the microphone and started talking about how he missed his home and his mother, but how he was still happy to be in Italy. He then invited everyone to sing together '*Ouvrez les frontières'*, a musical call to open borders by Tiken Jah Fakoly.
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 5 October 2018)

This protective, accepting atmosphere, purposely created and enforced during *Arte Migrante* events, makes it easy for people to share. During the evening, the phrase, 'No phones, please' was repeated for other performances. As a result, people did not shy away from sharing the difficult aspects of being a migrant in Italy, like racism.

> We [Samba and I] took the metro to *Arte Migrante*. On the platform, people looked at us and said things behind our backs. I thought it could be because we were eating dry rusk straight from the package, but Samba said people were very racist on public transport in Italy. In

the metro, he let me read the rap song he wrote about it [his experiences with racism]. The refrain starts, 'Every morning I wonder whether I should get up or if it is better to die.' One day, he wanted to perform it at migrant art, because that was the only place he thought he could share such feelings about being black. But not that night, the rap was not finished and he was not ready.
(Fieldnotes – Turin – 5 October 2018)

In Amsterdam, irregular migrants from We Are Here found a safe place in centres for debate like de Balie and Pakhuis de Zwijger. In those venues, they found a progressive, left-wing audience that was interested in refugee issues and willing to let them speak about them. By lobbying the organisers of these debates, irregular migrants ended up in panel discussions between experts and politicians:

> One evening in a centre for debate in Amsterdam, Miremba (East African, mid-thirties) had just made a speech about the situation of irregular migrants on the streets of Amsterdam. Afterwards, the panellists, situated on the other side of the stage, started to speak to and about her. During the discussion, she remained in her spot, until one of the panellists interrupts the rest of the panel and invites Miremba to sit on their side of the stage. Someone else adds, 'I wanted to say the same. We are creating a border ourselves now.' To loud applause, Miremba walked to the other side of the stage.
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 22 January 2019)

Not only does this invitation to physically join the panel add weight to the claims Miremba made in her speech and by being at this debate, but it is also a form of recognition of her claims. Moreover, the audience's response, applauding as she crosses the stage, shows that this environment is a safe place for Miremba to make claims.

In Amsterdam, most cultural activities were more 'professional' as compared to those in Turin, among other reasons, due to collaborations with professional artists and the involvement of artists in the We Are Here group. On various occasions, We Are Here migrants were selected to participate in creating and performing plays. For this to happen, there needed to be a sense

of safety. The audience must be benevolent and the migrants must not fear repercussions from the government as a result of what they share during performances:

> During his monologue, Aziz shares a story he also shared with me during one of our conversations. It is the story of when he was crossing the Mediterranean, amidst all the waves, a woman gave birth to a baby boy in the middle of their rubber boat. Everyone was too afraid to move. No one was helping her, so he decided to help her. Eventually cutting the umbilical cord with his teeth because the smuggler made them leave all sharp objects behind not to accidentally cut the rubber boat. The baby was named after Aziz.
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 5 November 2017)

In the play, the story was more polished and eloquent than when he told it to me. Yet, it was still extremely personal. To share it, Aziz had to have a certain level of trust in the audience and with the fellow creators of the play. An audience that chooses to attend a performance by or with irregular migrants self-selects as an audience that is somewhat benevolent to migrants and at least somewhat open to what they have to say.

5.4.2 Squats

Squats function as a backstage to claim-making (Swerts 2017). The squats are a place where claims are developed, where strategies are discussed, where banners are made, et cetera. Moreover, squats are a place for claim-making itself. Beyond this, squats are a place where irregular migrants can relax and find the headspace to think about their positions, visibility, and claim-making. Migrants and supporters actively try to create safe places in the squats, by inviting benevolent citizens and left-wing and pro-migrant organisations, as well as by keeping 'others' out. The squat as a safe place was managed by controlling what was public and what was private, as well as what was visible and what remained invisible.

As described in the previous sections, state officials' presence in and infiltration of the Turin squat created a tense atmosphere, among other

reasons, because this infiltration was a threat to the squat as a safe place for irregular migrants. Supporters tried to counter this by explaining police and government tactics and that migrants were not obligated to engage with or speak to state officials. They also taught migrants how to carefully ask state officials to leave properly, when the migrants jointly decided no longer to engage with the officials when they tried to approach them in the squat. This was celebrated as a (temporary) victory of group unity and spirit. Moreover, (primarily) supporters tried to subtly resist the state officials by teasing them or making jokes with or about them:

> I one time forgot my bike lock. So I left my bike in front of the military truck and told them I would be back when I was done teaching. Obviously, they did not mind keeping an eye on my bike. Hahahaha. (Laura, supporter – Fieldnotes – Turin – 23 July 2018)

> Two ladies came. They definitely did not look like they came for the dance party, and they wanted to know all these things, about who would be coming, how many people we were expecting…most likely, they were Digos. So Ali and I decided to have some fun, telling them, 'we do not know how many people will come, it could be ten, or a hundred and ten, or maybe even more, there was an event on Facebook so who knows who has seen it and will come today.' With a big smile on her face, she added, 'Then Ali asked if they wanted to join us for the party.' She starts laughing. 'We never saw them again!' (Manuela, Supporter – Fieldnotes – Turin – 4 October 2018)

In Turin, the (suspicion of) infiltration of (undercover) police, Digos, in the squats threatened the feeling that they were a safe space. In Amsterdam, police infiltration was less of a concern. Yet, also in Amsterdam, squats as safe places must be actively negotiated and maintained:

> [The morning of eviction from a large squat. The migrants have decided not to leave. There is a meeting to discuss the day's strategies.] Various people stand in a circle to discuss the plans for the day ahead. After about five minutes, an activist noticed that a man was filming the meeting and yells 'Guys, guys, do we want this to be

filmed?' 'What is it for?' Someone else asks. The man states he is from Denk (a Dutch political party very active in migrant and minority issues). He was filming to keep an eye on things and report back to his party in The Hague. After a discussion, eventually, he was asked to stop filming, which he did.
(Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 17 November 2017)

The squats are a safe place because they allow irregular migrants to control their visibility, and indeed whether they are visible. Squats allow for privacy, and how migrants are visible. Squats allow for control over who sees whom and what.
Negotiating visibility also means balancing the fine line between being visible and remaining somewhat under the radar. As a supporter tells me, he is worried that the success of the informal restaurant evenings at one of the squats in Amsterdam is attracting too much attention:

> It's too successful! It attracts a lot of attention. We should not forget they are undocumented in the end.
> (Emilio, supporter – Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 24 October 2017)

5.4.3 Cities

Where cultural activities and organised lectures and debates attract a benevolent audience, more traditional forms of political action and claim-making, like demonstrating and protest marches, have a less predictable audience. Similarly, safe urban public places, where irregular migrants can be visible and make claims without being arrested by police or attacked by opponents, are a precondition for claim-making, as described in Section 5.3. For instance, the moment when Samba asked me if I am prepared to run away from the demonstration 'when things go wrong' indicates not only his fear of the police, but also his fear of the demonstration becoming violent. His fears for his physical safety during the demonstration make him hesitant to fully engage. However, the day-to-day experience of being in public space is important to consider when describing the degree in which the city functions as a safe place for claim-making. Daily experiences of moving through the city

can influence whether irregular migrants feel they can potentially be included in (substantive) citizenship. They often perceive cities as safe spaces, due to the wide variety of people who live in them, especially when compared to other places.

> I lived in Friesland for two years. I did not like it there. When I came to Amsterdam, it was like coming home. I saw many black people like me. I thought, this is where I belong. In Friesland, everyone looks like you [white, blond, blue eyes], not like me.
>
> (Camile, late twenties, Ivory Coast – Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 17 November 2017)

Amsterdam as a multicultural city and thus safe because irregular migrants see other people who resemble them and they do not stand out as much as they do in other places in the Netherlands. In a large city, they can be visible, whereas in the countryside or provincial towns, irregular migrants experience hypervisibility due to their appearances. However, even though the city hosts a variety of different people, which means irregular migrants blend in, this does not necessarily make the city a safe place everywhere and all the time:

> Kofi just returned [to the squat] from an exploratory visit of an abandoned building on the outskirts of Amsterdam. His hands were freezing because he does not have any gloves. He reported to Hakim, Lucky and Abdel that the building was indeed empty, but that he did not stay long enough to see everything. 'Next time I will go together with Corrie or Jan [Dutch supporters].' Then to me, gesturing towards his face, 'If people see me walking around for too long, they might think I will steal something. They might call the police.'
>
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 3 December 2017)

Kofi's previous experiences with people calling the police when he wanders the streets looking for abandoned buildings to squat make him feels that it is unsafe to do so. Experiences of racism, explicit or implicit, major as well as minor, were present both in Amsterdam and in Turin. Yet, they were expressed more frequently and more structurally in Turin than in Amsterdam:

> When I was in Italy, people cross the street when I come close to them. They do not want to be on the same sidewalk as a black person. That is racism you know. Here, it is much better.
> (Abdel, early twenties, Gambia – Interview – Amsterdam – 18 January 2018)

Most frequently mentioned were experiences of racism on public transportation. These experiences gave reason to irregular migrants to no longer use public transportation, but instead to ride a bicycle. Public transportation is a place where migrants and citizens who live in a city are in close proximity to each other; it is also a place where one could 'pass' as a citizen. However, experiences of racism, e.g., overly aggressive ticket controls or people who do not want to stand near people of colour create a hostile environment and emphasise difference and not-belonging. As Boccagni (2017) describes, 'feeling at home' in public significantly depends upon a sense of external recognition by the 'native' population and whether they consider a person's presence in public legitimate (Boccagni, 2017, pp. 90 - 91).

5.4.4 The Internet

The Internet was a safe place for irregular migrants to make claims. Generally, the Internet makes it easy for the marginalised to make claims. Sassen (2006), for example, argues that the Internet has forms of autonomy from state powers and the digital therefore offers many opportunities for the relative powerless to make their struggles global (Sassen, 2006, p. 330). Being outside (direct) state control, the Internet thus provides opportunities to a variety of alternative, radical, or niche movements (Downey & Fenton 2003). The Internet can help challenge the discursive boundaries of the mainstream public sphere. With regard to cyber activism, Dahlberg (2007) states:

> A variety of marginalized individuals and groups representing counter-discourse are using various forms of radical counter-publicity to challenge the boundaries of dominant discourses and

subsequently to bring excluded issues and identities into debate within the 'mainstream' public sphere (Dahlberg, 2007, p. 841).

Among scholars of politics in the digital sphere, this has led to a debate about whether the Internet could be seen as a digital public sphere with the same qualities as a non-digital sphere. More relevant to this study is to note social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram were semi-safe places to make claims to citizenship both collectively and individually. The Internet allows irregular migrants to connect to large audiences of citizens who wish them well. The Internet provides irregular migrants with a place where they can make claims without being physically visible. Moreover, social media can be used practically, to mobilise resources

5.5 INCLUSION AS A CONDITION FOR CLAIM-MAKING

To make claims to citizenship and create citizenship from below, irregular migrants have to be capable, legitimate, able, and safe. In abstract terms, this means they have to already possess some forms of inclusion in order to make further claims for inclusion. Irregular migrants have to be able to access and manage the basic necessities of life, not only to survive and to have the headspace to think about and become unsatisfied with their position, but also to make legitimate appearances in public space. For instance, they have to speak a language that is understood in the country where they make claims. This can pose a challenge to irregular migrants because of their marginal situation. To make claims, there has to be a 'right degree of marginality'. This means migrants should be marginal enough to have an incentive to make claims. At the same time, the visibility making claims brings them should not put them at risk of losing the life they have already constructed. Moreover, to make legitimate claims in a 'new' context, one needs to know what constitutes legitimate claims or how claims are perceived as legitimate in certain situations. Contact and social relations with (native) citizens are crucial to acquiring this understanding. Therefore, supporters are indispensable; not only do they help with claim-making and the development of claims and communication of specific norms for protest contexts, but they also help

arrange for the basic life necessities, reducing migrants' marginality. Migrants' individual cultural capital enhances their chances of attaining legitimacy. Those who have high levels of education or come from a high-class background fare better in the claim-making process than those who do not. On a structural level, irregular migrants have to be allowed the freedom to make claims by the authorities. Irregular migrants need the freedom to be visible in public space; they need the freedom to mobilise and create collective action; and they need to have a semi-private backstage where they can develop claims. The state's repression of collective action, both in physical actuality and in irregular migrants' minds influence their potential for claim-making and the collective aspects of their social movements. Moreover, irregular migrants need to have physical places in the city where they are free and safe to make claims. These are places where they know they will not be arrested, where they will find a potential audience to listen to them, and where they will not be attacked or delegitimised while claim-making. Paradoxically, what the above implies is that forms of inclusion are a precondition for claim-making. To make claims that resonate, a person needs to have at least some knowledge about what kinds of claims and methods of claim-making are efficacious. Moreover, in order for states to let irregular migrants have specific freedoms, for example, the freedom to organise a demonstration, the state needs to already recognise them as subjects with certain rights that it needs to uphold or even facilitate, e.g., the right to demonstrate, and not as completely rights-less subjects or as subjects whose rights have nothing to do with the state.

CHAPTER 6

EMBEDDING CLAIM-MAKING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A recurring topic among irregular migrants in both fieldwork sites was a 'normal life'. Respondents shared with me, often without me explicitly asking, how they envisioned a 'normal life' for themselves. This was often followed by how they considered their current life in the squat to be different from a 'normal life'. Over time I became intrigued by this frequent reference to a 'normal life'. This was an imagined life for which respondents strove. Yet, this normal life was not necessarily a story of equal political participation or even full inclusion; it was a dream of being 'normal', ordinary, one might even say being boring. These narratives contrast with those of irregular migrants as political actors that activists and citizenship scholars alike share. Exploring notions of a normal life allowed me to see how irregular migrants constantly weigh or negotiate between active claim-making and its (seeming) opposite: their wish to be 'normal'. Even though being normal does imply some form of inclusion, the idea of a 'normal life' entailed more a civil life than political citizenship. A 'normal life' referred mostly to an ordinary or average life: a house, a job, a spouse, and children; having a traditional family life was central to this 'normal life'.

Notions of a normal life are revelatory for this research project, as they combine the topic of irregular migrants' social movements with that of their citizenship. Irregular migrants used 'a normal life' in claim-making by framing their narratives in such a way that they appeal to ideas of deservingness, being model citizens in order to make their claims resonate with existing ideas of citizenship. However, when we examine these wishes for a normal life empirically, we also see that they do not just constitute

strategic claim-making, but also a real desire to be 'normal', an actual desire to be good, honest, worthy citizens.

These coexisting meanings create a negotiated reality for irregular migrants' claim-making, which leads to a definition of citizenship that is broader than formal citizenship alone and likewise broader than the idea of citizenship as proposed in critical citizenship studies, namely an idea of citizenship that also includes civil practices that are not (intended to be) political (e.g., Ní Mhurchú, 2016). Referring back to Chapter Two, this contributes an empirical nuance to inclusive theories of citizenship, which often emphasise moments of rupture as political. This chapter will show how many irregular migrants explicitly try not to rupture social order, but adhere to it, since they want to be 'normal'. I will argue that the end goal of the struggle for citizenship of irregular migrants is not necessarily continued political participation, but rather forms of ordinary civil life. Their struggle for citizenship pertains to finding ways of 'normalising' everyday life. This chapter will explore how different, political and non-political, aspects of the citizenship struggle of irregular migrants are negotiated in everyday practices and how various practices can have different, co-existing, meanings. For example, being part of a migrant social movement can be an expression of desiring political change, as well as a way of establishing a relatively 'normal' living situation in a squat. This negotiated reality of claim-making points at everyday choices that are not concerned with political life, but with finding ways to 'normalise' an irregular situation, where, at the same time, collective visibility aids these individual struggles for 'normalisation'. It shows that the citizenship struggles of irregular migrants are not necessarily as optimistic or revolutionary as a critical citizenship perspective purports. This is even the case with the specific subset of irregular migrants active in social movements, who at first glance seem to perfectly fit the criteria critical citizenship scholars lay out. The comparison between Dutch and Italian contexts shows that the extent to which migrants are able to 'normalise' their lives depends upon a number of contextual factors, like the welfare state and informal economy, as well as on the rights that can be obtained through specific legal statuses.

6.1 ACTIVISM AND THE WISH FOR A NORMAL LIFE

Many respondents described their time living in the squat(s) as temporary, and their lives as being in an in-between stage. This stage was characterised by forms of waiting, for better times, but also by feelings of being stuck, both in place and in time. This resulted in both to frustration about their current positions and dreams of a better future. Accounting for the lived reality of irregular migrants enhances our understanding of their claim-making practices. My research suggests subtle negotiation between moving towards citizenship, on the one hand, and the wish to lead a normal life, on the other. The desire for a 'normal life' came up in conversations with me, as well as in discussions with each other. In these conversations, a 'normal life' represented both an ideal and the ordinary, traditional life they desired. In Amsterdam, the wish for a normal life became explicitly politicised. We Are Here used 'We need/want a normal life' as a reoccurring slogan and made 'a normal life' part of its discourse in media and interactions among irregular migrants and interested citizens. In Turin, the theme of a 'normal life' came up in conversations and interviews, but not as explicitly in collective claims as in Amsterdam.

Image IV: 'Normal life' banners at various demonstrations in Amsterdam. Shared on Facebook by We Are Here.

6.1.1 Framing 'a normal life'

The recurrence of the theme of a 'normal life' can be seen as a frame for irregular migrants' social movements. The literature on social movements states that movements frame political claims in specific ways in order achieve success (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014; Snow, 2013). Yet, this literature usually does not elaborate upon the content of frames. A frame that conveys a political message can be a strategic way of using the language of those upon which irregular migrants depend to recognise their claims to citizenship. In order to be recognised as legitimate, claims cannot be too 'out of the box' and have to resonate with existing ideas of citizenship (Bloemraad, 2018). Appealing to a sense of 'normalcy' can be a strategy for framing claims.

In the claims of irregular migrants, notions of a normal life appeal to a sense of similarity: 'I am just like you'. The literature on migrant deservingness states that portraying an image of migrants as 'normal' members of a national community has been used as a political opportunity (Nicholls, 2013b; Nicholls, Maussen, & de Mesquita, 2016). Explicitly identifying with the values of a national community frames claims to citizenship as not a 'threat' (Nicholls, 2013b), or even as a way to appear deserving of citizenship because they claim: we want to be good or honest citizens, just like you.

Moreover, using notions of a 'normal life' in claims can allow irregular migrants to distance themselves from activism. The alignment, overlap, and sometimes confusion between the means and the ends of social movements is a common problem in social movement studies, especially in descriptions of new social movements and pre-figurative politics, where a social movement's means reflect its ends (see, for instance, Leach, 2013; Yates, 2015). Because of this, participants in social movements are perceived as people who want to lead an activist lifestyle, instead of as people who are politically active because they want to address or change a social problem. Irregular migrants frequently team up with other activists for whom, often, activism has become a way of life rather than just a means to an end. Thus, they risk being perceived in similar terms by association. Emphasising the wish for a normal life and explaining this normal life in terms of traditional values serves to frame their message in as not 'extreme' or 'activist'.

The above reveals how irregular migrants constantly negotiate actual claim-making with a wish to 'just' have a normal life. Whereas the We Are Here banners reveal how this wish for a 'normal life' can be part of actual claim-making, often respondents suggested they saw political claim-making as an indication that their lives were not normal. The realisation that their life circumstances, as irregular migrants living in a squat, made their aspirations for a family life impossible usually manifested in stressful moments, for instance, when they were about to be evicted from a squat, or when someone they knew was about to be deported. Moreover, this frustration was especially prevalent among those who were arguably the most successful in creating citizenship from below, as they were the ones who discovered its limitations. An example comes from Mario (Ivory Coast, early thirties) on the evening eviction from a big squat. The migrants planned to protest against the eviction, as well as their situation in general. For Mario, the eviction was particularly stressful as he took a leading role in the francophone subgroup of We Are Here. Mario, Hakim and I were sitting in Hakim's room discussing strategies for resisting the eviction when, relatively out of the blue, Mario started engaging in a tirade of words, raising his voice, speaking with a lot of emotion:

> Mario: I'm so tired of this shit! I want to drive a car you know. You see this? (He shows me a big scar on his hand) I got in an accident because I do not know how to drive a car. I just want to drive a car! But with a licence.
> Minke: You know I cannot drive a car either.
> Mario: But that is your choice! You could if you wanted to. I do not have that choice! You know what I want? What I really want I just want a life. I want to work. And then I want to come home from work, and then my wife is there and she has cooked dinner. And we have children and they are also there. That's what I want.
> Minke: But you have a kid already, right?
> Mario: (immediately less angry) Yes I do. I have a kid…eight years old already…You know I made him with a Dutch woman. A nice Dutch woman (making female forms with his hands), you know,

really nice. But that was years ago. I need to grow up now. I want to
be an adult.
(Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 16 November 2017)

The exchange shows both Mario's notions of a 'normal life' and how his
irregular status excludes him from certain aspects of this life. For example, the
ability to obtain a driver's licence and drive a car, which many would consider
a mundane aspect of life, is a sign of freedom, of choice, a sense of
independence and, consequently, adulthood, for Mario. Not having a driver's
licence and his ensuing accident function as a daily reminder of his irregular
status. Moreover, the exchange shows various other aspects of what, for
Mario, constitutes a normal life: going to work, coming home to a house and
not a squat, and having a family life. Reflecting on the above, it seems
paramount that to understand the claim-making of irregular migrants, this
quest for a 'normal life', which cannot solely be seen as claim-making itself,
ought to be considered. Below, I discuss four aspects of 'a normal life' – work,
housing, family, and legal status – and how migrants must negotiate these
with regard to active political claim-making or activism in everyday life.

6.2 NORMALISING EVERYDAY LIFE

6.2.1 A normal job

'A job' was one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of, as well as a way
to obtain, a normal life. Respondents frequently mentioned employment,
when I asked what they needed most, both during informal conversations, as
well as in formal interviews. Many respondents indicated a wish to work in
construction. Jobs like welder and steel fixer were particularly popular.
Others expressed an interest working in restaurants or in public service
helping other migrants.

In the Netherlands, We Are Here irregular migrants had no legal
status and were therefore excluded altogether from formal employment. A
combination of social movement discourse and a not-widespread or
normalised informal economy meant that many limited their labour activities

to odd jobs in the domestic sphere and within their network. In Italy, humanitarian protection status provided opportunities for formal employment to many Ex Moi migrants. However, both those who did not have the opportunity for formal employment, as well as those whose legal status would allow for formal employment in principle, worked informally. But, general unemployment made finding a job difficult for everyone, causing most to be unemployed.

Both in Amsterdam and Turin, respondents considered work sign of a 'normal life' or an experience of what a 'normal life' could be. However, work was rarely a functional step towards legal citizenship. Although, in Italy, work could formally be a path to legal status, in practice this rarely happened as irregular migrants were often employed informally, extremely precariously, or in instable ways.

6.2.1.1 Amsterdam

In Amsterdam, one dominant discourse among those in the We Are Here group was that irregular migrants were not allowed to work. The Linkage Act requires a residence permit as one precondition, amongst others, for employment.

The fact that irregular migrants were not allowed to work appeared in many of the group's written texts and was something irregular migrants told interested citizens, for example, during meetings with people in the neighbourhood or during debates. During such moments of claim-making, they often shared how they wanted to work but simply were not allowed. In other words, they claimed how they wanted to take care of themselves but were not allowed to be self-sufficient or to even to contribute to society. Respondents used this as a justification for their request for donations of money, food, and other essentials. At the same time, quite a number of respondents expressed interest in working informally during personal conversations and interviews. Yet, this interest did not fit within irregular migrants' preferred frame of themselves as 'rule followers'. It therefore remained in the background during social movement activities. However, many irregular migrants, including those in We Are Here, were engaged in forms of informal employment nevertheless. The difference with comparison Italy was that this informal work was on a much smaller scale and consisted

mostly of odd jobs around the house [*klusjes*], gardening, or helping acquaintances with private construction projects, and, to a lesser extent recurring work like housecleaning. CSOs sometimes facilitated these jobs. For instance, in Amsterdam, a working group of the collective of churches, a group that received regular updates from supporters involved with We Are Here, communicated to churches and individual churchgoers through their newsletter. In this, they encouraged involvement with irregular migrants in different ways, for example:

> [T]hink which activities refugees can do together with your church. For which tiding job or cleaning job could the churchwarden or the church members ask a refugee for help?…. Or bring your clothing to be repaired at the *Vluchtmaat* [a legal squat] instead of bringing it to the tailor around the corner.[*]
> (Excerpt from newsletter – Amsterdam - October 2016)

These types of jobs provided irregular migrants with some money, but did not constitute a reliable source of income. The combination of the Linkage Act, social movement discourse, and a not widespread or socially accepted informal labour market stood in the way of irregular migrants' integration into the labour market. Of all those I interviewed for this research project, in Amsterdam, only Aziz worked informally in construction on a regular basis:

> On a previous occasion, Aziz told me he once helped a neighbour with his car when it was broken. The neighbour then recognised his technical skills [Aziz studied electrical mechanics in India before coming to Europe] and offered him a job in his building company. 'But, you know, then I had to tell him I do not have documents,' he said, pulling an uncomfortable face, but then added with a smile 'But he said it was no problem! He had people from Turkey working for him all the time. So it would not be a problem'. It actually turned out Aziz was working on a hotel that I passed by on a daily basis. We

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[*] Original text: om na te gaan welke activiteiten de vluchtelingen met u kunnen doesn. Voor welke opruim- of schoonmaakklus zou de koster of zouden gemeenteleden de hulp kunnen inroepen van een vluchteling?…Of breng uw kledingreparatie naar de Vluchtmaat, i.p.v. bij het naai-atelier om de hoek.

joked about running in to each other on our way to work, but it never happened.

Minke: How is your work going, Aziz? The hotel looks quite finished, I must say.

Aziz: Yes it is finished already. I'm now working in [Amsterdam] South somewhere.

Minke: That's nice. So you're also active with real work not only volunteering.

Aziz: But it is black work (informal work). You know that, right?

Minke: Yes I assumed it would be… But it is work, right?

Aziz: Yes, it is work.

Minke: I think in other countries there is a lot more black work than there is here.

Aziz: Yes, they need more black work in the Netherlands!

Minke: So, you are happy with your work?

Aziz: Yes, I am!

(Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 20 May 2017)

The informal economy provided Aziz opportunities. Since, in the Netherlands, informal labour opportunities were not easily accessible, respondents sometimes expressed a desire to go to Italy, as they perceived their chances of finding a job to be higher there. One supporter from Italy told me that various migrants had approached him asking if he could help them find a job in Italy. Others, like Jacob (Sudan, mid twenties), saw Italy as a possible next step because he had heard that in Italy, as a non-status migrant, finding a job could be a way to obtain legal status.

6.2.1.2 Turin

In Italy, both the formal and the informal economies provided opportunities for Ex Moi irregular migrants. Even though the majority did not have a job, some people at Ex Moi found employment opportunities (formal, informal, or a combination) and worked in manufacturing, making, for example, Grissini breadsticks, or worked in restaurants, gelaterias, or bakeries. Others worked seasonally in agriculture during the fruit and nut harvests in the Piedmont region.

As jobs were both scarce and in high demand, those who had one considered themselves very lucky, regardless of the arrangement. Jobs could also come with additional advantages to wages. Work is a way to establish a network of local citizens, which can be useful in many ways. For instance, contact with co-workers helped irregular migrants to learn Italian. One respondent even learned the Piedmont dialect through his contact with fellow gardeners at work. While he acknowledged the dialect was practically useless in the city, he saw it as a sign of his integration. Other jobs provided irregular migrants with meals:

> When I worked at KFC,[*] I never had to buy food. Just wake up, go there and eat…I'm lucky, I'm African. I really like chicken, ha, ha, ha! Oh my God, I ate a lot of fried chicken back then.
> (Samba – Fieldnotes – 19 October 2018)

Even though having a job has advantages, irregular migrants' precarious position made them vulnerable to exploitation. Working conditions were often bad, and as the example of Katim (Senegal, mid twenties) below shows, negotiating working conditions was difficult for fear of losing the job altogether:

> When I asked Katim about his work, he proudly showed me a video from the bakery where he worked. The video showed all the bread and pastries they made that night in big baskets all over the shop. It also showed his co-workers smiling. He said, 'Look at everything I can make now!' While pointing at some bread rolls, he added, 'These I learned to make only recently. They are sooo good.' His work at the bakery gave him feelings of fulfilment, pride, and accomplishment, but the job was very insecure. Sometimes, the baker paid him very little, 20 or even 15 euros for a whole night's work. Other times, the baker did not pay him at all. He told me he did not say anything about it because he was still learning and because of one thing he was sure. If he decided to not show up for work, he would lose the job. Because

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[*] KFC stands for Kentucky Fried Chicken, the fast-food chain.

> the job in the bakery sometimes paid so little, he took a second job, cleaning a restaurant, during the evening.
> (Katim, mid twenties, Senegal – Interview – Turin – 23 March 2019)

Malik's (Senegal, late teens) situation provides another example. After finishing school, Malik found a job in a nearby municipality. Due to the distance and early start time, he was forced to take the last train from Turin to his workplace, where he slept outside, underneath a fire exit staircase, and waited for his workday to begin. Despite all this, he considered himself to be one of the lucky ones because he was able to find a job at all.

Respondents considered having a job, despite the bad work conditions, favourable to not having a job at all. They emphasised that employment is important in Italy because legal employment is a way to change a humanitarian protection status into a residence permit. This became especially important after (then) Interior Minister Salvini's decree abolished the humanitarian protection status. Then, employment was almost the only way to keep a residence permit. Others, would lose their legal status completely. The conditions for converting a humanitarian protection status into a work residence permit, were formal employment with a contract, a minimum salary of 5,000 euros per year, and a passport from one's country of origin. These conditions made all but one of Ex Moi respondents disqualified to change their status. Most of those with a job worked in the informal economy, or worked formally a few days a month and informally the rest of it, meaning they might earn around 5000 euros per year in practice, but 'officially', the amount was considerably less. Moreover, most did not have a passport from their country of origin and were unable to obtain one. Omar (see Chapter 5) was the only one who potentially qualified. After five years of working six days a week at a nearby farm, his employer agreed to increase his legal salary to just over 5000 euros per year. After this, he immediately applied for a passport at the Malian embassy in Rome.

6.2.2 A normal house

Another aspect of a 'normal life' was having a house. This research project concerns irregular migrants who lived in squats. Squatting is widely

recognised as a form of direct political action, by occupying space in society. Squats are also sites where new forms of political subjectivity can be created and enacted (Dadusc, 2017; Dadusc, Grazioli, & Martínez, 2019; Dikeç, 2013) or as a means to use interstitial spaces to add weight to instances of claim-making (Hajer & Bröer, 2020). Moreover, the evictions of squatters often provided political opportunities or discursive openings that sparked irregular migrants to protest. Besides these forms of political protest, we should note that, both in Amsterdam and Turin, squats were an attempt to create relatively 'normal' living conditions. Irregular migrants often experience exclusion from the housing market; therefore, squatting is often one of their few options. In the Netherlands, irregular migrants cannot engage in legal contracts such as formal rent agreements. In Italy, those with legal status are allowed to rent a house, in theory, but this proved difficult in practice.

Squatting, therefore, provided a form of relatively normal living (living with a roof above one's head), especially when compared to the available alternatives, like living on the street, in tents, or in a shelter. In a way, squats became a place to call home. They provided a sense of security, a private place to rest, a sense of familiarity, a place to be at ease, as well as a sense of control, a place to do whatever you please (Boccagni, 2017, p. 7). Moreover, as described in Chapter 4, migrants invested a lot of effort in turning the squats into homes. While squats certainly had many limitations, they provided irregular migrants with a living arrangement that allowed them to come and go as they pleased, invite any guest they wanted, and cook their own meals. Thus, squats proved better at providing irregular migrants with the coveted 'normal life' than (government, NGO, or church-run) shelters. This depended on the type and the state of the squat. A squat that was cold, damp, or without electricity, for instance, abandoned churches, or warehouses in Amsterdam or the basement of the Ex Moi squat, was less of an alternative to shelter, than the Ex Moi apartments, or abandoned office buildings in Amsterdam. Dadusc et al. (2019) make a similar analysis. Drawing upon Lefebvre's distinction between habitat and inhabitance, they distinguish between housing and home, thus addressing how home-making practices in a squat can be perceived as alternative to 'being housed' in a shelter (Dadusc et al., 2019). Shelters generally had many rules and limited respondents' freedom to do as they pleased. In Turin, a substantial number of migrants 'resettled' from the Ex Moi squat during the small evictions leading

up to the final eviction in August 2019, returned to the squat after some time. They returned either because they found the alternative housing dirty and rundown, and too far away from their established network in the Lingotto area, or because their bed in the shelter turned out to be only temporary. They therefore preferred living in the squat, as the squat provided them with a sense of home. After the final eviction of Ex Moi squatters in August 2019 all the inhabitants were placed in shelters in and around Turin area and in Piedmont province. Respondents whom I spoke to afterwards stated they were generally 'okay' with their new accommodation. Some had to come to terms with the rules of the shelter and the limited freedom they had in the shelters. For example, Katim, whom I telephoned to ask where he lived now, responded:

> I have a bed in a shelter until next year. It is okay. I know quite some other people who live here. The only thing is that I cannot have friends over. I do not know why…I do not like that.
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 14 August 2019)

Likewise, in Amsterdam, those with a bed in the BBB shelter had to follow a lot of rules. They could not invite friends to visit, were not allowed to cook their own meals, or to come 'home' late at night. However, their biggest problem with the shelter was that they were not allowed to stay there during the day. Moreover, in both locations, the shelters did not have enough places to host every one and did not provide long-term opportunities. Squats, therefore, were the preferred option for some.

However, the extent to which a squat normalised migrants' lives depended on life in it. In Amsterdam, this depended on the type of squat the group lived in at a particular moment, and how long they could stay there. Some squats were small, extremely cold, and without hot water or electricity, for instance, the empty churches We Are Here squatted. Other squats, for example, empty office buildings, turned out to be quite comfortable to inhabit. Moreover, a migrant's position within the group influenced life in the squat. The division of rooms in squats often occurred according to gender, with women receiving their own rooms unless they lived there as part of a family. Other criteria were nationality, ethnic group, or language; those with a similar

background tended to group together by ways of solidarity between co-nationals. This sometimes created, for instance, a 'Somali room', 'Sudanese room', and a 'francophone room' in the squats. In Turin, the first building from which the inhabitants were evicted was referred to as the 'brown building', referring to the colour of the building, but also as the 'Somali building', referring to the nationality of the majority of the inhabitants. Besides this, group leaders and those actively involved in the social movement, and especially those who had been active in the actual squatting of a particular building, often occupied the larger or otherwise 'better' rooms in the squat and tended to have more privacy. Those less active, assertive, and/or those with problems with drugs or mental health generally had the less attractive rooms in the squat and/or had to share rooms. In Turin, those who lived at Ex Moi for a long period often had their own room or a room shared with one or two others, while those who had arrived recently slept in small rooms with more than 10 other people, in hallways, in the basement, or in summer even on the rooftop terraces. Although the number of squatters grew over the years, there had not been a re-division of rooms. As the above shows, being active in claim-making and social movement organising created the opportunity to live something close to a 'normal life' in the squats.

However, while squats provided some normalcy to the lives of irregular migrants, their eventual goal was a 'normal house'. In the Netherlands, finding a 'normal house' required a residence permit, as this provides access to social housing and also allows for renting a privately-owned house. In Amsterdam, irregular migrants left the squats for four main reasons: some managed to start a renewed asylum procedure and thus received a place in an asylum seeker centre; others obtained a residence permit and, while waiting for a social housing apartment, were offered a place in an asylum seeker centre; some found a place to stay at the house of a friend, family member, or girlfriend; and some opted for a place in the BBB despite its limitations. Leaving the squat was therefore strongly connected to legal status, i.e., a residence permit, and citizenship from below, i.e., finding alternative solutions through connections with local citizens.

In Turin, many living in the squat could technically rent a house as they had legal status that allowed them to do so, but this was difficult for the reasons stated above. There was an enormous difference between what was allowed on paper and what was attainable in reality. Respondents

encountered many problems on the housing market because those with a job were often employed informally and had a low to modest salary. Moreover, many had to face racist landlords who hung up the phone when hearing an 'African-sounding name' or denied them entry to the property when they discovered they were black. Those who left the squat had three main reasons: migration to another European country, usually Germany or France, finding a place to live with a friend, family member, or girlfriend, or obtaining accommodation through an NGO. Malik (this chapter), for example, was on Refugees Welcome Italia's waiting list. A supporter, trying to convince me to participate in this project, told me that the NGO had a programme to encourage young Italians to share their apartments with young migrants in exchange for 400 euros a month.* Another example is Samba (Chapter 4), who together with his close friends, Seman (Gambia, early 30s) and Abdi (Somalia, late twenties), obtained an apartment through a neighbourhood association, where they could live in exchange for working with neighbourhood children in an afterschool and weekend programme. Leaving the squat in Turin was therefore not connected to their formal legal status, but with the citizenship they created from below through their social network.

Living in a squat resonates with both claim-making and the quest for a 'normal life'. Life in a squat reveals how political activism can translate into improved living conditions and domesticity. It also shows how migrants who actively participate in the groups' social movements, as well as those successful at creating citizenship from below, could improve or normalise their living situation, either within or even outside the squats. Citizenship from below is relevant to normalising living conditions, since participating in society and the consequential social contacts provided opportunities outside the social and political movements of We Are Here and Ex Moi. However, the above also shows how, especially in Amsterdam, citizenship from above can result in normalisation of everyday life, and give migrants reason to cease engaging in political claim-making.

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* Whether this particular NGO actually offered 400 euros, or whether this respondent actually meant another housing project, is unclear.

6.2.3 A normal family

One of the most important qualities of a 'normal life' respondents named was having a family. This desired family life often corresponded with an image of a nuclear family with two spouses and children. While ideas of 'family' in general sometimes also included extended family, parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, when it came to ideas of a normal life and family, these referred to a more nuclear family. This can, for instance, be observed in the exchange with Mario in Section 6.1.1, in which he described his desire to come home from work to a meal cooked by a wife and to eat with his imaginary children. Like Mario, some irregular migrants who lived the squats actually already had children at the time of the fieldwork. Yet, having children alone was not enough to satisfy their desire for a 'normal' family. Hakim in Amsterdam, whose daughter lived with her mother, even though he said he would have loved to take care of her, provides another example:

> But look around you. [We are in a squatted thrift shop, just after moving in] I cannot bring her here!
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 2 December 2017)

Or in Turin, where some families with children live in the squat:

> A Somali man I had never seen before sat at the table where the meeting [with migrants and supporters] was going to take place. On the table in front of him was a half full bottle of vodka. Throughout the meeting, he continued to drink from his bottle and continuously interrupted the meeting by loudly sharing his story. 'I used to live in the brown building. But they evicted us. Now I live in the basement. I have two children. What a life is this!' and 'I'm Somalian, I'm a refugee. But still I live like this! My children were born here! I live in a basement here! This is a fucking mess!'
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 25 October 2018)

'A normal life' connotes not just having a wife or children. What most wanted was a normal, conventional, 'civil life'; something that could best be described

as '*burgerlijk*' in Dutch or '*borghese*' in Italian or bourgeois in English*. Moreover, these notions of a normal life were quite 'gendered', in the sense that the majority male respondents shared their aspiration to become the family's male breadwinner, while the wife takes care of the children and the household. As can be seen in the above examples, not living up to this ideal by not having a family or not being able to take care of children as they wished created frustrations among the irregular migrants whose lives I studied.

A second way in which respondents spoke about 'a normal life' with regards to family was by discussing girlfriends,† which they did frequently. This was not surprising, since the research population consisted primarily of men from their early twenties to early thirties. Respondents emphasised the desire for a partner by talking about the intimacy, warmth, and companionship a girlfriend can offer. Moreover, in these discussions of girlfriends, respondents considered their hypothetical girlfriends as potential wives, and therefore the first step towards a family and a 'normal life':

> I speak with them [irregular migrants] and I tell them they should get their lives in order, like go to school and find a girlfriend. Like Abdi, I spoke with him two years ago and now he is with Alessandra, the girl from [NGO].
> (Mustafa, early thirties, supporter – Interview – Turin – 24 October 2018)

Irregular migrants were not the only ones who saw girlfriends as a step towards a 'normal life'; various supporters also recognised their importance, like Mustafa who saw finding a girlfriend as something that was equally important to perusing an education. Moreover, Mustafa's statement indicates that respondents discussed girlfriends as a strategic move to normalise their lives. A girlfriend made it possible to leave the squat. Renting an apartment under the name of the (native) girlfriend made living in a 'normal' house attainable:

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* Yet, not necessarily with a middle-class connotation.
† In Amsterdam, migrants used the terms 'girlfriend', 'vriendin', or 'vriendinnetje'. In Turin, it was 'girlfriend', 'ragazza' or 'fidanzata'.

> I stood on the rooftop terrace with the cousins, Tommy (Cameroon, mid thirties) and Matthew (Cameroon, early thirties). While we looked at the other buildings and the courtyard of Ex Moi, we spoke about the ways people arrived here and how they left again. According to Matthew there were two possible 'ways out' of Ex Moi: to find a job and then a house with a contract [not a squat] or to find an Italian girlfriend. I asked whether the latter happens a lot.
> Matthew: Oh yes, it happens a lot. You know, we have many pretty young men here. Actually, it should happen a lot more!
> Minke: When you find a girlfriend, then what happens?
> Matthew: Then you are lucky! Because, you know, then you have a girlfriend. But also because you can then live with her.
> Minke: So they then all live with their girlfriends?
> Matthew: Yes, of course. The girlfriend cannot live here. [He made a sweeping arm gesture.] Look around you!
> (Fieldnotes – Turin – 11 June 2018)

Group activities like the cultural events (see also Chapter 4) were moments to come into contact with (native) girls, and therefore seen a place to find a girlfriend. This was, for some, an incentive to actively participate in organised activities like the language school, dance workshops, and theatre projects:

> I help to organise *Danzaterapia* [alternative dance lessons/dance therapy] also because it is fun. All the struggling and fighting [political battles] is good and all, but they also need to have fun. Basta! And they like it; especially now they have seen that it attracts a lot of Italian girls, ha, ha!
> (Manuela, supporter - Fieldnotes - Turin – 23 March 2019)

Moreover, supporters were also considered potential girlfriends. In both groups, there was a great number of young women who occupied themselves with supporting the, mostly male, irregular migrants. In Turin, for example, I attended several parties with young male migrants and at least twice as many Italian girls in their early twenties, mostly university students. Moreover, as older supporters mostly occupied themselves with logistics and practical help, the young female supporters often established more personal

connections and close friendships. Supporters are indispensable for social movement organisation, as well as claim-making. Yet, they were also part of attempts to normalise the lives of irregular migrants, for example, when they become girlfriends. Both in Amsterdam and Turin, multiple (serious) relationships between migrants and supporters were formed over the years, which resulted in the birth of several children. As Bob (Supporter, late fifties) told me when I ask him about the collaboration between migrants and supporters:

> Bob: You can also differentiate between those [supporters] who last a month or a year or two years, then you look at sustainability, [building a] sustainable relationship. You only have to look at the number of marriages there are, how many children were born.
> Minke: Are there many?
> Bob: Yes, definitely. [To Hakim, who sits in the back of the room] How many marriages are there between refugees and supporters? Not that many, but…
> Hakim: There were positive results [marriages between irregular migrants and supporters]. I do not know, four or five? But even if it's one, then that is good. Because, you know, to create a family, it's not easy and when people from supporters and refugees decide to make a family, then that is actually what we need.
> (Bob, late fifties, supporter & Hakim, early forties, Sudan - Interview – Amsterdam – 15 August 2017)

Girlfriends are not only short-term, casual, or strategic 'assets', but also a first step towards long-term relations, starting a family and attaining 'having a normal life', which is what many irregular migrants said they needed and wanted. As seen above, Bob and Hakim considered marriage between an irregular migrant and a supporter a 'positive result' of mobilisation, something that they 'need'. The need for a girlfriend to start a 'normal life' shows how even when irregular migrants have rights on paper, in some cases they need a girlfriend to be able to actually normalise their lives.

This sheds light on the role of legal status. In the Netherlands, girlfriends could help irregular migrants advance informally, but for substantial change, migrants needed to change their legal status. In Italy, by

contrast, a girlfriend could mean a substantial change in a male migrant's life since she could help him formally obtain the rights to humanitarian protection. Moreover, a girlfriend provided opportunities to circumvent informal boundaries, like racist landlords, could help with difficult bureaucratic procedures, and use their network to help their boyfriends advance.

6.2.3.1 Gendered notions of 'a normal life'

These notions of a normal life portray a gendered idea of the everyday. They reveal how the quotidian irregularity of the predominantly male respondents interfered with their shared ideas of masculinity. This 'hegemonic masculinity' can be understood as 'the currently most honoured way of being a man, it requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832; Sinatti, 2014). In other words, this is a general, shared idea of what it means to be a man, to which all men relate. Respondents saw their role in a normal life mainly as the employed, stable breadwinner in a heterosexual marriage and traditional family. Scholars argue that paid work is often a 'key element' of migrant men's manhood (Crossley & Pease, 2009; Donaldson, Hibbins, Howson, & Pease, 2009; Pease, 2009). While scholarship on masculinity and migration often notes the male breadwinner ideal and other 'traditional family values' in the context of sending remittances to families left behind (e.g. Broughton, 2008; Sinatti, 2014), the above shows that this ideal is very much present in the future aspirations of irregular migrants without a wife or children 'back home'. Based on the limited, superficial contact I had with female irregular migrants, I can state that the idea of the 'traditional family' was also present among them. However, this was not connected to fulfilling specific gender roles. For instance, one respondent shared her deep desire to reunite with the son she left behind in Eritrea, so they could be a family again. Her desire was not connected to, for example, finding a husband and becoming a housewife.

6.2.4 A normal legal status

An underlying topic above is the importance of legal status as 'citizenship from above'. In everyday life, irregular migrants who participate in claim-making simultaneously wish to find ways to 'normalise' their lives. Chapter 5 focuses on the role of legal status in the political struggle and claim-making of irregular migrants, and shows how obtaining legal status can cause migrants to stop participating in social movement activities or claim-making. Yet, legal status also played an important role in the daily lives of irregular migrants in Amsterdam and Turin, which had nothing to do with claim-making or activism. On the one hand, irregular migrants acknowledged that, even without legal status, they could establish a life to a certain extent; in other words, they could create citizenship from below. On the other, the quest for formal citizenship status and the consequences of not having it were at the core of their everyday lives. It did not matter how successful a migrant was in creating or enacting citizenship; without official status, this citizenship was provisional at best. Moreover, the struggle for rights was constant. The *lack* of formal recognition manifested in everyday situations, influencing quotidian practices and social interactions. While lack of formal citizenship can drive social movements or politicise irregular migrants, respondents had to negotiate between citizenship from below and the collective mobilisation of social movements and opportunities for formal citizenship.

6.2.4.1 Amsterdam

Legal status was a reoccurring topic in Amsterdam. Listening to irregular migrants and observing their day-to-day interactions revealed that legal status was not just a goal of political struggle or something to which to make claims, obtaining legal status was at the core of everyday life at We Are Here. It was often the second thing respondents asked each other after not seeing each other for a long time. Asking about legal status constituted a moment of exchange of human interest and solidarity. For instance, when I visited the 'women's squat' with Aziz, he met a friend he had not seen for some time:

> Aziz: Hi! How are you?
> Senait: Yeah, good, good.

Aziz: You got your status now, right?
Senait: [visibly upset by the remark] No, no, no status for me.
Aziz: I'm sorry. It will come, sometime soon!
(Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 20 May 2017)

Chapter 4 and the above demonstrate that there are opportunities for irregular migrants to achieve aspects of a 'normal life' without acquiring formal legal status. One could even say it is possible to enact being a citizen through these aspects. However, other qualities of a 'normal life' are impossible to obtain without legal status. Respondents acknowledged both these possibilities and limitations. For example, one day, Aziz asked me to explain in-depth what my research was about. I told him about theories of citizenship and how some scholars say it can be enacted even without formal citizenship status:

> You know what, Minke? Yeah, I think you are right. Because when I just got here and when I was in prison [alien detention], all I thought was I need to get a status, status, status. Status is what I need. But now I still do not have a status, but I am building my life. But I still want my status because I want to finish my studies and build my life. And I cannot do my studies without a status. But I do have a life. I'm very busy.
> (Aziz, mid-twenties, Sudan – Interview – Amsterdam – 20 May 2017)

Aziz's life, at times, could serve as a prime example of how scholars describe citizenship from below. But he still sought legal status, since it would grant him access to higher education. Though he acknowledged that even without legal status there were opportunities to 'build a life', he still needed citizenship from above for a 'normal life'. Ibsaa (Ethiopia, early thirties), whom I met at We Are Here before conducting my PhD research, provides another example of how migrants perceive legal status. He had received legal status in the meantime and was able to move into his own social housing apartment, but still now and then attended activities organised by or for We Are Here. He put it as follows:

> Ibsaa: When I founded the group and so many people came, supporters and journalists, and I learned a lot from everyone. I got to

know all these people, and there were so many people helping and supporting me. And from then, status was not so important anymore. It went to the back of my mind.

Minke: But is not that easy to say now that you have your status?

Ibsaa: I always saw it [the rejection] as a mistake and it was just a mistake of one person. So, now I have all these other people that are helping me. That is more important. The IND, like the interview, it was only one. All the people that are with me are sooo much more. You can have your own life. All these people that support me, help me, and even give me money sometimes.

(Ibsaa, early thirties, Ethiopia – Interview – Amsterdam – 15 October 2017)

The two fragments above show the two-sidedness of citizenship without legal status. On the one hand, Aziz and Ibsaa acknowledge that certain degrees of inclusion are possible without legal status. It is possible to 'build a life' to a certain extent, and to receive recognition from citizens. Yet, at the same time, they recognise that legal status is important, as it is necessary, for example, to pursue higher education or to leave the squat and move into a 'normal house'.

6.2.4.2 Turin

In Turin, the concept of legal status played out differently. Many of the respondents had the humanitarian protection status or were in the process of renewing this status. While this type of legal status provides certain rights, for example, the right to healthcare, the right to work, and the right to education, when asked what this status meant for their lives, many responded with a negative story. As the status does not offer full inclusion and is insecure (Borri, 2017), many respondents told me that obtaining the status changed nothing for them. Even once they had achieved legal status, they found themselves in an in-between phase, which is no different from those who did not have legal status. They all lived in the same squat, none had no job, nor did they have any money, a wife, or a girlfriend. For example, Katim who, during our interview, wanted to show me pictures on his phone of the wife and baby of a friend back in Senegal then said with a sigh:

> Katim: And we are here… No money, no wife. We are here to lose time.
>
> Minke: When you say this does that make you want to go back to Senegal?
>
> Katim: Definitely.
>
> (Katim, mid twenties, Senegal – Interview – Turin – 23 March 2019)

For Katim, the feeling of losing time was not related to his legal status per se, but to what that legal status would allow him to accomplish. Whereas, in Amsterdam, respondents stated they were in an in-between phase because they were waiting for legal status, in Turin those *with* legal status also felt like they were in an in-between phase. Their legal status provided some rights and entitlements, yet was not only temporary and insecure, but also did not provide guarantees for full inclusion or a long-term perspective. Italy's humanitarian protection status has been described in critical terms. Borri (2017), for example, calls it a 'humanitarian protraction' status, since it is a legal status that perpetuates liminality instead of enabling economic or juridical stability. It is precisely this state of being 'in-between' that may cause irregular migrants to shift backwards and forwards between political activity to gain citizenship status, on the one hand, and their wish to live a normal life, on the other.

The case of Malik (this chapter) exemplifies what humanitarian protection status can mean. The day I interviewed Malik, he had lost his wallet, which contained his humanitarian protection permit, at the school where he studied automobile mechanics. As soon as he noticed his wallet was missing, he went back to school, but the wallet was nowhere to be found. He reported the missing wallet to the police and obtained an appointment for a new permit, for two months later. The thought of not being able to prove his status drove him crazy, he told me in the interview. He wondered whether I thought the police report of his missing wallet and permit would be enough to prove his legal status. During the whole interview, he kept speaking about his wallet. Three weeks later, after an informational meeting with a lawyer, organised by supporters at Ex Moi, about the newly announced security and immigration decree, I spoke to Malik again. When I asked him how he was doing, he remained silent, stared in front of him, and then shook his head. After a long pause, he said: 'You know I lost my permit, right? How can I be

so damn stupid? I went to the office and they said I should just go away because they do not give humanitarian protection statuses anymore.' Later, one of his friends told him to go speak with the lawyer while she was visiting squat; maybe she could help or knew what to do. Later that evening, I saw Malik talking to Claudio, a supporter who used to work in the asylum system. A month after Malik lost his permit, Claudio texted in the supporters WhatsApp group:

> The boy of 19 years old Diallo Malik today got a duplicate of his humanitarian protection permit. Even earlier than thought, because he had his appointment on 22 of November.

Malik's story shows how his legal status meant he could obtain formal education, in his case, studying automobile mechanics as the only migrant in a class of Italian students. Moreover, he had access to healthcare. However, he still lived in the squat and was, to a large extent, dependent upon supporters for help, for instance, to navigate the messy reality of Italian bureaucracy, which requires 'insider knowledge' to recognise when a civil servant is stonewalling by saying you cannot ask for a duplicate of a residence permit, when in fact you are still entitled to it. What Malik's story reveals, above all, is that Italy's humanitarian legal status creates a deep sense of insecurity. An event like losing a wallet, that would be inconvenient for most people, caused Malik significant worries about his legal status, his future, and his ability to lead a normal life. Moreover, for Malik, the incident of losing his wallet coincided with the new decree abolishing the humanitarian protection status, causing him significant stress when the Questura* told him he could not obtain a duplicate document because humanitarian protection status had been abolished altogether.

In the fall of 2018, towards the end of my fieldwork period in Turin, the first drafts of the *Decreto Sicurezza e Immigrazione,* or the Salvini decree, became public. When this came to the attention of irregular migrants and supporters of Ex Moi, various civil society organisations began to organise expert meetings. One social centre organised information evenings for activists, and lawyers were invited to meetings at Ex Moi to explain how the

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* (State) police headquarters, charged with issuing residence permits.

proposed new law would affect irregular migrants. For those who had humanitarian protection status, the announcement of the proposed decree was very stressful, since it meant they were going to lose that status in several months to a year, if they were lucky to have only just received or to have renewed it recently. I observed migrants' distress, for example, during the informational meetings. Large numbers of irregular migrants did not usually attend activities supporters organised, but these informational meetings were well attended:

> One Wednesday evening in October, supporters arranged for an immigration lawyer to come inform those at Ex Moi about the implications of the (then) proposed decree. Before the meeting with the lawyer, while Samba and I were eating chips with ketchup wrapped in a newspaper we bought at one of the restaurants in the squat, I asked what he expected of the meeting. Samba answered he hoped this meeting would clarify things, take away some of the uncertainties and worries. During the meeting more than 60 men and some supporters gathered in one of the rooms of the squat. There was a half circle of chairs seating about 15, the rest of the men stood in two rows against the wall. Facing them were Patrizio [supporter], who was standing and the lawyer who sat in a chair. During the meeting, Samba stood still with his back against the wall, every now and then, he walked outside for some minutes and then returned to his spot. After the meeting I asked what he thought of what the lawyer had to say. Samba shook his head. 'This is a mess'. While many migrants huddled around the lawyer, all wanting to ask her questions about their specific situation, I saw Sulayman (Gambia, mid thirties) walk away. He lived in Germany but came back to Italy two months earlier to renew his documents. He had tears in his eyes. He said: 'I do not want to talk right now. You caught me in a bad time. Maybe now I cannot go back to Germany. I've already waited for so long for my documents. Now they might not give them at all!'
> Some days after the meeting, Samba told me he was now so worried he could hardly sleep at night. 'I worry so much, but not only for me. Because I will be fine in the end, I think. I have many people that want

to help me arrange my documents, even help me to get false documents. But many people do not have that. They will just lose it.' (Fieldnotes – Turin – 17/21 October 2018)

Although temporary and insecure, humanitarian protection was a legal status that came with certain benefits. A lot of respondents in Turin took advantage of the access humanitarian protection gave to formal education. Many had completed adult education and obtained the equivalent of a middle school diploma. Some pursued vocational training afterwards. Moreover, humanitarian protection provided access to healthcare, at least on paper. In practice, many respondents were unemployed and obtaining a healthcare card proved so difficult many did not have one. Civil servants tended to request additional documents to register for the National Health Service, like housing registration (*residenza*).[*] Even after finding a solution to this problem, those living at Ex Moi could register with the municipality at a fictional address, as stated above, many migrants needed volunteers, from *Medici Senza Frontiere*, to accompany them to obtain healthcare cards and doctors' appointments.

6.2.4.3 Negotiating legal status and activism

The above reveals that legal status is an everyday preoccupation of irregular migrants, both in the Netherlands and Italy. However, the concept of legal status can assume different meanings. Sometimes it is used to inquire to how someone is doing, when 'Did you receive a status?' is a follow-up question to 'How are you doing?'. In other cases, 'status' refers to shifting fundamental life conditions; going from having some rights to not having rights, from working to build a new life to seeing that future being taken away, with one decree. In other words, legal status or citizenship from above remained crucially important in everyday life.

As discussed in Chapter 5, authorities used the importance of legal status to undermine collective action. The fact that as soon as they learned the

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[*] For which, ironically, some municipalities require a proof of health insurance. Other implicit, informal 'requirements' include having a job or not having a criminal record (Bolzoni, Gargiulo, & Manocchi, 2015).

police were distributing residence permits, most of the irregular migrants agreed to leave the squat, even though they had previously stated they would not do so under any conditions, reveals the importance of legal status. It also shows the tensions between claim-making and the wish for normalised lives. Similarly, a supporter in Amsterdam mentioned the conflict between individual and collective strategies for obtaining rights as one reason why group was not as successful as it had been in the past:

> In the beginning there was a sort of adrenaline. You could really feel it. And there was a feeling that if only we could become visible together, there will be a general pardon or another group solution. But also then there were people that came to me like, 'You cannot tell anyone, but I found a new lawyer and I need 20 euros to go there, in Deventer or something, but you cannot tell anyone!' That really happened in secret. Now that's completely different, from a group solution to individual solutions. And it really affects the group a lot. Also because a lot of leaders got a residence permit, and went to an asylum seeker centre.
> (Suzanne, early thirties, supporter – Interview – Amsterdam – 20 September 2017)

This quotation shows how the group interests of collective political visibility and individual interests of legal status can be in conflict with each other to such an extent that the pursuit of legal status has to be secret. Suzanne considered the tendency to seek individual solutions a reason the collective's claim-making abilities deteriorated. At the same time, however, participating in a social movement could be of help in obtaining legal status. As shown, these movements attract supporters who are indispensable for political mobilisation and also help irregular migrants manage their personal difficulties. Participating in a social movement can be a way of establishing a network that can help with obtaining legal status, such as asylum lawyers, locals who help with filling in paperwork or accompany you to appointments (also see Section 5.2). In other words, the negotiated reality of claim-making also entails negotiation between collective political action and an individual quest for legal status, where one's participation in the former can aid the latter.

6.3. RACE AND A NORMAL LIFE

An important note has to be made before concluding the remarks about the notion of a normal life, namely regarding the importance of race. The topic of race and racism is latent* in this thesis. I have described various instances in which race played a role. In Chapter 4, I used the example of Mamadou filming himself for Instagram, in a crowded bus where people refused to sit next to him. This illustrated how he used his smartphone to gain a political voice and how irregular migrants make claims using digital tools. However, it is also a clear instance of Mamadou addressing racism. The people on the bus did not refuse to sit next to Mamadou because he is not a citizen. They had no way of knowing that. It was, most probably, because he was black. In Chapter 5, I mentioned that Kofi no longer wanted to scope out empty buildings alone, but decided to bring along a 'native' supporter because he was afraid people might think he would steal something and call the police. This illustrates both the dependence of irregular migrants on supporters and shows the multifaceted reality of their support given. At the same time, it is also an example of how race plays a role in political mobilisation. Kofi did not feel free to engage in political action (squatting) on his own, not because he was not a citizen, but because he was black. In Chapter 5, I also wrote riding the metro with Samba, where people stared at us. He stated that it was because he was black (possibly in combination with the fact that I was white). This illustrated the importance of safe places for claim-making because we moved from an unsafe (metro) to a safe place (*Arte Migrante*). Yet, race was also clearly a component. The metro did not feel like a safe place partially because Samba was black. Moreover, that section described the city as a safe place for irregular migrants. This was not because the city was objectively safer than more peripheral or rural areas – in many ways it probably was not

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* It was latent because during the fieldwork my focus was on citizenship and claim-making, this might have caused an inability to fully not recognize the role of race and racism in my observations. The growing attention for race, both in academia and out in the world, made me to reflect on this topic at the end of the PhD. While it is unacceptable to state that race is beyond the scope of this research, I consider it unethical to elaborate upon this important theme without a proper empirical foundation.

– but because there are other black people in the city. What the above makes clear is that the topics of race and racism were almost always present and had a strong impact on irregular migrants' claim-making, as well as on their lives as a whole.

Revisiting my empirical material revealed moments in which race played a role, as forms of micro exclusion on the basis of race or instances of racism, were so present in the daily lives of my respondents that they shared them with me, without me asking. For instance, Abdel (Gambia, early twenties), who, while telling me about his time in Italy, 'casually' stated people crossed the street so they did not have to pass him on the sidewalk (see Section 5.4.3.). Respondents thought race influenced how people saw them. For instance, Jacob, while discussing a new squat, a large open-plan space where many irregular migrants resided at the same time, stated:

> If you would bring your mother here, she would be scared!
> (Fieldnotes – Amsterdam – 16 November 2017)

When I asked for clarification, he reluctantly admitted, he meant that he thought my mother would be scared by being surrounded by approximately 60 black men. Moreover, there were many conversations with respondents about Africa and its place in the world, about how western states rob diamonds from Sierra Leone, or oil, about how black people were used and traded as slaves. There were also joking conversations about the differences between black and white people, about Dutch stiffness, about whether black people in Italy actually like pasta or just pretend to like it, or about whether Africans wear pyjamas or not. These were mostly silly conversations, but with implicit messages about race. Likewise, many respondents shared opinions on race via social media, mostly in the form of others' videos, images, and memes.

Reviewing my fieldnotes and interviews, there are many moments in which race played a role, implicitly or explicitly. The casualness of many of these examples makes me believe that there were probably many more instances that I did not note down. However, one area where the topic of race was not obvious was the claim-making, which focussed on migration status and human rights almost all the time. While banners, for instance, with slogans like 'Different Colours, Same People' or 'Think Human, Stop Racism

and Intolerance' sometimes made their appearance, race was not one of the main focuses. The focus of the struggle and practices of claim-making was not tackling racism, but migration status, migrants' living situations and rights as human beings, not as black people, even though the struggles cannot be separated from each other.

There is however interplay between race and racism, migration status, and visibility. The theoretical importance of visibility is as follows: in a societal order in which irregular migrants are not supposed to be present at all, if they are present, they ought to remain invisible. Thus, becoming visible is a first step to becoming a political actor or a way of appearing as less illegal (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Related to this, visibility can be problematic for irregular migrants because of their lack of legal status and the related risks of arrest or deportation if they choose to become visible. Yet, little scholarly attention has been given to the role of race and the impact (experiences of) hyper-visibility have on black irregular migrants. I note that black irregular migrants indicate walking the streets and riding the bus differently from white people. This obviously has an impact on claim-making and therefore on creating citizenship from below.

In combination with the notion of a 'normal life', race presented an additional theoretical question, namely how a normal life corresponds to the ways in which certain groups in society are included differentially, sometimes seemingly regardless of their legal status. More radically formulated, the question would be: How normal can the life of a black irregular migrant become in a society in which white is still the norm? Recent discussions about race in many societies, to some extent instigated by the Black Lives Matter movement, are a reminder of how black voices have been and are being marginalised. Add an irregular migration status to this and one can imagine a double disadvantage for black irregular migrants who want to make claims to citizenship. Moreover, some scholars argue that notions of (culturalised) citizenship are often simply racist, as they demand cultural integration or assimilation, who can only become citizens on conditions set by natives (Lentin & Titley, 2012; Pakulski & Markowski, 2014; Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 4). Therefore, the combination of migration and citizenship status with race makes black irregular migrants even more unlikely to be able to constitute themselves as worthy political actors. Moreover, societal racial inequalities and protest movements that aim to address and change racism

show that race continues to be a factor by which some people are structurally disadvantaged, and how beyond questions of irregularity or even migration status, because many racial minorities cannot legitimately be called migrants (anymore), groups in society are included differentially (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013), largely on the basis of race.

6.4 A NEGOTIATED REALITY OF CLAIM-MAKING

A central question in this chapter is how to understand the wish for a normal life among irregular migrants in social movements. This wish can be seen as a social movement's strategic frame for making claims to citizenship. The normalcy frame appeals to notions of migrant deservingness with regard to their similarity to 'natives' and therefore eliminates the 'threat' migrants are believed to pose to the national community. By connecting to traditional notions and values of citizenship, irregular migrants can display forms of 'good citizenship' and make claims to citizenship that are in line with norms and thus increase their chances of being recognised as legitimate.

However, the wish for a normal life is much more than just a strategic frame. From a critical citizenship studies perspective, creating a 'normal life' could be seen as contravening the hegemonic order that excludes irregular migrants from society, and therefore a political act in itself. Yet, I argue that respondents' comments regarding a normal life also indicate an actual desire to live a normal life. Interpreting the attempts of irregular migrants to have a normal life as political acts overlooks how for many irregular migrants desiring a normal life is not political at all. Respondents found aspects of a normal life in work, housing, and creating a home life, as well as in the construction of family (like) relations.

Social movement participation and instances of claim-making or acts of citizenship can be a way to create citizenship from below and thus normalise one's life. However, sometimes participation in a social movement leads to normalisation of everyday life in other ways, for instance, when connections in the social movement lead to an (informal) job, or when one meets a girlfriend during cultural activities. At the same time, having to participate in a social movement can indicate how irregular migrants' lives

are not normal and interferes with creating a normal life. Making claims to citizenship also implies having to expose, at some level, not being a citizen (yet), which can be contra-intuitive for someone who tries to 'pass' as a citizen.

Despite the fact that citizenship can be created from below, even without legal status, the absence of legal status or the absence of tangible rights tied to legal status played a large role in the everyday lives of respondents, as legal status is an important factor in normalising everyday life. However, the comparison between the two fieldsites shows how normalisation depends on the rights and opportunities tied to legal status. The Dutch system could be seen as rather dichotomous. Those with legal status were to a large extent included in many aspects of society and those without legal status were rigorously excluded by the Linkage Act. The Italian system was more diffuse, as there were various precarious legal statuses. Beyond this, the exclusion of those without legal status in practice is not total, as various aspects of Italian society provided more opportunities for informal inclusion, like the inclusion in the informal (labour) market. However, the true meaning of legal status or citizenship from above depends on the opportunities legal status gives to normalise life. Therefore, legal status is not in all cases sufficient to establish this normal life.

CHAPTER 7

THE PARADOX OF THE POLITICAL

Who can claim to be a citizen? Irregular migrants are just one group among many that make claims to citizenship and challenge the boundaries of inclusion. The boundaries of citizenship are bound to be contested and subject to struggle. Thus, irregular migrants' current struggles for citizenship resemble the struggles for women's rights, the rights of children, and the rights of indigenous people (see, for instance, Cockburn, 1998; Lister, 2007a; Peterson, Sanders, & Brennan, 1998; Roche, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997). What is however particular to irregular migrants is that they (most often) originate *outside* the territory of the nation-state, and hence it is relatively easy to place them in the non-citizen category. However, this does not mean that their struggles do not share similarities to the citizenship struggles of those within the territory of the nation-state as well. Historically contested, concepts of citizenship have changed over time to include a variety of groups (Giddens, 1982). Drawing upon scholarship on differential inclusion of people within the territory of nation-states to understand the struggle of irregular migrants reminds us that the concept of citizenship is not binary. The idea of 'full citizenship' is often regarded as a myth (Cohen, 2009). Inclusion is not an either/or proposition, but rather exists along a gradient of differential inclusion (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013). For instance, for a long time, European women were formal citizens in the sense of being able to have passports, but their inclusion and their rights as citizens differed markedly from that of European men. Women, for instance, were not allowed to vote, could not own property, and were considered legally incapable of action. The rights of women differed from those of men in such an extent that one could wonder

whether it would be appropriate to call 19th century women, for example, citizens at all. Acknowledging the gradient character of inclusion in the nation-state among citizens provides an opportunity to theorise a broad understanding of citizenship.

Moreover, recent scholars of citizenship draw upon the case of (irregular) migrants to broaden understandings of citizenship and to accommodate a reality in which the boundaries of citizenship are constantly contested. This has led to the development of novel conceptual approaches that incorporate new categories of citizens into the literature on citizenship (see, for instance, Bloemraad, 2000; Bloemraad, 2018; Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2012; Cohen, 2009; Dadusc, Grazioli, & Martínez, 2019; Das, 2011; From the struggles collective, 2015; Hajer & Bröer, 2020; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin, 2017; Lister, 2007b; Maestri & Hughes, 2017; McNevin, 2013; Nordling, Sager, & Söderman, 2017; Nyers, 2008; 2015; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013; Rees, 1996; Rygiel, 2011). This scholarship not only helps to understand the current situation of irregular migrants, it also shows how reflecting on the case of irregular migrants as a category refines citizenship as a sociological concept.

This thesis contributes to this broad understanding of citizenship by empirically examining two social movements of irregular migrants. The research project engages with ideas from critical citizenship studies. Yet, instead of focusing on the outright *political actions* of irregular migrants, it analysed claims to citizenship from the perspective of *the everyday.* Thus, I sought to contribute an analysis of how the prevailing notions of citizenship of irregular migrants in critical citizenship studies present both an *overly optimistic* and an *over-politicised* image of their citizenship struggle, making apparent irregular migrants' desire for a normal, non-political, life. Moreover, I contributed to the idea in critical citizenship studies that the power to make sustainable changes to citizenship will come from bottom-up mobilisation of irregular migrants, by describing the difficulties of mobilising politically for irregular migrants, as well as attempts to supress their mobilisation.

My empirical research shows that irregular migrants often become activists unintentionally or inadvertently. The *inadvertent activism* of irregular migrants manifests in roughly two ways. On the one hand, using a very broad definition of the political, academics make irregular migrants into activists in their publications by interpreting their behaviour in terms of political acts and

claims to citizenship. On the other hand, irregular migrants become activists in their zeal for a normal, non-political life. Thus, one could argue that they need to mobilise politically to some extent in order to be able to turn their backs on the political. In short, they mobilise politically not to obtain political citizenship, but because they want to be able *not* to be political.

7.1 TO BE POLITICAL OR NOT TO BE POLITICAL

This paradox – acting politically to become non-political – requires further explanation. Theories of the idea of 'citizenship from below' argue that irregular migrants can, despite all obstacles, manifest themselves as citizens, most clearly in acts of citizenship theory (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). These theories are based on a broad interpretation of politics Jacques Rancière proposes, politics as breaking with the 'partition of the sensible' (Rancière, 1999, 2006). It postulates a situation, which renders non-citizens invisible and inaudible, allowing us observe ways in which irregular migrants do nonetheless manifest themselves as political subjects, when they break with invisibility and silence. Irregular migrants who become visible can thus become less 'illegal' (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). As irregular migrants manifest themselves as active political subjects, instead of subject to a situation in which they lack rights, citizens start to recognize them as fellow citizens, as those to whom the right to have rights is naturally due (Isin, 2008). In other words, they can create forms of citizenship, despite the absence of formal recognition by the state, citizenship from below.

While this broad definition of politics brings to light the agency and autonomy of irregular migrants, one may wonder to what extent this definition provides a balanced analysis of the actual dynamics of migrants' political struggle. To be more specific, a broad interpretation of politics, as applied in critical citizenship studies, assumes that all practices of not accepting or not respecting (physical) borders and practices of bordering, in short, of not accepting all those practices that distinguish insiders from outsiders in everyday life, are political acts. If we apply this interpretation to specific groups of irregular migrants, it implies that simply because they are irregular migrants, and not formally allowed on a specific territory,

everything they do on that territory could be seen as resistance or challenging territorial and conceptual borders of citizenship. When irregular migrants try to include themselves in the community in which they live, their actions could be interpreted as challenging internal borders and bordering practices. All their behaviour could therefore be considered a political act or a claim to citizenship. In other words, who the actor is determines whether the action is a political or not.

The merit of considering the actions of irregular migrants through this interpretation of politics is that it makes obvious their participation in the political outside traditional examples of political activity, like organising or participating in demonstrations. Yet, it also politicises all sorts of everyday activities, of which neither the content nor the actors' intent is necessarily political. Indeed, it steers focus away from evaluating the content of and intentions behind practices, as it does not require examination of how actors evaluate their own actions. As Swerts and Nicholls (2020) put it, this critical scholarship of the political and of acts of citizenship '*presumes* rather than *explains* the disruptive qualities of undocumented activism' (Swerts & Nicholls, 2020, p. 3. Emphasis in original). Moreover, it does not divulge how the acts themselves are political, just presents them as stemming from inherently political actors.

While scholarship tends to focus on the political aspects of irregular migrants' citizenship struggles, or on acts of citizenship understood through moments of rupture with social order, this thesis seeks to underline how practices of citizenship are not strictly political. Some acts would not be considered disruptive at all, if one disregarded who the actors are. However, completely disregarding the actors would not do justice to acts of citizenship because the positionality of actors has an impact on the meaning of the acts. Yet even if, at some level, acts of citizenship by irregular migrants generate a rupture of social order, these same acts are embedded in all sorts of quotidian practices that perpetuate or reinforce social order. Moreover, if we do not focus explicitly on the actors of potentially political practices, we observe that certain practices in themselves pertain more to *going along* with or being part of social order than they do to rejecting it. For instance, working, pursuing an education, or participating in social networks could be interpreted as rejecting social order when performed by those formally excluded from that order. Yet, I argue that these activities can be interpreted as ordinary as they might seem,

in the first instance. Focussing too much on the position of actors therefore risks over-politicising everyday practices, especially because the intention of irregular migrants when performing these acts was often explicitly to 'go along' with social order, to fit in, indeed, to be 'normal'.

Moreover, if we consider these claims to citizenship from a culturalisation of citizenship perspective, we can even wonder to what extent claims to citizenship by irregular migrants actually confirm social order, or show how social order works. Culturalisation of citizenship refers to a process according to which what it means to be a citizen is increasingly defined by adherence to norms, values, and cultural practices, rather than civic, political, or social rights (Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 2; see also, Duyvendak, 2011; Geschiere, 2009; Hurenkamp, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2012). As inclusion in citizenship is increasingly measured along cultural standards, those who want to be 'insiders' have to culturally identify with the country in which they reside. Immigrants, in particular, are expected to show that they feel attached and connected to the country where they reside, demonstrate that they feel 'at home' there, and often have to prove their loyalty in various ways (Duyvendak, 2011; Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2016). In acts of citizenship, the moments in which non-citizens constitute themselves as citizens (Isin, 2008, p. 18) and comprehend the '*modes and forms of conduct that are appropriate to being an insider*' (Isin, 2009, pp. 372–372), that is, conform to established ideas of citizenship, are seen as a break or rupture with social order, because irregular migrants are not supposed to act as appropriate insiders. However, the culturalisation of citizenship idea causes one to question whether making newcomers conform to established ideas of citizenship is actually the purpose of citizenship. The fact that in performing acts of citizenship, non-citizens have to demonstrate that they comprehend and adhere to appropriate modes and forms of insider conduct could indicate that citizenship 'normalises' outsiders in a culturalised manner so that they become appropriate insiders. Then, depending upon how one defines social order, claims to citizenship by irregular migrants could either be seen as breaking with social order or as very much confirming it. From a 'common sense' understanding of citizenship, culturalised practices of citizenship tend to assimilate 'newcomers' according to ideas of citizenship prevalent in the receiving society. In this light, irregular migrants' desire to be normal could be seen as

an indication of the assimilative qualities of citizenship, and therefore the opposite of breaking with social order.

I suggest that there is a tendency among academics to idealise the power to establish change from the margins, even though citizenship is (almost) always defined by any country's dominant class, race, gender, culture, and ethnic group (cf. Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2016, p. 3). Perhaps, irregular migrants' struggle for citizenship does not demonstrate a transformation of citizenship or the political, but rather confirms the culturalised processes of making and shaping citizens, in cases where citizenship is defined less by legal citizenship and more by who is, or could be, a cultural insider. This relates also to the mechanism of 'migrant deservingness', which stipulates that migrants, in order to achieve acceptance, have to be seen as deserving of insider status. This often consists of showing how they are not a 'threat' to the national community, and one of the ways in which to do this is by showing (cultural) similarity with that national community (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014; Nicholls, Maussen, & de Mesquita, 2016).

7.2 INADVERTENT ACTIVISM IN THE SERVICE OF A NORMAL LIFE

The broad interpretation of politics frequently used to describe irregular migrants' activities can over-politicise their actions or frame irregular them as activists. However, it is important to note that, despite my critique, critical citizenship studies make a valuable contribution to understanding citizenship. What I have demonstrated is that critical citizenship studies contribute a *partial* understanding of the struggles of irregular migrants. I see three interrelated aspects that contribute to broadening this understanding: (1) the (methodological) perspective from which one views this phenomenon; (2) the role of irregularity in irregular migrants' citizenship struggles; and (3) the goal of normalising life and how this may differ from citizenship as understood in critical citizenship studies.

With regards to methodology, evaluating the role of activism or political activities in the context of understanding the everyday lives of

irregular migrants broadens perspectives of irregular migrants' citizenship struggles. Moreover, my methodological focus on everyday life, instead of on instances of claim-making, reveals the complicated and dynamic relationship that irregular migrants have with citizenship. This combines several valuable perspectives on irregular migrants' citizenship struggles and reveals that they are simultaneously conflicting and interwoven. Chapter 4 showed how following a critical citizenship studies' approach brings to light how citizenship is created in Amsterdam and Turin. According to this paradigm, constructing everyday life is a political act. When irregular migrants create a home by squatting, occupying space in society, it is considered an act of rebellion against formal exclusion. Homemaking is thus an act of citizenship, in which irregular migrants perform, and thus create, citizenship (Isin, 2008, 2017). Additionally, irregular migrants make claims through their everyday conduct, by behaving like citizens. By already living in the way to which they aspire, they effectively perform normalcy and performatively create belonging, hence citizenship.

Yet, conversely, we observe how the everyday lives of irregular migrants can interfere with political mobilisation and/or social movement activities. This is not in the last place because creating a home, working, and building family-like relations with citizens often have the goal of constructing a 'normal life' instead of political citizenship. Following theories of inclusive citizenship as described above, combined with a methodological focus on the instances of claim-making and acts of citizenship, could engender optimism regarding the chances irregular migrants have to create citizenship from below. The everyday, lived reality of the struggle for citizenship, however, tells another story. In this story, constructing citizenship from below is only an attainable goal for a select few: only when facilitated by citizens, when the state acts with a certain leniency or they manage to resist state repression of their mobilisation, and only in certain places. In fact, there is reason to believe that states grant formal citizenship to some irregular migrants precisely in order to undermine the collective power of citizenship from below.

Moreover, the role of irregularity needs to be appreciated to adequately understand irregular migrants' claims to citizenship. Many studies describe the political mobilisation of irregular migrants and forms of citizenship from below (see, for instance, Ataç, 2016; Bendixsen, 2013; Depraetere & Oosterlynck, 2017; Meret & Della Corte, 2014; Ní Mhurchú,

2016). However, collective claim-making by irregular migrants happens relatively infrequently. This does not mean that claims to citizenship are not political. However, to understand the lived reality of irregular migrants' claim-making, it is important to recognise how their irregularity can pose an obstacle to political mobilisation. This is not least because irregularity causes both physical and discursive marginalisation. Moreover, states actively try to suppress irregular migrants' mobilisation, which, given their irregularity, can be relatively easy. Social movement theory (see, for instance, Della Porta, 2013; Piven & Cloward, 1979; Steinhilper, 2020; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013) firmly establishes that those who are most marginalised are often least likely to mobilise; they often remain inactive. Likewise, those who are able to live relatively well often do not become politically active. Applying these insights to the situation of irregular migrants, Chapter 5 describes how, in order to consciously make claims to citizenship, migrants need to possess the 'right degree of marginality'. This refers to finding themselves in a situation in which they are not so marginal that they have to worry about daily survival, but, at the same time, their everyday lives render them marginal enough to want to strive for change. Those who manage to construct their everyday lives informally, despite their formal exclusion, can perceive (political) claim-making as a threat to the life they have created. Beyond this, marginality and the relative lack thereof are not the only conditions that influence irregular migrants' claim-making or political participation. In order to be politically effective in their claim-making, irregular migrants have to be capable of making claims, experience some legitimacy, and safe. This implies that they already have to experience some forms of inclusion in order to make claims for further inclusion. Not only do they need social relations with local citizens who can support them, the supporters, who contribute to their claim-making and inclusion both practically and discursively. But, in some instances, governments had reason to recognise some sort of legitimacy in the social movements of irregular migrants and their claims, to 'allow' them to (continue) make claims. In other instances, governments employed various strategies to undermine the collective action of irregular migrants. Additionally, irregular migrants need to have or be able to access (physical) places where they are free to make claims. In other words, claim-making is in fact quite rare both because at times

it is directly suppressed and because many (pre-)conditions have to be met for irregular migrants to mobilise.

Finally, when claim-making happens, irregular migrants may find themselves in a (seemingly) conflictual situation, in which standing out by claim-making has to be negotiated with a deep desire to be normal, to be part of social order instead of rupturing it. Supporters, who help groups of irregular migrants in political and in less political ways, are often voluntarily and consciously political and try to channel migrants' actions towards political demands and claims. The result is that irregular migrants, who are not a homogeneous group and sometimes do have an extensive background in political activism, often become activists through circumstance rather than intent. They became activists not because they want to be political, but because they want to be able not to be political; they want to be *normal*. Notions of 'a normal life' constituted a common thread in the negotiation between being political and being normal. Respondents balanced claim-making with how they envisioned normal life. This was not a life consisting of immense political participation or even full political inclusion. The idea of a normal life often corresponded to traditional, heteronormative gender roles, and with an ideal of a family with children. Understanding irregular migrants' everyday lives is important for comprehending this aspect of their struggle for citizenship. The goal of the struggle often was not political reform per se, but small, tangible changes in their personal lives, their normalisation. This desire to change their everyday lives could, however, be at odds with the collective character of social movements and claim-making, as normalising everyday life tends to be an individual endeavour. Having an informal job, for example, can create citizenship from below in a political way, seemingly an act or practice of citizenship that follows social norms. In practical terms, however, informal jobs can keep irregular migrants away from collective claim-making because they no longer have time to protest or participate in theatre productions, or because they are afraid doing so will 'expose' their irregular status. In other words, they are looking for ways to normalise their everyday lives *before* making political claims.

7.3 CITIZENSHIP FROM BELOW OR FROM ABOVE?

The above raises the question as to how the interplay between the wish for a normal life and citizenship from below relates to citizenship from above. How does substantive citizenship relate to formal citizenship? In other words, 'how does formal citizenship matter?' (Bloemraad, 2018, p. 5). One could argue that while a normal life implies inclusion, formal inclusion in the form of a residence permit is only a goal insofar that it brings the desired normalisation of everyday life. A residence permit for irregular migrants signifies a lot more than simply legal status. As with activism, the importance of formal status depends upon how and to what extent a change in status alters irregular migrants' quotidian existence to make it resemble their imagined normal lives. This, in turn, depends upon, for example, the welfare state in the country where they live, their chances of obtaining formal employment, and the availability of housing.

Based on the above, one can wonder where the limits of irregular migrants' citizenship lie. Citizenship-as-nationality provides easy parameters for defining citizenship's boundaries. When scholars interpret citizenship broadly, these limits become vague, to the point that everything can be seen as citizenship. With this broader interpretation of citizenship, citizenship's limits depend on one's point of view. To understand this, it can be helpful to distinguish the concept of citizenship from the 'life of a citizen', to see them as separate yet interconnected.

The empirical notion of 'a normal life' established in this thesis urges citizenship scholars to consider not just the concept of citizenship, but *the life of a citizen*, i.e., the life citizenship allows citizens to live. This relates to what Lister describes in relation to social movements of poor people, that, in order for citizenship to be meaningful, it has to bring dignity to everyday interactions (2007b, p. 53). A normal life should not be equated to citizenship because that would almost imply that our understanding of citizenship has no limits and is therefore devoid of meaning. When my respondents spoke of 'a normal life', they were not only referring to citizenship, but also to the life citizenship allows a person to live, which is why I suggest viewing citizenship and the 'life of a citizen' as separate yet interconnected. The life of a citizen refers to the regular daily life citizens live. Not all activities in the regular life of a citizen are directly linked to their citizenship, to their relation with their

social political community, yet many are made possible because of these relations. Citizenship grants access to rights and opportunities, such as education. Perusing an education is not citizenship or a claim to it in itself, but it is made possible by it, because lack of citizenship often prevents individuals from pursuing education. The same is true, in varying degrees, for other aspects of life, like housing, work, and family. This distinction also makes apparent the major difference between the situation in my two fieldsites, particularly with regard to migration policies and the welfare state. The struggle for a normal life cannot be analysed separately from states' deliberate attempts to exclude irregular migrants precisely from this normal life, by trying to make essential aspects of it unattainable without having been granted formal citizenship.

This shines a light on different levels of citizenship. Whereas some scholars advocate a supra-national, post-national, or cosmopolitan understanding of citizenship (see, for instance, Benhabib, 2004; Soysal, 1994), others argue for a local interpretation (see, for instance, Bhimji, 2014; Varsanyi, 2006), while yet others emphasise the renewed importance of the nation to citizenship (see, for instance, Nicholls, 2013). Instead of choosing one level as the most important, I call for a perspective that examines how these different levels influence the 'life of the citizen'. For this research project, the national level is very important because that was the level that had the greatest influence on 'the life of the citizen' in these two particular fieldsites. This does not mean that all lives, in particular those of migrants, are to a certain degree local, as well as transnational. The national level was significant, since the policies regarding residence permits and the rights and entitlements that came with them were decided nationally. Moreover, many claims to citizenship were made in reference to more general ideas of national citizenship. To illustrate this argument, in sanctuary cities (see, for instance, Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018; de Graauw, 2014; Villazor, 2010) where local policies differ markedly from national policies and irregular migrants have more rights because of this, the local level can be a crucial level for citizenship as well.

CHAPTER 7

7.4 A NORMAL LIFE OR A BETTER LIFE?

A critique of the 'normal life' argument might be that it would show that irregular migrants 'just want a better life' than they currently have. Informed by a currently popular political discourse, the better life of migrants is often seen as a threat to the lives of 'native' citizens in migrant receiving societies (see, for instance, Kešić & Duyvendak 2019), and as a threat to Western wealth and welfare (states) in particular (see, for instance, Innes, 2010; Kremer, 2016, 2017). It is difficult to formulate a precise response to this on the basis of my research. I have tried to show that claims irregular migrants make regarding a normal life pertain more to not being excluded than they do to improving life. They are claims to be allowed to work, or rather not to be prohibited from working, rather than a claim to welfare or money. A normal life is about a desire for the normality of average citizens, not a life better than those of citizens. Relating this to migration on a large scale shows how the critique itself contains a value statement regarding what are and are not legitimate ways of being a migrant, or what are and are not legitimate reasons to migrate. The response to this critique comes from one of the Turin respondents, who posted a meme on Facebook while I was writing this paragraph. The meme portrays a black man in a red T-shirt and blue trousers who encounters a white man with a blue t-shirt and red trousers, the first with a knapsack and the second with a trolley. They look at each other and say simultaneously: 'I'm looking for a better life, and you?' The respondent commented, 'He who does not have a life where he was born has the right to seek it somewhere else, where he could have it.' The image seemingly refers to the exodus of educated young Italians who, given the high unemployment rate and general lack of opportunities, leave Italy for other EU countries. The continuous state of (economic) crisis causes a lack of opportunities to achieve milestones or life events related to adulthood, i.e., transitioning from school to work or leaving parental homes, and can lead a sort of extended youth where young people are 'forced to stay young' (Montanarti & Staniscia, 2017, p. 55). The reasons young Italians migrate therefore often are not solely economic, but nonetheless influenced by factors that contribute to their ability to have a stable future as adults. Bartolini et al. (2017), for example, illustrate this empirically, stating that the main reasons for leaving, especially for those who have emigrated recently, are not imminent needs or unemployment, but

rather concern overall quality of life, (career) prospects, financial stability, and providing a stable future to their (future) children (Bartolini, Gropas, & Triandafyllidou, 2017). One might even state that they are seeking a normal life, in the form of secure employment, the ability to purchase a home, or other conditions that allow for a stable family life. The distinct difference is, however, that popular discourse frames these two similar migration phenomena in completely different ways. Migration towards Europe from outside, and south-to-north migration in general, is problematic, condemned, and even criminalised. North-to-north migration is not treated the same way. Moreover, when problems regarding north-to-north migration are raised, they are usually framed in terms of the future of the country the migrants leave behind, not in terms of the exploitation of opportunities and the welfare states of northern Europe.

Thus, a normal life also refers to certain improvements in living conditions, which, up to a certain point, are an intrinsic part of migration in general. Yet, it is this improvement in individuals' living situations, which is problematic for certain groups and not others. This argument favours excluding certain groups of migrants, whereas other migrants (internal EU migrants or expatriates) are considered 'normal'. Moreover, following this line of thought prevents perceiving that excluding certain groups of people from (the opportunity for) a normal life creates a group that is so abnormal, so far outside society, that their claim to normalcy can appear insurmountable and as a burden to society as a whole.

7.5 CLAIMING TO BE NORMAL

As with all forms of activism, in the eyes of the general public, as well as among academics, confusion can exist between activism as a means to an end and activism as an end in itself. Instead of viewing the claim-making of irregular migrants as an attempt to substantively improve their irregular situation, their claim-making can be seen as embodying new forms of being political. Because existing frameworks for political mobilisation, in social movement studies, do not (fully) account for the mobilisation of subjects whose right to be political is debated, scholars of (critical) citizenship studies,

(critical) border studies, and social movement studies may be eager to see the mobilisation of these 'unlikely subjects for political mobilisation' (Steinhilper, 2018) in terms of their own optimistic political frameworks. This provides a way of seeing irregular migrants as included despite their overall exclusion, of seeing opportunities for them to have agency instead of as incapable of autonomous action, of seeing rights granted to them despite their situation of fundamental rightslessness. We cannot deny that this way of looking at the current situation of borders, (irregular) migrants, inclusion, and citizenship is ideologically informed. Is it perhaps the case that we scholars argue for inclusionary theories of citizenship for irregular migrants because we want them to be included, because we perceive their extreme exclusion from fundamental human rights as unjust, and we admire those who manage to address their rightslessness? The fact that some irregular migrants become legitimate political actors, create citizenship, and become recognised as citizens certainly deserves scholarly attention. Yet, from the perspective of citizenship from below, however appealing it might be, we risk losing sight of the roles of political mobilisation in irregular migrants' everyday lives. We see mobilisation as an end in itself, instead of as a means to attain a normal life. We thus risk romanticising irregular migrants' struggles and fail to see what the goals of those struggles are. While the political struggles of irregular migrants, struggles for rights, inclusion, and citizenship, can surely be observed empirically, it would be one-sided to describe these as struggles that result in irregular migrants becoming fully accepted as political subjects, from below. Such a view ignores how being included into (political) citizenship from below might differ from having a 'normal life'. Some scholars argue that the everyday lives of irregular migrants constitute a form of protest. While in existing scholarship on citizenship, the focus often lays on forms of claim-making, I argue for examining the construction of normality. I argue that the everyday lives of the irregular migrants studied here were at the centre of their citizenship struggle as a form of political action, using acts of citizenship to 'constitute themselves as citizens' (Isin 2008, p. 18); a goal of political action, inclusion as citizens would allow them to live a normal life; and something that prevents political action, as other activities may more easily allow for the normalisation of everyday life.

Consequently, the rhetorical questions arise: do irregular migrants claim that they are citizens? Do they claim to be normal? Or do they make claims *in order* to be normal?

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APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWED RESPONDENTS

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Amsterdam/Turin	Migrant/Supporter	Audio/notes
Abdel	Early 20s	Male	Gambia	Amsterdam	Migrant	Notes
Abshir	Mid 40s	Male	Somalia	Amsterdam	Migrant	Notes
Asse	Early 30s	Male	Senegal	Turin	Migrant	Audio
Aziz	Mid 20s	Male	Sudan	Amsterdam	Migrant	Notes
Beppe	Mid 60s	Male	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Bob	Late 50s	Male	The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Supporter	Audio
Camile	End 20s	Male	Ivory Coast	Amsterdam	Migrant	Notes
Chiara	Early 30s	Female	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Christien	Late 40s	Female	The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Supporter	Audio
Francesco	Late 30s	Male	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Giovanni	Late 30s	Male	Italy	Amsterdam	Supporter	Notes
Hakim	Early 40s	Male	Sudan	Amsterdam	Migrant	Audio
Ibsaa	Early 30s	Male	Ethiopia	Amsterdam	Migrant	Notes

Name	Age	Gender	Country of origin	City	Role	Data
Jacob	Mid 20s	Male	Sudan	Amsterdam	Migrant	Audio
Katim	Mid 20s	Male	Senegal	Turin	Migrant	Notes
Mahmud	Mid 30s	Male	Somalia	Amsterdam	Migrant	Audio
Malik	Late 10s	Male	Senegal	Turin	Migrant	Notes
Manuela	Late 40s	Female	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Audio
Mario	Early 30s	Male	Ivory Coast	Amsterdam	Migrant	Notes
Matthew	Early 30s	Male	Cameroon	Turin	Migrant	Audio
Moussa	Late 20s	Male	Mali	Turin	Migrant	Audio
Mustafa	Early 30s	Male	Somalia	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Olivier	Late 30s	Male	The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Supporter	Audio
Omar	Mid 30s	Male	Mali	Turin	Migrant	Notes
Patrizio	Mid 30s	Male	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Petra	Early 50s	Female	The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Supporter	Notes
Romeo	Late 20s	Male	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Salvatore	Early 30s	Male	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Samba	Early 30s	Male	West-Africa	Turin	Migrant	Audio
Sara	Late 20s	Female	Italy	Turin	Supporter	Notes
Seman	Early 30s	Male	Gambia	Turin	Migrant	Notes
Tommy	Mid 30s	Male	Cameroon	Turin	Migrant	Notes
Suzanne	Early 30s	Female	The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Supporter	Notes
Tadesse	Mid 30s	Female	Eritrea	Amsterdam	Migrant	Audio
Yvonne	Early 50s	Female	The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Supporter	Audio
Municipality of Amsterdam			The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Policy maker	Audio

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY

Irregular migrants are formally excluded from the societies in which they reside, as citizenship is commonly and traditionally understood as a status, which indicates those persons who belong in a particular delineated nation-state. Both inside academia and out in the world, irregular migrants are not usually seen as members of a political community or potential citizens. However, in practice, this formal exclusion does not preclude them from citizen-like activities, such as living and participating in these societies. Nor does it completely preclude them from becoming part of (political and social) communities. In an aim to accommodate for this reality, 'critical citizenship' scholars increasingly see citizenship as more than just a status bestowed by the state, but as an *enactment of belonging.* Seeing citizenship as a practice allows to theoretically account for the presence and participation of those who are not formal citizens, like irregular migrants. Moreover, it allows seeing how irregular migrants, through their actions, can make claims to citizenship, both through traditional forms of political claim-making and through performative claims. Performative claims are seen as more than just words or artefacts but as descriptions of potential realities (Zivi, 2005, p. 1; 2011). By enacting a situation in which irregular migrants participate or are included, they can bring this situation into being performatively. For instance, by making a home in a squat while not entitled to a house, they performatively create the situation in which they have a home. This performative understanding of citizenship (Isin, 2017) is an underlying principle of a core theory in critical citizenship studies: 'acts of citizenship' (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). The notion is that, by acting in certain ways and claiming rights, non-citizens can be seen as citizens.

Based on an ethnographic study with two groups of irregular migrants, in Amsterdam and Turin, regarding their practices of claim-

making, this thesis has three main observations, described in three empirical chapters. **Chapter 4** describes how irregular migrants, in both Amsterdam and Turin, make claims to citizenship. Following critical citizenship studies, there are indeed instances of inclusion that could be understood as the performative construction of citizenship. These claims to citizenship can be explicitly political through demonstrations and protest; they can be cultural through theatre and other art forms; and claims can also be made through practices of home-making and working. While there were many similarities between Amsterdam and Turin in the ways irregular migrants made claims, there were also differences. In Amsterdam, irregular migrants had more political opportunities to make claims in a traditional political manner; while in Turin, irregular migrants had more opportunities for everyday forms of claim-making and freedom to build a life for themselves despite their formal exclusion.

     Chapter 5 nuances this; by showing that claims to citizenship are rare, and only occur under specific circumstances. Following social movement theory, irregular migrants could be seen as unlikely subjects for political mobilisation (see, for instance, Steinhilper, 2018). By showing how claims to citizenship are rare, reserved for the 'happy few', and how claim-making by irregular migrants is actively suppressed by states, this thesis describes (pre-)conditions for claim-making. It argues how irregular migrants need a 'right degree of marginality' to make or even consider making claims. Not merely focused on physical survival, yet not too 'established' that their visibility might form a risk to their everyday life. Local supporters play an important role in creating favourable conditions for claim-making, both by influencing irregular migrants' conditions of marginality, by providing practical help, helping with general integration, and helping with political claim-making. Moreover, the conditions for claim-making are heavily influenced by governments' response to it. Claim-making of irregular migrants depends on how much leeway the police gives them to make their claims, which tactics of repression are used, and how effective states are in breaking up collective action. Lastly, it is important for irregular migrants to have 'safe spaces', not only as a 'backstage' for political mobilisation but also for claim-making itself.

     Chapter 6 adds to this, by describing how many irregular migrants became activists inadvertently, in their zeal for a normal, non-political life, which leads to a constant negotiation between political mobilisation, claim-

making, and a desire be not be political. Besides arguing that claims to citizenship by irregular migrants are rare, this thesis also argues how the struggle for citizenship of irregular migrants is over-politicised. Among the irregular migrants in this study, there was a constant negotiation between claim-making and the (seeming) opposite: their wish to be 'normal'. They referred to this as their wish for a 'normal life'. While the notion of a normal life, was used as a social movement frame, connecting to notions of migrant deservingness, a 'normal life' also showed how irregular migrants often explicitly tried not to rupture social order, but adhere to it. The goal of the struggle for citizenship then was not necessarily continued political participation, or finding alternative ways to be political from the margins, but rather finding ways of 'normalising' everyday life with a normal job, a normal house, a normal family, and a normal legal status. In other words, irregular migrants claim that they are normal, but they also claim in order to be normal.

The focus in critical citizenship studies on the political aspects of citizenship limits our understanding of citizenship, as it does not account for irregular migrants' deep desires to *not* be political, as well as ways in which irregular migrants create citizenship by going along with social order instead of breaking with it. To such an extent that we can wonder whether irregular migrants' struggle for citizenship does not demonstrate a transformation of citizenship or the political, but rather confirms the culturalised processes of making and shaping citizens. I, therefore, argue for the importance of examining the construction of normality, to look at 'life of a citizen', the (normal) life which citizenship enables.

APPENDIX C

SAMENVATTING

Irreguliere migranten zijn formeel uitgesloten van de samenlevingen waarin zij verblijven. Burgerschap wordt doorgaans gezien als een status, die aangeeft welke personen behoren tot een bepaalde, afgebakende, natiestaat. Zowel in de academische wereld als daarbuiten, worden irreguliere migranten niet vaak gezien als leden van de politieke gemeenschap of als potentiële burgers. In de praktijk, betekent deze formele uitsluiting echter niet dat zij ook van 'burger-achtige praktijken', zoals het wonen en participeren in samenlevingen, zijn uitgesloten. Ook belet het hen niet helemaal van het onderdeel worden van de (politieke en sociale) gemeenschap.

In een poging om aan deze realiteit tegemoet te komen, ziet de 'kritische burgerschapsliteratuur' burgerschap in toenemende mate als meer dan alleen een status gegeven door de overheid, maar als een actieve uitvoering van behoren. Door burgerschap te zien als een praktijk, kan er theoretisch rekening gehouden worden met de aanwezigheid en participatie van hen die geen formele burgers zijn, zoals irreguliere migranten. Daarbij, staat dit perspectief toe om te zien hoe irreguliere migranten, door hun daden, claims kunnen maken tot burgerschap, zowel op traditionele manier van het maken van politieke claims, als door performatieve claims. Performatieve claims worden gezien als meer dan woorden of symbolen, maar als het beschrijven van potentiele realiteiten (Zivi, 2005, p. 1; 2011). Door het uitvoeren van een situatie waarin irreguliere migranten participeren of geïncludeerd zijn, brengen zij deze situatie performatief in wording. Bijvoorbeeld, door het creëren van een thuis in een kraakpand, kunnen zij de situatie dat zij een thuis hebben performatief tot leven brengen. Dit performatieve begrip van burgerschap (Isin , 2017), is het onderliggende principe van een kerntheorie in kritische burgerschapsstudies 'daden van burgerschap' of *acts of citizenship* (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). Deze theorie stelt dat

door op bepaalde manieren te handelen en daardoor rechten te claimen, niet-burgers gezien kunnen worden als burgers.

Gebaseerd op een etnografische studie bij twee groepen irreguliere migranten in Amsterdam en Turijn, naar hun praktijken van het maken van claims; heeft dit proefschrift drie hoofdobservaties, beschreven in drie empirische hoofdstukken. **Hoofdstuk 4** beschrijft hoe irreguliere migranten, zowel in Amsterdam en Turijn, burgerschapsclaims maken. In lijn met kritische burgerschapsstudies, zijn er momenten van inclusie die gezien zouden kunnen worden als de performatieve constructie van burgerschap. Deze claims kunnen expliciet politiek zijn tijdens en door demonstraties en protest; ze kunnen cultureel zijn door theater en andere kunstvormen; claims kunnen ook gemaakt worden door het creëren van een thuis en door te werken. Hoewel er veel overeenkomsten waren tussen Amsterdam en Turijn in de manieren waarop irreguliere migranten claims maakten, waren er ook verschillen. In Amsterdam hadden irreguliere migranten meer politieke mogelijkheden om claims te maken op een traditioneel politieke manier, terwijl in Turijn irreguliere migranten meer mogelijkheden hadden tot alledaagse vormen van claims maken en meer vrijheid om een leven op te bouwen ondanks hun formele uitsluiting.

Hoofdstuk 5, nuanceert dit; door te laten zien dat burgerschapsclaims zeldzaam zijn, en alleen onder specifieke omstandigheden voorkomen. Wanneer we sociale bewegingentheorie volgen zouden we irreguliere migranten kunnen zien als onwaarschijnlijke subjecten voor politieke mobilisatie. Door de laten zien hoe burgerschapsclaims zeldzaam zijn, voorbehouden aan de 'happy few', en hoe het maken van claims door irreguliere migranten actief onderdrukt wordt door staten, beschrijft dit proefschrift de omstandigheden en voorwaarden voor het maken van claims. Het beargumenteert hoe irreguliere migranten de 'juiste gradatie van marginaliteit' nodig hebben, om claims te maken of het alleen maar de overwegen, niet alleen gefocust op fysieke overleving, maar ook niet te gevestigd dat hun zichtbaarheid een risico zou kunnen vormen voor hun dagelijks leven. Lokale supporters hebben een belangrijke rol in het creëren van deze gunstige omstandigheden voor het maken van claims, zowel door het beïnvloeden van de condities van marginaliteit, door het bieden van praktische hulp, hulp bij integratie, en hulp bij het maken van politieke claims. Daarbij worden de condities voor het maken van claims, beïnvloed door de

reacties van overheden. Claims door irreguliere migranten hangen af van hoeveel ruimte zij daarvoor krijgen van politie, van welke tactieken gebruikt worden om claims te onderdrukken, en hoe effectief staten zijn in het breken van de collectieve actie. Daarbij is het belangrijk dat irreguliere migranten 'veilige plekken' hebben, niet alleen als een 'backstage' voor politieke mobilisatie maar ook voor het maken van claims zelf.

Hoofdstuk 6 voegt hieraan toe, door te beschreven hoe veel irreguliere migranten onbedoeld activist geworden zijn, in hun zoektocht naar een normaal, niet-politiek leven. Een situatie die leidt tot een constante afweging tussen politieke mobilisatie, het maken van claims, en een verlangen om niet politiek te zijn. Naast het beargumenteren hoe burgerschapsclaims door irreguliere migranten zeldzaam zijn, laat dit proefschrift ook zien hoe de burgerschapsstrijd van irreguliere migranten te sterk gepolitiseerd is. Onder de irreguliere migranten in deze studie was er een constante afweging tussen het maken van claims en het (schijnbare) tegenovergestelde: de wens om 'normaal' te zijn. Ze refereerden hieraan als hun wens voor een 'normaal level'. Hoewel het idee van een normaal level gebruikt werd als een frame van de sociale beweging, door deze te verbinden aan ideeën over hoe migranten moeten laten zien hoe zij inclusie verdienen (migrant deservingness), liet een normaal leven ook zien hoe irreguliere migranten vaak expliciet probeerden om niet te breken met de sociale orde, maar erin mee te gaan. Het doel van de burgerschapsstrijd was niet perse doorgaande politieke participatie, of het vinden van alternatieve manieren waarop men politiek kan zijn vanuit de marges, maar meer het vinden van manieren om het dagelijks leven te 'normaliseren' met een normale baan, een normaal huis, een normale familie, en een normale status. In andere woorden, irreguliere migranten claimen dat ze normaal zijn, maar ze maken ook claims zodat ze normaal kunnen zijn.

De focus van kritische burgerschapsstudies op de politieke aspecten van burgerschap, limiteert het begrip van burgerschap, omdat het zowel met de diepe verlangens van irreguliere migranten om *niet* politiek te zijn, als met de manieren waarop irreguliere migranten burgerschap creëren door mee te gaan met de sociale orde in plaats van ermee te breken, geen rekening houdt. Zodoende dat we ons kunnen afvragen of de burgerschapsstrijd van irreguliere migranten niet een transformatie van burgerschap of het politieke laat zien, maar juist het geculturaliseerde proces van het maken en vormen van burgers. Ik pleit daarom voor het belang van het kijken van de constructie

van normaliteit, voor het kijken naar het 'leven van een burger', het (normale) leven dat burgerschap mogelijk maakt.

APPENDIX D

RIASSUNTO

I migranti irregolari sono formalmente esclusi dalle società in cui risiedono, poiché la cittadinanza è comunemente e tradizionalmente intesa come uno status, che indica quelle persone che appartengono a un particolare stato-nazione delineato. Sia all'interno del mondo accademico che nel mondo non-accademico, i migranti irregolari di solito non sono visti come membri di una comunità politica, né come potenziali cittadini. Tuttavia, in pratica, questa esclusione formale non impedisce loro di svolgere attività da cittadini, come vivere e partecipare a queste società. Né impedisce loro del tutto di entrare a far parte delle comunità (politiche e sociali). Nell'intento di adattarsi a questa realtà, la letteratura scientifica sulla "cittadinanza critica" sempre più vede la cittadinanza come qualcosa di più di uno status conferito dallo Stato, ma come un atto di appartenenza. Considerare la cittadinanza come una pratica consente di rendere conto della presenza e della partecipazione di coloro che non sono cittadini formali, come i migranti irregolari. Inoltre, permette di vedere come i migranti irregolari, attraverso le loro azioni, possano avanzare *claims* di cittadinanza, sia attraverso forme tradizionali di *claim-making* politico sia attraverso rivendicazioni performative. I *claims* performativi sono visti come più di semplici parole o artefatti, ma come descrizioni di potenziali realtà (Zivi, 2005, p. 1; 2011). Mettendo in atto una situazione in cui i migranti irregolari partecipano o sono inclusi, essi stessi possono attuare questa situazione in modo performativo. Ad esempio, creandosi una casa in uno squat e non avendo diritto ad una casa, essi creano in modo performativo la situazione in cui hanno una casa. Questa concezione performativa della cittadinanza (Isin, 2017) è un principio alla base di una teoria fondamentale negli studi critici sulla cittadinanza: quella degli "atti di cittadinanza" (Isin &

Nielsen, 2008). L'idea è che, agendo in determinati modi e rivendicando diritti, i non cittadini possono essere visti come cittadini.

Basata su uno studio etnografico sulle pratiche di *claim-making* di due gruppi di migranti irregolari ad Amsterdam e Torino, questa tesi ha tre osservazioni principali, descritte in tre capitoli empirici. Il **capitolo 4** descrive come i migranti irregolari, sia ad Amsterdam che a Torino, formano i *claims* per la cittadinanza. A seguito di studi critici sulla cittadinanza, ci sono infatti casi di inclusione che potrebbero essere intesi come una costruzione performativa della cittadinanza. Questi *claims* di cittadinanza possono essere esplicitamente politici se associati a manifestazioni e proteste; possono essere culturali se accostati al teatro o ad altre forme d'arte; i *claims* possono anche essere fatti attraverso pratiche casalinghe e di lavoro. Mentre c'erano molte somiglianze tra Amsterdam e Torino nel modo in cui i migranti irregolari presentavano *claims*, c'erano anche differenze. Ad Amsterdam, i migranti irregolari hanno avuto maggiori opportunità politiche di presentare *claims* nella tradizionale maniera politica; mentre a Torino, i migranti irregolari hanno avuto maggiori opportunità di operare forme quotidiane di *claim-making* e la libertà di costruirsi una vita nonostante la loro esclusione formale.

Il **capitolo 5** aggiunge un'ulteriore sfumatura a ciò; mostrando che i *claims* di cittadinanza sono rari e si verificano solo in circostanze specifiche. Seguendo la teoria dei movimenti sociali, i migranti irregolari potrebbero essere visti come soggetti improbabili per la mobilitazione politica (vedi, per esempio, Steinhilper, 2018). Mostrando come i *claims* di cittadinanza siano rari, riservati a pochi fortunati, e come il *claim-making* da parte dei migranti irregolari sia attivamente represso dagli Stati, questa tesi descrive le (pre)condizioni per claim-making. Sostiene come i migranti irregolari abbiano bisogno di un "giusto grado di marginalità" per presentare o anche solo considerare di presentare *claims*. Essi non dovrebbero essere solo focalizzati sulla sopravvivenza fisica, ma non dovrebbero nemmeno essere troppo "stabili", poiché la loro visibilità potrebbe costituire un rischio per la loro vita quotidiana. I supporters locali svolgono un ruolo importante nella creazione di condizioni favorevoli per la presentazione dei *claims*, sia influenzando le condizioni di marginalità dei migranti irregolari, sia fornendo aiuto pratico, favorendo l'integrazione generale e contribuendo alla presentazione di rivendicazioni politiche. Inoltre, le condizioni per la presentazione dei *claims* sono fortemente influenzate dalla risposta dei governi. Il *claim-making* da

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parte dei migranti irregolari dipende dal margine di manovra che la polizia concede loro per farli, dalle tattiche di repressione utilizzate e dall'efficacia degli Stati nel bloccare le azioni collettive. Infine, è importante che i migranti irregolari dispongano di "spazi sicuri", non solo come "backstage" per preparare la mobilitazione politica, ma anche per sviluppare il *claim-making* stesso.

Il **capitolo 6** estende i capitoli precedenti, raccontando come i migranti irregolari siano diventati attivisti inavvertitamente, nella loro ricerca di una vita normale, una vita non politica, il che li porta a una negoziazione costante tra mobilitazione politica, *claim-making* e il desiderio di non essere politici. Oltre a sostenere che le richieste di cittadinanza da parte dei migranti irregolari sono rare, questa tesi sostiene anche come la lotta per la cittadinanza dei migranti irregolari sia eccessivamente politicizzata. Tra i migranti irregolari in questo studio, c'era una negoziazione costante tra la rivendicazione e il suo (apparente) opposto: il loro desiderio di essere "normali". Si riferivano a ciò come al desiderio di una "vita normale". Mentre la nozione di una vita normale è stata utilizzata come un *frame* dal movimento sociale, collegato a nozioni di merito dei migranti (migrant deservingness), il concetto di una "vita normale" ha anche mostrato come i migranti irregolari spesso cercassero esplicitamente non di rompere l'ordine sociale, ma di aderirvi. L'obiettivo della lotta per la cittadinanza allora non era necessariamente una partecipazione politica continua, o di trovare modi alternativi di essere "politici" ai margini, ma piuttosto di trovare modi per "normalizzare" la vita quotidiana con un lavoro normale, una casa normale, una famiglia normale e uno status giuridico normale. In altre parole, i migranti irregolari affermano di essere normali, ma fanno anche *claims* per poter essere normali.

L'attenzione negli studi critici sulla cittadinanza sugli aspetti politici di quest'ultima limita la nostra comprensione della cittadinanza, in quanto non tiene conto del profondo desiderio dei migranti irregolari di *non* essere politici, né dei modi in cui i migranti irregolari creano la cittadinanza assecondando l'ordine sociale invece che agendo contro di esso. Al punto che ci si può chiedere se la lotta per la cittadinanza dei migranti irregolari non dimostri una trasformazione della cittadinanza o della politica, ma piuttosto confermi i processi culturalizzati di creazione e formazione dei cittadini. Pertanto, sostengo l'importanza di esaminare la generale costruzione della

normalità, di guardare alla "vita di un cittadino", alla vita (normale) che la cittadinanza consen

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Can irregular migrants be citizens? Irregular migrants are usually not seen as members of the political community in the land of arrival, let alone as citizens. In practice, however, their irregular status does not preclude them from becoming part of a community. Irregular migrants live, work and participate in society, construct a variety of relations with citizens, and even engage in forms of political action. If we broaden our understanding of citizenship and then look at this empirically, the situation of irregular migrants reveals how many aspects of citizenship can also be attained in the absence of formal recognition or citizenship. This ethnographic study examines two social movements of irregular migrants and their struggle for citizenship, in Amsterdam and in Turin, respectively.

The research project shows how irregular migrants construct citizenship *from below*, in the absence of formal recognition *from above.* These empirical findings are the basis for a reflection on the debate in critical citizenship studies. Yet, instead of focusing on the outright *political actions* of irregular migrants, it analyses claims to citizenship from the perspective of *the everyday.* By so doing we see how the prevailing notions of citizenship of irregular migrants in critical citizenship studies present both an *overly optimistic* and an *over-politicised* image of their citizenship struggle. This limits the understanding of the claims to citizenship of irregular migrants, as it does not account for their deep desire to not be political. This study makes irregular migrants' desire for a normal life apparent and argues for the importance of examining this construction of normality, to look at the 'life of a citizen', the (normal) life which citizenship enables.