Tampere University

ELINA NIINIVAARA

Carving out Possibilities

Refugee Background Young Men and Mundane Political Agency

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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ABSTRACT

The driving question of my research is how young refugee background men try to affect their lives and possibilities. What issues emerge as problematic and important in their everyday lives, currently based in Finland yet transnationally interlinked, and how do they act upon them? By taking these questions as the premise of my research, I open a novel vantage point on the political agency of such young people. I do not define what is political—and how one is expected to carry out political acts—in advance, which enables me to inquire into what emerges as political in their lives and to recognize ways, reasons and aims of acting that have previously been blind spots. There are prominent academic and public discourses—in Finland, but also elsewhere—that describe these young men as having worryingly low levels of participation in society and little interest in politics, and as acting instead in disturbing or worrying ways. Their presence appears frequently as disorderly; a risk to others or to themselves. In these discourses, the young men tend to be approached as Others of Finnish society, which leaves their own experiences of society and their agency out of sight.

My approach to the young men's agency draws theoretically from anthropological conceptualizations of the political as pervasive in the practices and relations of social life, as well as from anthropological and feminist new materialist conceptualizations of agency. I understand agency both as a capacity of human beings with complex subjectivities—of fully culturally and socially constructed, but also resourced, beings—and as a capacity of material bodies, relating with other bodies. Methodologically, my research relies on the ethnographic fieldwork I carried out over a time span of over two years, both in various social settings—such as youth spaces, a vocational school, free-time activities and public city space—and in close-knit cooperation with five key research participants. My fieldwork had two foci: first, detailed observation of the young men's bodily choreographies in everyday encounters, and, second, sustained engagement in their efforts and reflections regarding their own life projects. In order to understand the young men's political agency, I inquire in this dissertation into how they are encountered by other Finnish (non-)citizens in the surroundings of their everyday lives, how they react to the

subject positions proposed to them in these encounters, and what kind of alternative subject positions they aspire and work for.

I suggest conceptualizing "mundane political agency" in the following way: 1) the young people's attentiveness to power relations vested in the subject positions available to them in everyday situations, 2) their immediate bodily strategies that aim at reconfiguring these positions (however subtly), and 3) their long-term projects that aim to carve out alternative subject positions. Building on this proposition, my key findings are twofold. First, in their everyday encounters the young refugee background men are constituted as different recurrently and in multiple ways. These are often, but not always, directly linked to racialization. The subject positions proposed to them are strikingly often both categorizing and constricting, something to which they are attentive, if not always consciously aware. Second, if the political agency of refugee background young men is investigated from their vantage point, they appear to be highly active: dealing with Othering and its implications is all but perpetual. In their encounters with Finnish society and its other (non-)citizens the young men are almost incessantly alert. They struggle with the subject positions that are available for them and attempt to stretch, transform or reject them, or to carve out other possibilities. This struggle happens on two levels: the visceral level of the material body and its immediate choreographies, and at the level of the intentional, future-oriented projects of human beings capable of conscious reflection. The repertoire of strategies the young people deploy and of the projects they further is large.

My research sheds light on the agentic capacities and strategies of young people in a disadvantaged situation where there is no readily available space for political agency. It thus contributes to new conceptualizations of agency and underlines the importance of the concept in anthropology and the social sciences at large. It also highlights the potency of ethnographic fieldwork as a method of producing knowledge together with research participants. The knowledge produced with young refugee background men brought forwards in the dissertation turns the tables on the discourse on participation. It suggests that Finnish society could and should participate in the project my research participants are engaged in: a project of desiring and working for another kind of society, one in which representatives of minorities as well as the majority are encountered in an open, caring, and respectful manner.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkimustani ohjaa kysymys siitä, miten nuoret pakolaistaustaiset miehet pyrkivät vaikuttamaan elämäänsä ja mahdollisuuksiinsa. Mitkä asiat nousevat esiin ongelmallisina ja tärkeinä heidän jokapäiväisessä elämässään, joka tällä hetkellä paikantuu Suomeen joskin transnationaaleihin yhteyksiin kytkeytyen, ja miten he toimivat niiden suhteen? Nämä kysymykset lähtökohtanani avaan uuden näkökulman nuorten poliittiseen toimijuuteen. En määrittele etukäteen mikä on poliittista ja miten poliittisia tekoja tulisi toteuttaa, vaan kysyn, mikä nousee esiin poliittisena nuorten arkielämässä. Tämä mahdollistaa aiemmin katveeseen jääneiden toimijuuden muotojen, syiden ja päämäärien tunnistamisen. Suomessa – ja myös sen ulkopuolella – käydään akateemisia ja yhteiskunnallisia keskusteluja, joissa näiden nuorten miesten osallistumista yhteiskuntaan pidetään ongelmallisena joko määrältään tai laadultaan. Heidät kuvataan usein vähäisessä määrin osallisiksi, osallistuviksi tai politiikasta kiinnostuneiksi, ja sen sijaan huolestuttavilla tai häiritsevillä tavoilla käyttäytyviksi. Heidän läsnäolonsa vaikuttaa näin usein häiriötekijältä; riskiltä heille itselleen tai muille. Kyseisissä diskursseissa näitä nuorukaisia lähestytään usein suomalaisen yhteiskunnan Toisina, mikä jättää syrjään heidän omat kokemuksensa siitä sekä heidän toimijuuteensa.

Oma lähestymistapani nuorten pakolaistaustaisten miesten toimijuuteen ammentaa antropologisesta teoriasta, jossa poliittisuus ymmärretään sosiaalista elämää ja käytäntöjä läpäisevänä ilmiönä, sekä antropologian ja feministisen uusmaterialismin kehittämistä toimijuuden teorioista. Ymmärrän toimijuuden sekä monitahoiseen subjektiviteettiin pohjaavana kykynä, joka ihmisillä läpikotaisin kulttuurisesti ja sosiaalisesti rakentuneina mutta myös resursoituina olentoina on, että materiaalisen kehon kykynä, joka kumpuaa suhteista toisiin kehoihin. Metodologisesti tutkimukseni nojaa etnografiseen kenttätyöhön, jota tein yli kahden vuoden ajan erilaisissa sosiaalisissa ympäristöissä – nuorisotiloilla, ammattiopistossa, vapaa-ajan toiminnoissa ja julkisessa kaupunkitilassa – sekä tiiviissä yhteistyössä viiden keskeisimmän tutkimukseni osanottajan kanssa. Kenttätyölläni oli kaksi fokusta: ensinnä, tarkka kehollisten koreografioiden havainnointi nuorten arkielämän kohtaamisissa, ja toiseksi, pitkäjänteinen sitoutuminen heidän omien elämänprojektiensa eteen tekemänsä työn ja reflektoinnin seuraamiseen.

Ymmärtääkseni nuorten pakolaistaustaisten miesten poliittista toimijuutta selvitän väitöskirjassani, miten muut Suomessa asuvat kohtaavat heidät arkielämän erilaisissa tilanteissa, miten he reagoivat näissä kohtaamisissa heille tarjolla oleviin subjektipositioihin ja minkälaisia vaihtoehtoisia subjektipositioita he tavoittelevat.

Ehdotan "arkisen poliittisen toimijuuden" käsitettä seuraavalle: 1) nuorten valppaudelle havaita heille arkielämässä tarjolla oleviin subjektipositioihin ujuttautuneita valtasuhteita, 2) heidän välittömille kehollisille strategioilleen, jotka tähtäävät näiden positioiden uudelleen järjestelyyn (usein hyvin hienovaraisesti), sekä 3) heidän pitkäntähtäimen projekteilleen, jotka raivaavat tilaa vaihtoehtoisille subjektipositioille. Tutkimukseni keskeiset löydökset rakentuvat tämän ehdotuksen pohjalle. Väitän ensinnä, että jokapäiväisissä kohtaamisissaan nuoret pakolaistaustaiset miehet asemoidaan erilaisiksi toistuvin ja moninaisin tavoin. Tässä on usein, vaikkakaan ei aina, kyse rodullistavista käytännöistä. Nuorille tarjotut subjektipositiot ovat erittäin usein kategorisoiva ja rajoittavia, minkä suhteen he ovat valppaita – joskaan eivät aina täysin tietoisesti. Toiseksi, jos nuorten pakolaistaustaisten miesten toimijuutta tarkastellaan heidän näkökulmastaan käsin, he osoittautuvat varsin aktiivisiksi toimijoiksi. He ovat alati valmiustilassa kohtaamisissaan suomalaisen yhteiskunnan ja sen muiden jäsenten kanssa, ja ponnistelevat vaikuttaakseen Toiseuttamiseen ja sen seurauksiin. He kamppailevat heille tarjolla olevista subjektipositioista pyrkien venyttämään, muuntamaan tai torjumaan niitä ja luomaan tilaa muille mahdollisuuksille. Tämä kamppailu tapahtuu kahdella tasolla: materiaalisen kehon ja sen välittömien strategioiden lihallisella ja vaistomaisella tasolla sekä tietoiseen reflektioon kykenevien ihmisyksilöiden intentionaalisten ja tulevaisuuteen suuntautuvien projektien tasolla. Nuorten käyttämien strategioiden ja edistämien projektien kirjo on laaja.

Tutkimukseni lisää ymmärrystä toimijuuden mahdollisuuksista sellaisten nuorten kohdalla, jotka ovat marginaalisessa asemassa, vailla vaivattomasti tarjolla olevia tilaisuuksia poliittiseen toimijuuteen. Näin työni tarjoaa panoksensa toimijuuden käsitteellistämiseen uudelleen ja alleviivaa käsitteen merkittävyyttä antropologiassa ja yhteiskuntatieteissä laajemmin. Tutkimukseni korostaa myös etnografian vahvuutta tiedon tuottamisen menetelmänä yhdessä tutkimukseen osallistuvien kanssa. Väitöstutkimukseni esiintuoma, pakolaistaustaisten nuorten miesten kanssa tuotettu tieto kääntää osallistumis-diskurssin päälaelleen. Se ehdottaa, että suomalaisen yhteiskunnan pitäisi osallistua projektiin, johon tutkimukseni osanottajat ovat jo heittäytyneet: toisenlaisen yhteiskunnan toivomisen ja edistämisen projektiin, yhteiskunnan, jossa niin vähemmistöjen kuin enemmistöjen edustajat kohdataan avoimella, välittävällä ja kunnioittavalla tavalla.

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1 INTRODUCTION

> After a long break, Emanuel has come to visit me. We exchange news from each other's lives, but our number one aim is to go through the argument I make in my dissertation and discuss the parts that concern him directly in more detail. As Emanuel's English skills are not at the level of reading academic texts fluently, I alternate between explaining what I have written and reading parts out loud, sometimes translating into Finnish while reading and, sometimes, as in the case of the field excerpts, which he knows very well, reading the original text. He listens intently, making a few comments here and there, pointing out that I have chosen a good example from his school (a baking task, described in chapters 5.1 and 6.1) and reflecting on how staggering it is to go through his story like this, with its many twists and turns, some of which he had already forgotten himself.
>
> Last, I read out two field excerpts I am a bit worried about myself. They go to an intimate level, describing situations of deep anxiety or depression (describing the rediscovery of his disappeared mother and finding himself at a dead end in his studies, described in chapter 7.1). I can see that Emanuel reacts strongly to these texts; his eyes moisten and he is deeply concentrated. After reading, I ask the question that bothers me:
>
> Elina: 'How do you feel about this kind of text, can I write like this? Is it too much in a way…'
> Emanuel: 'In what way too much?'
> Elina: 'I mean, does it come too close. I am writing about very personal stuff and in a way that exposes your feelings, you know, very openly.'
> Emanuel: 'I don't think it is too personal or too much, it is a fact. It describes the whole struggle. It is not self-evident that I have gotten this far.'

This dissertation is about these struggles: struggles that Emanuel and other refugee background young men wage as part of their everyday lives in Finland. The question driving this research is to understand how they seek to affect their lives and possibilities. To me, this question is in essence about political agency. In public discourse, these young people (often along with other youths with "immigrant background") are frequently described as having worryingly little interest in politics and Finnish society, and instead as acting in disturbing or worrying ways. Their low voter turnout is lamented (e.g. Borg & Pikkala 2017; Wass & Weide 2015), their marginalization or radicalization fretted about and studied (e.g. Juntunen et al. 2016;

Koivunen 2016; Myrskylä 2012). Their presence and situation in Finnish society is often described in public discourse as disorderly, as a risk to others or to themselves (e.g. Laitinen et al. 2016). In some cases (mostly in the realm of lay public discussion), such problems are located in the youths themselves, while, in others, they are recognized as societal problems; structures and practices that marginalize such youths and set up obstacles to their participation (e.g. Harinen et al. 2009; Rättilä & Honkatukia 2021). The latter approach, and research related to it, is necessary unconditionally, if equal opportunities for participating in the functioning of Finnish society is considered a value. One could, for example, ask whether the fact that people who are not (yet) Finnish citizens do not have the right to vote in any but municipal elections—regardless of how long they have lived in Finland, and the slow and difficult process of gaining citizenship—has an effect on their voter turnout.[1]

Nevertheless, in approaches that set participation as the premise, these young people tend to be approached as Others of Finnish society; their participation in it is, for various reasons, either seen to be problematically low or of problematic kind. Notwithstanding the importance of gaining insight into these dynamics, this approach inevitably leaves something highly relevant out of sight. This something is precisely the agency of the young people themselves, their efforts to affect their lives that are currently based in Finland. Thus, in this research, I turn the set up around. The vantage point is that of the youths', and living in Finnish society is approached from their perspective. From this point of view, society materializes in the everyday encounters these young people experience in the mundane surroundings of their lives: both with state/municipality officials or NGO workers and with other (non-) citizens, who they interact with in such environments as school, work, free-time activities and the public space of the city. Of fundamental importance, moreover, are the transnational ties such youths have due to their pasts as migrants and present as members of diaspora communities, and also, perhaps, because of their aspired futures. From their perspective, living in Finland does not mean that Finnish society would be the only, nor necessarily even the most important, point of reference for them. On the other hand, approaching the issue from this perspective brings the controversial position of these young men in Finnish society to the fore, a position they are perfectly aware of, and which plays a role in their everyday encounters in various ways.

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[1] The participation of refugee background people is in effect also limited in municipal elections, as only EU-citizens and citizens of Norway and Iceland have the right to vote on registering as residents of some municipality in Finland. Others have to live in Finland for two years before gaining the right.

The importance of taking the youths' perspective as a starting point of research is underlined by other researchers too, such as Häikiö & Snellman (2017) in the case of marginalized youth in general, and Laakkonen & Juntunen (2019) and Rogstad & Vestel (2011) in the case of immigrant background youth in particular. Apart from this, I also find it imperative *not* to define what counts as political in advance, nor how the young people should participate in it or express their views. Instead, I investigate these issues through the ethnographic data I gathered over a time span of over two years. In approaching the political in an open way, I follow Verdery (1999, 24) and Häkli & Kallio (2014, 183), who hold, on one hand, that the political by definition concerns matters of particular import, but, on the other, underline that what is considered particularly important very much depends on who one asks. Häkli & Kallio (2018, 64) conceptualize the political, understood in this way, as the *political ordinary*, which stands in contrast to the conventional understanding of the political as matters recognized as having particular import in society at large. This approach resonates strongly with anthropological understandings of the political as pervasive in social life, and not merely as an autonomous sphere of institutions and governments. Power rests in the practices and relations of everyday life that, however, tend to be inchoate and unremarkable. Their political aspect is thus easily ignored. (Gledhill 1994, 20–21; 70–71.) A corollary, for me, then, is the question: what *emerges as political* for my research participants.

The second overarching aim guiding my work is understanding what kinds of acts these young men perform to try to affect the issues they find pressing in their own lives. In other words, I inquire into the *political agency* of these young men. Theorizing agency has turned out to be a tough task for the social sciences. Nevertheless, I find approaching the political in these young men's lives from this angle a task worth probing, as it enables me to shift perspective from their participation in a predefined community to their acts in their everyday surroundings. The theoretical framework I develop in the following dissertation draws both from feminist new materialist understandings of the agentive capacities of material bodies, human and non-human alike (Barad 2007; Coole & Frost 2010; Väyrynen et al. 2017), and from anthropological conceptions of complex human subjectivity as both produced by power relations and culturally resourced, and thus capable of reflection and agency (Keane 2003; Ortner 2006). I believe that combining these two ways of exploring agency provides a fruitful avenue for better understanding the political ordinary and agency of people in disadvantaged positions.

1.1 Transdisciplinary reference points: inspirations, discrepancies, contribution

The following dissertation is theoretically and methodologically rooted in my own discipline, sociocultural anthropology, but draws from other fields besides the aforementioned feminist new materialist theorizations as well: from youth research, especially Finnish research on multicultural youth, migration and diaspora studies, and research on racism and racialization. The ethos of my research, certain methodological choices I have made and concepts I utilize, are informed by discussions in these fields, although my conclusions do not always correspond with theirs. It is by building on this critical engagement that I wish to contribute to these fields as well. Below, I briefly sketch out these transdisciplinary reference points. I outline my theoretical framework proper in depth, however, in chapter 4.

To begin with, the ethos that has guided my research throughout is inspired by scholarly approaches in migration and youth studies that call for more emphasis on the agentive capacities of children and young people with refugee background, instead of simply positioning them as helpless victims (Crawley 2009; Malkki 1996; Rättilä & Honkatukia 2021; Wernesjö 2011). One line of thought gaining prominence in this branch is research around the so-called resilience of refugee background people in general (e.g. Coleman et al. 2012; Hutchinson & Dorsett 2012), and children and young people in particular (e.g. Chatty 2013; Fader et al. 2019; Luster et al. 2010).[2] While I appreciate the intention of recognizing the strengths and abilities to deal with adversity of people of refugee background, I find the concept and discussion around it somewhat problematic. As Ahonen and Kallius (2019, 104) write, emphasizing resilience, endurance and optimism mirrors the narrative that emphasizes victimhood by simply inverting the set up. In its binarity (helpless victim versus resilient survivor) it lacks sensitivity with regard to the way people are both weak and strong, resilient and vulnerable, agentive and helpless, and how these features are not individual abilities, but build on relations between people. It is especially blind to understanding how these aspects can be intimately tied to each other; what is interpreted as resilience can actually turn out to be a coping strategy in a situation where there is little room for acting otherwise, a strategy that might conceal fragility and despair, and that might, in the long run, turn out to be a

[2] The concept of resilience has been in use for quite some time in psychology and in ecological theory, where it is understood as abilities for positive adaptation and withstanding the stress and shocks that human beings and societies or ecosystems register (Olsson et al. 2015, 1). In recent years, the concept has gained increasing interest in the field of social sciences, including youth and migration studies.

destructive strategy. Furthermore, as research regarding resilience is often concentrated around adapting to the situation and coping in a new home country despite a traumatic past, there is a tendency to a normative understanding of what being resilient actually means: it is about "bouncing forward" (Slejpen et al. 2013) or "moving on" in life in the new country (Hutchinson & Dorsett 2012, 58–59), in a word "successful adaptation" (Luster et al. 2010). In its normativity, it risks reconstructing the oft-seen division between "good immigrants" and "bad immigrants": those who integrate well, learn the language, get educated and employed, and act in a way that is comprehended and valued by the majority white society, and those who do not integrate, but are marginalized, radicalized, or form so-called "parallel societies" instead, in which they go on living among people who share their culture and ethnicity, separated from the majority society.[3] In my view, concentrating on resilience is thus of limited use when questioning how people in marginalized situations are positioned and categorized, and how this in turn affects their possibilities to act and to be seen and heard, as well as in deconstructing problematic understandings of integration. I wish, therefore, to make a clear distinction between research on resilience and my own approach. The concept I deploy and try to develop in the following dissertation is that of agency; I find inquiring into its possibilities, restrictions and modes a far more potent tool in conceptualizing both the acts of refugee background youth and the multifaceted situations in which they find themselves. It is by developing this concept of agency that I wish to contribute to youth and migration studies.

As for methodological choices, a central question for me has had to do with limiting the scope of my research. "Refugee background youth" is highly heterogeneous group in terms of the geographical and ethnic origins of its members, their religious convictions and worldviews, social classes and educational backgrounds and aspirations, ages and routes of coming to Finland, as well as the situations and locations of their family members. Very early in my research I found it necessary to limit the group I was to concentrate on in some way. In the context of Finnish youth research, it has not been uncommon to focus on one ethnic group (e.g. Hautaniemi 2004; Isotalo 2015; Marjeta 1999), but this would have kept experiences that are shared by refugee background youth out of sight. Instead, I decided to limit the scope of my research on the basis of gender. My reasons for choosing boys and young men are in part practical—as I had worked with immigrant background young men before, I had useful existing contacts—and partly based on existing research. Firstly, in Finnish youth and migration studies, slightly more

[3] See v. Freiesleben 2016 for a thorough analysis of the discourse on "*parallelsamfund*" in Denmark.

emphasis has been given to research regarding immigrant and refugee background girls (e.g. Honkasalo 2011; Isotalo 2015; Marjeta 1999; Nisula, Rastas & Kangaspunta 1995) than boys (e.g. Hautaniemi 2004; Honkatukia & Suurpää 2012). And, secondly, my previous employment in the sector of multicultural youth work made me realize the pressing need—both in the field and in society at large—for greater knowledge of the agency of young refugee background men, which, in my experience, is commonly misunderstood and, at least in a Finnish context, remains under-researched. As these reasons for focusing on only one gender imply, this study is not a study of gender *as such*. Nevertheless, gender is a significant aspect in it, and I have tried to be sensitive to gender issues both during my fieldwork and analysis, and I touch upon them in the dissertation in instances where it seems particularly relevant for understanding and interpreting the data. In these instances, my take on gender is analytical rather than empirical (Peterson 2005, 502): I pay attention to masculinities (and femininities) rather than to the empirical categories of boys/men as opposed to girls/women (or other genders). I try to analyse how gender is at play as a social structure in certain instances in the everyday lives of the young men, an approach that draws on the branch of research that has grown out of Connell's (1995; 2005) theorization of masculinities and hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, a few words on my conceptual choices. Instead of utilizing the concept commonly employed by many of the researchers mentioned above, namely that of "immigrant (background) youth", I have chosen the term "refugee background youth". This decision, too, has both research-based and practical reasons behind it: Firstly, over the course of my research I have increasingly started to find the concept of immigrant (background youth) problematic, as it risks reconstructing a stereotypical image of the "imaginary immigrant" (Lundström 2017, 79), and therefore an essentialist understanding of immigrants as a specific, homogenous category, separate from other Finnish (non-)citizens (Haikkola 2014, 88–89). Secondly, my research participants are all refugees, which makes me even more skeptical of the benefits of using a definition that would emphasize their immigrant-ness. As refugees they are, of course, *also* immigrants, but deconstructing, rather than reproducing, this essentialist category is an important aim of this work.

This is not to say that this choice is unproblematic. When I started to plan this project, I initially used the term "immigrant background", and throughout the whole research process I have hesitated and pondered over the terminology. I am aware that my research participants might choose another term; in Finland, the word refugee carries at least as heavy stigma as the word immigrant, and many young people, who do not necessarily avoid the word when talking about their past, are,

however, critical of being called refugees after living in Finland for a considerable length of time. Hence the supplementary word "background", which I stick with throughout the dissertation. Perhaps, in its very clumsiness, it brings out the feelings of uneasiness I constantly experience with regard to the choice of terms. Indeed, discomfort is one of the central threads of the whole work: being recurrently categorized as refugees has a considerable effect on the way these young people are encountered by other Finns and on the space that is available for them to act and define who and what they are themselves.[4]

Two other concepts that I use recurrently, and which may require clarification at this point, are those of "race" and "racialization". My research participants are people of colour living in a Finnish society in which they are in a clear minority position, both in terms of numbers and of power relations. Discussion of race, moreover, has been avoided for decades in Finland, as in other Nordic countries, in which there is a widespread perception of "Nordic exceptionalism": of being outsiders to colonialism and histories of scientific racism, and thus also innocent of racism and Eurocentrism (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012). I acknowledge the controversy around using the term race (e.g. Gilroy 2000, Miles 1988; Rastas 2005, 82; Rastas 2019, 373–375), and it is not without difficulty that I use it myself. Yet race remains salient in the lives of many minority groups in Europe, as "an inescapable social fact" (Silverstein 2005, 364). On the other hand, the discourse of race can enable resistance by people in excluded positions when it works as a base for forming collective political identities (Miles 1989, 72–73; Rastas 2019). In line with Bashi (1998), Cowlishaw (2000) and Keskinen & Andreassen (2017, 65), for example, I consider the concept necessary in order to be able to speak about its effects on people's lives. This choice has also been impacted by the emerging discussion on race brought forward by people who themselves belong to racialized minorities in Finland. In recent years, collectives like AfroFinns or Ruskeat Tytöt ("Brown Girls", initiated by Koko Hubara) and individual activists have increasingly started to underline the importance of acknowledging the significance of race and racialization in their lives.

Nevertheless, to the extent that I see race as a social fact, I also see it as a social construction. Races are socially imagined, not biological entities (Miles 1989, 71). Race is a category of difference, understood to be essential, natural and defining, irrespective whether it is based on alleged biological differences, cultural differences, or both (Molina 2005, 95; Silverstein 2005, 364; see also Keskinen & Andreassen

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[4] I will return to these questions in chapter 3.1, in which I discuss my methodological choices more profoundly.

2017, 65). In the latter case, in which races are constructed on the basis of cultural differences, these are understood to be determinative. Races are, thus, imagined to be biological groups of differentiated human populations or social collectivities (Miles 1989, 71–75). These can be explicitly defined as "races", though this is not, however, always the case (Miles 1989, 71), as, "ethnicity", for example, is often used instead of race in Finland and other Nordic countries (Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen 2014, 27). Here, discourse on differences between ethnic groups tends to present them as essential and natural, and hence immutable and determinative, in much the same way as the discourse on differences between racial groups (Hall 2000, 224–225; Rastas 2005, 86–87; Souto 2011, 24).[5] As social and political constructions, racial categories are historically flexible and constantly (re)formed. With the concept of racialization, I refer to the work of "making races" or racial formation (Omi & Winant 1986); "[...] to the historical emergence of the idea of 'race' and to its subsequent reproduction and application" (Miles 1989, 76). By "application", I understand instances in which a particular person or group of people is categorized as belonging to a specific racial group. This process of categorization, of defining an Other, is dialectical as it entails defining a Self by the same criterion (Miles 1989, 75).

Whiteness is thus just as much a social construction as other racial categories: it is not a skin colour, but a constructed hegemony of power (Keskinen & Andreassen 2017, 66) that grants privilege to people who meet the social ideal of whiteness (Krivonos, 2017). White skin as such does not necessarily grant access to this category (on "colourless" racial categories see e.g. Souto 2011, 25), and, on the other hand, people categorized as white are also racialized. In this, my use of the concept differs from those usages in which only people categorized as non-white are understood to be racialized (e.g. Kurki 2018). As Rastas (2019, 375) writes, this usage is problematic in its tendency to erase the racial nature of the category of whiteness. In the sociohistorical context in which we live, where a particular kind of "racial regime" (Mulinari & Neergaard 2017, 90) prevails, we are all "racialized people"—although the consequences and processes of being racialized as white or as black (for example) are different.

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[5] Opening up the relationship between race and ethnicity is beyond the scope of this introduction. Here, it suffices to note that as socially and historically constructed categories they are intermingled in complex ways, yet obviously not the same thing (e.g. Bashi 1998, Hall 2000). Some researchers and activists have started to use terms race/ethnicity and racial/ethnic in order to express the complex interlinkage of these concepts (e.g. Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen 2014, 27–29), and in some instances I also use that solution.

1.2 Research questions and method

In order to answer the overarching question of the political agency of refugee background young men, I ask the following subquestions:

1) What kind of subject positions are proposed to the young men in their encounters with Finnish society—with the state and its other (non-)citizens? I concentrate on encounters, as it is here—if anywhere—that their position as Others is made manifest to them: as Ahmed (2000, 9) notes, differences are not found on the bodies of others but are *constituted* in encounters in which some others are recognized as familiar and other others as strange. This holds both for encounters with other (non-)citizens and for the young men's encounters with state officials—teachers, social workers, police, health personnel, immigration officials, and so forth. It is through these encounters that the state, and the relationship between it and its (non-)citizens, comes into being: the state is "experienced in an intimate way where power is experienced close to the skin, embodied in well-known local officials [...]" (Aretxaga 2003, 396–398). It is thus the face-to-face, skin-to-skin (Ahmed 2000, 7) encounters of material bodies that are the focus of my research.

2) How do the young men act and react in relation to the subject positions proposed to them? This question springs from the attention Häkli and Kallio (2018, 65) pay to human beings' capacity to become attentive to power relations embedded in the particular subject positions they are offered in the flux of everyday life. In their view, political agency is constituted when people react to the subject positions proposed to them and to the power relations embedded in these: when "[...] they end up accepting, averting, or transforming [...]" them (Häkli and Kallio 2018, 65). The subject positions available for my research participants are often (though not always) affected by their constitution as different due to being young, male, refugees and racially Other.

2 a) What kind of "immediate strategies" (Väyrynen et al. 2017, 91) do the young men adopt *on the spot* in reaction to the subject positions proposed to them? What kind of bodily choreographies (Puumala et al. 2011, 86)—gestures, facial expressions, touch or avoiding touch, relating or refusing to relate with others—do they deploy? And what do these choreographies work for?

2 b) What kind of long-term projects do the young men develop in order to carve out subject positions they find desirable, in the sense that they open up more possibilities for them? This question is empirically driven: during the analysis phase, my data compelled me to give attention to the considerable effort and work the young men put into what, following Ortner (2006, 144), might be conceptualized as the "agency of projects", as: "[...] intentions, purposes, and desires formulated in terms of culturally established 'projects'." These projects are conscious long-term efforts that have to do with the contradiction between the way the youth are positioned and the way they see themselves and wish to be positioned.

For me, sustained ethnographic fieldwork is an indispensable method for answering such research questions. Understanding political agency, as manifested both in bodily choreographies and long-term projects, necessitates observing what people *do* as well as paying attention to what they *say*. Observing what people do means, in this case, both examining their ways of being and moving in space, and relating to other people in it, as well as following the ways they lead their lives over a longer span of time; what kind of aims they pursue, the choices they make, or what frustrations they encounter. Furthermore, gaining contextual understanding of these "doings" and their meanings requires a sustained research relationship, one that is not based on interviews, but on spending time together in various situations and on engaged interaction. There is a limit to the questions that can be asked, and to the explanations that can be given, in the form of discourse at a given point in time. Ethnography is the method by which a researcher can try to reach beyond language and grasp what is not and cannot be verbalized. The multifaceted data I have gathered with my research participants via extended fieldwork reaches beyond this limit, providing unique, in-depth insight on what occurs in the embodied encounters of refugee background youth with Finnish society and on the youths' long-term aspirations.

1.3 Locations and positions: temporal, geographical, social

Finland is relatively young, both as a nation state and as a country of immigration. Historically, the area has been multicultural and there are still minorities with long histories of living in the area, including the Sami, Roma, Jewish, Tatar, Karelian and Swedish-speaking minorities. (Martikainen et al. 2013, 33-35; Saukkonen 2013, 91.) Since gaining independence in 1917, Finland has been a country of emigration to a

far greater extent than immigration; over 1.3 million Finns have emigrated during last 150 years (Martikainen et al. 2013, 26). Low levels of immigration have contributed to the image of the Finnish nation as ethnically and culturally homogenous (Saukkonen 2013, 90). It was only towards the end of 1970s that the first refugees from more distant countries started to arrive, and, in 1990s—in correlation with joining the EU—that the amount of foreign people immigrating to Finland started to rise. Before that, immigration consisted mainly of the remigration of people with Finnish origins (Martikainen et al. 2013, 37). The growing number of immigrants was fast reflected in legislation and governmental practices: new laws were passed during 1990s that gave non-citizens basic rights, and legislation on, and practices of, integration were put in place. From the outset, these were guided by multicultural ideals inspired by Sweden and the Netherlands (Saukkonen 2013, 91–92). The amount of both quota refugees and asylum seekers has risen during the 2000s compared to earlier decades, yet remained very low in comparison to many other European countries: most years the quota has been 750 people, and Finland has received less than 5,000 asylum applications per annum (Saukkonen 2013, 87). However, during the first decade of the new millennium, right-wing populism started to gain impetus, and criticism of multiculturalism and immigration—not lacking racist undertones—has since become prominent, despite the relatively low numbers of immigration. According to the statistics on native language, at the end of 2020 there were over 432,800 non-native speakers in Finland, amounting to 7,8 percent of the whole population. The biggest groups were speakers of Russian, Estonian, Arabic, English and Somali (Statistics Finland, 2021).[6]

As in most EU countries, a rapid increase in the numbers of asylum seekers took place in the fall of 2015. Coincidentally, this was also the period during which I did the main part of my fieldwork, about 2014–2016, and thus stretches from the period before this so-called refugee crisis, through it, and into the period immediately after it. While the absolute number remained modest in Finland—about 32,000 asylum applications in 2015 (Migri 2015a)—this did mean a considerable growth in relative terms: the number is almost ten times the figures of 2014 (Migri 2015b). Again in line with other EU countries, this provoked strong reactions, from a considerable solidarity movement towards people in flight to a rise of new far-right and even neo-Nazi groups. This course of events has affected the lives of all my research participants: while their presence in Finland was controversial before the "refugee

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[6] Finland does not keep official statistics of ethnic/racial groups. The population statistics include information on people's citizenship, native language, and country of birth. Thus, estimates on the size of different ethnic groups have no basis other than this information.

crisis", it grew ever more prominent during and after it. Some were involved in the solidarity movement themselves, in organizing material help for asylum seekers accommodated in poor conditions, for example. For the most part, these events are not the subject matter of this dissertation as such, but the consequences that the "crisis" had, and has, are highly relevant for the everyday lives of my research participants.

Geographically, I carried out my fieldwork in a few Finnish cities, all of them belonging to the group of the ten biggest cities in Finland, but none of them located in the capital region (which consists of the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen). In all these cities there are some suburbs, such as Varissuo in Turku, Hervanta in Tampere, or Kontula in Helsinki, that might be called super-diverse (Vertovec 2007). Interest in studying such suburbs, in which the population is comprised of various groups with regard to race/ethnicity, nationality, religion, age and social class, has grown in recent years both internationally and in Finland. Indeed, research projects have been carried out in all the aforementioned Finnish super-diverse suburbs (Huttunen & Juntunen 2018; Puumala et al. 2021; Tuominen 2020), and emphasis has been given, for example, to the way the inhabitants of these areas, often stigmatized in the eyes of other city dwellers, can develop a strong sense of belonging and take pride in being residents of these special city spaces. I acknowledge the importance of this research and the way it opens eyes to vernacular realities in contemporary urban spaces. However, during my research I realized that *none* of my research participants actually lived in these areas themselves (despite some of them moving around relatively often). Instead, they all tended to live in suburban areas that are neither stigmatized nor held in high regard, which in practice means that their everyday lives took place outside areas where diversity is, if not the norm, then at least normal. In the areas in which they spent the majority of their time, the Finnish "white landscape" (Huttunen 2002, 124) still prevails in the sense that it is quite common for a person of colour to find themselves alone among white Finns while waiting at a bus stop, working out in a gym, dropping by a library or a café, and also in such environments as at school, work, or hobbies. Inspiring as the development of the super-diverse areas are, I thus consider researching mundane life in these non-diverse surroundings very much worthwhile. Not that the experiences of living in one or the other stand completely apart; both the stigma and the fame of certain areas is well known among residents of other areas, too, and some of my research participants consciously avoided moving to these areas in order not to reproduce the stereotype of immigrants acting in certain ways and living in certain areas.

Who, then, are my research participants? Some basic information is of use at this point to give a general idea of the group with which I worked, but I will save a detailed account of my fieldwork and a full presentation of the most central participants for chapter 2. I conducted the most intense and long-lasting (from one to two years and more) fieldwork with three young men, to whom I have given the pseudonyms Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax for the purposes of this dissertation. In addition, I worked closely, but for a much shorter period (about two to three months), with two other young men, whom I have named Adel and Denis. Apart from these individual research relationships I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in a multitude of surroundings, including a youth space, an institutional home for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, as well as at schools, places of work, and hobby environments. In these fieldwork situations I was naturally in contact with lots of young people, but in the pages of this dissertation these youths are present either in passing or as background characters, and I will thus not dwell on the details concerning them. The five young men that I worked with in person and for longer periods had come to Finland either as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, quota refugees with their families, or first fled from their native country and subsequently arrived in Finland via the family reunification process. They were all around twenty when we started to work together, some a bit younger, but all nevertheless of age. None of them had come directly from their country of origin to Finland, but had resided for longer or shorter periods in another country, or in other countries, in between. Most of my research participants are originally from different countries in Africa, but Adel's family is from the Middle East. These young people were about ten–sixteen years old upon arrival in Finland. Three of them are Christian and two Muslim; all profess their religion, though some are much more devout than others. Some come from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of livelihood and education, while other's families have been or still are better off. Some have family members in Finland, some do not, and, of the latter, some have contact with family members living elsewhere, while some have lost contact for good and do not know whether their families are still alive. One has gotten married in Finland, though this happened after we finished the fieldwork proper. When I started to work with these five young men, all but one were studying either in comprehensive or vocational schools, the exception having already graduated from a vocational institution and searching for employment.

I got to know three of these young men while working as a research assistant in Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto's (hereafter "AK") project *Transcultural Memories of Childhood*

Displacement—Tracing the Emotive-Spatial Tactics of Belonging.[7] In this research project, my job was doing ethnographic fieldwork together with AK in a family group home for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who had been granted residence permits, and work in person with three young people who had come of age and moved out from the home. These were Emanuel, Denis, and Adel. AK has agreed to my using ethnographic material gathered together in the family group home and the material I produced together with the three young men. With Emanuel, we decided to continue working together in the framework of my own research project, and with him the fieldwork has in some respects continued to the present date.

Another point of reference for me beyond my fieldwork proper is my previous employment in the sector of social youth work. For three years I worked as head of a small NGO-based social work unit whose target group was immigrant background boys and young men. The initial idea for this research project grew out of the lessons I learned over those years, and in several parts of this dissertation I refer to some particular events or experiences I underwent while working in the field. In most cases I do this to provide context and contrast to my actual data, but there are some instances in which I use some particularly clear memories (I also wrote notes of some especially disturbing events or thoughts during the job) as data. Furthermore, Afrax happened to choose youth work as his vocation and started work during my fieldwork period, and analysis of data gathered in his work environments forms a considerable part of my research. My background as a professional within the field has informed the way I perceive work done in the family group home and in other social youth work contexts, such as NGO projects targeting specific youth groups. I have found scrutinizing practices in these fields of great import, as these environments are central to the lives of many refugee background youths. Especially during their first years in Finland, these institutions, NGOs and projects might provide the only contact—in addition to school—for such youths with other Finnish (non-)citizens.

I highly appreciate the work done by professionals in these fields. As an ex-worker I also appreciate the insight such professionals have regarding their work and practices, insight that seldom lacks criticism and self-reflection. Often these workers do need neither grand theories nor research projects to make sharp evaluations and measured conclusions of their own field, and, for many, some of the arguments I make may well seem rather predictable. Nevertheless, as an ex-worker within the field, I also dare say that there are certain blind spots that can be hard to discern if you are in the midst of the work, which often is hectic and under-resourced. Some

[7] Academy of Finland project SA 266161.

of these blind spots are damaging, also with regard to the aims of the work itself, as they tend to reproduce certain problematic understandings and ways of encountering refugee background youths. In this dissertation I wish to unpack some of these kinds of practices and understandings. When doing so, I am also aware that, in part, these practices are reproduced because the professionals are themselves caught between a rock and a hard place: in designing projects and activities they obviously have to take into account what possible backers are likely to grant funds for, or what they are told to prioritize by people above them in institutional hierarchies. All in all, my critical eye regarding social youth work is most certainly also directed towards my own work in my previous employment, and I hope the results of this (self-)criticism might prove useful for other professionals of the field.

1.4 Outline of the dissertation

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. In the next, rather brief, chapter, I introduce the sociohistorical context in which my research participants' lives take place in more detail, including a sketch of Finnish immigration policies and integration practices. In chapter 3, I present my methodological choices: my approaches to fieldwork and the analysis of data, and dwell on ethical questions. In chapter 4, I lay out the theoretical premises of my work. I briefly introduce the past and present history of political anthropology, before moving on to concentrate on the concept of agency and its problematics in more detail. I look at three different ways of approaching agency, and on that basis delineate my own approach in subchapter 4.3.

Following this outline of the empirical context and theoretical framework for the dissertation, I present my ethnographic material and analysis. This section is divided into three main chapters that each concentrate on an aspect of agency: the first on encounters of differentiation (answering research question 1), the second on the young men's immediate strategies in these encounters (research question 2a), and the third on their long-term projects (research question 2b). These chapters are, in turn, each divided into three subchapters, concentrating on a given situation in the lives of my three main research participants, Emanuel, Manasse, and Afrax, but also opening from that particular example to a more comprehensive view of the ways young refugee background men are encountered in Finnish society and on the ways they react and act in response. All the subchapters follow the same logic: In the beginning, a brief excerpt from my fieldwork is presented to crystallize the subject

matter of each chapter and to indicate to the reader which young person and what situation the chapter deals with. In the body of the text, I analyze what is going on in these situations, expanding the scope of my analysis to other situations and youths in order to provide context and depth. Some subchapters also include an epilogue: these introduce the young persons' interpretations of the themes addressed in the chapter, which, in some cases, differ from my own, and also contrast the analysis with the subsequent course of their lives. The last chapter of the dissertation pulls together my analysis and argument and sketches out their implications.

A note on personal pronouns: I use the singular they (they/them/their) when speaking of persons whose gender I either don't know or don't want to reveal due to anonymization, or who use they as their pronoun themselves. A note on quoting discussions in my data: I have both recorded discussions, notes taken on the spot during discussions, and notes written afterwards. In order to distinguish between verbatim quotes from quotes relying on my memory, I use double quotes ("quote") to mark the former, and single ('quote') for the latter. In longer dialogues, the absence of quotation marks indicates verbatim quotes; use of single quotation marks quotes that might not be exactly verbatim (as for example in the opening vignette of this introduction).

2 INCLUSION/EXCLUSION: FINLAND AS A LIBERAL WELFARE STATE

> Emanuel: My personal social educator, my sweet personal social educator.
> Elina: Sweet personal social educator.
>
> Emanuel sends small kisses to a woman in a photo he shows me, making me laugh.
>
> Elina: She was really important for you. Here in the family group home.
> Emanuel: Yeah, and still is.
>
> In the photo, Emanuel stands next to a blonde, middle-aged woman. They both smile a little and look straight at the camera. As quite a tall young man he is considerably taller than she is. She stands in a very upright position, one knee slightly bent, the other leg tall and straight. She has put her left arm around his waist, which is at a comfortable level for her. Her fingers peek from between his left side and left arm. Emanuel, for his part, has put his right arm around her shoulders, and his palm rests on her right upper arm. He leans slightly on her shoulder and rests his right temple almost on the top of her head. He has to bend both knees a bit to be able to hug her this way, and his right side and her left side touch each other for the whole length of their sides and thighs. She stands there carrying slightly the weight of his body, which he rests on her head and shoulder, and, a little plump, she seems all the more strong, steady and trustworthy—somehow keeping her professional role even in this intimate hug. Emanuel, on the other hand, leans on her, almost curling around her: a tall, slender and slightly collapsed figure.

The context for this research is Finland, a liberal welfare state, one of the Nordic countries that all (albeit varyingly) have followed the "Third Way" policy: that of reconciling extensive welfare systems with liberal markets. As Sipilä et al. (2009, 182; 187–188) argue, while globalization, transition to post-industrial society and an ageing population have challenged the (Finnish) welfare state in considerable ways and inflicted deterioration in public services, it has not been abandoned and the principle of universalism—the assurance of the availability of benefits and services to all citizens—is still pursued. Also, non-citizens are granted some services: citizens of other EU-countries, nationals of a so-called "third country" (i.e. non-EU country) who have a residence permit in Finland, and asylum seekers waiting for a decision on their asylum applications are all entitled to get certain public services and benefits. What these rights are depends on the status of the individual, and the system is rather

complicated in its precision and detail. These details are not the point here, and I will not go into them; what is essential is the way the welfare state structures the lives of my research participants in Finland. For a brief description of this one could paraphrase Barker (2012, 16), who argues that the Swedish (which, she underlines, is at one and the same time exemplary of and in some details different from Nordic states in general) welfare state "[...] functions as both a universal but exclusionary model." By this she means that the Nordic welfare state is very generous, if you belong to it, and marginalizing and depriving if you are not recognized as belonging to it. Moreover, the welfare state itself is, "[...] preserved and made sustainable for those in the inside by limiting the access from the outside", and the structural barriers to belonging are high and hierarchical, "[...] particularly to those deemed 'other', 'undeserving', or members of particular ethnic groups." (Ibid., 17.) In this sense, the Nordic welfare state can be understood to be Janus-faced: its generosity towards the people recognized as insiders is one side of the coin, the other side of which is the exclusion and criminalization of others.

2.1 Encountering the sovereign state: sorting bodies to be provided from bodies to be exposed to death

The excerpt with which I started this chapter illustrates the generosity the Finnish welfare state displays in certain instances towards refugee background youths aptly. The photo Emanuel showed me presents an embodiment of the caring face of the state: in it, a smiling staff member of the family group home for unaccompanied minor asylum seeker youth embraces and supports Emanuel, whose asylum application the state has accepted, and to whom refugee status has been granted along with a residence permit. In the photo, Emanuel is literally held in the arms of the state. A considerable number of resources are allocated to ensure his (and other youths' in a similar situation) well-being in all possible ways: besides accommodation and nourishment, he is provided with schooling, health care, hobbies and free-time activities, the support of professionals working in the home, and even psychotherapy to tackle his traumatic past. In Emanuel's case, all this work seemed to achieve its aim: he was a happy, optimistic and self-confident young man when I first met him.

A few years later, however, the Finnish state showed its other face to Emanuel: his mother, presumed to have perished, is found alive back in their home country, but she has been maltreated and is seriously sick. Emanuel starts to work for family reunification, but the process turns out to be long, burdensome and with little hope.

> I visit Emanuel after a couple of months' break, and realize the joy he had found while living in the family group home is gone. The first two family reunification applications Emanuel submitted with the help of his former legal representative were deemed somehow flawed, so they have had to submit it three times, paying the application fee each time. In Angola, his mother has to travel several hundred kilometers to another country every time she needs to visit a Finnish embassy, as there is not one in their home country. Emanuel has worked hard during the summer to earn money for application fees, travel to and from the embassy, and accommodation costs during the visits. Recently, it has come out that his earnings cut the social benefits he receives for the rent of his apartment and his studies, and he is left with no income for the coming months. It is the last year of his degree, and he is supposed to finalize his studies and pass major exams. He is exhausted, penniless, and deeply worried about his mother, whose health is wavering. He looks as though he has grown several years older; his face drawn and tired, his hair worn out due to the constant tousling of it he seems to direct his anxiety in. He offers me a simple and cheap but uncompromisingly healthy meal made of rice, onions and frozen fish. While cooking it in a slow and uncoordinated way as if his thoughts were somewhere else all the time, he sighs: 'What is that Immigration office, is the purpose of it simply to keep people out of Finland?'

Emanuel pretty much hits the nail on the head here: the purpose of the Finnish immigration service is precisely to keep some people out of Finland, while letting other people in. It is a border wall—not a physical wall in the sense of the geographical border in, say, the forest between Finland and Russia—but the keeper of a legal barrier any migrant wishing to enter has to pass. And border walls, Ticktin argues (2017), work not only to defend, but also to define; not only to keep all kinds of things in place, but also to reorder them; not only to hold bodies still (to prevent them from entering), but first and foremost to sort bodies. Border walls separate the ones that can enter from the ones that cannot, or the ones that can, but only with certain conditions. This sorting of bodies takes very concrete forms: for example, the physical border walls erected by the United States and Spain are designed to let certain animal bodies pass. There are holes constructed in the wall for this purpose, big enough for the desired animal body to pass, too small for the unwanted human body to pass—though at the Spanish–Moroccan border Ticktin was told that migrant children occasionally get caught in these holes in an effort to force their bodies through. This way of designing border walls has the purpose of sorting out the bodies whose life matters from those whose life does not matter, Ticktin argues (ibid.). She calls the bodies sorted as unworthy as those deemed "killable", paraphrasing Agamben (1998). I would rather call these unworthy bodies as the ones that can be "let die", paraphrasing Foucault (2003, 241–247) and Das & Poole (2004, 25), or as the ones that can be "exposed to death", paraphrasing Mbembé (2003, 12).

Herein resides the ultimate expression of sovereignty in the age of Foucaldian biopolitics, Mbembé (ibid., 11–12) argues: "To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power." This interrelation of biopower and necropower lies at the heart of modern sovereignty, but it is much more visible on the margins of the state than at its centre (Das & Poole 2004, 25; see also Stepputat 2014, 18).

All the young people who have participated in this research have crossed the border wall of the Finnish state and been sorted as bodies whose lives matter. Most of them have claimed refugee status, either as asylum seekers upon entering Finnish territory (as Emanuel, Adel and Denis did), or by registering to the UNHCR in the country to which they had first fled in order to be resettled in some European country as so-called quota refugees (as was the case for Manasse and his family in Rwanda). Some have family members who arrived in Finland first, and the youths in question have followed via a process of family reunification (as with Afrax, whose father came to Finland as an asylum seeker while the other family members fled from Somalia to Kenya, where they waited for the decisions). Nevertheless, while these youths have managed to cross the border wall, many of them have family members who have failed in their attempts to do so. Some have tried to follow their family or relatives as individual asylum seekers, but have not been granted refugee status by the Finnish state. In other cases, family reunification has been applied for but not granted. The family reunification policy of Finland has been tightened several times during the 2000s, with the result that almost no unaccompanied minor asylum seekers get positive decisions in response to their applications (Kuusisto-Arponen, 2016b). It is difficult to put into words the grief, agony, guilt, and extreme loneliness these negative decisions inflict on the youths whose lives the Finnish state has recognized as worthy, thus separating them from their families and other kin deemed unworthy. Adel's advice to other youth facing a similar situation to his was as follows:

> Adel: Try to forget everything that has happened before. Try to think a new life. Think positive. I know it is difficult, I have myself tried but have not been able to, but it can help a lot if you think this is gone, this is gone and now it is new and let's try a new life. That can be a really good starting point. I myself tried like forget the family completely, because when I talked about the family I started to really bad… [Pause.] [When] I talked about the family I started to feel bad.
>
> [Pause.]
>
> Elina: Mmm. But can one forget?
> Adel: No, one cannot.
> Elina: One cannot forget?

> Adel: One cannot forget. One cannot, I didn't call my family for a long [time]. I said, I will forget completely that family. But I could not.

The case of Emanuel's mother is extreme: in the end they did get a positive decision on their application for family reunification, but, after his mother had spent some two years in Finland, her application for its extension was refused and she was told to leave Finland. In this way, the family reunification policy of the Finnish state inflicts an intensification of the interrelation of biopower and necropower *within* families in the margins, as the sovereign exercises its power by cutting through family ties, sorting the bodies of the family members into lives that matter and lives that do not, separating the body that is to be fostered and nurtured from the bodies that are to be exposed to death. Rousseau et al. (2001, 40; 56) argue that family separation (of spouses from each other, or of children from their parents) is a key aspect in the psychological well-being of forced migrants, as integral as the (possible) traumas of war itself. Prolonged family separation caused by legislation and bureaucratic practices, Leinonen & Pellander (2020, 119; 124–126) underline, "[...] can be regarded as administrative violence against refugee families." Ironically, the caring face of the state then seeks to heal the traumas caused by the violence effected by its exclusionary and punitive face.

But how is this cut made? Why is Adel categorized as worthy while his sister is not? Why is Emanuel recognized as a refugee, while his mother has so much trouble gaining the status? The arbitrariness or even randomness of the family reunification process (when, say, one out of five siblings is granted a residence permit, but the others are not) serves to expose the fact that the lives of non-European displaced peoples are not considered worthy as such, that they do not have a right to life. As Fassin (2005, 380–381) makes clear, the Schengen Covention of 1985 defined the core European Union member states as a zone that should be defended against aliens: this "racial security"—difficult to name since often masked—"[...] has to do with the protection of a European, Christian, and white civilization against Third World, Muslim, or black populations [...]. [...] asylum seekers and aliens in general are seen as potential threats to [...] European security." Besteman (2019) uses the concept of "militarized global apartheid" to refer to the structural violence enacted by the Global North that cause people from the Global South to die and promotes a particular, hegemonic racial identity. The undesired racialized populations can be exposed to death, and, exceptionally, have their lives spared: Denis is an exception. Adel is an exception. Emanuel and his siblings are exceptions. Afrax and Manasse are exceptions, as are certain members of their families. But what, then, are the grounds for making these exceptions? "Why," asks Fassin (2005, 366), "in societies

hostile to immigrants and lacking in concern for undesirable others, there remains a sense of common humanity collectively expressed through attention paid to human needs and suffering?"

According to the Finnish Ministry of the Interior (webpage, emphasis mine): "In its quota policy, Finland emphasises the resettlement of the most *vulnerable* groups, such as families with children and women in a difficult position [...]."[8] The body threatened by violence and its right to life, Fassin notes (2001, 4–5), is being displaced from the political arena, while the suffering body is gaining greater importance and the right to life becomes a humanitarian question. Fassin terms this the "biopolitics of otherness": when the social is reduced to the biological and "the body appears to be the ultimate refuge of a common humanity", the right to healthcare becomes "[...] more comprehensive than any civil or political right, greater than all other social rights" (ibid., 5). Hence, "[...] the suffering body manifests itself as the ultimate [...] resource, supplanting all other social justifications for immigrants to be granted legal status [...]" (ibid., 7).

Under these conditions, it is more acceptable for the state to reject an asylum application by declaring it unfounded than to reject a suffering body by denying it indispensable care (ibid., 4–5). Indeed, during the years I conducted fieldwork, Finland made negative decisions even in asylum cases that the immigration officials deemed *founded* in cases where they estimated that applicants could live in some part of their home country as "internally displaced persons". Asylum has lost much of its legitimacy, the Geneva Convention is implemented in a more restricted way, and asylum seekers are viewed with systematic suspicion, Fassin notes (2005, 368–369). Simultaneously, the management of asylum seekers has been "humanitarianized". In this way, contemporary biopolitics oscillates between sentiments of sympathy and concern for order, "[...] between a politics of pity and policies of control" (Fassin 2005, 366), and refugees, "[...] oscillate between being objects of repression and compassion" (ibid., 376).

The recognition of refugees' political rights is replaced with displays of sympathy: recognition of someone's refugee status turns thus from a fulfillment of a political obligation to "citizens of humanity" (Malkki 1994) into an act of generosity toward a "suffering stranger" (Fassin 2005, 377). These exceptional acts of generosity are performed in order to show a humane face that veils the general state of repression and hence, in the longer run, such acts benefit Fortress Europe and its protected citizens far more than the undesirable migrants (ibid., 382). Finland follows this general European trend dutifully: its refugee quota has been as small as 750 persons

[8] http://intermin.fi/en/areas-of-expertise/migration/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/quota-refugees

per year during the 21st century (except for 2015 and 2016, when it was augmented to 1050 due to the war in Syria), and in 2009–2011 the centre-right government tightened asylum legislation with several regulations that, taken together, made the process very rigid indeed (Keskinen 2016, 357). This took place before the so-called refugee crisis of 2015–2016, which led to considerable further tightening of asylum policy.

2.2 Encountering governmentality: categorizing bodies, practicing Othering

As several border scholars have argued, bordering does not stop at borders (e.g. Johnson & Jones 2014; Mezzadra & Neilson 2012; van Houtum et al. 2005; Yuval-Davis et al. 2018). Externalization of border regimes, Mezzadra & Neilson (2012, 68) write, "[...] involves the displacement of border control and its technologies beyond the territorial edges of formally unified political spaces", as, for example, when the European Union involves third countries in cooperation regarding the surveillance and control of migratory flows. Simultaneously, internal bordering processes have also proliferated (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018, 230). Such territorial displacement of borders contributes to the emergence of "[...] different degrees of internality and externality, which substitute and blur the clear-cut distinction between inside and outside that was produced by the traditional border of the nation-state" (Mezzadra & Neilson 2012, 68). For my research participants and companions, being granted refugee status and the first residence permit in Finland has not, thus, been a one-off ticket to inclusion in the Finnish nation. As Yuval-Davis et al. (2018, 230–231) argue, these bordering processes are intimately linked to boundaries and political projects of belonging—and, as Barker (2013, 17) brings out, in the Nordic welfare states the structural barriers to belonging are both high and hierarchical. Hierarchies of belonging are partially related to people's formal citizenship status, but not only to that; they profoundly affect their citizenship rights, even if they have been granted formal citizenship (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018, 240).

2.2.1 Hierarchies of formal status

If one enters Finland as a refugee, the first residence permit is usually only valid for one year.[9] Since the application process takes months, one has to apply to extend the first permit pretty much upon receiving it. Taken together, applying for the first and second permits means that one's status is uncertain for the first two or even three years in Finland. The second permit, the so-called extended, or A-permit, is also temporary, and it is valid for four years. After that one can apply for permanent residence—or for citizenship if one also fulfills the other criteria than five years continuous residence in Finland: a sufficient level of language skills in either Finnish or Swedish,[10] which has to be proven by taking a test for the "National Certificate for Language Proficiency" or by providing a certificate of comprehensive/upper secondary/vocational/higher education; establishment of identity, meaning that one has to confirm one's identity with valid proof, e.g. a valid passport issued by the country of origin;[11] integrity, meaning that one has not committed any punishable act (offences punished by petty fines are not counted); establishment of livelihood, meaning that one has to report one's source of livelihood and provide a list of all sources of income for the entire preceding period of residence in Finland; and, finally, one must have taken care of so-called "payment obligations under public law", such as taxes, hospital fees, student loans or fines. If one does not fulfill this criteria, one can apply for the permanent "P-permit", which does not need to be renewed: even though one lacks some rights citizens have, at least one's legal status in Finland is finally stable—as long as one doesn't commit major crimes.[12]

In this way, my research participants—along with all other foreigners willing to migrate to Finland—have been, and are, constantly and repeatedly constructed as aliens by the Finnish state. They have to apply for the right to stay in Finland several

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[9] This, along with other details in this chapter concerning Finnish policies, were accurate during the years I conducted fieldwork and started writing the monograph. For the most part I have not included possible changes in legislation and practices, since, for the lives of my research participants, the most relevant are the ones they encountered personally.

[10] Swedish is also an official language in Finland, and in some areas of the country the majority of the population speaks Swedish.

[11] For many refugees from collapsed states, such as Somalia, this considerably complicates (though does not altogether block) the process of obtaining citizenship in Finland.

[12] There are plans for changing this system, as EU countries are negotiating about new harmonized regulations concerning immigration policies. Negotiations have not proceeded very fast due to internal frictions, but part of the plan is to stop giving permanent residence permits to people with refugee status altogether, so as to be able to deport them immediately when the situation in their home countries becomes better.

times, and the temporary nature of their stay is spelled out and extended to last at least five years from the date the first permit has been issued. When submitting their applications, they deal either with so-called "foreigner police" or with the Finnish Immigration Service, *Maahanmuuttovirasto*, the literal translation of which would be "Immigration Bureau"—though after the initial interviews communication with the state becomes impersonal and indirect, happening mostly by the intermediation of different kinds of forms and applications, often via internet. It is in these continuous applications, letters that declare the decisions, and the documents issued to the young people that their status as a refugee and alien materializes: at the level of everyday life, Das & Poole write (2004, 16), the population, "[...] encounters the state through documents such as ration cards, identity cards, criminal complaints, court papers, birth and death certificates [...]. These documents bear the double sign of the state's distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday." When I started to work with the youths, Afrax and Manasse had already been granted Finnish citizenship, while Emanuel, Denis and Adel carried residence cards marked with either an A or P, signaling the temporary nature of their legal status. When traveling abroad, they carried either an alien's passport or a so-called refugee travel document in their pockets. Once, another young person, who had lived in Finland for nearly ten years but still had not gained citizenship, described his feelings about carrying an alien's passport like this:

> Every time I take out my alien's passport I feel strange, I feel like I am not even from planet earth, that I am from outside. They label me alien. Am I not a human?

The power to name, Brubaker and Cooper write (2000, 15–16), to monopolize symbolic force in order to "[...] identify, to categorize, to state what is what and who is who," is sought by the modern state, and it sure is powerful in imposing "[...] the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which non-state actors must refer." Even if the state cannot create identities in the sense of self-identification (ibid., 16), its identifying practices nevertheless have profound effects. "I feel strange", the young man says. It is through these kind of practices, Das and Poole (2004, 17) argue, that the state's pedagogic aspects are manifested; they make subjects "[...] learn the gap between membership and belonging." The practice works: the alien's passport makes one feel that "I am from outside." In Ahmed's (2000, 21; 39) vocabulary, such youth are recognized by the state as strangers, as not belonging, as bodies out of place. Ahmed (ibid., 23–24) writes: "[...] to address some-body as a stranger constitutes the 'you' as the stranger in relation to the one who

dwells [...]", differentiating between the bodies at home and the bodies out of place. When a person has to take out their alien's passport time and again, they are "continually reinterpellated" as a stranger to the Finnish nation.

2.2.2 Daily practices of the state: "integrating immigrants"

It is not only the applications, papers and statuses that do the work of categorization, but also daily welfare state practices, aimed at integrating those refugees it has granted formal status—now considered "immigrants", along with other people who have migrated to Finland for various reasons—as dictated in the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration. In this section, I draw attention to the categorizing effect of this grassroot level integration work. By doing so, I am not implying that newly arrived immigrants should not be offered services in order to learn the language and understand how things in Finland work. Of course this needs to be done. My point here is to point out how the concepts and categories used in this work also repeatedly reinterpellate immigrants as strangers. Also, while all immigrants, regardless of their background, are, in principle, included in the sphere of integration work, in practice this means quite different things for a migrant from a Western country who comes to Finland to work, study, or raise a family than for refugee background people.

In the case of quota refugees, the municipalities that have agreed to receive them also commit to taking care of their integration. During the first years following their arrival, Afrax's family received support from the "Bureau for Foreigners" [*ulkomaalaistoimisto*], which provided social services for new quota refugees in his home city. Manasse's family, placed in another town, received similar services from "Immigrant Services" [*maahanmuuttajapalvelut*]. As unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, on the other hand, Denis, Adel and Emanuel were transferred from their respective reception centres to so-called family group homes (and thus, again, to cities new to them) upon receiving a positive decision. The family group home is, in addition to taking care of the basic material needs of the children and supporting them in daily life, responsible for "supporting the children in integrating into Finland," as a leaflet presenting the home in which I conducted fieldwork explains.

Upon their arrival to Finland, Afrax and Manasse started to go to comprehensive school. There, they first attended so called "preparatory teaching" [*valmistava opetus*]: children with "immigrant background" who do not have the language and/or learning skills considered necessary for attending normal teaching are usually placed

in separate classes with special curricula. Usually, the children attend preparatory teaching for about one year, but they can be transferred to ordinary classes earlier too, if they are thought ready for it.[13] The same holds for unaccompanied minors, but, as Emanuel, Denis and Adel were already near the age limit for compulsory education (16 in Finland at the time) when receiving residence permits and being placed in their new home cities, they attended basic education designed for "adult immigrants", which includes a preparatory stage and, after that, a compressed curriculum of basic education.[14] When I started my fieldwork, Emanuel and Adel were doing the final courses of this compressed basic education, while Denis and Afrax had started vocational education (in ordinary classes—vocational schools have classes with special curricula for immigrants too, both preparatory and at degree level), and Manasse, who has proved to be an extraordinarily fast learner, had already graduated from vocational school (ordinary curricula), was unemployed and looking for a job. During fieldwork, Emanuel completed his compressed basic education and started to study at a vocational school (ordinary curricula), while Afrax graduated from vocational school (ordinary curricula) and started to work.

A special "integration plan" [*kotoutumissuunnitelma*] has been made for Emanuel, Denis and Adel, as they are unaccompanied minors. In the case of other immigrants, the integration plan is made if the person is unemployed or receives supplementary benefits for a longer period, if the person asks for such a plan, or if social workers think it necessary. It can also be made for whole families if the family needs extra support, which is the case for both Manasse's and Afrax's families. The integration plan is made with either the job centre or with municipal social workers, and includes plans for language education, other education or job seeking, and other measures that are seen as supporting the integration of the person/family.[15] If a person has an effective integration plan, they are entitled to receive so-called "integration support" [*kotoutumistuki*], a benefit equivalent to unemployment benefits. At the beginning of my fieldwork, this was the main source of income for Emanuel, Adel and Denis. Paradoxically, though, the system for applying for integration support was so

[13] Both children who have migrated themselves, and children whose parents are immigrants, are admitted to these classes. The reasons for migrating have no importance: children with refugee background study together with children whose parents have moved to Finland for work or other reasons. The curricula is compiled by Finnish National Agency for Education [*Opetushallitus*] (2017a).

[14] All of them, as underage asylum seekers, were also attending school during the asylum process. When they move to their new hometowns, the municipality in question estimates what kind of schooling fits the child's skills and needs. The compressed basic education curricula is also compiled by the Finnish National Agency for Education (2017b).

[15] On integration plans, see the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's special integration webpage (2017).

complicated (you were supposed to fill in a convoluted online application independently every twenty days, which thus does not follow any calendar logic) that at least Emanuel never quite learned to use it—I once found him totally out of money, relying on a big stash of bananas and oatmeal porridge, since no one had had time to help him with the application. Manasse and Afrax, on the other hand, who already were Finnish citizens, relied either on incomes from work or on the general social security system. Even so, I learned from Afrax that in cases of unemployment they could get special services designed for "immigrant youth" from the local job centre, provided by an "integration team" [*koto-tiimi*]. The official services organized by the state are supplemented by numerous NGO projects that offer a wide variety of support services to immigrant background people, and all my research participants have been involved in these kinds of projects either occasionally or almost continuously.

As has perhaps become clear in the above, the concept used extensively for integration work in Finnish is *kotoutua*, to "become at home".[16] It is used in two senses: as the work done by Finnish officials for the immigrants in order to make them feel at home [*kotouttaa*], and as the work the immigrants are expected to carry out in order to make themselves at home [*kotoutua*]. When advancing in this work of becoming at home, the immigrant moves gradually from the realm of special services to the realm of general state services. This is a slow process, however, and the need to work fervently for integration year in, year out, serves to intensify the effects of being categorized as a body out of place, still not quite at home. Kurki (2018, 63) proposes the concept "immigrantization" for integration policies and practices that work to produce "immigrant subjects".[17]

2.2.3 Never full citizens?

Some of my research participants have indeed managed to climb relatively high in the hierarchy of belonging. Some already have, and others are currently applying for, Finnish citizenship. The majority speak very fluent Finnish and write quite well. Most have a vocational degree, and some are aspiring for higher education. Many have,

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[16] *Kotoutua* is a neologism invented solely for describing the integration process of immigrants, and as such it is difficult to translate.

[17] For some, this process is never-ending. This is especially the case for illiterate immigrants, such as Afrax's mother, who tend to get stuck in a cycle of courses and support services that never lead to a level of "education" that would be recognized in Finland, or for employment in anything other than underpaid support jobs (such as "work try-out practice" or the like).

after some struggles, gotten employed, and some even have steady jobs—though all in low-paid service or manual work. The majority have friends, both ethnic Finns and others. Still, when I met one of them just a couple of days ago, he told me that he feels like he has reached his limits and cannot bear living in Finland, as he feels that he will never be accepted as a member of this society as he is. The final straw was finding out that the fact that he studied Finnish as a second language, instead of as his mother tongue, in vocational school has consequences for his chances of gaining university education. 'I can bear with everyday street racism', he said, but facing discriminatory structures in central institutions of society feels overwhelming: 'I feel powerless.'

Another clear manifestation of the hierarchy of belonging is the ethnic profiling certain officials tend to commit. As the young men who participated in this research project know themselves, and as recent research has shown (Keskinen et al. 2018), the Finnish police, the Finnish Border Guard and private security companies—to whom some policing tasks are delegated—all practice ethnic profiling. It is especially young men belonging to racialized minorities who are targeted by practices of ethnic profiling, an effect of which is that they "[...] make the persons stopped aware of the fact that they are perceived of as 'others'—those not belonging to the country where they live and perhaps were also born—and in some cases, as those expected to commit criminal acts because of their ethnic or racial backgrounds." (Ibid.) Schclarek Mulinari & Keskinen (2020, 16) argue that this stems from the Nordic welfare states themselves, which, while they are officially based on colour-blind universalism and egalitarianism, are in practice organized along lines of racial hierarchies that equate whiteness with nation state belonging.[18]

As young and male, my research companions are also targets of other kinds of governmental practices that, despite perhaps benevolent intentions, also often work as Othering. Young people as such are often seen either to be at risk or as risks; either especially vulnerable or threatening—the latter especially holds for young Muslim men—and thus in need of the intervention of social and youth services (Horton & Pyer 2017, 13). As Rättilä (2006, 52) claims, the Finnish discourse on the (non-)participation and (wrong kind of) activity of youths constructs them as categorically untrustworthy "not-quite-citizens". This, in turn, legitimizes a top-down relationship between authorities and the youth, who are then studied, disciplined, and guided towards the right kind of citizenship (ibid., 52).

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[18] It is worth bringing up, though, that certain features of Nordic states point to fractures *within* European whiteness, with certain groups—such as Russians in Finland—being perceived as less white than others (Schclarek Mulinari & Keskinen 2020, 17).

Last, but not least, are the relationships with people who are higher up the hierarchy of belonging: those citizens whose belonging to the Finnish nation state, and entitlement to its welfare services, is unquestioned (at least on racial/ethnic grounds). As several studies have shown, racism is recurrent in everyday life in Finland, from early childhood education (Non-discrimination Ombudsman 2020), to schools (Souto 2011), working life (Ahmad 2020; Larja et al. 2012; Lehmuskunnas et al. 2020; Pohjanpää et al. 2003; Wrede & Nordberg 2010) and in general (FRA 2019; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2002; Non-discrimination Ombudsman 2020; Rastas 2007). It is not only hostility or fearful attitudes that produce Othering; exoticizing admiration (Loftsdóttir 2017, 75) or well-meaning compassion can contribute to racialization and an experience of being seen as essentially different (Rastas 2002, 11). On the other hand, racialized minorities are currently creating forums and communities of people with whom they can share their experiences of racism and act politically in order to make the meanings of the category of race visible (Rastas 2019, 367–368). In this way, as Yuval-Davis et al. (2018, 230) argue, bordering processes are intimately linked to political projects of defining who belongs and who does not, championed by individuals and collectivities.

This is just a brief sketch of the sociohistorical context in which my research participants and their families live their everyday lives, and of their "precarious inclusion" (Karlsen 2015) in the Finnish welfare nation state. The empirical chapters of this dissertation will dwell on these issues in more depth, unfolding them from various vantage points anchored in particular, mundane moments. It is these kinds of processes of governance, bordering, and politics of belonging that work to categorize the young people this research concerns. Such categorizations have a profound effect on the subject positions that are available or offered to such youths in particular situations. Different intersections of such categories as male, person of colour, refugee, immigrant, Muslim or Christian, and young person produce various positionings that very often—though, it is worth underlining, not always—emphasize the *difference* of the person who is placed in them. These positionings are not always racialized, though often race/ethnicity does play some kind of role in their formation. The differentiating subject positions under scrutiny in this study are in some way Othering, and thus excluding. Furthermore, they are often on one hand restricting—they allow certain kinds of acts and behaviour, while being resistant to others—and, on the other, formative—they foster the formation of certain kinds of subjectivities (as proposed, for example, by Kurki [2018] with her concept of immigrantization). How young people react to and act upon or against the subject positions offered to them is the primary focus of this study.

2.3 Across the Finnish border: global migration & transnational ties

In this chapter, I have chiefly examined what happens after young people have managed to cross the border wall. In order to understand refugee background youths' lives, it is also necessary to acknowledge what happened before crossing the border. The experiences of the youths are embedded in a large constellation of global migration, of which forced migration is an intrinsic part. Finland, as a nation state, is a part of what Malkki (1995) calls the national order of things: a global system of territorial national states, a cultural grammar that speaks the language of nationhood. The national order of things secretes displacement, Malkki argues (ibid., 516): as a system based on an idea of sedentary culture, it presupposes borders and governance of cross-border mobility. As I have shown above, it is those very borders that sort bodies, categorizing some into extremely vulnerable positions. The immigration laws of the Global North, de Genova (2002, 439) argues, produce "illegal" subjects; denial of residence permits (whether the application is based on seeking asylum, labour, or family ties) generates undocumented migrants whose very presence is criminalized and fundamental human rights denied. Furthermore, de Genova (ibid., 438) claims, deportation is a putative goal of this apparatus, which thus works to produce a condition of *deportability*: "The category 'illegal alien' is a profoundly useful and profitable one that effectively serves to create and sustain a legally vulnerable—and hence, relatively tractable and thus 'cheap'—reserve of labor" (ibid., 439–440). Fear of deportation or ending up undocumented is (or has been at some point in time) palpable in the cases of the young people this research is about, either concerning themselves or some of their family members.

Manasse's family managed to enter Finland via the quota system, and Afrax, together with his mother and siblings, as a family member of a recognized refugee. In this sense they were lucky in comparison with Denis, Adel and Emanuel. Due to a lack of other ways of entering Finland, they had first to cross the border clandestinely and subsequently seek asylum. Here, they have had to set foot in the grey zone of irregularized migration; between what is considered legal and what is considered illegal. Entering EU countries without the necessary documents is illegal, even though seeking asylum is a human right. Facing this contradiction means putting oneself at risk. In Emanuel's case, the risk was moderate as soon as he got out of Angola: he was helped by people with resources and selfless motives, and did not have to cross the Mediterranean Sea, as he traveled mostly by plane. As for Denis and Adel, I know very few details of their journeys to Europe and Finland. I know

that Adel took the so-called Eastern Mediterranean migration route, finding his way from the Middle East to Greece and then onwards. The Central or Western Mediterranean route was Denis' most likely passage. Knowing how vulnerable underage asylum seekers are to different forms of exploitation on these trips, I did not want to question them about this issue at all, and neither were they eager to talk about it unprompted. As the travel has to be done clandestinely, it happens via dangerous routes over land and sea, and deaths and disappearances are not uncommon. Taking these routes often presupposes getting involved in the unregulated markets of organized human smuggling. "A growing body of evidence is beginning to highlight the scale and scope of exploitation experienced by migrants along these routes, including human trafficking", Galos et al. (2017, xiv) write, stating that 37% of the migrants interviewed for their report had experienced human trafficking or other exploitative practices. Children, Galos et al. (ibid., xvi) underline, "[...] are exposed to similar risk factors as adults but are less able to address their own vulnerabilities." In another report concerning unaccompanied Afghan children seeking asylum, Mougne (2010, 21) states that the "[...] risks encountered by children who use the services of such networks [of organized smuggling] are incalculable [...]." The smugglers often intimidate the children, keeping them under tight control, treating them violently and controlling their possibilities for keeping in touch with their families. While crossing the Mediterranean in overcrowded vessels is generally among the most traumatic experiences for these children, being detained in difficult conditions in different locations while waiting for the next part of the journey to begin, working during the trip in order to cover costs (in cases where the family is not able to pay the whole fee) or being mistreated because of failing to pay by an agreed deadline and crossing dangerous mountain areas are also reported as very difficult experiences (ibid., 18).

To understand refugee youths' struggles after crossing the border wall, it is essential to bear these large constellations of global migration in mind, along with their highly vulnerable position in the national order of things. Furthermore, it is equally essential to remember that what exists and has happened across the border does not cease to exist after crossing it. All the young people who have taken part in this research have transnational family ties, even though some are—at least for the time being—broken, as family members are now missing. Most have at least some contact to their country of origin, and some have plenty. Some interact with other members of their diaspora communities as well, both physically in their current home surroundings, and virtually via social media (though, it ought to be mentioned, not all of them have these kind of networks: some are surprisingly alone). These

transnational contacts come up here and there in the course of this study. However, I have not discussed transnational aspects at length for two main reasons. The first is the focus of this dissertation; it focusses on what happens here, inside the border wall, in the embodied encounters of everyday life. I thus aim to point out the importance of transnational ties, though I cannot dwell on them. The second has to do with my research participants' wishes and anonymity: in most cases, when they asked me to leave something out of this dissertation, it concerned their family members or certain details about them. In many instances I would not write about these issues even if the youths themselves would allow me to: there are too many details that would risk their anonymity too gravely. I will go into this and other methodological and ethical questions in detail in the next chapter.

3 FIELD & WORK: METHODOLOGY, SITES, ETHICS

In this chapter, I move from the sociohistorical context of this research to its more immediate surroundings. First, I describe the ethnographic fieldwork I have carried out, shedding light on both my methodological choices (and those imposed on me) and actual fieldwork settings, and introduce my research sites and participants in more detail. Following that, I scrutinize ethical questions faced during this research project, before opening the process of analyzing and interpreting my data.

3.1 Conducting fieldwork

Since my research topic is mundane political agency, which, as I understand it, covers a wide range of acts, from bodily reactions and strategies to more articulate expressions, long-term ethnographic fieldwork has felt like a necessity. From the outset, I aspired to gather data which is not only discursive, but also comprises detailed observation of what people actually do and how they relate to each other. On the other hand, concentrating on these bodily choreographies (Puumala et al. 2011, 86) alone would bypass the ways the young people themselves understand and explain their acts and aspirations, and their longer range efforts—hence the necessity of long-term interaction with my key interlocutors. My understanding of what ethnographic fieldwork can mean, however, has changed considerably along the way.

I started my training in anthropology at the end of the 90s, at a time when classical anthropological fieldwork was both cherished and critically re-examined. Our professor's answer to criticisms from undergraduate students—that they gained insufficient experience of fieldwork practices during their education—was that they would love to do fieldwork trips with students, if only the department had sufficient funding, as, "the climate in the field is so pleasant." Another lecturer told us to carefully consider which kind of recording devices we would take to the field with us, as minidiscs, then popular, are vulnerable to humidity and therefore were not a good solution for working in "the tropics". For them, "the field" meant certain islands in the South Pacific, and, accordingly, we were trained to appreciate the kind of fieldwork Gupta & Ferguson (1997, 11–12) call "archetypal": the kind in which a

lone, white fieldworker, able in a masculine way, lives for an extended period (we were told that three months of fieldwork was the minimal period for an MA thesis, and two years for PhD theses) among "natives" in a clearly delimited field site far away from "home". Of course, not everyone accommodated this ideal and nor were they reproached for this. Still, we heard only echoes of discussions already taking place in other arenas regarding the exoticizing and Othering implications of classical anthropological ideas about "the field" as radically separate and different from "home" (e.g. Amit 2000; Gupta & Ferguson 1997), or the needs to adjust fieldwork practices and constructions of "the field" in a "world in motion" (Rapport 2000, 73), in which not only ethnographers but also their subjects move and increasingly have transnational connections (Marcus 1995; Olwig & Hastrup 1997).

It is thus not surprising that my research plan for this dissertation was informed by ideals central to archetypal fieldwork. Because of planning to do fieldwork in Finland, and, in that sense, "at home", I felt the need to emphasize that I nevertheless sought to "immerse myself in the field"—by which I probably meant roughly the same thing as Amit (2000, 2), when she describes the familiar picture of fieldwork, "[...] where the ethnographer will immerse him/herself in personal face-to-face relationships with a variety of natives over an extended period of time." I already had trouble defining what my "field", and who my "natives", were. Having worked with refugee and immigrant background youth, I was intently aware of the diversity of their backgrounds and situations. Treating them as a "target group" would be violent, in the sense that it would work to (re)construct them as a specific category, separated from other Finnish (non-)citizens (Haikkola 2014, 88–89), which is pretty much the opposite of what I wished my project to contribute to. Also, I did not want to limit my research participants on the basis of their ethnic origins, partly because this kind of "methodological ethnicity" risks essentializing, and naturalizing, ethnic groups, over-emphasizing the significance of national or ethnic background (ibid., 87; Glick Schiller 2008, 3–4), and partly because I believed that there were many experiences that immigrant background youth in Finland shared, despite the notable diversity of the group. Hence, I could not plan to do classical fieldwork in the sense of concentrating on certain cultural areas or language groups either: the youths with whom I wished to work came from a vast geographical area and spoke various languages. It also meant that I could not use their mother tongues when conducting fieldwork, since learning several languages to the extent necessary would have taken years; I mainly spoke Finnish with the youths, supplementing this with a few words of English or Spanish when that helped our mutual communication.

Faced with such problems, I decided to "let the field site construct itself during the fieldwork process" when designing my research plan: I adopted the idea of the site as social rather than geographical from Hage (2005, 465–466), and was hoping to gain understanding of the community/ies my research participants align with during my research. From the outset, I delimited the group I planned to work with in one way: by limiting the research to one gender only, choosing boys and young men for the reasons described in the introductory chapter. At this point, I planned to work with a rather large group of young immigrant background boys and men in one city only. I had a vague idea that this group might, at least to an extent, be thought to form a kind of subculture, or at least a social group, in the sense that there would be some pattern to the places or communities in which they experience a sense of belonging or non-belonging, which they align with or against.

Unsurprisingly, things did not work out quite as planned. My endometriosis aggravated the very autumn I got a position as a PhD candidate, and in a couple of months I was on a sick leave waiting for major surgery. It took a year to return to work: I then started working as a research assistant on AK's research project regarding the transnational memories and sense of belonging of unaccompanied minor asylum seeker background youths. My main task was to do ethnographic fieldwork in a family group home for minors who were granted asylum together with AK, and to work individually with three young men who had come of age and moved out from the home (I will describe both in more detail in the next subchapter). This period came closest to my initial understanding of "immersing myself in the field": working in the family group home approximated classical fieldwork in that it was a bounded setting with a culture of its own, the youths and staff of the home had long-standing social relations with each other and, for several months, with us as participating observers. During the four-month period I worked with AK it became clear, however, that the operation I had gone through did not have the results hoped for. This meant that I also needed to rethink my research plan. Instead of either abandoning my research project or working with a large group of young people, I decided to try to carry on by working individually with a few young men whom I already knew and could work with in a dialogic and flexible manner, adjusting the intensity of the work with my fluctuating energy levels. I was feeling uncertain about proceeding in a condition in which I could not know if I could actually bring my research to a conclusion; I found it ethically problematic to involve youths in a project that was on such shaky ground, and felt that the only solution was to work with youth I was on close enough terms with to be open about my physical condition and its consequences.

This meant that I had to abandon my initial ideal of "immersing myself" in "the field". There was no field, really: I ended up working with three young men who had very different backgrounds, life situations, aspirations and social lives, and who lived in different locations—all in the biggest Finnish cities (one or several, since work or studies made some of them move during the fieldwork), but none in the capital region. The idea of "letting the field construct itself" during the process was obviously unworkable in a context in which the only common factors shared by these young men were that they were all refugees from the Global South, all identified as male, were all young, and all lived in Finland. Furthermore, my initial idea had been to do fieldwork with the youths as extensively as possible, encompassing all the areas of their lives to the extent they would allow me to. This was far too ambitious for my sick body, and I had no choice but to settle for something of much more limited scope. In the end, this turned out to be a combination of meetings in private and conducting participant observation in one area of the lives—either at school, work, or free-time activity—of my research companions (I will describe this in more detail in the second subchapter below). In the beginning, I was quite disappointed by this turn, and felt that my fieldwork would inevitably be somehow lacking. I found it surprisingly difficult to let go of my ableness in relation to the youth. In the case of both Manasse and Afrax, whom I had gotten to know in the context of youth work, I was accustomed to being the person who is, in the last resort, responsible for what happens, how it happens, and why it happens. Emanuel, in turn, is one of the young people I worked individually with in AK's research project, and even though we were thus used to being in a research relationship with one another, AK's project was far more concise and my role in it was clearly to be the one leading the work. But now I was in a situation in which continuing the research required me to show my fragile condition and the subsequent uncertainty around my project and the way of carrying it out: "It is darned difficult to change my role from being the person who takes care, knows, is able and guides others, to someone who doesn't have strength, doesn't know and isn't able, but asks the young people to join as companions in a very uncertain journey", I wrote in my field reflections.

Letting go of my fieldwork ideals and my role as an able researcher turned out to be inspiring and instructive as well. Not having a clear idea of how to conduct my project, and having to be open with the youths about the possibility that I might not be able to see it to an end at all, served to clarify what was most important: that which mattered most to the young people themselves, and a way of working that would either be useful for them, fun, or both. I realized that the project could not

only be something that I wanted to carry out, and for which I would carry the responsibility alone, but that it should be something that the youths wanted to do, too, and that they would support for their own part. This opened some leeway for much more participatory working methods than I had initially thought would be possible; it helped me to orientate fieldwork less as a necessary research task, to be carried out as efficiently as possible, and instead concentrate more peacefully on being together and sharing those parts of the youths' lives that they wanted me to see and understand and that I was able to participate in. This, I slowly realized, fitted well with my understanding of the political as matters that have particular importance to the people in question; working with a loosely defined framework actually gave space and time for those matters to emerge at their own pace and catch my attention. This led to an awareness, too, of the way my sickness on one hand limited the scope of my fieldwork, but on the other facilitated a deep involvement in these three young men's lives. Perhaps I was not immersed in "the field" in quite the way I had pictured—some kind of deep dive into some pre-existent, separate life-world of the youths in question—but I was certainly, and partly still am, immersed in our mutual relationships. From this realization grew an understanding of "the field" as encompassing myself as part and parcel of the lives of these young people, and vice versa. As Amit (2000, 6) writes, "[...] in a world of infinite interconnections and overlapping contexts, the ethnographic field cannot simply exist, awaiting discovery." In my research, this was particularly clear as I conducted fieldwork "at home" in two senses: both in my home country (and partly in my home city), and with familiar young people, in many instances in situations and surroundings with which I was already acquainted. Yet, despite the benefits brought about by my disabilities, they also inflicted considerable limitations. First, I was, for the most part, unable to participate in the free-time hanging around of my research participants, and thus my observations of their informal interaction with their peers are few and far between. Second, to limit the scope of my fieldwork, I did not actively follow the youths' self-expression on social media forums. As the few glimpses I did catch of these areas of the young people's lives indicate, both would be significant in understanding the scope of their political agency. This is a lack in my work that I certainly hope I or other researchers can address in future.

Furthermore, considering the semi-big Finnish cities we all lived in as "the field" did not free me from issues regarding "methodological control", as Passaro (1997, 152) puts it. What kind of "field site" is this? What kind of fieldwork can one do in a setting which is, on one hand, a somewhat unbounded environment, and, on the other, strictly limited in terms of the number of interlocutors? In her own research

among homeless people in New York, Passaro struggled with similar problematics: she did not want to delimit the boundaries of her field site in advance by focusing either on some "manageable" subgroup, such as residents of a certain homeless shelter, or by imagining the homeless to form somewhat coherent social group(s), a kind of subculture(s) of their own (ibid., 151–152). Originally, I had planned to do something in the direction of the former: of working with a bigger group of youth that would be "anchored" somehow and somewhere, and thus possible to handle as a unit of analysis. Now, with these three individual young men living apart, this did not work out. Nor did I want my research to reconstruct them in terms of a category, as explicated above: I could not, and nor did I wish to, treat them in any one-sided way, merely as representatives of some such unit as "immigrant youth" or "refugee youth", imagined to be somehow coherent. Instead, I wanted to inquire what kind of consequences these very categorizations have in their daily lives and how they act on those consequences.[19]

Instructed by Ahmed's (2000; 2004) work on everyday encounters as moments in which difference and similarity are constituted, I chose to focus on observing the embodied encounters of my research participants with the people around them in the variety of sites that I worked in. I paid specific attention to how people related to each other; how they addressed one another by such various means as touch, speech, facial expressions and gestures, and how they withdrew from interaction. This focus developed during research with AK in the family group home, and, as I found it useful, I continued along the same lines in my own research project. In this way, my "field site" turned out to be embodied and momentary, and its central focus came to be the very processes of (re)constructing and challenging the categories that work to objectify immigrant background youth as a bounded group of Others. I did not limit my observation of these kinds of encounters only to situations in which one of my three key research companions were present and in a central role, though of course these situations comprise a notable part of my data as I spent time with them systematically. My data regarding encounters in which difference and similarity are constituted, however, encompasses a much larger number of youths and variety of situations. Thus, I find it safe to claim that the selection of Othering encounters that emerges from my data is, while not exhaustive, at least all too familiar to many

[19] Notwithstanding this aim, using the terms "refugee background" and "immigrant background" in research risks reconstructing the categories in problematic ways. Yet, as Haikkola (2014, 96) points out, as researchers we have to use some terms that name these kinds of societal positionings in order to make structural inequalities visible.

immigrant and refugee background young people living in Finland, and not only to my key research companions.

What is unique to my data, however, and applicable only to my key research companions, is the way they acted in these encounters. When observing this, I focused on their bodily being in space and its ways of relating with other people. Being deeply involved in the lives of these three young men permitted a thick description of the bodily choreographies they each deployed in their everyday encounters, as well as reflecting my observations and interpretations. As my relationship with Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel evolved, and our discussions of, and my understanding about, their personal aspirations and projects gained depth, the modes of agency discernible in these long-term endeavours cropped up as another focus of attention along with the more immediate forms of agency that arose in momentary encounters. Working with a bigger group would not have allowed this, and in the process I learned to value the nuances and profoundness of the data our cooperation yielded. While the specific ways of acting of these three particular young men are not generalizable as such in any way, they testify to some of the means and modes of agency young people in this kind of situations deploy, and something about the agility with which they are used. At the same time, the unique avenue I found each young person pursuing helped deconstruct the image of immigrant and/or refugee youth as forming a coherent social group.

In the end, then, my fieldwork was temporally and geographically sporadic and comprised various settings. In the following two sections I will delineate these in more detail to give a more comprehensive picture of the situations and environments in which I worked, and after that introduce my key research participants.

3.1.1 Institutional homes as field sites

I started fieldwork with AK in the family group home in autumn 2014. The home was located in one of the big cities in Southern Finland (not in the capital region); a biggish, old, brick building, in which there were two floors, two spacious kitchens and a living room, and in which each young person had their own room. Some fifteen young people lived at the home at the time, about two thirds of them boys and one third girls (the numbers kept changing, as new young people move in sporadically and the ones who turn 18 move out), all of them young people who had come to Finland as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and who had been granted refugee status and residence permits. Most of them were teenagers, but there were also a few

children around the age of ten. A couple of young people only spent their afternoons in the home, as they lived with relatives. A few of the others also had relatives in Finland, though most were completely alone in the country. The majority came either from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DR Congo), Afghanistan or Iraq. We were not informed about details of their backgrounds beforehand, and nor did we ask about them, unless the youths themselves wanted to tell us—though some information on their situations inevitably reached our ears during the time we spent in the home. Some had lost their families for good, some did not know whether their family members were alive or not, and some had families either in their home countries or in some other country and kept regular contact with them. As for the home itself, its aim was, on one hand, to support the youths' integration to Finnish society, and, on the other, to teach them the skills they would need when coming of age and moving out of the home. This meant teaching basic skills such as cooking and cleaning, taking care of bureaucracy and one's economy, and supporting the youths in their studies and free-time activities (sometimes it almost felt like an obsession that each young person should have a hobby). There was an educated and dedicated group of staff, a nurse and a regular social worker, and many of the youths were offered psychotherapy, or at least conversational therapy with a psychologist.

We visited the home regularly, once or twice a week, sometimes together and sometimes individually. Each time we spent several hours in the home, and we took care to visit both on regular days, when the everyday life of the home was running its own course, and on special occasions, such as monthly house meetings, parties (birthday parties and Christmas celebrations), and a one-day event in which the staff and the youth planned the coming year's activities and events together. During the special days, our role was more observational, though of course we also helped out with some of the preparations when needed. During regular days we spent time in the house, mostly in the kitchens (there were two: one for the younger ones, for whom a chef prepared their meals, and another for the older ones, who cooked for themselves), in which the youth tended to gather, or together with one or two young people in the living room or in the youth's own rooms, if invited to enter. There were moments when the house was very quiet and the young people were either out or wanted to stay alone in their rooms, and on these occasions we spent time speaking to staff members. But there were also times when the house was full of life and we were occupied doing homework or household chores with the young people, or surfing around for music videos they liked and wanted to show us, or just chatting and joking. We kept a common field diary, where we both wrote our own description

of the day and a reflection of our feelings or observations. I carried a notebook with me in the home, sometimes jotting notes down openly, not only because I found it useful to have at least some conversations written down verbatim, but also to remind the youths that I was constantly doing research and to discuss that with them. AK did not find this practice natural to her, so her notes are written afterwards and quotes are not verbatim.

Even though the time I spent doing fieldwork in the home was relatively short—of my four-month period as AK's research assistant, it took almost two months to negotiate our access to the home as researchers, and I thus participated in the everyday life of the home for about two months—many of the common, yet dramatic, issues regarding these young people's lives in Finland came up. Two turned eighteen and had to move out, which was a very difficult and frightening step for both of them. One received a negative decision on his family reunification application. Two had arrived to Finland and the home recently, and were going through a difficult period adjusting to the new situation. There were also some problems with aggressive behaviour, either concerning some of the youths living in the home, or guests that came to birthday parties, and the police were called at least once during our fieldwork period. On the other hand, there were also lots of moments of joy and expressions of care and togetherness—the Christmas celebration I was present at has, in particular, stayed in my mind as a moment of extraordinary warmth and happiness. And, of course, there were ordinary days when nothing special seemed to go on, everyone was occupied with their own things, and we went along with this common flow.

Along with my work with AK in this institutional home, I also worked in three other homes, roughly two to three months in each, about once a week or two. These were the homes of three young men who had already moved out of the group home and lived on their own, supported by a so-called aftercare youth worker, who visited them each once a week to check how they were doing and help with bureaucracy and practical issues. I was introduced to these young men by this aftercare worker, after explaining what the research was about and asking their willingness to participate. The flats the youths lived in were rented either by city, student, or other organizations that aim to provide inexpensive housing, and the support offered the youths was organized by an NGO and funded by the city council. All of these young people preferred to meet me in their homes; I also met each a couple of times someplace else (such as a café or restaurant), but that was exceptional. They all lived in suburbs, none of them in the areas immigrant background people tend to concentrate in in this particular city, but in small, somewhat characterless areas in

which a dozen or so blocks of flats are crammed between major roads and small patches of greenery, accompanied by a small grocery store, one or two bars, and perhaps a gym.

Even though these were the young people's own homes, they were, in a sense, extensions of the family group home, liminal spaces between the institutional home and private, personal homes. When the young people move out from the home, they are legally entitled to receive "aftercare", which, in practice, means support finding housing, gaining education, maintaining social capacities and psychological well-being, and guaranteeing sufficient income and health care. Even though the youths are, in principle, allowed to have a say in these things, they were heavily pressured by the staff of the family group home and the aftercare workers to accept the first flat offered them, regardless of whether they liked it, or the area in which it was located, or not. The aftercare worker helped the youths find the necessary furniture and in decorating what were the first homes of their own, and the rationale of her weekly visits was also to monitor how they coped with household tasks and with keeping up with the rhythms of daily life. When I first visited the three young men I worked with, I was astonished by the likeness of their homes: All were single flats decorated with black and white furniture and textiles—there were even similar curtains in two of the flats. All had a big, black, artificial leather sofa, a coffee table made of glass with a TV set behind it, long curtains covering all the windows, and otherwise simple furnishings; nothing but the necessary bed and table at which to eat and work. All kept their flats very tidy and organized. They were flats in which the youths were supported, and guided, in the work of building a home of one's own—according to Finnish norms. None of these young people had ever lived alone, and probably never expected to do so, coming from large families and backgrounds far removed from the Finnish norm of moving out at the age of eighteen and living alone until forming a nuclear family of one's own. Now they were all located in one bedroom flats in average suburbs in a semi-big Finnish city, and feeling at home in these flats was anything but self-evident for them. Some of them seemed to adjust to this situation and gradually make themselves at home, but others did not. These three homes, then, constituted part of a field site for me, the nucleus of which was the family group home.

As I started working with these young men, I offered them two possibilities: the first was to do things they found either useful for themselves, or which were fun to do together, and the second was doing specific research tasks. In each case we ended doing both, though emphasis was definitely on the useful things: all of them wanted us to study together, primarily maths, and I spent hours doing homework and

preparing for exams with each of them. The fun part consisted mainly of eating and chatting, and I also did some driving practice with one of the youths; he had recently gotten a drivers' license, but had no car to maintain his skills, so I requisitioned AK's to provide him this opportunity. As for the research tasks, AK and I had thought of different methods in advance, and I suggested four possibilities to the youths (leaving the door open, of course, for their own suggestions): first, that they would take photographs of their daily life, which we would then discuss together; second, that we could compose maps of the important places of their life; third, that we could do walks in the areas of the city that are meaningful for them and talk while doing so; and, fourth, that I could provide them access to equipment for producing some creative stuff around the research questions (like music, drawing, or writing). Two of the young people chose to use photos, and the discussions around them proved extremely illuminating. One was not very keen on doing research tasks, but did once compile a map of important places in his life, showing some genuine interest in the task. With all of them the most fruitful way of working—unsurprisingly—was simply spending time together, often starting with homework and then, when we ran out of steam, continuing chatting in an informal atmosphere over a cup of tea. Mostly I did not use a recorder when spending time with the youths, but memorized our discussions as best I could, writing notes straight after our meetings. I did use a recorder when discussing the photos they took, and when doing a semi-structured interview I conducted with each of them at the end of my fieldwork. I let the youths know that they could turn the recorder off whenever they wanted, or say aloud if they happened to say something they did not wish us to use in our research, though none of them did so.

This field site does not play a big role in this dissertation, however. It has, nevertheless, been of significant importance for me, especially for understanding the position of refugee background youth in the Finnish liberal welfare state, and I use material that sheds light on this specifically in chapters 5.1 and 5.2. The encounters between the youths and the staff at the family group home have been particularly illuminating. They visit these pages only in passing, however, and I find it unnecessary to dwell on their particular situations and backgrounds here. Instead, I introduce the three young men who were former residents of the home and who appear more regularly within the pages of this work. Their backgrounds and life situations are accurate examples of the other youths residing in the home, too, and give the reader sufficient information on what it means in practice to have a background as "an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker" in Finland. Before introducing them, however, I will first outline my fieldwork proper.

3.1.2 Field sites as home(s)

In comparison with the period of fieldwork as part of AK's research project, my own fieldwork was of quite different nature. As mentioned, it was both temporally sporadic and geographically dispersed, though, on the other hand, I was in some ways always in the field during it, as I came to understand that I actually shared a home with my research companions. It was not only the same country, and sometimes the same city, we lived in, thus sharing the national and local sociocultural context, but also often localities that we all were quite familiar with: multicultural youth spaces and projects, sports and music venues, such as futsal halls and football fields, on the one hand, and subcultural concert joints on the other, Finnish schools, and public city space with its parks, libraries and cafés for example. We also literally shared our homes as fieldwork sites, with Emanuel, especially, preferring to meet either at his place or mine, and I often met and worked similarly with Afrax too. Manasse is the only companion of this research whose home I have never visited, and who has not visited mine—for some reason, he preferred to meet either at his (or sometimes at my) favourite café, or at my office. In addition to working closely with these three young men, I also did some fieldwork alone, visiting youth spaces and happenings I knew to attract immigrant background youth. These were quite occasional appearances for my part, however, and do not form a considerable part of my fieldwork, even though they sometimes back up my observations and interpretations in notable ways.

To say that we shared a home or familiar spaces is not to say that our experience of these environments would be similar; it is a different thing, for example, to feel at home in a youth space as a young person to whom it is a sort of second home, or as a professional social youth worker, for whom it is a former working environment—or as a young professional currently transitioning from the former to latter. Or, consider the experience of "going to school" during the period I conducted fieldwork in Emanuel's class: the moment I sat at the school desk, surrounded with the all-too-familiar buzz of the students and the never-ending lecturing of the teacher, I returned to the emotional state of a Finnish teenager trying to bear the monotonous sequence of classes and sluggish minutes spent slouched in the back row. For Emanuel, as the only immigrant and person of colour in the class, the situation has been quite far removed from that, as I try to detail in the chapters on his school. Exactly herein lies the gist of doing anthropological fieldwork "at home": "[...] 'home' is from the start a place of difference," as Gupta & Ferguson (1997, 33) crystallize. They define fieldwork as "location work": as the self-conscious shifting of social and/or

geographical location in order to discover phenomena that would otherwise remain invisible, or to acquire new perspectives on things considered familiar (ibid., 36–37). Frequenting places I thought were familiar to me with my research companions was, for me, an exercise of this kind of "dislocation" (ibid., 37), and it taught me a great deal about the multiplicity of our home(s), of our different positionalities and their effects. Since these places comprise quite a variety, I clarify the scope of my fieldwork with each young man below, while introducing them to the reader.

3.1.3 Research participants and companions

I will first introduce Denis and Adel, the research participants with whom I worked individually in AK's project. Then comes Emanuel, who I also got to know as a participant in AK's research, but who continued working with me during my own research. Finally, the reader will be acquainted with Manasse and Afrax. As already mentioned briefly, I have developed quite deep bonds with the latter three young men, who were my main companions in this journey, and they have also had an active role in this research. My relationship with Denis and Adel (not to speak of other youths that I have briefly encountered along the way), on the other hand, was clearly structured by AK's research and we never got onto very close terms. For them, I was one of those many adults that make a brief visit in their lives and then disappear: social workers, teachers, psychologists and so on—including other researchers, an issue I will return to in chapter 5.1.3. Against this background, it feels even more significant that I was able to work closely, in a participatory fashion and at length with Manasse, Emanuel and Afrax. With them, my role developed into a big sister like position: we have had quite intense and personal discussions, some of which might be surprising for young men to share with an older woman. My openness about my health condition perhaps partly contributed to the development of mutual trust. In this sense, my gender and my vulnerability due to my illness, which I considered as possible obstacles for fieldwork at the beginning, turned out to be enabling, at least in some respects.

As to participation in the research process itself, I spoke with Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax about which areas of their lives they find most important on one hand, and, on the other, possible for me to participate in, and they each invited me to do fieldwork in one area (or some originally two or more, but in practice with each one became most prominent) in addition to our meetings and discussions in private. I have occasionally showed them my notes, and I have had at least one data session

with each of them, during which we discussed my preliminary reflections. Some of these have been quite informal and unstructured conversations, but in some sessions we have read parts of my notes, listened to excerpts of my recordings, and looked at photos taken from field situations, discussing the thoughts arising from and reflecting on these samples of data. During the writing process I have given each the possibility to either read my text themselves or to get an oral explanation of the central argument, which they all wanted to do. In this phase, I have asked the youth to tell me if there are things they wish me to leave out, either to ensure their anonymity or for other reasons, such as unwillingness to reveal personal issues, for example, or details concerning their family members. There were not many things they asked me to omit, and of course I followed their wishes in these few details. All in all, the research process with these three young men has been quite participatory, and I therefore refer to Manasse, Emanuel and Afrax as *research companions* rather than interlocutors or research participants.

Denis

When I got to know Denis, he was around twenty and had lived on his own for about one and a half years. He had arrived to Finland some four years ago, first to a reception centre in a remote small town, and from there to the family group home in his current home city. Denis is originally from the south of Sudan (today South Sudan); I know nothing of his route to Finland, nor many other facts about his background. In Sudan, he had lived with his family, which consisted of both parents, younger siblings and some pets. He had not gone to school, but had learned basic reading, writing and counting skills at the local church. The family is Christian, but Denis did not practice his religion much; during the time he spent at the reception centre he used to go to the local church and knew the priest personally, but in his present home city he didn't go to church regularly. The family was dispersed due to the political unrest in Sudan. Denis's father was involved in armed conflict, but he did not know exactly what had happened to his family, and was not in contact with any family members, whom he missed dearly. He always had a bunch of soft toy animals on his bed, which he took a photo of for our research task. Upon discussing the photos he told me, laughing a bit embarrassedly, that he considers them his family: each of them represented one of his siblings or family pets. In another photo there was a bowl of popcorn, the meaning of which Denis explained by telling me that when he is alone at home, he tries to kill time by watching movies and eating popcorn so that he would not feel so lonely and miss his family so bitterly.

Denis, in any case, seemed to spend very little time at home: for one thing, the vocational school he studied the hotel and restaurant trade at was located far away and transport connections were bad, so what with getting there and back it ate up twelve hours of his day, and, for another, he was extremely sociable, and seemed to know half the city (both people of immigrant and Finnish backgrounds), and spent a lot of free time hanging out with friends and acquaintances. He had active contacts with the family group home where he said he had felt happy, visited there often and told me he considers the residents of the house to be his new family. Moving out had been difficult for him, and living alone was tedious—he told he would rather live with some friend, but organizing this seemed difficult, and his aftercare worker was not keen to further this solution. With Denis, I spent a lot of time studying maths, discovering that he did not have problems with the tasks as such, but that understanding assignments in Finnish was a problem. I enjoyed working with Denis, but he seemed to be a little reserved in relation to me and never quite relaxed, and, partly due to this, partly due to his overwhelming daily schedule, our work together did not last longer than two months.

Adel

Adel was also around twenty years old at the time we worked together. His parents are Iraqis, but he has never lived in Iraq himself. His family fled before he or his younger siblings were born, and, before he traveled to Europe to seek asylum, they lived together in another country in the Middle East, in which their life was very tough. They were poor, Adel had worked with his father since he was five or so, and the children didn't go to school. They met discrimination and bad treatment, but Adel also has some dear memories of the places in which they spent joyous moments together, picnicking or in other leisure activities. Adel had arrived to Finland about five years earlier via Greece. He has some clear memories from the trip that crop up suddenly, taking bodily form—once, for example, he described how dirty the place in which he was staying in Athens was, and showed me how his skin still got goose bumps when thinking about it. Otherwise, he shared many detailed memories with me that seemed to arise associatively, evoked by some music, photo, bodily posture or something like that, and we spent hours talking about his past.

In Finland, Adel was first placed in a reception centre located in a small town in the south of the country. His asylum process took quite long, about one and a half years, and he said he had had a hard time in the remote place the centre was located. After gaining asylum and a residence permit Adel asked to be placed in the family

group home of his current home city. He got the place, but the two friends he had made during his time in the reception centre were sent to other parts of Finland. Adel went through a tough period in the family group home: he was close to committing suicide, but hid his torment from the staff, who did not quite know how to approach him. Instead of showing his agony, he behaved aggressively: 'I was like the devil himself', he told me. But then he got support from a youth psychiatrist, decided himself that he would change, and was now a polite and talkative young man who expressed his emotions vividly. Adel, however, never got very close with the staff of the family group home, and felt abandoned by them upon moving out—only the director had visited him once, otherwise there had been no contact after he was dropped off at the new flat with his few belongings. Luckily, after coming of age, his two friends from the reception centre had moved to the same city as Adel, and the three shared their everyday life to a large extent, often sleeping in each other's homes. Adel did not have other friends—acquaintances, yes, but not friends, and he openly told that he feels very lonely. For a while he had a Finnish girlfriend, but they broke up.

Although Adel is a professed Muslim—he had, for example, a print of the ninety-nine names of Allah on the wall, though he said that he didn't know that much about his religion, and would like to know more—he did not have ties to any local mosque. Adel's family had returned to Iraq, they were all alive and in regular contact with him. He felt constant worry and distress for them having to live in that "hell", as he described the situation in Iraq. Adel's legal representative had not recommended applying for family reunification, and so they had not done so. Adel was still furious about this decision, telling me that even though the chances are minimal and the costs large, they should have at least tried. At the time we worked together, Adel was studying the last courses of the compressed comprehensive curricula for adult immigrants and was pondering his choice of vocation. He told me he would like to help others, and was considering becoming a nurse, but was also worried about this choice: 'Then people will say that all immigrants want to become nurses.' We had an easygoing and relaxed relationship, and Adel seemed to consider me a trustworthy adult from the outset, but also to take it for granted that I would only visit his life as so many other people. We worked closely together for almost three months, but he showed few emotions when we met for the last time and I bid him goodbye, gave him a small present and also my personal phone number in case he wanted to keep contact (he has not).

Emanuel

When we were introduced to each other, Emanuel had quite recently moved to his first flat and was about to turn nineteen. He had lived in Finland for a relatively short period; he had difficulties remembering dates and years, but from the patches of information I got, I concluded that he had arrived to Finland less than three years earlier. Emanuel's home country is Angola, where he had lived with his siblings and parents. The family was rather well-off for most of Emanuel's childhood, but ongoing political turmoil broke it up when Emanuel was in his teens; his parents were lost and believed to have perished, and some of his siblings were known to be dead. The events were violent, dramatic and traumatic. After some complications, Emanuel managed to flee, first to a neighboring country and then to some European country, from where he came to Finland. He was sent to a reception centre, which (again) was in a remote area in a small town, but his asylum process was fast, and after just a couple of months he was told he would move to a family group home on the other side of Finland. At first he objected, feeling overwhelmed by the idea of moving yet again to an unknown city where he knew no-one, but was persuaded by the staff to move. Subsequently, he was happy about that decision.

In the family group home, Emanuel had a very hard time at first: he told me he had felt deeply depressed, regretted coming to Finland, was withdrawn, easily irritable and behaved somewhat rudely. He got some psychological support and described to me how he somehow just changed: "I found my joy again." Following this, Emanuel had felt happy in the family group home, felt that the group spirit was good, and, only half-jokingly, called the director of the house "papa", and the chef "mama". There was still regular, mutual contact between him and the staff of the home. As a devout Christian, Emanuel was also an active member of a small Pentecostal church, attending services weekly and getting joy, support and strength from participating in this community. Of massive importance to Emanuel's well-being had been the information that two of his siblings were alive, and he managed to get in contact with them, and applied—successfully—for family reunification. Of the minor unaccompanied asylum seekers I met during the fieldwork we did with AK, he was the only one whose application had been successful.

When I met him, Emanuel was friendly, warm, self-confident and open, and we quickly got onto quite close terms. He was completing the compressed comprehensive curricula for adult immigrants, was dedicated to his studies, and already had a plan to first study to become a nurse, then a registered nurse, and finally a doctor. Coming from an educated family and having a good school background

himself, he received quite good grades at that time and was progressing relatively fast in his studies. He had a growing social network comprising both immigrant background youth and Finnish people, and he spent a lot of time communicating with people via different social media channels. He also had a Finnish girlfriend whose parents welcomed him in their home, and some other Finnish adults around him who supported him in one way or another. I met Emanuel later than Adel and Denis, and we only had about two month's working together, but, as we were about to finish, he openly brought out his sadness about that. He kept active contact with me after the research period, and we developed a close bond. Thus, it felt natural to ask him to continue working with me for the purposes of this dissertation, and he agreed without hesitation.

The first time I spoke about my own research plans, and asked Emanuel's initial thoughts on participating, was in spring 2015, but it took about half a year before we made a clear agreement on working together. This was partly due to my health problems, which were acute during that period, and partly due to Emanuel's situation, which was always somehow straining. This period was still useful, in the sense that during it some of the issues that were central in Emanuel's life kept regularly coming up and started to attract my attention. I was intrigued by the way Emanuel talked, on one hand, about his situation at school, and, on the other, of how he used considerable amounts of his time and energy pondering on and working for his social relationships. I suggested participant observation in the school as one of many options for doing fieldwork together, and, after considering this suggestion for some weeks, Emanuel told me that he thought it was a good idea, and he welcomed me into the class. After gaining a research permit, I frequented Emanuel's class about two days a week for eight weeks, the period left of the semester. In addition to following classes (I usually sat somewhere at the back or side of the classroom, writing notes fervently), and school life in the corridors and cafeterias, we met regularly to study together. During these meetings we spent, of course, a lot of time chatting about many other issues, too, and generated invaluable data for this dissertation during these discussions. I pretty much never used a recorder with Emanuel—recording hours and hours of studying maths, or cardiovascular diseases, or whatnot, didn't feel like a practical way of catching what was essential. I sometimes showed my notes to Emanuel, just to be sure he knew and remembered what I was doing, but that was probably a bit patronizing: on many occasions he reminded me himself of my position, noting, for example, that, 'now you got good material for your research'.

After the period of doing participant observation at Emanuel's school, I considered our research cooperation as closed. We were still in regular contact as friends, but I felt we had pretty well covered the essential issues and stopped writing notes. His situation changed drastically next spring, that of 2017, however, as his mother was unexpectedly found alive back in Angola. At the same time, Emanuel was supposed to pass his first baccalaureate exams, and was under extreme stress. This situation, and the way it developed, brought out some issues that we both found significant with regard to this research project. I thus started to make notes again, regarding this particular issue, and continued to do so until spring 2020. In addition to the intensive period of working together, which lasted for about ten months, then, this research has in some way been present in our relationship until the very last phases of writing.

Manasse

Manasse's origins are in the DR Congo, but his family (or most of it—some of his siblings stayed, while others followed their parents) fled political turmoil to Rwanda when Manasse was less than two years old. He is from an educated and, back then, well-off family, "semi-rich" in Manasse's own words. His parents are devout Christians, and Manasse describes himself to be a "true believer" too, though he does not practice his faith overtly, and religion is not a subject he would discuss with me of his own initiative. In Rwanda, Manasse's family lived in the proximity of a large and well-established refugee camp, situated next to a rather big city, in a house owned or rented by his parents. Manasse's parents and older siblings were involved in the organization of the refugee camp, and the younger children—including Manasse—went to the camp's school.

Manasse does not have many memories from DR Congo, but, as I am acquainted with some of his other family members, I have heard some stories regarding their circumstances and flight—stories about gunfire, bullet wounds, running among corpses, fear and death. In contrast, the memories Manasse has from Rwanda sound quite happy and safe; the family's life there seemed to run along quite steadily, and the siblings had the possibility to pursue some hobbies in addition to getting some quite good quality education. Manasse's love for music, dance, and football was born during these years. It was still a refugee camp, however, and his parents chose to register at the UNHCR in order to find a new home country via the refugee quota system. They were chosen by Finland, brought here when Manasse was about 14, and placed in a town in eastern Finland, close to the border, in which other refugees

from DR Congo were already settled. Manasse fared alright in his new home town, acquiring friends with whom he was still in contact years later, when I worked with him, and, contrary to many other refugee background children, proceeding with his studies so fast that he was actually allowed (upon his own request) to move up a class to study with Finnish children who were a year older than him. A bit later, one of Manasse's older siblings moved to a bigger city in the south of Finland to study at a vocational school, and the rest of his family soon followed, Manasse moving along with the others.

I got to know Manasse soon after the move to the south of Finland through my job as a social worker. He participated in a few of the many projects I led at that time, on each occasion showing commitment and enthusiasm for the project in question, be it an international youth exchange or some initiative of smaller scale. During these years, Manasse completed comprehensive school with excellent grades, started to study in vocational school, and graduated (after some complications, since 'it is not exactly my thing' as he himself formulated) from the field of HPAC. Later on, he worked odd jobs in construction, cleaning and youth work sectors, finally acquiring a steady job in the field of logistics. During the years we knew each other in the framework of youth work, our relationship developed into an open and trusting one, which made it easy for me to ask him to participate in my research: I could trust him to be frank in his views about it and his willingness to participate or not. He was immediately interested in my project and expressed a willingness to work together.

We started out in spring 2015 and met regularly for about a year. Manasse was especially willing to let me familiarize myself with his free-time activities: his music projects, sports activities and general social hanging around. I participated in all these, but Manasse's music came to form the most prominent part of our work together. I was personally present at some of his gigs, and have watched videos of several others, followed one music project he participated in targeted at disadvantaged youth (chapters 5.2 and 6.2 are based on this project), and collected lyrics written by him. After we finished meeting and working together regularly, I continued to follow his music via the internet, where he publishes songs, videos and photos in different forums. When meeting in private I rarely used a recorder with Manasse, partly because we tended to meet in cafés and other public spaces, partly because it did not feel natural as our discussions tended to be quite personal and to flow to all directions. I did use a recorder on occasions where we had some specific research related issue at hand, such as in our data sessions. During Manasse's gigs, at their soundchecks and other preparations, I sometimes made notes openly with a

laptop, as he seemed to feel completely at ease with this practice, coming sometimes to have glance at what I was doing. We had another, more intensive, period of working together during the phase of writing the chapters concerning him: he read big chunks of my text, and we had profound discussions on them. Otherwise, we are not in active contact, yet meeting him after long breaks has always felt easy and natural, and we quickly return to our accustomed, rather confidential, way of conversing.

Afrax

Afrax spent most of his childhood in Mogadishu in Somalia. His family was not particularly well-off, though it was not particularly impoverished either: Afrax's grandmother owned a house in and around which the extended family was concentrated, they had enough to cover basic living costs and needs—food, for example, was simple, but there was enough—and some of the family were educated. Nevertheless, in order to secure their livelihood, Afrax's parents were forced to travel in search of work, and, for long periods, Afrax was reared by other relatives. He was not happy with this situation and ran away from home, spending some months living on the streets of Mogadishu. Perhaps surprisingly, he now looks back to those times with some nostalgia, saying that they were the most carefree times of his life: he did not have to worry about anything but earning a few coins to buy some food and of finding some corner in which to sleep. He sold fish, flip flops, or whatever else he was given the opportunity to sell by some adult street vendor, and slept in mosques, coal heaps, or wherever he felt safe enough. When not on the streets, he lived in the family house, went to Quran school and, at least occasionally, to a UNICEF run school where basic literacy and arithmetic were taught. His family are professed Muslims, and so is Afrax—though later, as he was growing up, he started to question some of the religious practices and rules, if not the religion itself.

Afrax was around ten when his parents decided to flee Somalia. His father found his way to Finland as an asylum seeker, while his mother, two of their children (some siblings stayed behind), and a cousin, raised as one of the siblings, crossed the border to Kenya.[20] Afrax remembers the journey—first by plane, to a town near the border, then by lorry across the border at a spot they had heard to be safe for clandestine crossing—as an exciting and fun one, though looking back at it as an adult he

[20] Fostering (relatives') children is a rather common practice among Somali people, whose understanding of "family" is much more extended and dynamic than the model of the Western nuclear family (Tiilikainen et al. 2016, 47; 61).

considers it risky. In Kenya, his mother and the children lived in Nairobi for about a year while waiting for a decision on their family reunification application. When it came, it was positive, and the family arrived in Finland and settled in the city in which the father was already living in southern Finland.

I got to know Afrax perhaps a year after they had arrived in Finland, when he was in his teens and studying in a normal class in the upper level of comprehensive school. His was one of the most regular faces to be seen in our youth work unit, and he came almost every day the youth space was open to participate in futsal, other activities and to do homework. Afrax's family was struggling to make ends meet in Finland: being illiterate, his mother never got employed, despite her considerable working experience from abroad, and his father was unemployed at times, having serious issues with his health. Afrax could not count on getting economic support from home and was always one of the keenest to find summer jobs or any other opportunities to make a few euros. He did alright at school, being a smart young man when he could find the willpower to concentrate, but also finding studying at that point somewhat frustrating and the call of the streets and football fields at times too tempting. He was still determined to gain education in order to ensure a decent income, and around the time I was finishing my work in this unit he was about to finish comprehensive school and was pondering some vocational training. I might have something to do with his decision to start studying youth work: I had been impressed by his social skills and ability to tutor younger peers and had warmly recommended social work to him.

By the time I started to work with Afrax in the framework of this research project, he was about to graduate as a youth worker and was working in a peer mentoring project (chapters 5.3 and 6.3 are largely based on this period). My fieldwork with Afrax lasted for about two years, and it comprises participant observation of his work, which I did in quite sporadic and unsystematic fashion over a period of about a year; our common exploration of African history and its representations, including two "field trips" we did together, one to Helsinki and one to London; and a series of our profound and deeply personal discussions. As Afrax had more trouble than the other youths regarding our relationship, which was a mix of friendship and research (an issue to which I will return in the section regarding ethical questions), I developed a habit of using a recorder with him very early on, and continued to do so whenever possible, to make my role as a researcher more visible and present. In addition to our conversations specifically related to certain themes of my research, I have thus also recorded several completely spontaneous conversations we had during the time we worked together. I always kept the recorder visible, and told

Afrax that he could stop it any time he wished to do so. He did not do so, but there were times when I did, when the discussion turned towards issues I found too delicate to be recorded or used in this research. The data we generated in this way is thus very rich and highly personal, offering unique insight to his life, yet demanding sensitivity when used as research material.

3.2 Pondering ethical questions

This leads me to the ethical quandaries I have encountered during my research process. As presupposed by the general ethical principles of research (e.g. TENK 2019, 50), I have tried to prevent causing any harm to my research participants or companions, their families and intimates or other relevant communities. I have sought to fulfill this principle both from a point of view based on Finnish and EU legislation and guidelines given by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK), but also by reflecting and evaluating ethical issues more widely—since, simple as the principle may sound, following it in ethnographic research often turns out to be uncertain and ambiguous. As I conducted fieldwork in many different settings—in institutions, such as Emanuel's school, in informal situations that involved large and continuously changing groups of other young people and adults, such as Manasse's music project, and individually with each research companion—I have had to consider ethical questions from multiple perspectives. The clearest difference between research settings concerns the fieldwork I did as AK's research assistant and my own fieldwork. I will thus first briefly treat the ethical issues that arose with regard to AK's project, and then move on to the specific questions regarding the work I have conducted independently.

3.2.1 Research with vulnerable groups: children, youths, and refugees

As laid out above, ethnographic work in AK's project consisted of two parts: participant observation in a family group home, where all the residents were minors, and my individual work with three young men who had arrived in Finland as unaccompanied minors, but had already turned eighteen and moved out of the family group home. Since the target group of AK's study was, arguably, extremely vulnerable, she had to show greatest care in considering ethical issues, applying for research permits, and when asking for consent forms either from the youths

themselves, or, in cases where they were under fifteen years of age, from their legal representatives.[21]

Unsurprisingly, the latter turned out to be somewhat problematic. Approaching these youths, some of whom had only just arrived in Finland and who had all recently gone through traumatic experiences, with a consent form first did not work out too well. For those who had already moved out of the home, whose language skills were rather good, and with whom I also had plenty of time and peace to discuss the meaning of the form thoroughly, filling it out and signing it did not prove to be too great an obstacle. In the case of some of the youths residing in the home, however, we soon realized that not only would it be impossible, but also unethical to stick to the ideal of getting the forms signed during the first weeks of our research. As AK writes, when one works with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, one has to be able to separate "official ethics" from "lived ethics" and appreciate the contextual nature of the dividing line between these two. In her estimation, instead of trying to push the consent forms in a compulsory manner, it was better to act in a more flexible way, adapting the official ethical procedures more to the situation of each young person and inch forward accordingly. In the end, all but three of the sixteen young people residing in the home gave their consent, even though some signed the form only during the last weeks of AK's fieldwork period (I worked in the home for a bit less than three months, after which she continued for another four months). (Kuusisto-Arponen 2015, 85.)

This meant that we were conducting fieldwork in a situation in which some of the young people present either had not been able to digest the information regarding the research, were still considering whether they wanted to participate in it, or were simply unwilling to do so. In discussions with the director of the home it was decided that these youth would not be shut out from the social situations and common activities we shared with the residents of the home. That would have felt unfair and thus unethical, especially with regard to those youths still considering their participation. Hence, these youth were often present in the situations that we observed, and we treated them as parts of the social milieu rather than as research participants, as part of the general phenomena in which our actual participants were enmeshed. Private discussions that we had with these youths and other information concerning them were not included in the research data so as to respect their wishes not to be considered participants in the research (ibid., 85). For me, working as a research assistant in this project was an enlightening experience as to the

[21] See Kuusisto-Arponen 2016 for a more detailed description on ethical procedures regarding her project as a whole.

problematics that "official ethics" sometimes cause; despite aiming to the contrary, in some cases procedures such as informed consent forms can turn out to be obstacles, and actually work against conducting ethical research. In the next sections, I will look at these issues with regard to my own research project, and then move on to ethical issues that reach beyond "official ethics".

3.2.2 Informed consent

In research with human participants, informed consent is a central ethical principle according to the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2019, 51) and numerous other similar organizations. While "[...] energetic critiques have been mounted of the autonomous, rational individual evoked by the concept and the fetishization of informed consent at the expense of broader moral issues [...]" (Bell 2014, 511), anthropologists have largely embraced the principle, to the extent that it "[...] has reached the status of an unassailable value [...]." (Ibid., 513.) In my research project, I have also treated it as such, despite (yet acknowledging) the criticism that Bell (ibid.) and others (e.g. Murphy & Dingwall, 2007) have raised. I did so for two reasons: first, I found applying the practice to my particular research project possible and useful, and, second, when I started out I could meet the requirements of the legislation regarding research in which personal data is processed as part of the same procedure (see the next subsection on the legal requirements).

At the beginning of our work together, I made a written and signed agreement with each of my research companions. That informed consent is preferably done in writing, and signed by the research participants, is a practice that many ethnographers have criticized, arguing, for example, that ethics committees "[...] don't understand anything about the different cultural meanings of 'paper'" (Wynn 2011, 102). Others have pointed out that, in ethnographic research, a form signed at the beginning of the research is problematic, as, on one hand it might disrupt the process of building rapport with interlocutors and, on the other, it is problematic to assume that a consent form signed at the beginning of an extended period of fieldwork will be remembered by the research participants at later stages of the research (Bradburd 2006; Murphy & Dingwall 2007). Furthermore, one of the greatest problems with the use of consent forms in ethnographic research is the very nature of this work: as Murphy & Dingwall (2007, 2227), for example, stress, "[...] the research focus and the research design typically emerge during the course of the research [...]". Also, analysis of ethnographic process is typically an iterative process,

in which the lines of analysis emerge along the way, and which is therefore impossible to explicate in the necessary detail beforehand in the informed consent form (ibid., 2227). Malkki (2007, 180–181) underlines that this open-endedness is not to be understood as an awkward by-product of ethnographic work, but that "a tradition of improvisation" is fundamental to anthropological fieldwork practice, and as such is a "risk and responsibility" that the ethnographer must take.

These issues were relevant in my research project as well, but not to an extent that would have made signed informed consent forms futile or completely problematic. Informed by these criticisms, I have not given too much weight to the forms I signed with the youths at the beginning of our work together, but I have considered them a useful if evidently partial tool. When signing the forms, I had a thorough discussion with each of my research companions, explaining to them the points in the form written by me, and asking whether they had other points to add. All of them wanted to stress the possibility of either having breaks from, or ending, our research agreement if their life situations so required, the right to which I naturally also wanted to be clear for them. One of them also asked me to add a point whereby I would promise not to consume myself too much with the research work (he was well informed about my health problems), a point which I did indeed add to the agreement, and to which he referred at times when he was of the opinion that I was stretching my limits too far. Instead of a one-off situation in which an official form is signed and stowed away, we thus spent quite some time discussing these issues over more than one meeting. I am not claiming that my research companions would have gained a comprehensive understanding of the research at this point—due to the open-ended nature of ethnographic research, I didn't have one either. But I did find the moments we spent sitting with the form in front of us a welcome rather than a disruptive break, one which signaled to all of us that we were now truly starting a research collaboration, in which I took our agreement and the information they would disclose to me seriously, and that ensured that they have certain rights, which it was highly important for me that we took care to respect together. Signing the form worked as a starting point for reflecting these issues together throughout the research process.

3.2.3 Personal data and legislation versus ethnographic research

From the initial stages of my research project, I have tried to take as much care as possible to protect the youths' anonymity. I used pseudonyms in my notes from the outset, stored my data on separate hard disks in a locked space, and I will destroy it after use. As long as it exists, it is considered to contain sensitive personal data according to Finnish law as it includes both direct and indirect information on my research participants' personalities (Kuula 2006, 82–83). Thus, I have had to follow legislation regarding the handling of this data, as well as when writing and publishing results that are based on it. However, the Personal Data Act (523/1999), which was my guideline at the beginning of the project was changed to bring it into line with new EU regulation, and the new Data Protection Act (1050/2018) came into force in May 2018. Signed consent forms, for example, were required under the old act, but the criteria regarding their content are stricter in the new act. The new act specifies simultaneously, however, that if personal data is collected for research purposes, then this can be done without express informed consent (this is also the case for delicate data), the legal basis for which is the research being in the public interest (DPA 4§; 6.1§, 7).

In my estimation, my research fulfills the minimum requirements of both the old and the new laws. In addition to the written agreements and reflection of ethical issues during fieldwork, I gave the youths the opportunity either to read all the parts that concern them or to get a thorough explanation of their contents from me in the writing up phase, especially around issues that might be delicate. I have underlined their right to ask me not to write about issues they do not wish to have published. Some asked me to leave certain details out—as mentioned in chapter 2, above, these were mainly issues that not only concerned themselves, but also members of their families—and obviously I respected these wishes. Unlike Kuula (2006, 136) suggests, however, I did not simply leave it up to my research companions to decide which details are too delicate and which are not for themselves: I have brought out my concerns regarding some of the issues these young people have not found problematic, we have discussed these together, and, sometimes, I have decided to leave something out even though the young person considered it unproblematic to publish themselves. Also, I have omitted references that would reveal either direct or indirect personal information.[22]

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[22] I have listed these references separately, and can provide more information on them upon well-founded request.

Nevertheless, according to the new act, when it is deemed that personal information is handled in the public interest, questions of anonymization have to be considered with the greatest care. Even before the law changed, anonymization was the issue that caused me most trouble, as I was trying to balance the need to ensure it with the specificities of conducting ethnographic research. Taken at face value, the requirement that "an outsider cannot recognize the participants" is met in this dissertation. All names are pseudonyms; specific field locations are not revealed; and I have also intentionally altered some non-relevant details (for example exact age, education, or details in background, such as the route of refuge or family details) in order to avoid giving away too much indirect personal information. However, it is somewhat unclear what is meant by "outsiders". As Murphy & Dingwall (2001, 341; emphasis original) note, in ethnographic research it is practically impossible "[...] to give *absolute* guarantees that the identities of people and places will remain hidden." Since fieldwork often is, and for ethical reasons aims to be, overt (so as not to conduct covert research) "[...] many people come to know that it is taking place and will be able to identify the source of data after publication." At the very least, the participants are likely to recognize themselves and to some extent each other. As I conducted parts of my fieldwork in institutions or settings in which (almost) everybody present knew that I was there as a researcher, and as some of the young people I worked with were themselves open to their friends, colleagues and families about participating in my research, inevitably there are people who can at the very least recognize my research companions from the pages of this dissertation. Furthermore, even though none of the young people are readily recognizable for complete outsiders to my research, it is still possible that someone keen to find out who they are might succeed in doing so with some intent googling, other background research and reasoning. This applies especially to those among my participants who have appeared publically under their own name, with their own face and giving their own opinions. Even though the EU regulation on which the new Data Protection Act is based gives freedom to handle delicate data in case the person in question has gone public themselves (General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679 9.2 e), the fact of fulfilling legal requirements does not free me from pondering the ethical quandaries raised by these issues.

On the other hand, commitment to the ethics of ethnographic research in some cases goes against the grain of current legislation regarding anonymization. For thorough anonymization risks both eradicating significant nuances in the data, and erasing the research participants as *persons* who are variously socially and culturally positioned. This, in turn, means compromising the analytic value of research, as it is

the very richness and thickness of description that yields understanding of the life-worlds of different groups of people. Wholesale anonymization might thus turn out to be ethically problematic, if it hinders the right of the research participants to be understood and seen. In my project, the group being studied—young men categorized as refugees and immigrants—have more at stake than most as participants in this kind of research. Their presence and belonging in Finland is contested, which means, on one hand, that having their opinions and acts published might provoke some anti-immigrant and/or racist individuals to actually try to find out their identity for purposes of hate speech. On the other hand, exactly because of these young people's contested status, it is especially important to conduct research concerning their lives. As Honkatukia et al. (2006, 314–315) point out, in research with groups that are in vulnerable positions, serious tension between their right to be seen, heard and recognized, and the need to safeguard them from any harm the research might cause prevails. There is no unambiguous solution to this problem, they stress, hence the researcher should be aware of it and stay sensitive to its different nuances in varying situations. In some cases I have felt it necessary to respect my research companions' explicit wishes to reveal information that might compromise their anonymity, but which is of great relevance for understanding their situations and the grave effects certain practices have on their lives, such as issues related to family reunification policies.

3.2.4 Ethical questions beyond legislation and "official ethics"

As the above suggests, simply following legislation is no guarantee of ethically sound research. I have reflected on each difficult decision on whether to include, or omit, issues that might compromise either the anonymity, or the right to be heard, of my research companions thoroughly myself, together with the research companions, and with my supervisors. In the kind of project that I conducted—in which I had relatively few research companions—this has been possible despite its time-consuming nature, and, in my opinion, it has been the best way to balance the tension articulated by Honkatukia et al. (2006). There were also some ethical issues that have preoccupied me during the research project to which legislation does not provide ready answers, two of which have been the most central: the first has to do with the aforementioned question regarding "insiders and outsiders" of the research, and the second my position and role in relation with my research companions.

How overt can ethnographic fieldwork be?

While being open about conducting research is, as Murphy & Dingwall (2001, 342) point out, one of the ethical cornerstones of ethnographic research, they also underline that distinguishing between covert and overt research is by no means straightforward: since ethnographers often have limited control over who enters their field of observation "[...] in complex and mobile settings, it may simply be impractical to seek consent from everyone involved." Thus, ethnographic research tends to lie on a continuum between overtness and covertness. The balance between being as overt as possible and the need to be covert in order to protect my research companions' anonymity has been an issue that has preoccupied me throughout my work. For example, when I was starting fieldwork in Emanuel's school, I was pondering whether his classmates and teachers should be counted as research participants, and treated accordingly with regard to informed consent, or not. Applying the premise of informed consent would have meant the loss of Emanuel's anonymity and put him in a difficult situation with regard to his classmates. It would, most likely, also have affected situations in the school and hence the results of my research. In this case, I discussed the issue with the education coordinator of the school who granted me permission to carry out my research. The coordinator suggested that I inform the whole school of my presence as a researcher studying interaction among students and teachers in the school space, but not to inform anyone else than herself that my special focus was the encounters of one (immediately recognizable) refugee background student with other students and teachers. I followed her recommendation, and no-one in the school—including the coordinator herself, as she never asked, and I never told her, Emanuel's name nor which class I was going to observe—knew that I was there because of Emanuel, and the students and teachers of his class did not know I was only observing that particular class. I didn't participate in the lessons every day, but on random days of the week, so they could not draw any conclusions on that basis either. As time passed, however, Emanuel started to seek my company during breaks and after the lessons, and his classmates might have guessed that my research was somehow connected to him particularly. That was Emanuel's own choice, though, and we did reflect on it together at times: he said that it didn't matter anymore what the others know or what they think of him.

A somewhat similar problematic came up when I was observing Manasse's music project, in which other young people and instructors were involved. Manasse explicitly asked me not to tell the others about his participation in my research, so I

never negotiated with anyone else than Manasse about "access" to this field, not to speak of applying for research permits. In this case, my fieldwork observations in which other members of the group are present are only from public situations, in practice from the live performances the group did. We did have a plan for me to come to their rehearsals as well, but this never materialized. I did not enter a backstage or practice space, and hence avoided ending up in a situation in which the ethical contradiction between Manasse's right and the other youths' would have become pressing. Afrax, on the other hand, was quite open about his participation in my research with his colleagues, friends and the youths with whom he worked, and I did not face similar issues as in the cases of Manasse and Emanuel. I negotiated access to the NGO unit with its head, who granted it readily, and when I participated in Afrax's job situations, we informed his colleagues about my role in advance as well as in the situation itself. In addition, the youths with whom Afrax worked in the youth space itself were informed—though I am quite certain that this information did not reach all of them, as the users of the space kept changing, and their willingness to concentrate on the content of such official information tended to fluctuate. In some other (semi)public field sites—such as youth spaces or sports or art venues—there were also people who either did not necessarily know I was conducting research, or were not aware of exactly what I was conducting it about, as it turned out to be impossible to inform everybody, either due to constant changes in the group present, or because of the need to protect my research companions' anonymity.

With regard to the presence of under-informed participants in all the aforementioned sites, I have applied a similar solution to that used with AK in the family group home with regard to the staff and the youth who had not signed the research agreement: I have not treated them as research participants, but as parts of the milieu, of the general phenomena in which my actual participants and research companions were enmeshed. I have not gathered information that would include personal data concerning these people, and I have taken care to ensure that any of their anonymity is under actual risk. Their presence has certainly informed this research, as I have learnt from them too. But these people only appear in the pages of this dissertation in passing, mostly as characters constructed from bits and pieces of real persons: I have left out some details, changed others and added some in order not to reveal too much information about any one person. In this way, I have tried to ensure no harm was inflicted on them because of this research.

Another question was the kind of implications this setting had for Manasse and Emanuel. Being aware of my observing eye among a group of peers who were not

aware of exactly what was going on might put them in a peculiar position. The feeling I got was that they were more at ease with it than I was. Both sought my company in certain situations in the field, interacting with me openly, and, on the other hand, often seemed to be able to be absorbed in their tasks and other interactions without taking account of my presence. This issue never really came up in our discussions about our cooperation, either: I sometimes tried to ask how my presence felt, but got quite brief answers to the effect of 'it is nice to have you around'. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to estimate how the setting may have affected their behaviour in, or experience of, the situations.

Ethics of engagement

Ethical issues regarding my position and role in relation with my research companions preoccupied me especially in the initial stages of my fieldwork. In the beginning, this concerned mostly Afrax and Manasse, both of whom I previously knew as their youth worker. I was worried about how our existing relationship might influence them and the way they related to the research project. I knew Emanuel beforehand too, but that was a bit different; we had initially gotten to know each other through AK's research project, and thus being in a researcher–research participant relationship was much clearer to us already. With Afrax and Manasse, I had to think about such issues as how the authority I used to have over them as their youth worker, or the emotional bonds that already existed between us, might affect our work together. Later on, as my relationship both with Emanuel and Afrax clearly started to develop into a form of friendship, I started to ponder over the problems of the "friendship and fieldwork link" (Cerwonka & Malkki & 2007, 97).

With each of these young persons, with whom I worked closely for more than a year, the course of our (research) relationship and the ethical issues linked to it developed in distinct ways. With Manasse, my worries turned out to be mostly groundless. From the initial stages of our work together he took an active role in defining the ways we worked together, and the way he communicated gave me the impression that he had a pretty clear idea of the kind of things he wanted to disclose to me. His ways of being around me spoke to an experience that we were of pretty much equal standing in relation to each other. Sometimes, he made me realize that my worries about my relationship with the youths was, to some extent, patronizing. As Cerwonka & Malkki also note (2007, 94), "[...] the ethnographer's relationship with an informant is not authored or defined by the ethnographer alone. Informants, too, continually observe and learn things about the ethnographer as a social being, a

person—and decide how they want the relationship to develop, or not." Manasse might, for example, answer my sms in which I suggested a meeting time and some topics to discuss with: "Let's see tomorrow then what we will talk about." He tended to have clear opinions about who to inform about my research (as will be clear from the above), and about which areas of his life he welcomed me to share. At times he also took initiative to gather data he considered relevant for me (such as taking a video of his band's gig), and he wasn't shy about bringing out his disagreement with my interpretations in the writing phase of this dissertation. He brought out his ready awareness of the value working with him had to my research, but he also felt that it was in some ways useful for himself: it was a chance for self-reflection, for somehow summing up his life and projects in Finland, and also for learning how this kind of research is conducted. The longer we worked together, the stronger my feeling grew that he "knows exactly what he does and doesn't want," as I once wrote in my field reflections.

Things were different with Emanuel and Afrax, with whom balancing my roles as a researcher and as a friend-confidante became an issue to some extent. With Emanuel, it was an issue mostly for me, not for him, as he repeatedly brought home to me when I raised my concerns. I sometimes felt the need to remind him that he does not need to tell me certain details of his background, or that if he does tell me, he should be aware of my being a researcher and possibly using this information in my work. On such occasions he would look me solemnly in the eye and tell me that I should not worry about these things: he knows what he is doing, he trusts me, and as long as I keep my promise to go through the things I have written about him together, he has no worries about my being a researcher. Also, some of his spontaneous remarks made it clear to me that despite the intimacy of our friendship he had not forgotten my other role: for example, he sometimes noted that "now you got more data for your work" when we were discussing some recurrent crisis in the residence permit situation of his family members.

In the case of Afrax, my pondering was more worthwhile, and we used considerable time reflecting on our relationship that evolved increasingly towards genuine friendship. During quite an early stage of our work together he once noted that I 'don't feel like a researcher'. When I asked him what he meant, he first said that I should, at the very least, have spectacles, before turning serious: 'No but truly, you are not like distant.' This remark indicates that it was at times hard for him to remember that I was conducting research while spending time with him, and that this was to some extent problematic. We discussed the issue time and again, but for quite a while felt sufficiently at ease. To make my methods of working more

transparent, I showed him passages of my field notes, and in our common data session we also listened excerpts of the recorded discussions and went through other material I had chosen from the data. I persistently underlined to Afrax that we could end our common project whenever he wished to do so, and that it was important to me that I could trust that he would say so, did he indeed wish to. And, in the end, he actually did:

> It is beginning of the summer and we have met in order to have ice cream together in our regular ice-cream-in-the-summer park. First, we talk about all kinds of things that we have been up to or thinking about lately. Then, we turn to topics regarding my research project and plans that we have made related to it. We had applied for funding for a study trip to London during Black History Month, but it was not granted. I ask Afrax if he is disappointed, and he admits that he is. We start to consider alternative sources of funding, but don't come up with much. It starts to rain, first just a little, and we stubbornly sit on my picnic blanket continuing our conversation, but the rain gets suddenly harder and we have to escape fast. We run towards the nearest house and find refuge in a doorway. We stand on opposite sides of the door so as to be as well covered from the rain as possible while not hindering people in walking in and out. In this somewhat uncomfortable moment, Afrax starts a new topic: 'I would like to talk about this work.' He tells me how, the closer we become, the more difficult it is for him, that he does not know who I am, a researcher or a friend. We talk about this for a while, and I apologize to him for not being able to be clearer about my position—I find it complicated myself. Again, I tell him that he is free to decide any time that we should finish the research part, and finally he says that he thinks we could still do some things that we have already planned, and then finish or re-evaluate the situation. I feel uncomfortable the rest of the day about causing him distress, and in the evening I send him an sms underlining that I personally see our friendship as more central than our research relationship. He answers: "Yeah I also think first and foremost so and I feel that we are quite close friends. This is why I started to think how our roles change and so on. But yeah, let's see if we can treat these [issues] together."

We did as he suggested; continued working together around some topics during that summer and, the next autumn, we traveled together to London, where we participated in the Black History Month celebrations and finished our common fieldwork. Our friendship still prospers.

Being emotionally engaged with Manasse, Afrax and Emanuel was, thus, not ethically unproblematic. But as Cerwonka & Malkki (2007, 97) note, social situations can never approximate laboratory situations, hence the researcher cannot neutralize themselves in the research process. This means that research ethics need to be thought from the perspective of an "ethics of engagement", of remaining consciously aware of "[...] one's investment in and even fusion with the 'object' of inquiry." (Ibid., 31–32.) Ethnographic research is not, Malkki (2007, 178) underlines,

a straightforward matter of working but a matter of living, a way of being in the world with senses and emotions. Ethics of engagement was my guideline in this research project, in which the love (partly professional youth worker kind of love, partly sisterly) I felt towards my research companions was a factor I could not even imagine "neutralizing". Instead of trying to do that, I chose to be as open about my research practices as I could, and to involve the youths in the research process as much as I could and to the extent that they themselves wanted to.

Yet I do not want to suggest that the experience of closeness, emotional bonding and relative equality with my research companions does away with the power relations that inevitably structured our work together. Even though the youths have participated, to some extent, both in defining the contexts and forms of my fieldwork as well as in the analysis and writing phases, this process of knowledge production has still principally been in my hands, and has been both informed and controlled by academic practices. In this sense, it would be dishonest to claim that we could have been "equal partners" (McBeth 1993, 162) in it, or that my research companions have acted as "co-authors" (Clifford 1986, 17). As Ahmed (2000b, 56) notes, these redefinitions risk simply concealing power relations: in this "postmodern fantasy", the ethnographer is still authorized, but this time as "[...] the 'I' of the ethnographer that can undo the power relations that allows the 'I' to appear." The hands that have carried this research process out are those of a white, middle-aged Finn—by both ethnicity and nationality—with a middle-class background and a position as a doctoral researcher at a university. As these social facts in some ways influence even my personal relationships with my research companions, they inevitably have positioned us in asymmetrical power relations in this research project. In comparison with these young people, I am privileged in many ways, and I cannot undo the effects of that privilege by engaging in dialogue and using participatory research methods—their value as such notwithstanding. In a way, then, this privilege is a disadvantage: since the differences between us are at least partly impermeable, there is no way for me to overcome the boundaries—racial, gendered, educational—between us (Ahmed 2000b, 58). Even though spending time together with my research companions surely has been instructive for me, for example regarding what it means to inhabit a black body in a white Finnish landscape, I still cannot inhabit that body and cannot claim to know what it is like. And even though inhabiting a chronically sick body has forced me to know what it means to be a non-normative body, and thus sensitized me to the different faces of non-privileged experience, I don't believe, as Hedva (2016) suggests in their *Sick Woman Theory*, being disabled by a chronic illness enables me to overcome racial boundaries and

truly know that experience. I don't know. I have tried to incorporate awareness of this "not knowing" as a part and parcel of the ethics of engagement that have guided my work.

3.3 Analyzing and interpreting data

"Not knowing", Hakala & Hynninen (2007, 213) argue, is the basis on which an ethnographer defines the questions they ask. As they determine what they don't know in a specific context of knowledge, time and place, their questions in turn determine the field—or at least what they observe and what kind of data they produce. Malkki (2007, 171; emphasis original) writes: "The 'facts' or 'data' are not, in other words, objets trouvés waiting to be discovered and recorded. They are *made* [...]. They are a social product, whether expressed in numbers, words, images, or other media." Understanding this, Malkki (ibid., 171–172) underlines, is not a novel insight in anthropology: long before postmodern reflections on the social construction of knowledge, Malinowski wrote about the need for constantly switching from observation and data collection to moulding theory and, vice versa, having plastic theoretical ideas that adapt to empirical data. On one hand, observations are impossible without theory, but, on the other, theories must be re-moulded, and even dispensed with, in the course of observation and analysis. (Malinowski 1935, 321; ref. Malkki 2007, 172.) In addition, ethnographic truths have long been recognized to be "partial" (Clifford 1986, 7) or "particular" (Leach 1967, 78; ref. Malkki 2007, 167): they are in essence "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1991). This, Cerwonka (2007, 26) argues, is relevant not only in the sense of acknowledging how one's positionality and sociohistoric situatedness affects one's research, but also in the sense of understanding that without the mediation of a researcher situated in a particular way the information would be meaningless and uninterpreted. "This point bears on the important question of how one's personhood is also a *condition for* knowledge claims, rather than a deterrent to understanding" (ibid., 28; emphasis mine).

Continual tacking between empirical data and theoretical concepts has formed the backbone of this research process as well, especially during the analysis phase. On one hand, I have read and re-read my data through different kinds of theoretical lens, asking what emerges from it as especially interesting from a particular conceptual vantage point. On the other hand, I have let the data challenge the concepts by asking what they do not recognize, or the ways in which my data does

not fit a certain theoretical framework, but sticks out as disturbing and demanding attention. Thirdly, I have tacked between my own field notes, material which is not based on my interpretation, such as recordings, videos, photos, or reports written by others, and my research companions' reflections regarding the interpretations I have made on the basis of this body of material. The movement back and forth between theory, empirical material and interpretations of it has, as the literature quoted above emphasizes, been a continual process throughout this research process, and it would be impossible to unfold all the layers of this work. In the following section, then, I will concentrate on describing those dimensions of my analysis that are more prone to explication.

3.3.1 Coding

When I first wanted to distance myself from the fieldwork and get absorbed in my data as a mass of information, I started out by doing some quite fervent coding. As encounters had emerged as my primary focus already during my fieldwork, I started coding by going through all the encounters that I could find in my data: encounters that I had witnessed, and encounters I had been told about. At this point, I included all my data in the process, from the fieldwork I had done in larger settings (like the family group home, or a youth space) to more detailed individual work with my research companions. I started the analysis from such an encompassing vantage point to tease out themes that would be relevant with regard to refugee background young men more generally, not "just" from the vantage point of my three main research companions. I tried to pinpoint all the various types of encounters that the youths had, and ended up with a following list:

- encounters with other Finns
- encounters with family members and relatives
- encounters with "foreign" friends/other people of colour/Africans
- encounters with officials (such as teachers, social and youth workers, job office workers etc.)
- encounters with me (as a researcher)
- encounters with other people, not defined (e.g. non-defined friends or colleagues)
- encounters with no-one: loneliness

- encounter with oneself: self-reflections, encountering different social roles in different situations
- encounters with difference, either in other people or in oneself (situations in which the youths underline difference themselves)

In the midst of this rather mechanical work, I also spent time with my data in a fashion that could be described as "hermeneutical hanging around" (Kankkunen 2007, 189): I read, listened and watched time and again extracts of the data that I felt intriguing or bothering, transcribed and corrected transcriptions that called for attention, and wrote short analytical texts about some photos, moments and details that inspired me and felt important. For example, I wrote several short texts regarding skin and touch: moments in which I had seen skins touching each other either on purpose or not, reactions to that, and touches that I had seen being avoided. Few of these initial analytical texts appear in this dissertation, but it was by writing them that the importance of touch became evident to me and that I started to look for theoretical concepts regarding touch (e.g. Manning 2007).

Then I went back to coding again. Now I went through all the different kinds of encounters listed above, trying to track what happened in each. On the basis of earlier coding work and hermeneutical hanging around, I had formed the following questions that I asked of the data: How were the young men treated in each encounter? Were they categorized somehow? If yes, did this categorization include differentiation? If yes, how did this manifest in the encounter in question? How did the young people themselves act in these encounters? I drafted different kinds of tables on the basis of this work, in which I tried to create thematic categories out of the mass of data. For example, as an answer to the question of how the difference of the young people was manifested in different encounters, I made a table that specified all the encounters of my five key research participants, and ended up organizing the way they were treated in these encounters into eight categories:

- as being different by their very being, by essence
- as behaving differently and thus being objects of integration work
- as being in need of support or protection: being vulnerable
- as being immigrants
- as being in need of encounters: being alone
- as being objects (and subjects) of research
- as being successful in integration and thus not that different anymore
- as being (almost) similar/included/equal with others

Other tables I compiled treated, for example, the encounters the youths had with officials, or the reactions and actions of the young people in different kinds of encounters specifically. Here, I did not go through all my data with as much precision, however; at some point it became evident that the results started to repeat each other and I felt that, in this sense, I had exhausted my data. Also, some themes had already risen as most relevant from the mass of data: they kept on repeating themselves with more density and intensity than others, or stuck out as somehow disturbing in their difference in relation to others. At this point I moved on to reading the material related to each theme that I had dug out analytically, and to theoretical reflection on the concepts that had arisen through coding and categorization (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, 26–27).

3.3.2 Building interpretations

At first, I tried to approach the themes and concepts in an all-encompassing fashion, aiming to write analytical texts that would cover basically all relevant themes in a systematic way. It didn't take me long to realize that this wouldn't work, neither economically (in the sense of the working time and pages needed to do so), nor intellectually (in the sense of the result being a list more than a thorough analysis). I thus changed my approach and returned to hermeneutical hanging around with the data, searching for moments that would at the same time crystallize some larger theme and bring out something specifically intriguing with regard to it. There were, of course, several captivating and inspiring moments to start working with, but quite soon three emerged as the ones that I found both most suitable and had enough data about. These three moments form the backbone of this entire dissertation: in them, Emanuel struggles with a baking task at his school, Manasse performs on the stage of Finlandia Hall, and Afrax gives a presentation to a steering group of a project he works in. In the first, Emanuel is encountered by his classmates and teachers as a racialized immigrant; in the second, Manasse is encountered by social workers as a vulnerable refugee youth; and in the third, Afrax is encountered by his colleagues as a representative of racialized immigrant youth. I started out from these three moments, reflected them in the light of other excerpts from my data and research literature, and in this way worked towards conceptualizing what was going on in each moment. The empirical chapters of this dissertation are written on the basis of this work, shedding light on the ways the young people are constantly categorized in their everyday encounters, and how the youth, each in their particular way, try to work on

those categorizations and carve out space for alternative positionings for themselves. Thus, while I claim that the setting from which I start in the case of each young person is a typical one, and hence to some extent generalizable, the way each young person reacts and acts in the setting is a unique example of the strategies young people who find themselves in this kind of position can deploy.

Nevertheless, smooth as this solution seemed to be, I had trouble with some themes that had popped up during coding, but that did not fit into my tabulations regarding the different encounters and their particularities. I had odd lists around themes that didn't fall under any neat file in my computer directory, but kept leaping out. They were lists I had somewhat intuitively named, for example, "scraping coins" or "emotional labour". The former consisted of excerpts of my data that had to do either with earning money from odd jobs or saving money with different techniques, either to make ends meet (like Afrax, who had serious difficulties, for example, paying the train trips from his home city to the town in which he studied; students were not allowed to spend weekends in the dormitory, so he had to travel about seventy kilometres back and forth), to be able to send some money to family or other relatives who were in difficulties, to be able to have some hobby, decorate their home or have some nice clothes, or to be able to finally travel to meet family members living far away that they had not seen for years ('It's seven years that I saw my parents last time... No, wait... it's nine years already!' one young boy of Afghan background, working hard in order to buy flight tickets, told me while we were watching a football match). The latter comprised situations in which I found the young people working hard with their emotions, trying to push away memories of, and worries about, their family, for example, in order to concentrate on school work, or forcing themselves to behave politely in situations in which discrimination occurs so as to be able to get away, or to get what one needs, or trying to find the courage and stamina to build social relationships in a place where they knew no-one, to participate in activities they found interesting, and to maintain self-respect and hope. What I found to combine these odd lists, in the end, was the fact that in one way or other they all required work or labour from the young people in question. I started to realize how much they worked in order to achieve longer-term aims, and to see connections between this work and the categorizing subject positions they kept been positioned in. I thus started working on conceptualizing this labour, which I now understood as a form of agency too. This forms the analysis of the third chapter regarding each young person.

As I have already mentioned, I conducted a kind of "second round" of fieldwork with Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax, going through what I had written regarding them

and discussing my interpretations. This was the most unnerving part of the analytical work for me: I was both worried and excited about the way the youths would react to my interpretations and my way of writing. These discussions turned out to be both fruitful and vital: in many cases in which I had been hesitant about my interpretation I got confirmation from the youth, and, in some cases, they disagreed with me, bringing out their own interpretations and the grounds for them. Inspired by these discussions, I have, in some cases, re-moulded my analytical work, and in some other cases—in which I have deemed my own interpretation as, if not the only right one, then perhaps just as valid as the young person's—written our dialogue or its results in the text, most often in the epilogues. Including our dialogue about the interpretations is, in this sense, also an attempt to unwrap our power relations that, despite the involvement of my research companions in the analysis and writing phases of this work, positions me as the person who has had the final say on the interpretations and arguments of this dissertation.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I begin by briefly sketching out the development of the anthropology of the political, and position my research within this field, giving emphasis to the way anthropologists have approached the question of political agency. I then move on to inquire in more detail into the concept of agency itself, the ways in which it has been defined, and the problematics its theorization has recurrently stumbled upon. Thereafter, I outline three approaches to political agency: one, currently pivotal in anthropological study of the political, in which political agency is approached through the optic of citizenship; feminist new materialists' posthumanist approaches to agency, which have been a central source of theoretical inspiration for this dissertation; and a more classic anthropological discussion of political agency as it pertains specifically to this research project. Finally, in the last subsection of this chapter, I will outline my own approach towards the subject matter of this dissertation, which I, following Häkli & Kallio (2018), in combination with insights from new materialisms and the anthropology of the political, conceptualize as *mundane political agency*.

4.1 Political anthropology: from system to power…

There is some strange beauty in classic political anthropology. Think, for example, of *The Nuer* (Evans-Pritchard 1940), the way it lays a society out in front of the reader's eyes, clear and concise like a mathematical equation. Those early years of political anthropology—the time of the structural-functionalist paradigm, stretching from 1940 to about the mid 1950s (Lewellen 1983, 8)—were marked by enthusiasm for and pride in the theoretical value of this newly formed subdiscipline. "We have not found that the theories of political philosophers have helped us to understand the societies we have studied and we consider them of little scientific value," Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1950 [1940], 4) boldly stated in their introduction to *African Political Systems*. And system, indeed, was the word of the day. "Classic political anthropology was greatly concerned with definitions of its subject matter, formal models, and typologies," Spencer crystallizes (2007, 36). But the messiness of the

world inevitably filtered in. Gluckman and Leach's work during the 50s on conflict and oscillation as internal to political systems made them transitional figures (Lewellen 1983, 9). Later on, Gluckman's students developed his ideas further, forming the so-called Manchester School and the new processual paradigm—or, to be more precise, paradigms, since subdivisions soon emerged—which concentrated on process and conflict instead of structure and function (ibid., 9–10).

Give messiness an inch and it will take a yard. In the mid 1960s, the new paradigms severely challenged the whole disciplinary specialization of political anthropology. It "[...] first decentred and then deconstructed," according to Vincent's (2010 [1996], 546; see also Vincent 2002, 3) summary of its brief history, defining political anthropology laconically as a "[...] late and comparatively short-lived subfield [...]." Not that anthropologists haven't found political phenomena interesting ever since—rather, they have found it everywhere, "[...] underlying almost all the discipline's concerns [...]" (ibid., 644). Still, to paraphrase Spencer (2007, 34; 38), as a subdiscipline, political anthropology seemed to run out of steam somehow and was, by the 1970s, in "something of a rut." Simultaneously, along with other social sciences, anthropology faced the post-68 challenge (Mukherjee 2011, 341). Theoretical inspiration emanated from other disciplines: the poststructural turn that took place in geography, social history, literary criticism, feminism and elsewhere, revitalized anthropology's interest in power relations (Vincent 2002, 3). In the post-colonial landscape it was argued that "[...] concepts like society, community, clan and nation had to be reread as political fields wherein the motor of human life was power" (Mukherjee 2011, 340). The focus of anthropological work on the political from the 1970s on thus became the anthropology of power and resistance: "[...] recognition of power as the principal dynamism in all forms of human relating [...]" (ibid., 340; see also Spencer 2007, 38). In its first phase, such research concentrated on major social changes in the context of decolonization and nation-state building, but a new focus soon emerged: "the micropolitics of everyday resistance" (Gledhill 2009, 14).

4.1.1 …and from power/resistance to an anthropology of the state and citizenship

A number of monographs concentrating on power relations and resistance came out in the 1980s, including Comaroff's *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* and Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (both 1985), Ong's *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women*

in Malaysia (1987), and Boddy's *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men and the Zār Cult in the Northern Sudan* (1989). All these works were concerned with showing how people in positions of subordination—peasants, factory workers, women, colonial subjects—carry out political acts and contest power relations in everyday situations. The proposition of agency as a subject's capacity to act even in the most disadvantageous situations began to gain impetus. My research on young refugee background men's political agency is obviously greatly indebted to this field; not only to resistance studies itself, but also to the criticism it has occasioned. Abu-Lughod (1990, 41–42), for example, warned of a tendency to romanticize resistance: "[...] to read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated." She inverted Foucault's famous proposition thus: "where there is resistance, there is power", and proposed looking at instances of resistance not as signs of human freedom, but as signs of power, helping us understand its different forms and the ways people are caught up in them. Mahmood (2005, 22), on the other hand, argues compellingly against conceptualizing political agency simply as synonymous with resistance, as norms are not only reaffirmed or subverted, but "[...] performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways". Concentrating solely on resistance, she argues, "[...] ignores an entire dimension of politics that remains poorly understood and undertheorized within the literature on politics and agency." (Ibid., 35.) Problematic presumptions about freedom, power, and human subjects remain central questions when theorizing agency. I will return to them in the next subchapter.

Spencer (2007, 45–46) and Gledhill (2009, 14) criticize resistance studies from a slightly different angle: in its concentration on the political acts of everyday life and understanding of power as ubiquitous, it tends to leave the whole world of organized politics, its institutions and spectacles, outside the frame. "In the literature on resistance, the state is never a resource, or a place to seek justice, let alone a zone of hope, however distant or deferred, in the political imaginary. It is, if it appears at all, an 'absolute externality', a source of coercion, violence, or fear; and thus the only theoretically correct response to the state is resistance." (Spencer 2007, 45–46; 136.) And, indeed, after the turn of the millennium, political anthropology began to re-emerge in the form of "the new anthropology of the state" (Gledhill 2009, 17). Strong interest in research regarding the state and citizenship is reflected in the publication of several readers, such as *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives,* edited by Krohn-Hansen and Nustad in 2005; *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader,* edited by Sharma and Gupta in 2006; and *The Anthropology of Citizenship: A Reader,*

edited by Lazar in 2013. This has not meant that questions regarding agency have disappeared from the scene altogether, but rather that they are now approached from a different theoretical framework. Lazar & Nuijten (2013), for example, argue for an expansive notion of citizenship that refers to political belonging and political agency in a very wide sense (instead of understanding citizenship simply as legal status and rights). "Thus," they write, "citizenship might be [...] an analytical category *denoting political agency generally* even where not specifically and explicitly articulated around questions of citizenship [...]" (ibid., 4; emphasis mine).

4.2 The problem of agency

"The term agency, variously defined, has become ubiquitous within anthropology and other disciplines," writes Ahearn (2001, 109) at the beginning of the millennium. She posed the question of why "[...] so many scholars in so many fields are currently interested in the concept of agency", and called for greater care and clarity from scholars using the concept (ibid., 109; 130). Her own "bare bones definition" of agency denotes a "socioculturally mediated capacity to act", an ability to act in ways that bear transformative potential (ibid., 112–113; 120). Agency, thus understood, stands in opposition to routine action or habitus (the Bourdieuian one), activities performed in customary fashion in accordance with a social order, hence reproducing it (Arendt 1958, 8; Häkli & Kallio 2018, 69; Isin 2008, 15; 2012, 131). Ahearn, however, not only underlined the need to define the concept carefully, but also to become aware of certain kind of "[...] assumptions about personhood, desire, and intentionality that might unwittingly be built into their analyses." Mahmood (2005, 5), for her part, has argued openly against certain key analytical concepts in liberal thought—including agency—that "[...] enjoy common currency across a wide range of disciplines, in part because liberal assumptions about what constitutes human nature and agency have become integral to our humanist intellectual traditions." And, finally, Fausto & Heckenberger (2007, 4) wrote: "If it is true that anthropology has focused primarily on the normative and structural aspects of social life during the heydays of the nation-state and the planned economy, it is also not by chance that it has recently glorified flexibility, history, and individual agency along with the neoliberal momentum in the global economy." They called individual agency one of "our [meaning Anglo-American] own most cherished cultural notions", noting that agency,

> [...] connotes the capacity of individuals qua individuals to consciously guide their lives and act upon the world. This culturally specific concept stems from a particular notion of the person, predicated upon self-identity and self-consciousness, in which free choice is the model of action and property relations characterizes the agents' connections to their acts [...]. (Fausto & Heckenberger 2007, 4; endnote 3.)

While these anthropologists criticized the concept of agency on the grounds of its inbuilt individualism and its assumption of an autonomous subject, other scholars (in anthropology and other fields) were approaching the same problematics from a different angle. An understanding on power as productive—as forming the subject whose condition of existence it thus provides—had developed from Fanon (who wrote about being overdetermined from without as a "black man", 2008 [1967]; see also Fassin 2011, 422–424), to Althusser (interpellation as the discursive production of the subject, 1971) to Foucault (*assujetissement*, 1991 [1975]; 1990 [1976]; 1982; 1980) and Bourdieu (habitus, 1977), and finally to Butler (2011 [1993]; 1997). This insight on the process of subject formation—of *subjectivation* (or subjectification)—is ill at ease with a notion of agency based (however subtly) on any kind of free will exerted by subjects. There is no pre-existing subject, no outside of structuring structures (as Bourdieu would put it), or practices of governance (as Foucault would have it), since the subject is produced through power relations that form the necessary conditions of its possibility. This is what Butler (2011 [1993], xxiii) calls the paradox of subjectivation; the means of becoming a self-conscious agent are the very same processes and conditions that subordinate the subject, they are "constituting constraints". Mahmood (2005, 17) neatly summarizes: "[...] the set of capacities inhering in a subject—that is, the abilities that define her modes of agency—are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power but are themselves the products of those operations." It follows that agency is not about external opposition to power but has to be understood as immanent to it (Butler 2011 [1993], xxiii).

For some scholars, this does not mean an end to human agency, understood as a capacity for transformative acts. Mahmood (2005, 18; emphasis original), for example, conceptualizes agency as "[...] a capacity for action that specific relations of *subordination* create and enable." Tsing (1993, 232), for her part, claims that subjects "[...] play with, pervert, stretch, and oppose the very matrix of power that gives them the ability to act [...]." And Butler (1997, 17; emphasis original) writes: "[...] the subject is *neither* fully determined by power *nor* fully determining of power (but significantly and partially both) [...]." Yet, developing a theoretically solid understanding of human agency that is, on one hand, a product of operations of

power, and still capable, on the other, of disrupting that very matrix of governance has turned out to be difficult. If the subject is constituted by power (as Foucault and Butler would put it) or socioculturally constructed (as Ahearn and social constructivists would say), how to account for the capacity not only to reproduce governance/structure but also to do surprising, creative and transformative acts? Ahearn (2001, 117) called this problem a "recursive loop": as actions are products of social structures, they thus necessarily (re)create those very structures, and noted that despite the efforts of practice theorists (like Giddens, Bourdieu and de Certeau), the question of how any habitus or structure could produce actions that fundamentally change it remains insufficiently answered (2001, 117–119).

Due to these problematics agency is, perhaps, not quite as ubiquitous a term these days as it was when Ahearn wrote her article. Not that the potential for agency or disruptions and transformations of the social order as such doesn't continue to intrigue scholars in many fields. But, to avoid the impasse described above, it is often approached either from quite distinct analytical angles or from a down-to-earth ethnographic starting point that concentrates on the possibilities, constrictions and nuances of empirically situated action. In what follows, I will consider three approaches to agency—one that has gained notable interest in recent political anthropology, but which I am critical of to a certain degree, and two that I have found both more compelling and fruitful with regard to my own research. Following this, I move on to delineate my own approach to political agency and the reasons I find it worthwhile sticking to this somewhat problematic concept.

4.2.1 Citizenship as denoting political agency

As mentioned earlier, certain anthropologists suggest using citizenship as an optic for political agency and subjectivity. (Lazar 2013b, 16; Lazar & Nuijten 2013, 4.) They have found the concept of citizenship a productive means for focusing on political action analytically, on the ways individuals relate to their political communities and on the practices of making individuals full members of a given political community (Lazar & Nuijten 2013, 3; 5). In this line of thought, citizenship is understood to be more than "the legal status of member of a national political community with certain rights and responsibilities" (ibid., 3): "For people are members of varying political communities, not just those governed by national or even local states, and they are subject to forms of government that originate from different entities" (Lazar 2013b, 5). At the same time, Ong's (1996) argument about

citizenship as both top-down processes of being made and bottom-up processes of self-making, as well as Rosaldo's (1994) understanding of "cultural citizenship" as a right to be different without compromising one's right to belong, are of fundamental importance for this new anthropology of citizenship (Lazar & Nuijten 2013, 4; Lazar 2013b, 8). Lazar thus argues for enlarging the concept of citizenship to name political belonging in general, for studying citizenship as an inquiry into "how we live with others in a political community" (ibid., 1), and for understanding political citizenship as political agency (Lazar 2013c, 122).

Dislocating agency as something that individuals either have or do not have, and concentrating instead on the processes of living together and negotiating belonging in various political communities has most certainly been a fruitful way to circumvent the problem of agency. A focus on what is actually going on in the processes and practices of citizenship making anchors the discussion on agency in detailed ethnography (Lazar & Nuijten 2013, 4), forcing it beyond simple dichotomies. Also, I embrace the idea of understanding citizenship as something larger than the liberal view of it as simply the legal status of an individual in relation to a nation state (Lazar 2013b, 1). Nevertheless, I find using citizenship—even in this extended sense—as *the* frame for inquiring into political agency circumscribing. No doubt it can produce insightful results on political agency—but only up to a point. When trying to grasp the political agency of non-citizens or not-quite-citizens analytically it leaves one with only meagre tools.

Lazar (2013b, 13–14) underlines that, as citizenship names membership of, and belonging to, a political community, "[...] it is also a means of excluding others from that membership." It follows that, for those excluded, citizenship is a language for claiming membership—either formally, for example when certain groups of "illegal" migrants claim national citizenship in their new home country, or substantially, when marginalized second-class citizens claim better or full membership of a political community (be that a state, a local political formation, or some other political community—Lazar, for example, studies trade unions). But this is all. "Constituting non-citizens as other can lead to a positive politics of dissent and resistance and to the broadening of citizenship [...], but can also be highly restrictive, not to say violent," Lazar (ibid., 15) concludes. This leaves limited scope for non-citizens' or not-quite-citizens' agency, as all there is for them to do is to claim (better) membership, or to be violently excluded. This, of course, is an important struggle, and it is relevant for my research participants too. But is there nothing else they might be pursuing or struggling against than claiming membership or resisting exclusion? Might their agency not reach in other directions than inclusion in the

political community they are—to some extent—excluded from? I believe that approaching political agency solely via the framework of citizenship risks leaving other, highly important aspects of my research participants' political agency, its different nuances and the young people's various and sometimes contradictory strategies and aspirations out of sight.

In its emphasis on belonging to political communities (however broadly defined), I feel that understandings of agency based on notions of citizenship risk presupposing what is actually political for the young people in question. As, in this dissertation, I am inquiring into what Häkli & Kallio (2018, 64) conceptualize as the *political ordinary*—the ways in which the political unfolds in everyday life, in mundane events that may seem commonplace or unremarkable—using citizenship as an analytical lens might, therefore, turn out to be misleading. The concept of the political ordinary stands in contrast to a conventional understanding of the political as matters that are recognized as having particular import in the society at large and, thus, as something that one immediately recognizes as politics. The issues at hand in the realm of the political ordinary are, however, certainly of importance *to the people involved*; with Häkli & Kallio (2014, 183) and also Verdery (1999, 24), I hold that the political can be defined as matters of particular import. What is at stake, however, depends on who one asks: "[...] the way in which, and by whom, this importance is recognized" (Häkli & Kallio 2018, 64). Citizenship, or belonging to a given political community, might not work as the best analytical starting point for asking what the issues that are of particular import to my research companions are.

4.2.2 Agency in new materialisms—quantum physics and relating bodies

> [...] agency is cut loose from its traditional humanist orbit. Agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity. [...] *Crucially, agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has*. It cannot be designated as an attribute of subjects or objects (as they do not preexist as such).

Above, Barad (2007, 177–178; emphasis original) crystallizes her posthumanist take on agency, developed in the context of feminist new materialisms. As with new materialists in general, Barad turns to matter to reposition humans among the nonhuman. She draws on quantum physics to contest a human-centred concept of agency, arguing for an understanding of matter as a congealing of agency; matter is not a fixed essence, but "[...] substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing but a doing [...]." (Ibid., 183–184.) Building on modern physics and life sciences—such as particle physics, chaos & complexity theory, new biology & genetics—new

materialist ontologies move towards post-Cartesian understandings of matter not as a passive, inert substance, but as active, self-creative, productive and unpredictable. "Matter becomes" rather than "matter is" (Coole & Frost 2010, 9–10; 15–16). Hence, agency is dislocated from being the "property" of discrete, self-knowing and sovereign human subjects, and is instead understood as agentic properties inherent in the natural environment and its material forces, as ontological capacities for agency all bodies—human and non-human alike—evince (ibid., 10; 20–21).

This provides a fruitful approach to political agency, detached from the burden of inbuilt liberal assumptions and any scent of "free will". Instead, new materialisms "[...] emphasize the active, self-transformative, practical aspects of corporeality as it participates in relationships of power" (Coole & Frost 2010, 19). Such elements as creative contingency, meaning, difference, efficacy, improvisation and resistance are introduced to nature itself, "before cognition begins" (ibid., 20). While new materialists do not ignore the role of social construction, they "[...] stubbornly insist on the generativity and resilience of the material forms with which social actors interact [...]" (ibid., 26). Coole & Frost (ibid., 20) underline the significance of the effects of corporeal capacities on social and political processes:

> Thus bodies communicate with other bodies through their gestures and conduct to arouse visceral responses and prompt forms of judgment that do not necessarily pass through conscious awareness. They are significant players in games of power whenever face-to-face encounters are involved [...].

Building on Barad's, Coole & Frost's and other new materialists' insights, Väyrynen et al. (2017, 4; emphasis original) develop an understanding of how "[...] *deeply disadvantaged and vulnerable bodies that are not assumed to have any agentive capacity, let alone political agency, can obstruct and resist the smooth functioning of practices of governance, and thus open a space of political resistance and action.*" They explore case studies that deal with Filipino migrant nurses in the global care economy, undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, and Roma beggars in Europe, arguing that even the most disadvantaged bodies possess "ontological agentive capacities" (ibid., 35; 96). These capacities emerge from the body's "[...] materiality and movement that both, to a large extent, are beyond the control of networks and practices of power [...]" (ibid., 37): the mobile body, relating with embodied others, is, according to them (ibid., 27), an "outside" of governmental discursive power. The ontological, material body has an inherent capacity to relate to other bodies, and it is by "[...] engaging with and relating or refusing to relate to other bodies [...]" that it creates the potential for politics, even in circumstances where there is no readily available space for agency

(ibid., 37). For each and every time mobile bodies relate with one another, a possibility for surprises opens. As they write:

> Although bodies are moulded by the practices of governance in neoliberal economies, relating with other bodies, they can play with these practices in ways that transform, disrupt, ridicule and even rewrite the scripts of governance. These acts of playfulness are not simply the same thing as collective action taking place outside and against the formal institutions and procedures of the state, and neither is it the same thing as intentionally ridiculing the law through acts of nonconformity. Rather, it is much more subtle, and often unintentional. (Ibid., 96.)

This approach offers a much broader and more nuanced framework for analyzing political agency than, for example, Lazar and Nuijten's suggestion of approaching political agency through the lens of citizenship. With regard to my own work, new materialist approaches are especially useful in their emphasis on the political potential of acts that are not easily recognizable as such at first glance. Acknowledging the political potential of all material bodies and their face-to-face encounters (instead of a preconceived understanding of what counts as political, such as claiming membership of a political community, or participating in institutional politics, or collective action outside and against it) has been of crucial importance to my work with refugee background young men. However, as I will detail in the last subsection of this chapter, new materialist approaches turned out to be lacking in other respects. I thus have found it necessary to look for analytical tools from anthropological discussions concerning agency, to which I now turn.

4.2.3 Human subjectivity and agency—the quantum of culture and relating human beings

> Barad's position suggests a radical reconceptualization of our being in the world. In engaging the world as agents, we do not act as monads endowed with *potentia*, but as entangled phenomena that are part of what exists. We do not preordain material dynamics as a result of aspirations dictated by reason. Instead, we participate in processes of materialization of which we are a part but do not control. (Zanotti 2017, 372.)

As the quote above suggests, Barad's (and other new materialists') thinking has, for many scholars, brought about a profound change in conceptualizations of human and non-human agency. From an anthropological point of view, however, it is perhaps not quite as radical. As Keane (2007, 52–55) points out, the liberation of a self-aware, sovereign subject is central only to the modern narrative, and is not a

universally shared view of human beings. While it is quantum physics that teaches the lesson of entanglement and non-human agency for Barad, for anthropologists it has been encountering various local understandings of "persons" and "agency". Strathern (2004, 223–224), for example, writes the following of Papua New Guinean relationalism:

> But whole bodies are, in another sense, part-persons; from a second perspective which these other persons have, what they see is divided substance. For as well as being singular, persons can also be plural. Since the 'whole' person is detached from other relations, then taken together these relationships compose the person as an entity with a multiple or plural character. This produces another perspective on the body. [...] As a result, a person's substance may be thought of as body which is a part of other bodies.

On the other hand, Fausto and Heckenberger (2007, 13) describe what they call the "shamanic action" of indigenous Amerindians, to whose "[...] animist ontologies an ontological separation between humans and nonhumans [...] fits awkwardly [...]." In this way, problematizing the idea of the individual sovereign subject and their inherent self-awareness as a precondition for freedom and thus agency has grown out of ethnographic practice and is therefore not, as such, a novel insight in anthropology. Keane (2003, 241), for example, snaps that: "This parochial perspective is not only theoretically problematic, it is ill-equipped to deal empirically with people who would deny that they themselves are or would want to be humanist or liberal subjects." The insights provided by peoples for whom the modern narrative is not central has led anthropologists to question prominent Western understandings of human subjects and their agency.

This, however, does not automatically lead to questioning subjectivity as a specific dimension of human existence. Acknowledging non-human agency and seeing human beings as parts of processes of materialization is not, I firmly believe, incompatible with recognizing human subjectivity and certain kinds of agency it enables. I align with Ortner (2006, 110) in her insistence that subjectivity is a major dimension of human existence; ignoring it theoretically would impoverish the sense of the human. I also follow Ortner in her view that subjectivities are complex (in a way elaborated below), and as such are the basis of forms of agency specific to *human beings*; existentially complex bodies that are capable of reflecting their situation and desires. As important as I find the approach described in the previous section, there is another level to the young men's agency that I find just as crucial. For while these young people inhabit material bodies that possess ontological agentive capacities, they are simultaneously human beings among others who, as Ortner (2006, 56; 110)

would put it, feel, think, reflect, seek and make meaning, interpret and evaluate their situation in relation to others, and formulate their own projects that they try to enact.

This is not to say that human agency is about acts of freely choosing individuals—quite the contrary. The way anthropology offers for getting around the liberal assumptions baked into the concept of human agency is culture, or *cultures*. As Ortner (2006, 57) writes: "[...] the answer to the reified and romanticized subject must be an actor understood as more fully socially and culturally constructed from top to bottom." This might not sound as radical a reconceptualization as Barad's—it is not so novel to point out that subjects are socially and culturally constructed. As brought out above, this is exactly one reason why agency is such a tricky concept—remember the loop: if the subject is socially constituted, how could they be truly reflective or create anything "new"? But, to understand people as *fully* socially *and* culturally constructed is to get rid of the assumption that, "[...] agency is naturally located within pre-existing individuals [...]" (Keane 2003, 240–241). Keane (ibid., 241) proposes that agency can be understood as "forged among" human beings—who, in turn, following Strathern and Barad, can also be understood to become determined via such "forging" or intra-action (Barad 2007, 139), as, for example, singular subjects or plural persons (Strathern 2004, 223–224). If agency is not conceived as a "thing" that preconceived individuals "have", such formations as families, institutions and societies seem less deterministic, Keane (ibid., 241) argues. To summarize his elaborate argument in somewhat simplistic fashion, intra-action means that action (among other things) is semiotically mediated: there is social communication about and around it and its interpretations, and this makes the interpretations of action subjects of objectification (ibid., 231; 239). Objectification, in turn, allows for reflection, as it enables simultaneous understanding of, and distancing from, varying interpretations and, thus, their comparison. Keane (ibid., 233–234) calls this a movement between "epistemologies of intimacy and estrangement":

> To understand the non-explicit features of action, the habitual or the covert, requires an epistemology of intimacy—but to take them as anything other than obvious, natural, self-contained, and unshakeable requires an epistemology of estrangement. This further level need not derive from something "external" to a community, since it builds on pervasive capacities for self-reflection, inherent to the semiotic mediation of action. (Keane 2003, 240.)

Hence, while culture is constraining as, "[...] people in a particular society are constrained by their cultural frameworks to be as they are and act as they do [...]" (Ortner 2006, 14), it is simultaneously enabling. On one level, it is enabling in the

classic sense developed, for example, by Geertz (2000 [1973], e.g. 79–83; 214–218): without the frameworks of symbols and meanings provided by shared culture, people would not be able to think, understand what they see, feel, or imagine at all (see also Ortner 2006, 14–15). But, on another level, culture is enabling, in the sense that it provides resources for reflection, as described by Keane above. Ortner (2006, 125) underlines that culture, even in its most dominant forms, is never "pure", in the sense of being without internal tensions and contradictions: within any given cultural formation, "countercurrents", alternative cultural formations, coexist with the hegemonic cultural formation. This is partly due to the element of instability that power itself introduces within cultural formations; power differentials within groups, supposed to share goals, are a basis for their ultimate instability, Ortner (2006, 149) argues. Importantly, cultural formations are also mobile phenomena—they are not moored to particular groups, but geographically and temporally "traveling" (ibid., 13; 15; on the question on how culture moves, see also Urban 2001). As human beings relate with each other, they are influenced not only by the constraints and resources of their "own" culture but by others as well, whether we talk about subcultures, Cultures, in the sense of classic anthropology, or large historical regimes (such as Jameson's [1991] "late capitalism" or the like).

This means that while culture/s have deeply constraining power (Ortner 2006, 15), they are nevertheless necessarily internally and externally multilayered—and that enables a reflective movement between epistemologies of intimacy and estrangement. Taking the suggestion of human beings as fully socioculturally constructed seriously implies taking them to be able to reflect their situation: to be at least to a certain extent "knowledgeable" (Giddens 1979, 5), equipped with some reflexivity about themselves and some "[...] 'penetration' into the ways in which they are formed by their circumstances" (Ortner 2006, 111). As Das (2017, 200) puts it, subjectivities are thus not fully "colonized" by the processes of subjectivation. Ortner (2006, 126–127) calls this *complex subjectivity*: "[...] a subject partially internalizes and partially reflects upon [...] a set of circumstances in which she finds herself." And this, in turn, is the basis for specific types of human agency: it enables people to react against their circumstances—or, one could add, to try to maintain, transform, stretch, or play with them. Understood in this way, as a capacity forged among relating sociocultural beings, agency does not presuppose an outside (of structure, governance, or culture), since cultural multilayeredness introduces "estrangement" inside itself. Ability for reflection is *immanent* to it. Ortner (2006, 127) writes:

> What I prefer to emphasize here are the complexities of consciousness even in the face of the most dominant cultural formation. This is not to say that actors can stand "outside of culture," for of course they cannot. But it is to say that a fully cultural consciousness is at the same time always multilayered and reflexive, and its complexity and reflexivity constitute the grounds for questioning and criticizing the world in which we find ourselves.

I have found this discussion helpful, although not an all-out solution, with regard to some of the theoretical problems around the concept of human agency discussed above. I was prompted to return to this classic discussion by my ethnographic material, which refused to comply to interpretations based on major currents in anthropologies of the political—that of an anthropology of the state and citizenship—or solely on posthumanist understandings of the agentive capacities of material bodies. As I will explicate in more detail in the next subsection, I find this understanding of human agency—as based on complex subjectivity, enabled by cultural multilayeredness and intra-active reflection—a useful tool when investigating the political agency of my research companions, and I use it alongside new materialist conceptualizations.

4.3 My approach: mundane political agency

In this subchapter I pull the threads discussed above together and delineate how I conceptualize political agency. As suggested by the anthropology of power/resistance and by new materialisms, there are numerous ways of acting politically, and some of them can be deployed in extremely subordinate positions. In this dissertation, I contribute to this discussion, albeit taking into consideration the criticism resistance studies has occasioned and the problems surrounding the concept of agency. In order to do this, I deploy theoretical tools from both posthumanist new materialisms and from anthropological and other humanist theorizing to recognize forms of political agency that are not readily visible. From this point on, this understanding structures the rest of the dissertation: this chapter is followed by a set of three empirical chapters—all of which comprise three subchapters—that concentrate on one aspect of agency.

The first set of three subchapters (chapter 5) sets the stage by shedding light on the circumstances in which young refugee background men find themselves in Finland—circumstances that do not provide them with a "readily available space of agency" (Väyrynen et al. 2017, 37). On one hand, their lives and bodies are objects of prominent practices of governance, which categorize, and sort, them, and apply

different measures to differentially categorized groups (as brought out in chapter 2.2). On the other hand, the networks and practices of power that permeate their daily lives and their encounters in Finnish society—with its officials, citizens and non-citizens—also work to constrict the space available to them, configuring them in disadvantaged and vulnerable subject positions. The subchapters show what this means in practice, concentrating on the subject positions (here understood as social locations and identities) proposed to Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel (and other young people similarly categorized) that in many ways turn out to be subjectivating; both constricting and formative.

The second empirical chapter (chapter 6) is written from the point of view of new materialisms, dealing with the ways Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel each act and react to the subject positions proposed to them as material bodies that are "[...] part of the world-body space in its dynamic structuration" (Barad 2007, 172). The view, developed in new materialisms, of the "agentic properties inherent in nature itself", and thus of the ontological capacities for agency all bodies—human and non-human alike—evince (Coole & Frost 2010, 20–21), is of central importance for the understanding of political agency I utilize here. That the body, as a material organism, is "[...] recognized as exhibiting capacities that have significant effects on social and political situations [...]" (ibid., 20), reasserts the proposition made by resistance studies in the 1980s, without constructing a romanticized image of an ever-resilient and creative human spirit. New materialisms in general, and the insights of Väyrynen et al. (2017, 28), in particular, in studying political enactment at the level of the material body, which is often not easily recognizable, visible or articulate, have been crucial for my own work. During fieldwork, it helped me to pay attention to the ways my research companions relate, or refuse to relate, with the other bodies that people their everyday life—citizens, non-citizens, and governmental bodies. It also prompted me to reach beyond the discursive level, and to give at least as much weight to observing the mobile bodies of the young people as to their speech. During the analysis phase, this insight has encouraged me to scrutinize acts that seem unintentional with as much detail as those that seem intentional, and to ask what kinds of "immediate strategies" (Väyrynen et al. 2017, 91) the young people deploy in the mundane, yet always surprising, situations they face in the encounters of their everyday life.

As inspiring and fruitful this take on agency has proved to be, however, I became increasingly aware of its limitations during my fieldwork, and the early stages of analysis, as well. For while my research companions certainly deployed a multitude of "immediate strategies" in their everyday encounters, many of which were not

intentional or consciously planned, their ways of relating to the world, others and themselves was also indicative of another "type" of agency which I find difficult to interpret *solely* as "bodies communicating with other bodies through gestures and conduct" (Coole & Frost 2010, 20). I therefore started to think of these as different types of agency; one as the capacity of material bodies, and the other as a specific capacity of human beings, that by their very nature are sociocultural beings with complex subjectivities. This does not go against the grain of new materialisms—as Coole & Frost themselves note, while not privileging the human body and its cognitive capacities and reflexivity, new materialisms do not deny them either. Rather, they are seen as "chance products of a self-generative nature from which they never entirely emerge", and thus the difference between humans and the rest of nature is seen more as a question of degree than of kind (Coole & Frost 2010, 20–21). Similarly, I understand the difference between these "types" of agency as one of degree, and consider them as constantly "bleeding" into each other: it is hard to imagine one could separate acts as springing up *purely* from either the agentive capacities of the material body or from complex human subjectivity. For, as Parkins (2000, 62) underlines, subjectivity is also embodied: it does not exist in a vacuum, but "[...] arises from the experience of embodiment in both time and space."

Working with Manasse, Afrax and Emanuel, who each *invited* me to be present in some area of their life, pushed me to understand that they did so at least partly because there was something there that they wanted me to see, recognize, and understand, and possibly also to write about publicly. This is also why I have found the concept of human agency—despite its insufficiencies and problems—essential for grasping what was going on: their very willingness to get involved with this research project is, I believe, a sign of agency. In this way, this dissertation is driven by my ethnographic material; the way my young research companions maneuver through and around the constraints, possibilities and compulsions they encounter has led me to conceptualize agency along the lines of the "agency of projects" developed by Ortner (2006, 139). She draws attention to the two "faces" of agency—agency of power and agency of projects—of which the latter is about "[...] intentions, purposes, and desires formulated in terms of culturally established 'projects'." (Ibid., 144.) Each of my three research companions had projects that they tried to pursue in circumstances that were, in many ways, constraining. They had dreams and goals they aimed for, and they all worked hard in order to proceed with their projects—and inviting me to see and understand their efforts was part of that work. Not that all of these projects would have been wholly conscious or thoroughly articulate for the young men themselves, and indeed our work together was also about exactly this:

finding articulation, understanding one's situation and goals better, and even searching for the project itself. Nevertheless, there was a strong sense of orientation towards the future, of imagining another kind of life and circumstances, and of finding ways to implement these desires, step by step. "The agency of projects [...] is about people having desires that grow out of their own structures of life, including very centrally their own structures of inequality [...]," Ortner (ibid., 147) writes. The projects Manasse, Emanuel and Afrax tried to work for all welled from their personal lives, its struggles and possibilities, and as such were simultaneously deeply personal and immanently tied to larger structures. What could, in the words of Biehl & Locke (2010, 335; emphasis original), be described as: "[...] stubbornly alluding to—and sometimes [...] living, in seedling state—*hope* for something different [...]" is intimately linked with a much larger "desire for a different world" (ibid., 334). Biehl & Locke understand this "ever-thwarted but never-extinguished" desire as an *everyday life force* that enables people to curve around or push through impasses, "[...] carving out small life chances against the odds." When seeking to break through foreclosures, this life force aims "[...] to define a kind of subjectivity that is as much about swerves and escapes as about determinations." (Biehl & Locke 2010, 333–334.) In the last of the three empirical chapters (chapter 7) of this work I immerse myself in just this: I explore the projects that grow out of the young men's desires and hopes and which aim at carving out alternative subject positions, as well as the fragility of their hopes in the face of the constraints of their lives.

4.3.1 Agency—always political?

As ought to be clear by now, my approach to political agency is in line with the mature anthropological understanding of the political as pervasive in social life (not as an autonomous sphere of institutions and governments), and of power as resting in the practices and relations of everyday life (Gledhill 1994, 20–21). This pervasiveness of the political makes it a difficult phenomenon to grasp: as Spencer (2007, 36) puts it, the "[...] problem we are trying to analyse is in part the very uncontainability of the political, its tendency to overflow its banks and wash through all areas of social life [...]." Since political action in the sphere of everyday social relations tends to be of inchoate and non-remarkable quality, it is in constant danger of slipping out of view and being ignored (Gledhill 1994, 21; 70–71). As already noted, I have adopted the concept of the political ordinary from Häkli & Kallio (2018, 64) to denote the way the political unfolds in everyday life, in mundane events

that may seem commonplace or unremarkable. On the other hand, understanding the political as pervasive in social relations risks diluting the concept of the political as some "political everything" (Dean 2000, 5–8). In some ways, *all* agency can be understood to be political, if one embraces the definition of agency as a capacity to have an effect on the world and thus either to maintain, or disrupt and transform, a social order. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I find a higher resolution necessary: since my starting point is that the young men in question do have agentive capacities—both as material bodies and as humans with complex subjectivities—my question is what the issues are that are of particular import to them and that push them to act. Or, as Häkli & Kallio (2018, 58) put it: "How do we know what is political for whom in the flux of everyday life, in its multilayered spatial and temporal complexities?" It is not only that these aspects of everyday life are often seemingly of non-political nature in conventional political analysis, but they might be so to the people themselves as well. How, then, to recognize the moments when political aspects of living together are animated—to tell the difference between ordinary social coexistence and the political ordinary (ibid., 64)?

Häkli & Kallio (2018, 65) suggest that the political ordinary is animated when people "[...] become attentive to social power relations embedded in particular subject positions [...]" proposed to them, experience them as more or less agreeable, and end up "accepting, averting, or transforming" them. In this dissertation, I take this proposition as my starting point in recognizing and analyzing the political agency of my research companions. I ask how they are categorized in their everyday encounters, what kind of subject positions are available to them as a result of these categorizations, and how they relate to the positions proposed to them. I utilize a term borrowed from Häkli & Kallio, of political practices in the realm of the political ordinary, that of *mundane political agency*, to conceptualize the ongoing work of my research companions to affect their circumstances, welling from their "[...] responsiveness to a situation based on attentiveness to power relations vested in subject positions encountered in everyday life". Unlike Häkli & Kallio, however, I understand mundane political agency as *both* bodily responses to immediate situations *and* as future-oriented, purposive (though not necessarily intentional) acts animated by complex subjectivity (cf. ibid., 68–69).

4.3.2 Mundane political agency—always relational

Another aspect that has cropped up frequently by now is a fundamentally relational understanding of human beings, both as material bodies and as sociocultural beings. Manning (2007, xv) writes: "[...] there is no such thing as a body that is not relational." And Kapferer (1997, 1–5; 222–223), for his part, that human life is fundamentally social, as people tend towards each other, reach across the space that separates them and, while doing this, break individual organic unity. The whole anthropological discussion of agency and subjectivity, on the other hand, stems from the stance that there are no pre-existing individual subjects, but that our very perception of ourselves (be that individualist, or, for example, relational) is socioculturally constructed. And if one moves into the realm of new materialisms, the whole universe (as, for example, in Barad's theorization), is relational: for them, relations pre-exist relata—there is no prior existence of independent entities that would then interact with each other, but it is exactly the intra-action of "agencies" that determines the boundaries and properties of the components of a phenomenon (Barad 2007, 139).

To descend from these theoretical heights to a concrete level, in my analysis I give attention both to encounters, touch, and also to their avoidance. I find this a relevant point of departure not only when taking the relational nature of (human) existence into account, but also as a way of understanding how my research companions' difference with regard to Finnish society is (re)constituted and is manifested to them. Ahmed (2000, 9) writes about everyday encounters as moments in which some others are recognized as familiar and other others as strange: difference or similarity are not *found on the bodies* of other people, but are *constituted in these encounters* in which bodily and social space are defined and re-defined. In these encounters, it is not simply that any body is recognized as strange or hated: "[...] particular histories are re-opened in each encounter, such that some bodies are already read as more hateful than other bodies." (Ahmed 2004, 32–33.) Furthermore, as Manning (2007, 7) notes, while moments of contact re-open such histories, they also open for exchange and hence a possibility of change: "As I reach toward, I reach not toward the 'you' I ascertain but toward the 'you' you will become in relation to our exchange." Touch—the act of reaching toward—thus enables the creation of worlds, of inventing relations that affect and change all parties involved (ibid., xv).

This holds for encounters with other citizens and non-citizens, but also for encounters the young men experience with state officials: teachers, social workers, the police, health personnel, immigration officials, and so forth. It is in these

encounters that the state and the relationship between it and its (non-)citizens comes into being: the state is "experienced in an intimate way where power is experienced close to the skin, embodied in well-known local officials [...]" (Aretxaga 2003, 396–398). It is thus the face-to-face, skin-to-skin (Ahmed 2000, 7) encounters of material bodies with both other (non-)citizens and officials that are the focus of my research. An emphasis on the material body leads to an understanding of inherent capacity of bodies to relate to other bodies. As Väyrynen et al. (2017, 37) write: the potential for politics is created by bodies relating or refusing to relate to other bodies.

5 SETTING THE STAGE: SUBJECT POSITIONS OF DIFFERENTNESS

This first empirical chapter comprises three subchapters, each presenting an encounter my research companions had with other Finnish (non-)citizens and/or officials. I start with a snapshot of these encounters, and then proceed to dissect what, in my understanding, is actually taking place in these various moments. In this first section, I do not confine my analysis to the moment described in the beginning, but draw heavily on my data at large as well as other academic writing to reach a contextualized and thorough understanding of what is at stake in each encounter. For this purpose, I treat these moments as still frames from which to open up a wider perspective on similar kinds of encounters. It is first in the next set of subchapters that I move on to "what happens then", digging into the agentive strategies each young person deploys in these situations.

The difference of my research companions from other Finns is constituted in each of the encounters I present in this section in one or several ways. I am looking at questions such as: what kinds of differences are attached to the youths? How are these differences constructed; what kinds of acts and situations work to mark them as different? And, especially, what kind of subject positions are offered to the young people constituted as different in different ways? The moments that I have chosen to set the stage on which the agency of the young people plays out are, as already brought out in the discussion on analysis (chapter 3.3), at the same time particular and typical encounters in the everyday life of refugee background young men in Finland. Their particularity lies in the way each aptly crystallizes one or several ways that difference is attached to these young men. On the basis of my data, encounters in which these young people are essentially treated as similar to other Finns are an exception. They do happen, but they are not as prominent in the flux of everyday life as encounters that constitute, and re-constitute, difference. In the majority of the encounters I recorded, one (or most often several) of the following broad types of difference were discernable: essential differentness (due to being an immigrant and/or racially Other) or behavioural differentness (due to not knowing how one acts in Finland); differentness related to particular types of vulnerability (due to being a refugee and/or unaccompanied minor asylum seeker); and differentness that took

as form being encountered as almost-but-not-quite-similar as the consequence of successful integration work. I don't claim this to be an exhaustive list; as I have underlined, my research has not aimed to be all-encompassing, it cannot be thought to be representative of the everyday life experiences of all refugee background young men in Finland. Still, I do feel able to claim that the encounters I have chosen from the cases of Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax are typical experiences, in the sense that they are familiar, or at the very least recognizable, to many refugee background youths. This also means that at least some, or possibly all, of them are also familiar to the reader—I am certainly not the first researcher to write about these kinds of categorizing subject positions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to dwell on them for a moment so as to make the way the youth maneuver in relation to these positionings understandable, which is the subject matter of the chapters that follow this, which sets the scene.

5.1 *Mamu*—a stranger stranger: Emanuel at school I

It is a lesson on nutrition: the students are taught both theory and practical skills regarding healthy diets. Gluten-free diets are the theme of this lesson, and the students are expected to prepare different kinds of gluten-free pastries, both salty and sweet. The students are each given a recipe and are divided into pairs, so that they can help each other. For some reason, the boy who is Emanuel's partner mostly works together with one of the girls, and doesn't help Emanuel too much. And he sure needs a lot of help—he does not have enough mastery of Finnish to be able to follow the teaching in general, and in this class his mis- or non-understanding becomes evident for all as there is a concrete baking task to carry out.

He has great trouble understanding the recipe and finding the right ingredients. He doesn't know that there is a special cupboard for gluten-free flours, for example, and spends long minutes in front of the wrong cupboard looking for ingredients, slowly reading through the labels on the bags and comparing them with the recipe. He understands from the instructions that he is supposed to whip the eggs and sugar together, but not that he should do so using a machine. Parts of the baking task become all the more difficult for him as the teacher gives him rapid advice that differs from the recipe (for example, they tell him to use liquid margarine—in Finnish, "running"—instead of solid, but don't explain what the term means), and because some of the items have different names in the recipe than on the actual package (like baking paper/baking sheet). The teacher moves around in the space a lot, helping students out here and there, and does not give Emanuel any more attention than the others. Emanuel is forced to shout for them several times across the class when he doesn't know how to progress. My heart

aches every time, as I know he is himself very aware of sticking out from the class like a sore thumb—as different from all the others.

Finally, one of the other boys of the class—the one who most often helps Emanuel out in lessons—finishes his own dish and comes over to walk him through the baking task. He guides Emanuel with a firm voice that turns slightly snappish towards the end of the kitchen session, telling him to concentrate, or to put the stove on when melting butter—correcting whatever he is about to do wrong, like adding cocoa flours to the dough just like that. He snaps: "Through a sieve! Get a sieve! A big sieve!" With his advice, Emanuel manages to finish his pastries, a little burned, though, since he accidentally put the oven on air circulation. It bakes faster, the teacher explains afterwards, joking about the brownies that became "a little too brown".

Emanuel often talked to me about his awareness of standing out—not favourably—from the rest of his class. He was not the only one of the young men to talk about this experience, though. As Rastas (2002, 7) writes, for people who are conscious of being seen as racially Other in Finland, a heightened awareness of one's difference is a daily experience, and in public spaces it can be constant. Consider how Denis described his feelings about starting at a new school: he told me he was "nervous" about not knowing anyone at the school, and was afraid what the others would think about him, "[...] as I am different and of different colour too." While Denis was saying this, he gripped the back of his left hand, pulling his skin outward with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. The gesture made it loud and clear that the second difference, that of his colour, was attached to his skin. But what about the first? I believe it is important to hear the other difference he is trying to bring out as well: Denis's statement can be read as him being categorized as different twice, a double Other.

What might this other difference be? Denis did not spell it out, but Emanuel did. 'Oh, how they made me feel like a *mamu* again,' he once sighed to me after spending hours filling in a citizenship application form in one of the offices of the Finnish Immigration Service. *Mamu* is an abbreviation of the Finnish word for immigrant: *maahanmuuttaja*, a person who has moved into the country. While Emanuel's tone suggests that the connotations the term carries nowadays can be questioned (an issue to which I will return later on in this chapter), at this point I would like to draw attention to the word *again* in Emanuel's utterance. In the case of certain people in certain contexts, immigrant-ness seems to turn into a chronic condition rather than a passing phase of life, a condition that Sadeghi (2017) calls "perpetual foreignness". At the point at which Emanuel was filling in the application, he had lived in Finland for about seven years, roughly a third of his life—but, "once an immigrant, always an immigrant," as the phrase goes. In case of some people, immigrant-ness is thus

understood to be an essential difference, as the often used and almost equally often problematized (e.g. Turjanmaa & Haikkola 2020, 57–58) term of "second-generation immigrants" (or even third!) also indicates.

Another occasion on which Emanuel used the term suggests, interestingly, that it is possible to recognize a *mamu* by their appearance. He once told me of a weekend he had spent in Helsinki, and his first trip to Hakaniemi, an area filled with Asian and African grocery stores and congregations. 'And there we walk in the street,' he explained, 'and there comes a mamadou! And, after a minute, another one! And yet another, and another!' I laughed at the exaggerated astonished faces he made and asked (even though I guessed) what mamadou means. 'Mamadou, it is like *mamu* you know,' he answered, 'but a nicer *mamu*, a little more beautiful.'[23] This story suggests not only that *mamu*s are not so very nice and beautiful, but that they can be recognized exclusively by their looks—you do not even need to hear if the person speaks Finnish fluently or not, or ask them about their background; the appearance is enough to tell whether someone is *mamu* or not. On the other hand, this works to underline that not all immigrants are *mamu*s—though it is not explicit, it is still obvious from Emanuel's story that he was talking about an unusual experience for him: of walking on a street among several other persons of colour.

Together, Denis's and Emanuel's reflections speak of the complex relationship of racialization and migration (Erel et al. 2016); as in many European countries, categorizing (some) immigrants as Others is interlaced with processes of racialization in Finland, as Emanuel stresses, yet being a person of colour is not the same thing as being an immigrant, as Denis observes. Also, as both make clear, being considered different from the majority of Finns in these ways is not unproblematic—at least potentially it means that one is met with exclusion, whether by classmates at school or by state institutions and officials. This chapter is an inquiry into how these Othering processes materialize in the everyday encounters of my research participants, and how these encounters work for subjectivation, in the sense that one starts to categorize oneself as different, as Denis above, or feels like a *mamu* once again, as Emanuel. I am especially interested in the subject position available to Emanuel in his class, but I approach the topic from an encompassing perspective, using my data at large, in order to understand better what kind of position Emanuel's "being different from the rest of the class" is. The first two sections are about the school context and deal with encounters with teachers and classmates. In the third section, I step out of the school environment to inquire into encounters that aim to

[23] Mamadou is a common first name in West Africa, derived from the name Mohammad.

be inclusive, but still work for Othering, such as certain integration practices—and, for that matter, certain research practices.

5.1.1 Teachers constructing differences: superficial, essential, disparaging

I start from the school context, probing what happens in the encounters Denis and Emanuel have with teachers, students and the larger material and social environment of the school. My aim is to illustrate how the difference of Emanuel and Denis from the other students gets manifested in these encounters. I begin by presenting three examples of the ways in which they were encountered by their teachers, two of the examples being exceptional and one typical. The typical example aligns with the opening vignette of this chapter, in the sense that while difference is not explicitly pronounced, it is still prominent because of the way the teacher acts. As for the exceptions, difference is pronounced, though with opposing results. Let me start with one of the exceptional cases:

> It is a maths lesson, feared by many students. The lesson differs from others: there is very little mucking around; the class is quiet, the cheeks of the students blushed with concentration. It is the last lesson before the exam, and the teacher goes through the solutions to their homework fast, trying to cover all the central issues during the precious minutes of a single lesson. The course is about calculating the right doses of different kinds of medicines for patients of different weights, and the teacher makes it clear that mastering this is a matter of utmost importance: they tell a story about a nurse who screwed their calculations up, with the consequence that the granny they were taking care of died. Emanuel looks at me when the teacher tells the story and smiles, and I smile back—we have been studying maths together and making a lot of bad jokes about the consequences of working the doses of medicines out wrongly. The teacher goes on to assignment number twenty-six, and one of the girls of the class exclaims: "It was when the suppositories appeared that I quit [doing the assignments]." The teacher asks: "Why are the suppositories so difficult? Emanuel, did you understand what this suppository is?" "No, I did not," Emanuel answers, shaking his head and smiling, eyes fixed to his desk. The teacher asks the active girls in the front row to explain "in such a way that Emanuel also understands," then completes their explanation, which Emanuel in turn checks one more time to be sure he understood correctly. "Once more," the teacher winds up the off-topic discussion, "think about [studying] this course in Portuguese!"[24] He finishes the assignment on the blackboard, and a girl next to me looks at me smiling and shaking her head—it is too difficult even in Finnish.

[24] The lingua franca of Emanuel's home country, Angola, is Portuguese.

The teacher's request to the students to explain the word to Emanuel in such a way that even he might understand it made my hair stand on end. I expected this to turn into a moment outspokenly underlining his difference from the rest of the class, which would have felt quite over the top, as his difficulties in following teaching in Finnish were obvious enough. But, instead of that, the teacher reduced the difference to a superficial question of language, managing to turn the situation upside down: if this is difficult for you in your mother tongue, then imagine how difficult it would be in another language! Fleeting as the moment was, the importance of this gesture, done in front of the whole class and accentuating the skills Emanuel has in being able to follow teaching in a foreign language at all, felt remarkable. In its exceptionality, this encounter made me understand that sometimes treating refugee background youth differently to others actually works to undo the hierarchies of difference. And vice versa: if one compares this situation with the one described at the beginning of this chapter, in which Emanuel did not receive special attention from the teacher in order to understand what he was supposed to do, it becomes clear that sometimes treating the youth similarly to others actually works for the contrary, as inconsistent as this might feel at first. Another frustrating moment that I experienced with Denis, also while studying maths, will perhaps help make the point clear:

> Denis has asked me to help him with his maths, for, as he says, 'I suck at maths.' This honest explanation makes me laugh, which he probably misunderstands, as he starts to explain why he sucks, reminding me that, in his home country, he never attended a real school. He shows me his assignments and asks if I am able to help. They are on basic geometry, and I say no problem, asking what kind of help he needs. He says that he would just like to understand better in general, as he 'does not know which way is up.' So, we start to go through his last exam, in which he scored three points out of thirty—no wonder he feels he sucks! I read the first assignment: 'A merchant ordered six boxes and thirteen sackfuls of goods...', and, as my first deed as his "maths" teacher, I ask which words of the assignment he understands. Apart from the numbers, he finds barely one word familiar. I explain what the assignment is about, and then he figures out how to do it. I continue in the same way, and, at first, he seems uncomfortable as he has to say so many times that he does not understand this or that word. But, as we proceed, he sees that the assignments are a piece of cake once I have explained the words and he understands what they are actually about. His frustration changes character, he starts to grunt and squirm and then he exclaims: 'Now that [math] teacher thinks that I am totally stupid!' I tell him that the teacher should understand that he is not stupid but that he simply does not know the meaning of the words in the assignments—words that are quite distant from spoken Finnish, the assignments seem to be remnants of some maths book of bygone days. Denis is not convinced, though; he says that the teacher is new and does not know him, and probably just thinks he is stupid.

Here we are, then, with Denis who is convinced that the teacher sees the problem to reside in Denis's intellectual inferiority, not in his different mother tongue. That this teacher did not treat Denis differently from the others in the class by making sure that he understands the expressions used in the assignments made Denis deeply and uncomfortably aware of being seen as unskilled and inferior, again. Exactly the same happens in the nutrition class described at the beginning of this chapter: the fact that the teacher didn't pay attention to whether Emanuel understood the recipe and the instructions they gave him worked to create a situation in which Emanuel appears to be inept in comparison with the other students. It is impossible to guess what these teachers' intentions were—maybe they did not even think about the issue, or maybe they thought making assumptions about their students' language skills on the basis of their looks problematic, or that it would be uncomfortable for them to be treated differently from the rest of the class, or that ensuring that they understand would take too much time and energy (both are in a normal curricula class, where students are supposed to have basic language skills—which indeed they both do, but the vocabulary needed in some courses is way above basic level). Their intentions might very well have been good (or at least not bad), but the effect certainly was not. This was, as I already hinted, typical of the way the teachers encountered Emanuel in class: not openly pronouncing his difference, yet, by not taking into account his language problems, letting difference appear prominently.

Before going into this more deeply, let me present a third encounter, the other exceptional one in my data. Here, Emanuel was not exactly singled out as different, as the teacher was speaking on a general level, but their choice of words and expressions, however, inevitably involved Emanuel too:

> It is a lesson in a course called "Health, Safety and Well-being", and the teacher is trying to map out different aspects that promote people's (especially patients') well-being and abilities. In order to illustrate the significance material environment has on these, the teacher asks: 'How do you find these surroundings [the location of the school's premises] as a psychological environment?' They get a ready answer:
>
> Student: 'Peaceful. It feels that, even though we are so many students here, there is enough space for one to be in peace.'
> Teacher: [Sounds of agreement.] 'So is that a positive thing for you? That it is peaceful.'
> Student: 'Yeah, it is. Also the library is really nice, there is always such a peaceful atmosphere there, one can go there during the day to study or to use a computer, it is nice.'
> Teacher: 'Yeah... but today when I visited the library there was quite a different social environment there, there was some kind of game session among "the *mamu* students, there was an awful hullabaloo [*hirvee älämölö*]."

The teacher makes a disapproving face, rolling their eyes.

So, we bump up into the figure of the *mamu* again, a concept that, as Emanuel knows only too well, is often attached to him. When I heard the teacher's comment and saw their face expressing disapproval and dislike, I bit my lip, looking at Emanuel's back in the first row right in front of the teacher. I couldn't see his face from where I was sitting, nor see him react in any way. I was angry with the teacher, yet, at first, considered this expression just a slip of the tongue, and also felt guilty about condemning them so harshly for one mistake, as they usually seemed to treat Emanuel quite well. As it is, the word *mamu* was, most likely, originally coined for practical purposes and did not have immediate negative connotations; especially at the beginning of the millennium, countless third sector projects targeted at immigrants used the abbreviation in their titles, and, in the field of education, for example, preparatory classes for immigrant background people were quite generally called "*mamu*-classes". Furthermore, the dictionary of standard Finnish, maintained by The Institute for the Languages of Finland (2020), still contains the abbreviation and describes it neutrally as a term used colloquially.[25] During recent years, however, awareness of the negative connotations of the abbreviation because of its use in racist slurs and hate speech has grown, and consequently its use in official language has dwindled. The same holds for the vocational institution in question: the concept of "*mamu*-teaching" had previously been in use here, but, at the time this incident occurred, the abbreviation was not often used, even colloquially (the only time I encountered it was the incident described above), and a discussion on whether the term should be banned altogether was unfolding at the school. This discussion reached a conclusion around 2018, when a decision was taken to consciously avoid the word in all contexts (personal communication with head of immigration education, 2020). Against this background, and considering that a person the teacher knew to have immigrant background was sitting in front of them, it is difficult to consider their choice of expressions wholly accidental and innocent.

I would like to make the following observations after contrasting these encounters with each other: first, intentionally or not, the two latter encounters construct the difference of refugee background students as essential, as something

[25] Nonetheless, the definition has changed over the years: originally (the word was added to the dictionary in 2004), both the use of the abbreviation as a part of compound words and as an independent word were defined as part of the standard language. In a 2012 update, its use as an independent word was defined as colloquial, and, in 2020, an update defined its use in compound words as colloquial as well. These changes signal the changing connotations of the word. (Personal email-exchange with the Institute, 2020.)

that they are in nature. In the last incident, the teacher's description makes the "*mamu*-students" appear to be of their own type, which, by their very presence, breaks the peaceful atmosphere, disrupting the harmony of the school environment with their inappropriate behaviour and unpleasant and unintelligent sounds [*älämölö*]. In the second incident, Denis is constructed as "totally stupid", to borrow his own words. Here, as in the opening vignette of this chapter, the unskillfulness of the student comes into being when they fail to meet a standard set by the teacher, a standard that presumes near perfect Finnish skills, both in its written and spoken forms (which, in the case of Finnish, differ considerably), and including both old-fashioned and recently coined vocabulary. Yet, as the first encounter suggests, it does not necessarily demand that much of the teacher to undo this otherwise invisible standard: even in a hectic lesson just before an exam it is possible to check whether the most important terminology is understood by everyone, and, with a small gesture, to remind everybody present how impressive it is that someone manages to study difficult subjects in a language that is not their mother tongue.

Why do I find these class settings, which work to essentialize refugee background youths' failures to follow teaching in Finnish into a general intellectual inferiority so relevant? It is because coming from non-privileged backgrounds, from cultures and areas associated with pre-modernity (read: uneducated, ignorant, having different values) to "our" country in search of a better future is an integral characteristic of what Lundström (2017, 79) calls "the imaginary migrant" (see also Gullestad 2002, 59; Leinonen 2012, 218). Lundström writes in the context of Sweden, but in present day Finland, too, the colloquial concept "immigrant" does not refer to all immigrants, but to people who are thought to share certain characteristics and experiences.[26] As Haikkola crystallizes (2014, 93–94): "[...] everyday understanding of an 'immigrant' means predominantly a migrant who is non-western, non-white, Muslim, and has arrived to the country on humanitarian grounds." This image is colonizing in the sense that people categorized as immigrants are subsequently often seen as a uniform, undifferentiated mass, Leinonen (2012, 218) argues. This is reflected in how, for example, professional and highly skilled North American migrants in Finland try to distance themselves from the category of immigrant, and how, on the other hand, the larger society fails to see them as such. Or, in the way in which, in Norway, migrants from Iceland are perceived as "kin", or even "genuine Norwegians", who share genes, culture and values with Norwegians and whose belonging is not questioned (Guðjónsdóttir 2014, 179), while, at the other extreme,

[26] Similar kind of images of "the immigrant" prevail in many Western countries, as for example Gullestad (2002) and White (2002) bring out with reference to Norway and Ireland.

for example, Swedish citizens of Latin American descent (Lundström 2017), non-white Danish citizens (Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen 2014), and Finnish citizens of Asian or African descent (Rastas 2005b, 152–153) are constantly categorized as immigrants and/or refugees, and regularly questioned about their nationality by being asked where they are "really" from.

Leinonen (2002, 218–219) concludes that the category "immigrant" is racialized to refer to people originating from "poorer", non-white areas of the world who are seeking to gain residence in rich Western countries. Some groups, such as the educated and white North American migrants Leinonen studied, are (more) able to pass as "one of us" (ibid., 2016), as (becoming) members of the Finnish nation constructed and imagined to be white (Ruuska 2002, 67–71). Some other groups are racialized as "immigrant Others", and, as Erel et al. (2016, 1352) underline, in the way this group is constructed "[...] the physical movement of people is less important [...]." It is not migrants as such that get racialized as Others, it is through racialization that various categories of migrants are produced; hence, the belonging of Finnish citizens whose phenotype is not white is recurrently questioned. However, while persons of colour whose parent/s are Finnish, or who are themselves international adoptees can negotiate—at least to some extent—their belonging to the Finnish "us" on the basis of their parent/s' ethnicity, mastery of Finnish and their citizenship, my research companions cannot. And, while immigrants from Western countries are either not even recognized as such because of their phenotype (if they happen to be white) or country of origin, or gain better positioning in the racial hierarchy by, for example, being highly skilled professionals, my research companions do not. The way racial thinking and nationalism articulate with each other (Miles 1989, 89) in present-day Finland position them at the bottom of the hierarchy of belonging: they are racialized as Others twice, as both persons of colour and as immigrants. As the only people of colour and the only immigrants in their classes, Emanuel and Denis have no way of escaping these categorizations. They constantly stick out from the others because of their bodily visibility, as well as being "audibly visible" immigrants as non-native Finnish speakers, and by virtue of their having "foreign-sounding" names (Leinonen 2012, 217; Toivanen 2014, 195). There is very little space for them to negotiate their position as double Others in this hierarchy, as they constantly find themselves put in the intersection in which the figure of the *mamu* comes into being: the intersection of skin colour (black), migratory status (refugee, not yet citizen), origin (Global South), and social class (non-privileged, uneducated by Finnish standards).

In hindsight, Emanuel's teacher's decision to use the *mamu* word, accompanied with a verbal and gestural expression of contempt, in front of a class in which one student was a person of colour and of refugee background, cannot be considered a "slip of the tongue". Or, if it were indeed a slip of tongue, it was a telling one. It is a rare but clear instance in my data in which a teacher acts in an openly racist manner.

As such, this is not a surprise: I have heard numerous stories recounting racist acts by teachers or other adults in positions of power—also from Manasse, who ended up changing the team he played football in due to a racist coach, and Afrax, who quit one job partly due to having a racist boss. In my experience, situations in which adults in positions of authority act in a racist way are often singled out by young people who belong to racialized minorities as those that are most hurtful. One more or less learns to put up with racism from other young people, or by strangers on the street, but racist acts by adults who one is supposed to respect never cease to appall. And, as Emanuel noted regarding another adult in a position of power, a supervisor in a place in which he did his first vocational training, youths cannot defend themselves in these situations, some of which have tangible consequences. This supervisor gave Emanuel the worst possible grade of the traineeship, and did the same later to a friend of his, who is also a person of colour. There were no real grounds for these grades to be this bad as both are good students and did their best, and they started to suspect that the person responsible of grading the trainees is racist. 'It is so sad,' Emanuel said. 'You should be fair, I think, you should give the grade one deserves, if you get bad grades in your practical training how can you get employed? It affects your whole life.'

There is extensive evidence on the recurrence of racism in Finland to back up these numerous stories, both of everyday racism, structural racism, racist acts by authorities such as the police, and discrimination in job markets (Ahmad 2020; Busk et al. 2016; FRA 2017; Keskinen et al. 2018; Non-discrimination Ombudsman 2020; Rastas 2007; Souto 2011). There is no need to repeat exercises other researchers have done before me to prove this point, and I will thus not concentrate profoundly on the outright racism my research participants recurrently meet. These experiences do pop up here and there in this dissertation, reminding us of this fact and its significance in my research participants' lives: their belonging to Finland is, time and again, questioned simply on racial grounds, because of their being persons of

colour.[27] Here, however, I am trying to dig out other, and more subtle, ways that also work to Other and that are, perhaps, more difficult to recognize and resist than openly racist behaviour or clearly discriminating structures.

For example, the question asked by the teacher above could be used to inquire into the material and social environment of the vocational institution and the role it played in constructing Emanuel as an Other. A case in point: in the classes in which the students practiced the physical tasks of care work, such as lifting patients, changing sheets and so on, there were hospital beds with human size plastic dolls as patients. In other classes there were torsos, both adult and children, displaying the anatomy and viscera. It almost goes without saying that all these dolls, representing typical patients and normal bodies, were white-skinned with imitation blonde, straight hair. Another case in point: *all* the teachers I met working at the school were white. As a matter of fact, the other personnel were white too—with two exceptions: the school social worker was a person of colour, and some of the cleaners were black. Otherwise, the only position people of colour occupied in the school space was as students, so far as I could observe. In this sense, Emanuel's experience of the school environment in its normative whiteness was quite different from what the student described above: that there is space to be in peace. In the next section, I will move on to inquire how he was encountered by the other students in his class and what that reveals about the position available to him at school.

5.1.2 Classmates constructing differences

Denis's fears about starting at the new school turned out to be unnecessary in the case of his classmates: 'They are real nice and we have fun together,' he told me. Emanuel's class proved to be different. A couple of days after starting my fieldwork at his school—which I did in the spring semester of their first year—I remarked to him that the class seems nice and that the students are not mean to each other. Emanuel then told me that it was different at the beginning, some of the boys were mean to him. 'I guess they had some kind of prejudice,' he reflected, and explained how, in general, his classmates act differently to him now. In the beginning they laughed at his mistakes and misunderstandings, but, after the form master had had

[27] In the case of Finland, it is important to keep in mind the existence of "colourless" racial categories as well (Souto 2011, 25). As Puuronen (2011) and Krivonos (2018) have argued, Russian people, for example, face racism in Finland too. In any case, while people whose phenotype is white can sometimes "pass" as Finnish, my research companions cannot use this trick due to their visibility as non-white.

individual discussions with each student, they ceased to do so. 'I think they must have talked about me with them and told them that I have only been in Finland for a short while.'

At the point I was doing fieldwork, he already felt that the class had more or less accepted him, and so it seemed to me too. There were quite strong cliques in the class, and it happens that Emanuel spends most time with the clique in which the three boys of the class are also in—two of them those he pointed out as being the most "prejudiced" towards him in the beginning. In a class in which the boys clearly cluster together, it was, perhaps, still the easiest clique for Emanuel to get in—the others are "girls only" cliques. All of them seem to get along alright now, even though it is the third boy with whom Emanuel is in most contact, and who helps him out more than the other two. In addition to the three boys, two girls belong to this group, and one of them in particular often sits next to Emanuel and works together with him. It is this group Emanuel most often joins for lunch or spends time with in the corridors between lessons, sits next to in class, and does pair or teamwork with when required. It is also the members of this group that most often help him out when he cannot follow the teaching due to difficulties of language.

Yet it is also remarkable that he is often not actually involved in chitchat or whatever the group is currently bustling about, but merely stands or sits quietly nearby. The others never seem to touch him either. Two of the other boys have constant play fights with the girls of the group, sometimes quite physical, but Emanuel is never involved. Everybody keeps a certain distance from him. This practice seemed so inviolable that I almost held my breath when I once noticed it being broken, making the following note in my diary:

> Emanuel and the girl student are both making notes and lean their arms on the table, writing. His elbow is resting on her table, very close to hers, and they chat quietly for a moment, exchanging intensive eye contact as well. Soon, she turns towards the other young man on her left side and starts to talk with him. While doing it she leans slightly to the right, and her and Emanuel's elbows meet. They do not withdraw from the touch but let it happen until, after a few minutes, both change position slightly and their elbows depart.

It is as if there was an invisible bubble around Emanuel that separates him from the other students—a bubble that breaks when he meets some friends or acquaintances of his who are also persons of colour and study in some other class; they always greet each other by shaking hands and touch each other otherwise too, which serves to further accentuate the avoidance of touch that prevails between Emanuel and his own classmates. As Rastas (2005, 87) notes, in everyday encounters the supposed

difference, or Otherness, of someone is constructed not only by openly racist acts, but also in less obvious ways such as gaze (looking at or looking away), treating someone differently from others, or including some and excluding some others. Ahmed (2000, 48; emphasis original), for her part, brings out the importance of touch in social differentiation thus: "[...] *bodies are touched by some bodies differently from other bodies*." Though not outspoken (anymore), Emanuel's difference from his classmates is made manifest, and reproduced, through small but continuous gestures. As weeks go by and the class spirit gets better, this differentiation turns slowly neutral or even amiable in its tone. There is even relaxed joking about some classmate acting racist, for example, if they accidentally treat Emanuel differently from the others (like handing him a spoon instead of a fork at the lunch table). Nevertheless, differentiation still takes place: a peculiar kind of friendly distance seems to be the attitude adopted by most of his classmates. Or, some might even help him out when they see he needs it, but get irritated when they have to do so repeatedly, as in the baking situation in the opening vignette of this chapter. It is not his difference as such that provokes the classmate helping him out, but the trouble it causes him, and this serves to manifest the difference all the same.

Emanuel's position as *the* Other in the class is also built, perhaps completely unintentionally, through acts that construct the belonging and similarity of the two other students in the class who have multicultural backgrounds with the majority. Both of these girls speak and write flawless Finnish, and they do not differentiate from others by their looks either—they have maybe slightly darker hair than the other brunettes in the class, but not so much as to catch attention. They also dress and act in line with the other girls, and I might not have noticed their backgrounds were it not for their "foreign-sounding" first names and two small incidents. The first was kicked off by the very name of one of the girls, when a teacher, new to the class, asked her how to pronounce it and then asked where she came from. The girl took this as questioning her country of origin, and answered: "I am right from [the city in question], my father is Finnish." With this trained sentence she promptly confirmed her belonging twice, both to the Finnish nation and to the local hoods. The second incident, involving the other girl, was even more interesting, as it exhibited a more contradictory stance:

> I sit alone in the class, enjoying a peaceful moment and correcting my notes. Soon some girls come in and go to their places in the back row to chitchat. After a while, another girl comes in and starts explaining in a loud voice how she had been talking to another student in the corridor, when the teacher of the other class had arrived and asked the other student to come in. 'That Turkish girl won't let me in,' the other student had then said. The girl goes over to the sink to wash her hands, looks at

> herself in the mirror and asks the other girls: "Am I white? They called me white." The other girls respond immediately in a serious tone: "Yes." "Yes you are, very fair[-skinned]."

The discussion was unfortunately interrupted here, as the teacher walked in and asked the girls about the progress of their group work. Still, one can make a few remarks on the back of this short conversation: first, the other girls were quick to confirm the "Turkish" girl's whiteness, and their tone made it clear that this was not a subject to joke about. But, second, the girl herself used the expression "they called me" hinting in a way that she finds it insulting to be categorized as white. Third, there was something in her tone, in her way of bringing this under discussion and voicing the question itself—"Am I white?"—that did not support the interpretation that she was upset. Contradictory as the girl's sense of belonging perhaps is for herself, it is something that she can negotiate with herself and others—and, in this class, her belonging to the white majority was not questioned in the slightest, quite the contrary. Thus, these little incidents, in which the girls were reconstructing the limits between white and non-white, immigrant and native, served to make Emanuel's position as *the* black immigrant Other of the class all the more clear. As Ahmed (2000, 100) writes, and as I have tried to bring out above, in the section concerning the racialization of immigrants, belonging and Othering are not constructed through simple divisions between "us" and "the Other", but differentiating "Others" into those who are familiar, are assimilable and touchable, and those who are strange, are unassimilable and untouchable.

At a more general level, that of constructing a nation, Ahmed (ibid., 96), describes this as a "[...] double and contradictory process of incorporation and expulsion: it may seek to differentiate between those strangers whose appearance of difference can be claimed by the nation, and those stranger strangers who may yet be expelled, whose difference may be dangerous to the well-being of even the most heterogenous of nations." Ahmed wrote this text in an Australian context in which multiculturalism was (two decades ago) explicitly embraced at the level of state policies and discourses. While the Finnish context is different, a similar double process has been identified by Finnish researchers, too: two discourses concerning immigration (Huttunen 2002, 13–14) and two forms of Othering (Lehtonen et al. 2004, 258–259). On one hand, a need to open up to the world is acknowledged, becoming more international is seen as a positive development, and immigrant Others who are seen through this lens can be thought of as *includable others*; part of the Finnish "us" or even part of a desired identity in their exciting difference. On the other hand, immigration is portrayed as something that needs to be controlled

and the difference of migrants assimilated. The migrants seen through this lens are not considered to be part of the positive internationalization of Finland, but instead *excludable others* at the margins of society: opposite the Finnish "us".

Although Emanuel is aware that even though his classmates might have accepted him as a member of the class, they still have prejudices when it comes to other "foreigners". He told me, for example, of how they spoke meanly about an Afghan boy who goes to the same school, making pejorative jokes about his hair. Emanuel had interrupted, and told them to quit talking like that, telling them they should understand that 'I was similar [to the Afghan boy] to you before you got to know me.' Emanuel's reflection shows how, in the eyes of his classmates, he has been recognized as a person instead of merely a representative of the category of racialized immigrants, but also how this recognition does not deconstruct the category itself: other Others are still recognized as essentially strange. Among his classmates, then, Emanuel feels in an ambivalent way accepted, though only as an exception, and hence only to a degree.

5.1.3 Compassionate constructions of difference: encounters with professionals of integration work

I have inquired above into how Emanuel's and Denis's difference as racialized and immigrant Others was constructed in their encounters in school environments, in which the attitude of the other parties was either hard to interpret, neutral, or in some cases prejudiced or openly racist. Difference, however, can be constructed with openly benevolent intentions too. One instance would be the kind of admiring exoticizing of, for example, people of African descent, which I have sometimes seen to shape the encounters Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel have with some Finns. Such association with exoticism and excitement is, of course, intertwined with racism (e.g. Loftsdóttir 2017, 75), but is nevertheless often without pejorative intentions. Another instance can be found in the work done in the institutions that are responsible for the young people's integration. Most of the Finnish adults with whom the refugee background young people have encounters, especially during their first years in Finland, are professionals of this sort: reception centre and family group home staff, social workers, teachers, youth workers and social educators, police officers, healthcare personnel, coaches, priests and researchers. Some also meet volunteers who act as mentors, and, with time, develop informal relations with some other adults, like their friends' parents. The overwhelming majority, however, are

either state or municipality officials or third sector professionals whose job is more or less directly related to integration work. The significance of these encounters in terms of the young people's sense of how they are seen—and, if we listen to Denis, how they *feel* themselves to be—is weighty. In this section, I now move out from the school environment and delve into these encounters to better understand their profoundly subjectivating effects. Benevolent intentions often motivate these acts, aimed to support the youths' inclusion in society either by instructing them in how one is supposed to act in Finland (first subsection below) or by gaining understanding of their life situations (second subsection). Nevertheless, on closer scrutiny these acts of inclusion turn out (also) to work for constant Othering.

Educating and training

> We are looking at the photographs Denis took of his everyday life for me last week, a task he seemed to embrace immediately. He has taken photos at home, at school, and during his free time, hanging out with friends, and we talk about each photo for quite a bit. One of the photos is a selfie he has taken at home, wearing one of the ten top-notch baseball caps he cherishes. He looks straight at the camera, eyes wide open, a peculiarly tense smile on his face. It catches my attention and I say that he looks happy in the photo, a remark that provokes a short burst of slightly awkward laughter from his part and a lengthy explanation.
>
> Denis: Well, at least I can say that I have learned something here in Finland, actually at school, when I was in S [the location of the reception centre where he waited for a decision on his application for asylum]. When I am over there, where I come from, we take a photo like this [Denis makes a solemn face]. Over there one does not laugh or like that in these sorts of situations. But I remember, like, the first day when I went to school here in Finland, at S, where I used to live, and at school I was like [in the school photo], probably I was [makes the solemn face again], and then the teacher was like "hey, you should like smile". I was totally like "what, this is a photo, teacher, why should I smile?" They took me to one side and we went to some other room and they said that here we act like this and this, a photo should be like happy, one cannot be like this...
>
> At this point I cannot help interrupting him, I am so puzzled:
>
> Elina: So they took you like...?
> Denis: To like another room.
> Elina: And they actually explained you that?
> Denis: Yeah, they explained me that. Well, from then on, when a photo is taken, so [he makes a happy face with a strained grin].
> Elina: So you always have to smile!
> Denis: Yeeaah. Yea but over there where I come from, in a photo no-one like laughs...

This is integration work in a small, detailed sense of teaching and learning the right "techniques of the body". As Mauss lectured (1973 [1934], 70), "[...] from society to society men know how to use their bodies." This knowing, he later points out, does not come naturally, but is the result of both imitation on the part of, and of the education given to, children on the right ways of walking, swimming, ways of holding one's hands, running, and so on (ibid., 71–74). The appropriation of Finnish techniques of the body is given considerable attention in the daily encounters between refugee background youth and state officials. School is one of the most important environments in which this work is done, as exemplified by Denis' story. Another is the family group home, in which the minutiae of daily life is organized accordingly. Times to wake up and to go to sleep, times to eat and not to eat, how and what to eat versus what and how not to eat, when to have and what to do in free time and when and how to throw a party—everything follows the Finnish norm.

> On one Sunday evening AK is visiting the home by herself. Almost all the children are out. One is at home, though, tired, sad and with a bad headache. The educators try to find something for her to do and suggest watching TV together. There is some Finnish dance program on, and one of the educators suggests that, because it is so popular among Finns: 'If there are five million inhabitants in Finland, about one million of them watches this program, so that is also integration.' Another social educator suggests Moomin cartoons, but the young person objects, saying that they are for small kids. Nevertheless, the social educators end up screening winter episodes of the Moomin cartoons, so that the young person will learn what winter is like: 'Moomins are also about integrating,' they say.

> Another time I am in the downstairs kitchen with one of the social educators, who starts to prepare an evening snack—there is a cook in the institution, but she only works the day shift, so the educators are responsible for serving the younger children food in the evening. The educator puts an apron on and takes a bag of flour from the cupboard, telling me that "Finnish people usually eat some bread with a cup of tea in the evening, but they [the youth living in the home] expect something more substantial." She explains that they would like a proper meal, but, as a "Finnish rhythm is followed" in the home, she will only bake some bread and not cook anything else.

Training the young people's bodies to follow the "Finnish rhythm," so self-evident for professionals, requires a good deal of practice. Learning not to wake up at five, in order to be in time for church, for example, as Emanuel used to do only a few months before moving into the home, or sitting and studying at school every day instead of going to work on construction sites (like Adel, who worked with his father from around the age of five) or roaming the streets selling shoes (as Afrax did at some point), or having special hobbies like Thai boxing or playing the kantele

(Finnish zither) instead of meeting up with friends to play football in some vacant lot, or not eating a meal in the evening, but only having a piece of bread and a cup of tea—the list goes on. Thinking about this incessant training from the point of view of bodily encounters can help understand how the feeling of "being different" is constructed. In these encounters, the difference of the young people is located in their material bodies: in their gestures and habits, and even in their biological functions, their feelings of hunger or sleepiness. Differences, in these encounters, are framed as something that need to be ironed out by training oneself to live and act according to the Finnish norm. "How one acts," Denis summarized for me once, "is the kind of thing that I learned here [in Finland]."

Simultaneously, the professionals of integration work are well aware of the importance of the young people's "own culture" for their well-being. Supporting the young people in maintaining at least some traits of their culture, for example their skills in their mother tongue, is seen as an integral part of integration work. How to do this better is one issue that was tackled together with the staff and the youth in the family group home in a special session. I followed the discussions on the issue in couple of small groups, and in one of them especially the tension between the staff's understanding of maintaining "own culture" and the youth's perspectives surfaced clearly:

> One of the Muslim boys starts to talk immediately very fast and in an angry tone: "The educators do not respect our culture!" He explains how they had told staff earlier in the autumn that they had a religious holiday, a holiday for mourning, and, for that reason, could not participate in some activity the staff had organized (with quite a lot of effort), and one of the educators—"that irritating Joonas", the boy calls him—had said that: "It does not matter, we will have a party and dance." "We said that we would be MOURNING," the boy says, and underlines the importance of this particular day for Muslims, going on to say that no-one goes to school or work that day. Jaana, the other social educator in this group, says that in Finland, "that will not succeed in working life." The boy disagrees, saying that you can inform your boss in good time and agree your shifts so that you can be off duty, but both the educators highlight how difficult that is. Reetta, the other educator, says that, "anyway, as we live here in Finland and there are all the Finnish holidays, of course, it is a bit difficult if there are to be others as well." Jaana agrees, saying that different groups of Muslims also have different kinds of holidays, one cannot take them all into account. The boy still doesn't give way, and resolutely writes on flip chart that if one is away because of a religious holiday, one can provide that information in advance. The educators then try to redirect the discussion, asking what other things than religion are related to one's culture, suggesting language or music, but with little success. Another lad who has earlier withdrawn from the discussion, lying on a pile of pillows, now exclaims: "One has to forget one's own language, has to forget one's own religion, that is how Finland is."

In other groups, the tensions were less evident, as the discussions turned more fluently into sessions in which the social educators mapped out elements of the young people's cultures that they considered possible and worthy of preserving, in the sense that they could be fitted into Finnish working life or the Finnish daily rhythm. "Own culture" as a whole does not fit, as Jaana and Reetta make clear, but some parts can be cut out and turned into appropriate activities, such as a drumming club, or posters about each young person's home country, as suggested by the educators in other groups. The way "own culture" is presented in these discussions by the staff is, in this sense, objectifying: culture becomes an object that can be eaten, hung on the wall, listened to, or had as a kind of a hobby. hooks (1992, 21) crystallizes the commodification of Otherness thus: "[...] ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture." While some parts of the young people's cultures are constructed as worthy and interesting and celebrated in the name of multicultural pluralism (ibid., 25–26), others are not considered as enriching the Finnish mainstream dish but rather as messing up the whole table. Issues such as the socially sanctioned use of headscarves in the case of girls, or Muslim celebrations and holidays that disrupt the rhythm of mainstream society, were presented as problematic. Cultural diversity should remain an exception that confirms the rule; not shaking but reinscribing the status quo (ibid., 22): "anyway we live here in Finland." In this way, holding on to one's own culture turns into one more thing one can learn to perform correctly and according to the Finnish norm.

Monitoring and researching

When I began fieldwork with AK in the family group home, we were cautious, as we considered the place as a kind of a safe zone—it is the children's home! We asked the youth for the permission to hang around in their home outspokenly, explaining that while we were there we were always doing research, and were surprised about the ease with which they gave us permission. But later, observing how the staff members and their substitutes, security personnel and other professionals walk in and out of the house monitoring the youths, we understood that, in their lives, being under detailed observation is a normal condition:

> I am sitting and chatting with some of the young people and one social educator in the upstairs kitchen, reserved for those who are supposed to cook for themselves. One of them has just finished cooking and now serves for two: himself and a girl who is visiting the home. The educator pretends to whisper me that the girl is the young man's girlfriend, to which I respond in a normal voice that I had guessed as much, as he serves her like a true gentleman. Another young man offers me some food too, as

> they always do—it seems to be a rule that food is shared around this kitchen table, often in a non-ceremonial fashion by simply laying several forks around one plate and saying "welcome". I decline as politely as I can, explaining that I have just eaten. Suddenly, another social educator rushes into the kitchen and asks straightforwardly what the young people have cooked. Pasta with beans, they reply, at which point she walks across to the stove, asking what the dish contains other than beans, taking the lid off the pot. She scrutinizes the food, trying to guess the ingredients, then asks aloud: 'Beans and ketchup?' The cook answers that it is onion and tomato mash. The educator then drops the subject and goes on to discuss the young man's first lesson in driving school, about to start soon.

Furthermore, it is normal practice at the home to write detailed reports on each young person living there. There are obvious practical reasons for this: the purpose of the reports is to keep staff up to date in regard to each young person's situation. There is a lot of different people working there, often substitutes, and they work in three shifts—the reports help make these changes of shift and staff as smooth as possible. Continuous reporting, however, has other kinds of effects too, intentional or not:

> One day, AK tells me about a brief conversation she had had with the municiple social worker responsible for the social security of the youths living in the home. She had spoken to them in order to agree an interview, and the social worker had asked if we had managed to involve youth who are of age and had thus moved out of the home, as we had hoped to do. AK told them that yes, we had managed to find three, at which point they said that, actually, they had already read that we had met with one former resident of the house in the report. AK was, and probably looked, astonished, so they explained that the daily report mentioned that one other young person had been accompanied by a social educator but then left in our company—our meaning me, AK, and this former resident of the home. AK tells me that she feels confused about this: why is our presence marked in an official report regarding the young person? I, for my part, get quite pissed off, as I have only recently told the young man we were with that no-one in the home knows he is participating in our research, but now the whole staff of the home can, and will, read this information in the report. AK feels bad and writes in her reflection: "We haven't done anything [wrong] at this point, but I think this is a clear evidence of the limits of the life and privacy of these children and young people, and the institutional care that restricts this, producing strange situations."

On the other hand, we also wrote our reports, even if we called them field notes, and had different reasons for them and uses for the information. From the youths' perspective, however, how far are these practices from each other? In both situations they are encountered as something that needs to be monitored and have information gathered about, information that is then passed on and used for purposes that more often than not remain obscure for the youths themselves.

> I have come to a multicultural youth club to present my research. There is a house meeting this evening, and there are other issues on the agenda and other visitors as well. When it is my turn, I get up from the circle of people sitting on pillows and mattresses around the floor, stand in the middle of the room next to a flip chart, and present myself to the people who don't already know me (many do, as I used to work in this place). I then tell them briefly about my work as a researcher at the university and my research project, trying to emphasize that I would like to do it together with some of the young people, researching issues that they find important. At this point, one of the older lads—Samiullah—suggests: "For example, how we deviate from the majority population [*valtaväestö*]?" I am stupefied at this suggestion and stumble on my words, trying to find an answer that would not confirm what he said without ridiculing it. I cannot really come up with anything, so I say: "For example—or, how you do not deviate." Perplexed, I sit back in the ring on the floor to listen to what the other two visitors have to say. The first is from the city youth services, and she presents a project called "Keys to Success" that aims at enhancing healthy lifestyles among young people through the activities of sport clubs. The second is from one of the local football clubs, and he starts his session by saying that, "we also have activities aimed at immigrant youth." He first tells them about the possibilities of training to become a referee, or even of doing an internship at the club, and then about the coming week against racism and an event that the football club has decided to organize during it: "As it is part of that week against racism, it would be great if you would like organize it."

Samiullah wanted to be polite, to show that he was listening and participating in the house meeting.[28] If he had known the level of uneasiness his suggestion provoked in me, he would not have said anything. Oh, how awkward I felt! For sure, I am not studying the ways that immigrant young men deviate from the majority Finns! Or am I? Because, of course, the biggest reason behind my embarrassment was that Samiullah actually got to the heart of the matter, or very close to it, to say the least. I did say that I was researching the life of immigrant young men in Finland, and, for that category to be of interest, there is supposedly something that makes it worth studying (instead of, say, the life of young men residing in Finland in general). Despite my interests to the contrary, using this category as a tool of analysis *also* does the work of categorizing itself (Brubaker 2013, 6), and the practice of research has an effect on the people it has as its objects, no matter how participatory the ethos of one's research. So, there I was, as a visitor in the house meeting among other visitors, and we all categorized the people we were talking to as immigrant youth in need of this or that: advice on healthy lifestyle, opportunities for internships, anti-racist

[28] Interestingly, an almost exactly similar comment was made by an immigrant background young man to Laakkonen & Juntunen (2019), who were conducting research in a multicultural suburb in Finland. In their case, however, the comment was saturated with irony: "What are you researching? Like what's wrong with us *mamu*s?"

events, or research on issues they find important. This incident pushed me to profoundly reconsider my research setting and concepts, and was among the reasons I chose to use the term refugee background youth instead of immigrant youth (as outlined in the introductory chapter).

It is not only the concepts of research that are relevant for the processes of the subjectivation of these young people, but the practice of research itself. It was nothing new for them to be objects of research, it was a repeat occurrence. Several theses have been written about the multicultural youth club in question and its regular visitors. The family group home where I did fieldwork with AK had, until then, not been an object of research as an institutional space, but some of its residents had participated in research projects—Denis and Adel, for example, who had been working individually with a student doing their master's thesis some years before they started working with me. While we were doing our research, another anthropology student was carrying out fieldwork with former residents of the home for their master's thesis, and we had to communicate with them in order to make sure we were not working with the same youths or otherwise confusing things. It is not uncommon for youths to be asked to give some account of their experiences at events aimed at professionals or students of social work, in newspaper articles, or to participate in different kinds of panels regarding migration, racism, equality, or the like.

Thus, Samiullah's suggestion should not have surprised me: being observed by the questioning eye of a researcher precisely because of their difference from the majority population is not uncommon for these young people. If training the young people's bodies to meet the Finnish rhythm and norm works to build a feeling of being different, so does monitoring and researching—albeit with a slightly different twist. The latter constructs them as something not enough is known about, something one needs to get more information about—something that is strange and unfamiliar in its difference. Here, the difference is located somewhere even deeper than in cultural education and the training of bodily behaviour, since, in the latter, the idea is that it is possible to eliminate difference and that similarity is achievable. But, in case of monitoring and researching, it remains unclear what the difference actually consists of, and where it resides, and in its very vagueness seems to turn into an essential feature of the young people.

Acts of inclusion producing Othering

The instances described above—the slow process of gaining recognition in everyday encounters with classmates, bodily encounters with state officials in integration work, and being repeatedly encountered as strange by practices of reporting and researching—are cases in point as to how acts of inclusion can, and do, work for constant Othering (Ang 1996, 37). Among his classmates, Emanuel feels, in an ambivalent way, accepted, but only as an exception: he is painfully aware of the exclusion of other racial and immigrant Others, and of the fact that he is constantly (in other situations) categorized as such. On a structural level, the integration work of institutions that cherish multicultural values and preserving "own culture" not only contributes to feelings of being essentially different, it can actually serve to mark out the limits of multicultural tolerance by defining what kinds of differences are valued and which cannot be tolerated. As Stratton and Ang (1998, 114; emphasis original) write: "[...] multiculturalism can be seen as a policy, not to *foster* cultural differences but, on the contrary, to direct them into safe channels. [...] Seen this way, the idea(l) of unity-in-diversity is itself, ultimately, an exclusionary ideological construct." The discussions about "own culture" in the family group home described above bring to light the tensions that cultural practices seen as "too different" create (see also ibid., 114). A group discussion, originally framed as a moment of finding ways for the staff to support the young people in preserving their cultural practices, turned into its opposite: a moment in which the staff drew clear limits to the toleration of difference, explicitly pointing out that difference can only be tolerated so long as it doesn't interrupt the "Finnish rhythm". Finally, the way Samiullah perceived my research project forced me to recognize how I was unwillingly reproducing the otherness of "immigrant youth".

The latter moment served not only as a necessary intervention, making me rethink my own work, but also as a reminder of how difficult it is to act against this logic. In my experience, professionals working in the field of integration have generally not swallowed the "fantasy" of multiculturalism (Ahmed 2000, 110) whole and are aware of these problematics. Awareness alone, however, doesn't undo them. Ang (1996, 37) writes: "[...] racially and ethnically marked people are no longer othered today through simple mechanisms of rejection and exclusion, but through an ambivalent and apparently contradictory process [...]," and it isn't easy to grab hold of this process, let alone to turn it around. My intention in this section has not been to point a finger at professionals acting "wrongly", but to help unfold and gain understanding of these processes.

5.1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the difference of my research companions as racial and immigrant Others is constructed (and sometimes deconstructed) in their everyday lives, in encounters both with state officials and other professionals, and with other (non-)citizens. I have especially tried to dig into the ways in which the difference can be built not only in openly racist or xenophobic encounters, but also in encounters that seem neutral, amiable or motivated by benevolent intentions. Another aspect I have tried to highlight is how difference is not constructed "only" at the level of language and discourse, but in embodied encounters in which the material bodies of the young people are approached as different and strange. I thus suggest that, along with visibility in terms of phenotype and appearance (being a person of colour/dress code), and audible visibility (accent/"foreign-sounding" name), visibility in terms of "techniques of the body" (not fitting "the Finnish rhythm") can play a significant role in the racializing processes of constructing immigrant Others (cf. Toivanen 2014, 195). Practices of monitoring and researching the young people's lives further work to manifest their essential difference, contributing to subjectivation. A "feeling" of "being different" develops, and is explicitly expressed by some of the young people: "I am different," says Denis. "We deviate," says Samiullah.

I have also tried to highlight how these processes of Othering are not simple and easily recognizable, neither at the level of everyday encounters nor that of institutional structures and discourses. Ahmed (2000, 106) summarizes this as follows:

> Multiculturalism as an official discourse hence involves narratives of partial assimilation or incorporation (through which the "we" of the nation can appear different) as well as narratives of partial expulsion (through which the "we" of the nation defines the limits of what it "can be"). Both the narratives of incorporation and expulsion involve differentiating between others, which produces simultaneously, two figures of "the stranger" [...]. [...] In one figure, the stranger appears different, but is the same underneath; this stranger can be assimilated, and even welcomed, insofar as it enables the nation itself to appear as different. In the other figure, the stranger's dress can reveal only *a strange being*; this *stranger stranger* cannot be assimilated.

Hence, while the notion of "the immigrant" has, to some extent, been racialized in Finland, this is not a straightforward process, but a double and contradictory one in the sense described above. Perhaps the immigrants from North America studied by Leinonen (2012) do not call themselves immigrants in order to secure their position in the racial hierarchy, but they are categorized as such officially, and they do interact

with the Finnish Immigration Service, just as racialized immigrant minorities do. Instead of a simple racialization of immigrants as a category, two figures of the immigrant seem to be produced: the assimilable stranger or includable other, and the unassimilable stranger stranger or excludable Other—*mamu*, the perpetual foreigner.

As pointed out by Emanuel and his teacher, *mamu*s are not beautiful and they are not nice, their presence is disruptive and they make an awful hullabaloo; it is not comfortable to feel like a *mamu*, and they can be recognized on the basis of their phenotype. Whereas immigrant, as a term, is contradictory in regard to racialization, *mamu*—despite its original use—is not: it has become a widely used dysphemism through which the non-belonging of stranger strangers is made explicit.[29] I am unwilling to use the word in the rest of this dissertation, and will thus refer to this figure, which comes into being in the intersection of non-whiteness, refugee-ness, third-world-ness, and underclass-ness, as the "imaginary immigrant", following Lundström (2017, 79). As I have brought out in this chapter, Emanuel is very aware of being recurrently categorized in this way, and of the subject position available to him at school as someone on the limits of this category—as almost, but not quite, accepted in the "us" of the class. This emerges as a central issue of the political ordinary in his everyday school life. The next chapter devoted to him (chapter 6.1) delves into his agency, as he balances on this limit. Before that, in the following two chapters, I will introduce the subject positions offered to Manasse and Afrax.

5.2 Vulnerable young person: Manasse on stage I

On a freezing cold winter day, Manasse performs in front of hundreds of people. The moment is extraordinary: he enters the stage at Finlandia Hall with one of his bands. The building is a congress and event venue, but not just any old venue. It is one of Finland's most important symbolic buildings, designed by renowned Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, and located in the heart of the capital city Helsinki. While performing in the house is most likely a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Manasse, what has taken him there is quite typical for him.

The band he is with is part of a project initiated and coordinated by a third sector organization. The organization runs an art school that aims to provide equal opportunities for studying the arts. In principle, the school is open for all, but its main target groups are "[...] people who need special support, like the mentally disabled and *people in vulnerable*

[29] Acts of reclaiming the word also take place, and they indicate some of its connotations. Racialized rap artists Prinssi Jusuf and Musta Barbaari ("Prince Jusuf" and "Black Barbarian") have, for example, used the word in an ironic sense in some of their works.

positions [...]" (emphasis mine). In the case of this band, maybe three or four of its members have mental disabilities (the composition of the band changes a little during the project), while the other youths involved are considered to be vulnerable in other ways.

From the outset, the project was designed to concentrate on world music and different cultures, which is reflected in the name of the band, the costumes the members appear on stage in, the dances they perform, and also in the music—though not in any strictly traditional sense, more in the sense of finding inspiration for their own music and performances. Manasse was invited to participate, since, as a young refugee, he was considered to fall into the category of vulnerable youth, and, as he was born in, and lived in Africa during his childhood, he could bring the needed original African element to the band. Manasse agreed to join, as he almost always does: participating in different kinds of projects has turned out to be a useful way of learning new skills and networking for him. He sure has participated in several projects, although, as he remarks to me, he does not take part in any project, it has to be interesting and fun, "not something boring".

It is in this position that Manasse enters the stage of Finlandia Hall and performs in front of a full house. In addition to the actual band members, the instructors—one Finnish person working for the art school, one African background person working as a musician and dancer—perform too, supporting the young people with mental disabilities in particular. The event itself is arranged by another third sector organization that works with people with mental disabilities, and, according to the organizers, all the performers are "musicians and artists with mental disabilities". That there are youths in this particular band whose vulnerability is of a different nature is not mentioned in the information about the event. In this way, being placed in the category of vulnerable youth ends with Manasse entering the stage of Finlandia Hall in the role of a person with mental disabilities.

Among the many projects Manasse has participated in, this one is not exceptional with regard to its target group.[30] Several, if not most, of them have been especially designed for "vulnerable", "disadvantaged" or "refugee"/"immigrant" youth. Indeed, I have been part of two or three of them myself in my previous job. In addition to the projects Manasse took part in, I have applied for funding for several larger undertakings to fund the social work unit I worked in, or some other long-term project. In all the applications, I have either explicated or implicated the position of refugee/immigrant youth as more vulnerable than that of other young people. I always felt uncomfortable doing this, but did so nevertheless as it works; most of the applications were successful. The young people themselves, who were thus categorized as refugees/immigrants, and by implication as somehow more problematic than "normal" youth, didn't like it either. 'Why do we have to write in this application about us being refugees? We don't want to be refugees, we are not refugees anymore, are we?', they would object. And I would explain that this is how

[30] I have left details of the project and organizations involved out of the text (including references) in order to protect Manasse's anonymity.

they will get money for their projects: 'Use it,' I would tell them, 'you don't have to think of yourselves as refugees, but the fact is that by using this label you will get funding more easily.' And they would comply, and we would get the money, and use it for a weekend camp, or an international youth exchange, or some music or sports event.

"Using it", of course, is not innocent, it has its costs. In this chapter, I ask the following questions: What does it mean to think that someone is vulnerable? What kind of subject positions are constructed by categorizing people as vulnerable? Even though these questions are inspired by working with Manasse, I approach them here mostly by drawing from other field experiences, my previous job in social work, and academic writing. Towards the end of the chapter, I return to Manasse, to show what being categorized as vulnerable means in his case and in the project in question.

5.2.1 Vulnerability, care, and power

Fine (2005) defines vulnerability as a *bodily incapacity*. It means the person is *in need of care*, and giving care is a social response to this. Fine (ibid., 253) writes:

> [...] just as the body provides the material foundations of our existence as humans, so must care be understood as a necessary social response to the vulnerability and incompleteness of individual bodies at different points in the life course. The need for care is linked to unavoidable bodily incapacities experienced at different points in the life course—infancy, ageing, disability, mental illness, as well as to episodes of acute and chronic illness.

To be vulnerable is, thus, to have incapacities, not to be able, to be disabled. One of these incapacities is the inability to protect oneself—in Fine's wording explicitly from other people (ibid., 253), but implicitly also from oneself in an unable, unstable mental state. To be vulnerable is to be in need of care, which, in turn, is to be in need of support and protection from others and oneself.

One might add the condition of refugee-ness to the list Fine presents above (infancy, ageing, disability etc.). More than twenty years ago, Malkki (1996, 387–388) argued that conventional images of refugees are a "[...] spectacle of "raw," "bare" humanity [...]" that, because of the depersonalization of the actual people it concerns, produces "anonymous corporeality". These anonymous, bare human bodies are in a condition of pure helplessness, which—Malkki argues—is internationally and institutionally expected to characterize "the refugee". Images of women and children are conventionally used as embodiments of refugee-ness (ibid., 388). Going one step

further, Ticktin (2016, 257–260) links the refugee child as an ideal embodiment of refugee-ness to the children's presumed *innocence*: they are represented as innocent victims of wars and disasters. "Innocence is about purity, vulnerability, and naiveté [...]." The figure of the refugee child, then, is vulnerability become flesh. This kind of understanding of "the refugee child", Ticktin continues (2016, 260), "[...] carries the desire to protect and take responsibility for those who [...] cannot take care of themselves."

As I brought out in chapter 2, the children and youths recognized as refugees by the Finnish state are certainly cared for, both by governmental institutions and numerous third sector organizations. In what follows, I will take a closer look at what this means at the level of practices, and at the way warmth and affection on one hand, and power and control on the other, are interwoven in these practices.

Institutional care as a soci(et)al response to vulnerability: the professional hug

> It is a grey November day, but not only that, it is also the Great Gathering of the family group home. The social educators at the home have organized, together with some of the young people, a common afternoon-long session to plan the next year. The youth have gotten permission to skip school that day, and all but one are present at the planning event. The day starts with a shared meal, and then the young people are asked to work in smaller groups on different themes: "own culture", "program and trips", "well-being", "rules and sanctions", "school and homework", and "my personal social educator". After working for a couple of hours, there is a break: time for ice cream and massage. The educators take the initiative and start to massage the young people; they have brought a bagful of tennis balls to the meeting room for this purpose.
>
> The director of the home massages one of the older boys, who lies on pillows on the floor, face down. The director gives him a long, thorough back massage, and, at one point, one of the other boys comes and starts to massage the director's back with a tennis ball while they are still working on the back of the boy lying on the pillows. When the director has finished massaging his back, another boy comes and starts to continue the massage. Soon the massaging turns into a play fight, nearly a wrestling match. Other blokes begin to join the human pile, and the director goes to pacify the situation.
>
> Some other young people also lie on the floor receiving a back massage, while others sit on chairs and have their shoulders massaged. Some of the youths also massage each other or the educators. One of the social educators massages one of the girls who sits on the floor in front of her. After a while, one of the other young people comes and sits behind the educator, starting to massage her back. Soon, others join them and there is maybe five or six people sitting in a queue, each massaging the back of the person sitting in front. In a while they start larking around with each other,

> there is giggling and a few shouts, someone tickles someone else's side and the queue starts to collapse towards the sides and finally disperses in general laughter.
>
> AK writes in her notes of the day: "There is a peaceful atmosphere in the room. Somehow, the constant bustle of [the group home] ceases for a moment. I nearly start to cry when looking at the young people who, each in their own way, let themselves be touched or, on the other hand, refuse. Words one could use to describe the situation: trust, caring, warmth, touch, respect for boundaries, intimacy, being close, peace, daring, but also nervousness, timorousness, fear, rebuff."
>
> Later, in an interview, the nurse of the home explains to AK how they have realized how important touch, especially in the form of massage, is to these young people:
>
> "And then, nowadays, I have started to massage them! Yeah. As they always ask for it. [...] I have, like, imagined that it is not, like, my thing, but as I noticed that while I massage them, they start to speak about all kinds of things, and that is what they miss anyhow: closeness, touch, as no-one ever touches them. They miss their mothers of course, but that is how they get something like that. Yeah, so I have started to go in for it, and it has, well, felt somehow real nice."

Caring is the job of the staff of the family group home, as it was my job as a youth worker in the third sector, and as it is of numerous other institutions and projects too. In welfare state structures it is care workers who embody the state's taking care of the lives it has committed to foster. As I described above, at the lowest level, caring takes very bodily forms. The professional hug replaces the motherly care the young people are seen to lack. This does not only hold for the unaccompanied youth: touching is something that I also learned to appreciate as an important element in my work with immigrant background youth. It took a while for me to understand its importance, though, as I initially thought that touch by an older woman would be awkward for the youth—at best! However, in time, I learned how much the young men lacked being touched, and how a considerable reason for their play fights and mucking around was just a need to be close to each other, close to someone. "As no-one ever touches them." So I also started to do massages, to hug, to sit close to them, letting the youths lean on my shoulder, to caress them as casually as I could.

The professional hug is, of course, just one form of expressing care. Other examples: a constant flow of food that, despite the outspoken intention of promoting healthiness, often tends to include considerable amounts of ice cream and other comfort food, even plain sugar (in our unit, there used to be a huge bowl of sugar on the table to satisfy the cups of tea, each of which would swallow several tablespoonfuls), as if the workers could not resist wrapping the young people in sweet comfort in the form of foodstuffs too. Practical support in an endless stream of homework, unfinished theses, social security forms, outstanding bills, citizenship

applications, job applications and CVs; or in finding this or that: a football club one's parents can afford, a legal aid office, a vocational school to study in, the right place to charge one's bus travel card, friends. Being present, doing things together—whatever: playing a game, cooking, going for a walk—and while doing so, using the method AK started to call care-ask-listen during our fieldwork: show that you care, ask how the young person is feeling, and truly listen to what they tell you.

> I have come to the yearly summer football cup my previous work unit organizes as a guest. I arrive early, to help the director and one of the educators at the unit, who are arranging things. A bit before the start of the first games, the youths start to arrive. A bunch of older boys, who have been regulars of the unit for quite some years, approach. 'My lads forever', says the director affectionately as they draw closer. They reach us, and prolonged greetings start: everybody hugs or shakes hands or does both with everybody and starts to exchange their latest news. We stand in a loose circle, in pairs or smaller groups that constantly reform, chatting and laughing and gesturing and shouting. I see one of the boys caressing the educator's arm, and, a bit later, giving a high five to the director, who has just stated with evident irony how much she loves football. I shout from further off, where I stand chatting with another young man: 'We almost believe you!', and the lad she is talking to shouts back: 'Yeah right!', laughing and winking his eye. I feel like resting on feather pillows: the warmth of this bunch of people, showing affection and care towards each other, carries me so softly, so comfortingly.

Care as a power relation: the compulsory hug

These kinds of affectionate moments that care professionals provide and work for are often deeply touching. Yet they also carry disturbing elements within them. This came out on an elemental level right at the beginning of the gathering of the family group home described above.

> Two of the social educators, dressed to the nines, stand near the front door to welcome everybody entering the room. They hug all the young people, and many hug them back with affection—but some try to maintain as much physical distance as possible, keeping their body tense while giving a quick hug. One of the older youths does not want to hug them at all for some reason, and manages to bypass them and turn in the other direction. The educators shout their name with resentful voices—jokingly, but still making it clear that their behaviour was not quite acceptable. They pretend not to hear and walk around the room along the walls. I try to catch their eye to say hello, or at least nod, but to no avail: they salute only the other young people and dismiss all the adults in the room. This makes me puzzled and a little sad.

This little incident keeps on bothering me. Why did the young person refuse to hug? Why did the social educators reproach them for refusing to do so? To me, the compulsory nature of the professional hug on one hand, and the young person's

unwillingness to receive it on the other, speaks of a thread of power interwoven in the "purest" practice of caring, in the motherly hug. For, as Manning (2007, xiv) writes, "[...] touch is not simply the laying of hands." She defines touch as an act of one body reaching toward another, "[...] drawing the other into relation [...]." As bodies are by definition relational (ibid., xviii), touch inevitably means exchange and change. "As I reach toward, I reach not toward the 'you' I ascertain but toward the 'you' you will become in relation to our exchange." (Ibid., 7.) There is no "neutral" touch. The question, then, is what kind of relation the professional hug is? Into what kind of relation does a social educator reaching toward the young refugee draw them? And what kind of "you" is the young person becoming through hugging, what kind of subject position they are offered in this hug?

A hierarchical relationship is established between the ones who care and those who are cared for, between subjects who have power to protect and objects who are understood to need protection, Ticktin claims (2016, 257–260; 265). Similarly, Tronto (1993, 146) writes: "[...] care is rarely an activity engaged in by equals; the fact that A needs care and that B provides it, means that A is in B's power." That this happens is not due to the nature of care itself. It is the ideal of the modern subject as an autonomous being who does not depend on others in fulfilling their needs that is behind the unequal relationship of care. Neediness is a threat to the autonomy of this ideal subject: "[...] those who have more needs [...] appear to be less autonomous, and hence less powerful and less capable," as Tronto (ibid., 120) writes. She claims that as autonomous rationality is thought to define political life in modern societies (ibid., 117), weakness and neediness represent its opposite and thus people in need of care are constructed as pitiful others without political voice or recognition (ibid., 120; 123):

> [...] our desire not to be unequal and dependent results in a treatment of those who need care as inherently different and unequal. The result is that those who receive care are often transformed into the "other", and identified by whatever marks them as needing care: their economic plight, their seeming physical disability, and so forth. (Tronto 1993, 145.)

Wernesjö (2011) notes that, in the case of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, this logic seems to hold even in regard to academic research. She writes that studies about them "[...] tend to characterize unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as a particularly vulnerable category of children [...]", "outside the realms of a *normal*—or rather ideal—childhood [...]", and hence "[...] as *in need* of support and protection." She sees this as carrying the risk of pathologizing them as a deviants, who are at a greater risk of developing emotional problems and, as such, of constructing them

"[...] as passive and vulnerable, i.e. not seeing them as able—despite sometimes being in a vulnerable position—and as actors in their own right." (Wernesjö 2011, 504–505; emphasis original.)

5.2.2 Care and control: encouraging the right kinds of agency, uprooting the wrong kinds of agency

For, as it is, vulnerability and agency are often understood to be dichotomous (Verdasco 2017, 45). In the United Kingdom, Crawley (2010) found that if unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (especially those getting close to the age of eighteen) expressed political views, or described their political activities in their asylum interviews, their grounds for seeking asylum were not considered credible and they were *not accepted as children at all* (ibid., 167). As Verdasco (2017, 44) notes, this implies that agency is not compatible with the category of children. In her own research in Denmark, Verdasco noticed that the staff of units dealing with minors tried to restrict the agency of children, if it was seen to be in contradiction with their life stage: for example, taking responsibility and care of younger siblings was discouraged in order "[...] to let them know that 'You also have to be a child'," as one staff member explained to Verdasco (ibid., 53). In Verdasco's (ibid., 53–54) interpretation, in these situations, the agency of the young people contradicts the modern Western ideal of childhood, in which "[...] children ought to be safe, happy and protected [...]." Hence, the welfare state's attempts to remove the responsibilities the young people bear is an attempt to make them children again.

Yet, not all sorts of activities are restricted. In the situation Verdasco (ibid., 53) describes, the older brother was discouraged from taking care of his younger brother's clothes, while, conversely, the younger sibling was encouraged to take care of his own clothes himself. Taking care of oneself is exactly the kind of agency one is expected to develop. This was something I also came to understand during my fieldwork:

> 'These are like thirteen–fourteen-year-olds in the skin of an eighteen years old', Reetta says, looking at me a little askew, 'and they should already live independently.' We are in the kitchen of the family group home, where she cleans the mess one of the older residents has created while cooking. Reetta had remarked how tough it is to move out and live on your own if you don't have basic skills like cleaning up after cooking, and my answer, that you soon notice the consequences when you live alone perhaps irritated her a little. To change the tone, I ask if it isn't the case that all the young people who move out of the home are offered so-called aftercare, and Reetta says that yes, they all get at least basic support (meaning that they live in normal rental

> flats, but a social educator visits them every week), or, if necessary, move into special support accommodation units. 'And for this [young person]', she says, 'we are organizing a tailored solution with strong support measures.'

The Western ideal of normal childhood as careless and protected versus the Western ideal of normal adulthood as independent and autonomous seems to create a tension with respect to children's and young people's agency: they simultaneously "have to be children", and thus not carry too much responsibility for others, *and* grow up, in the sense of becoming independent adults who take care of themselves. It is not simply any kind of activity and responsibility that is discouraged by social workers, but certain kinds, while they expend huge amounts of effort cultivating others. Just as showing the wrong kind of (political, social) agency may disqualify you as a child, not showing the right kind of responsibility and self-management disqualifies you as an adult: as long as you need someone else to take care of you, you are considered a child, despite the age of your "skin".

> Reetta's explanation helps me to better understand a discussion we had had in the kitchen earlier, while the young person was cooking—I had found out that they were about to turn eighteen soon and asked how they felt about moving out, and we had ended up talking about how they would like to live in Helsinki. At that point, another social educator had intervened, noting that moving to a big city like Helsinki it is not recommendable. I had opposed mildly, saying that I had lived there for thirty years and liked it, but that it is good to have friends over there before moving. The young person then told us that they have more friends over there than here, and that they think Helsinki would be better, as they find their present hometown rather boring. The social educator objected strongly: 'For you, this town is far better.'

Here, the unequal relationship of care that Tronto (1993, 146; see above) speaks of comes to the surface. That the young person did not clean up after themselves is seen as proof of their ongoing need for care, which, in turn, is a sign of their incapacity to understand where and how they should live. As Bacchi & Beasley (2002, 338) point out, in Western liberal thought political subjectivity is equated with *disembodied rationality*, which is interpreted to mean control over one's body. Consequently, showing deficiency when it comes to control of one's body allows illiberal treatment of the person in question, such as control over decision making (ibid., 332). It is worth noticing that, in Reetta's description, there was no room for other interpretations for the young person not cleaning after themself than their inability to do so, the mere fact that their childish body does not possess the necessary skills for taking care of themself. Reetta did not seem for a moment to ask whether not cleaning might be an act of rebellion against the staff of the unit, or a calculated way of making one's day a little less of a burden (maybe they knew very

well that someone else would clean up after them)—or, for that matter, the possibility that they were ravenous and simply wanted to eat before cleaning up. The way Reetta puts it, there is only one answer: inability, which in turn justifies the continuation of special protective measures that go against their wishes despite their coming of age.

Both in the situation described by Verdasco and in the one I experienced in the family group home kitchen, the young people in question are seen to be *at risk*—or feared for, as Horton & Pyer (2017, 13) put it. They are seen to be either too responsible and adult-like, or not responsible enough for their chronological age, which is understood to be a sign of their special vulnerability in comparison to normal youths. As Horton & Pyer (2017, 13) write, the other end of this still prevalent binary discourse is the figure of a young person as feared, as *a risk*. Both justify control as part and parcel of care, either in the sense of protecting the young person—seen as innocent in their immaturity—or in the sense of disciplining the unwanted behaviour of the young person—seen as potentially evil in their undeveloped state (Pekkarinen 2015, 17–18). While, at first glance, seeing young people as potentially evil might sound like a thing of the past, the discourse regarding the marginalization of immigrant youth and the radicalization of Muslim youth is not innocent of this understanding, and this discourse is very much present in Finnish social work contexts.[31]

"Participation" as a solution

The dichotomy of vulnerability and agency described above creates a contradiction that institutions working with children and young people have to grapple with. Seeing minors as immature, incompetent and irresponsible, and thus in need of protection and control tends to lead to "protective exclusion," as Pekkarinen (2015, 17–20) writes. Paradoxically, when protection invades all areas of life it restricts the children's possibilities to take responsibility, develop skills and become competent. Yet, letting children and young people's agency thrive untrammeled is problematic from the institutional point of view, especially if they start breaking behavioural or legal norms (ibid., 20). One attempt to settle this apparent contradiction, between treating children and young people as passive objects of care or as active subjects of their own life, is so-called "participation". As an idea and practice, participation has become increasingly popular in youth work and child development agencies since

[31] Space does not allow me to give extended examples of this, but one way this came up during my fieldwork in the family group home was concern about the religiosity of young Muslim men in comparison to approval of religiosity in Christian youths.

the mid 90s (Theis 2009, 343), to such an extent that it is now orthodoxy, even hegemonic, in the sense that its value is unquestioned (Farthing 2012, 71). This upsurge has been strongly influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was opened to signature in 1989 and has since then been ratified by almost all states worldwide. Among other children's rights, the convention asserts their right to have a voice in decision making. Another important factor in the increase in popularity of participation is the sociology of childhood, which criticizes the simple understanding of children as objects of socialization, seeing them instead as active subjects and social actors (Thomas & Percy-Smith 2009, 1).

During my years in the youth work sector in Finland, participatory practices were gaining strong foothold, and participation was one of the catchwords when writing funding applications. I even designed a large-scale project around the idea, and it was successful—what started as a three-year project with one employee grew bigger and more stable than the youth work unit under which it was originally initiated. Participation was given a lot of weight in the practices of the family group home too: the staff, with quite some effort, organized monthly meetings to discuss common issues and make decisions together with the youths, and, in this sense, the Great Gathering described above was a big investment. Of course, some social educators were more into participatory ideas, while others seemed to be more skeptical, but I did hear many of them talk about the importance of "the voice of the youth being heard", or the possibility of their having an effect on the way daily life in the home was run. The young people were actively encouraged to take part in the meetings, and they were made more tempting by food and—of course—ice cream being served at them. In the meetings, the youths were asked their opinion and, sometimes, also feelings over some issue, and everybody was encouraged, but not pressured, to speak. Yet the monthly meetings were also situations where the frictions between the staff and the children tended to surface, and sometimes the meetings turned into moments for sanctioning the behaviour of the youths with rewards or reproaches.

This, perhaps, reflects the insufficient conceptualization of participation, and the underdeveloped theorizing of its practice (e.g. Checkoway 2011, 340; Farthing 2012, 72; Morciano et al. 2014, 82; Theis 2009, 343–344; Thomas & Percy-Smith 2009, 3). Theis and Farthing both draw on earlier efforts to define participation and develop its theorization in order to synthesize the concept with the practice. On this basis, both conclude that children and young people's participation is about active exercise of their citizenship rights: taking part and having decision-making power in the communities they live in and on issues that affect them (Farthing 2012, 73; Theis 2009, 344–345). Thus, fundamentally, children and young people's participation

concerns their right to exercise—and to be supported in being able to do so—*active citizenship*. Theis (ibid., 345–346) writes:

> Children's abilities to exercise their citizenship rights and responsibilities evolve as they grow and learn. This is a gradual process that enables older children and adolescents to assume the full range of citizenship rights and responsibilities by the time they become adults. People do not suddenly become citizens on reaching a certain age. [...] Citizenship must be learned through everyday experiences of family and community life, education, civic and political awareness.

As this quote makes clear, and as Farthing (2012, 74) notes, defining participation as a method that takes young people towards active citizenship is "[...] inextricably linked to normative claims about the merits of an active democratic society." Enthusiasm around participation reflects an assumption that young people's active engagement in democratic society is intrinsically good—an assumption which, Farthing (ibid., 74) claims, is left little analyzed. I suggest this unquestioned assumption is strongly linked with the equally unquestioned assumption that growing up means learning how to take care of oneself, which is seen as equivalent to being independent and autonomous. As Tronto (1993, 117–123; see above) writes, to gain political voice and recognition—to become a citizen—one has to prove one's autonomous rationality by not being needy. As taking care of oneself must be learned while growing up, so must citizenship: the "right" way of participating in decision-making practices. Understanding participation as a method that has the reassertion of the agency of children and young people *as such* as its object would be a mistake. Rather, it should be understood as cultivating *certain kinds of agency* while uprooting others—in line with upbringing, in the sense of teaching children and young people to take care of themselves.

It is not surprising, then, that of the few criticisms of youth participation, one of the most dominant is what Farthing calls "the radical critique". According to this, contrary to its claims to be empowering, the practice of participation is but another form of governmentality: a "[...] tool for social control, or a cosmetic device designed to secure compliance with an existing power structure [...]." (Farthing 2012, 78.) I am unsure whether I share this criticism as it stands. As a professional of youth work (as well), I cannot think of it without participation as one of its cornerstones—what would that mean? Non-participation? And yet, I often feel slightly ill at ease when participatory methods are used. In situations where participation is obviously merely used as a cosmetic in the sense Farthing describes, this is not surprising. I was also awkwardly aware of the irony of designing my project to promote the participation and active citizenship of young people who were not even granted citizenship in

Finland—some not yet, others never to be. It holds, too, for projects like the one Manasse took part in, described in the opening section of this chapter. In the next section, I will consider this more closely, discussing its participatory ethos and the subject position offered to Manasse within it.

The band project as a participatory trial

The whole band project was designed to be participatory from top to toe: the instructors who led the project worked hard to support the young people involved so that all could use their potential, each according to their abilities. This goes not only for performing, but also for writing and composing the songs, as well as the overall planning of the show. Both the leaders and the participants were dedicated to the project, and the culmination of it—having an opportunity to perform their own music at Finlandia Hall—must have been wonderful for many of the members of the band. At the same time, this very performance crystallizes the central problematics of this, and many other, participatory projects. The fact that Manasse (along with those members of the band who did not have mental disabilities) had no other option than going on stage in the role of a person with mental disabilities (or not going on the stage at all) is deeply disturbing. Due to the way the band, and the whole event, was defined from above and outside there was no space left for the young people involved on the stage of Finlandia Hall for self-definition.

This speaks of the limited space they had for this in the course of the rest of project too. After I first visited it, and got to know what it was about, I wrote the following in the reflections in my field notes: "Interesting and thought-provoking project [...]. At the same time makes sense and irritates a little." Some colleagues found the project more than a little irritating; they read it as a way of collapsing different vulnerabilities and treating them as similar: 'Did they seriously make him [young person with refugee background] perform with disabled people?' Seen from this perspective, the project appears in a strictly categorizing and disempowering light. Others, on the other hand, have seen great potential in the way the project enabled breaking boundaries between people with mental disabilities and other (young) people—this is the way I also found it to "make sense". This, furthermore, was the perspective from which Manasse perceived the project.

It was apparent from the get-go that taking part in this project was not something Manasse considered self-evident for him. After the group's first official performance, I told him that I think it is wonderful he is taking part in it and that I guess that doing so requires some courage. He looked at me with a serious expression and confirmed:

'Yeah, it does! But one can try out different kinds of stuff.' Some months later, in a longer conversation, he again defined the project as "different": 'I like to try out different kinds of things as you know, it was a good [project].' Also, he defined the members of the band as "different": 'That is exactly the message I want to give the audience, that I enjoy it and I feel good over there [on stage], even though there are different kinds of people, I want to pass on that message.' These reflections and Manasse's straightforward invitation for me to follow the project had the tone of being proud of oneself and of having the courage to do different kinds of things with different kinds of people. When we discussed the gig at Finlandia Hall, he dismissed the way he was positioned on stage, underlining instead that he had not thought about how the gig was "framed from outside" at all. Instead, Manasse explained, he had taken it as a challenge, had done his best on stage and had been satisfied with being able to offer the audience something different and entertaining.

Manasse's attitude towards the project brings out how there might be space for self-definition inside a given setting, even if it is strictly framed from outside. This is also the strategy I was hoping to utilize when carrying out projects for "refugee/immigrant" youth. However, whether this kind of leeway is available or not depends fundamentally on the way the care work professionals leading the projects or institutions work—at worst, participatory structures turn into what Paakkunainen & Mykkänen (2021, 17) call an "obligation to go through practices that imitate participation". Furthermore, regardless of the inner working culture, exploiting the category of "vulnerable youth" in designing projects at the very least works to reproduce this constricted subject position time and again, no matter how dedicated the professionals might be in using it for the benefit of the young people concerned.

5.2.3 Conclusion

As a method, then, participation does not undo the relations of power between the ones who care and the ones who are cared for, even though so many social and youth workers (including me) hope it does. Sometimes it works for the contrary, not questioning, but masking underlying power relations. The shape it takes is in practice defined by the adults and social workers, who—intentionally or inadvertently—assume the role of guiding the youths towards the right kind of agency as independent citizens. In this sense, participatory ethos does not undo the tension

between seeing children and young people as passive objects versus seeing them as active subjects, it is rather one of its outcomes.

Yet, I insist that some of the empowering potential claimed for participation is not just wishful thinking. As Vaittinen (2015, 102; 111) and Verdasco (2017, 54) write, the dichotomy of the vulnerable and thus passive and apolitical body versus the non-needy and thus agentive and political body is not real but categorically constructed. For, as Vaittinen (ibid., 104; emphasis original) points out, vulnerability and neediness are not exceptional points in the course of life (as Fine [2005, 253] formulates it), but corporeal vulnerability is *the* defining feature of each and everyone's embodied existence: "[...] there are *no* autonomous subjects *without needs*, only degrees of embodied vulnerability [...]." It is a powerful discourse, she (ibid., 102) underlines, as its purpose is to maintain the "fallacy of autonomous rationality" as the basis of political subjectivity. But I do think that, at their best, participatory projects can bring about a crack in this script, if only momentarily so.

Something like this happened in the band project Manasse took part in. Based on the way I heard him reflect, and saw him behave in the project (more on this in the next chapter on him), it is clear he didn't experience it *only* as categorizing in its emphasis on vulnerability, as if his refugee-ness would have been seen as a form of disability and, hence, a band of disabled youth a suitable project for him. In my interpretation, both Manasse and the instructors of the project could think *beyond* the vulnerable-agentive dichotomy and see the band as a common effort of different people, each agentive and vulnerable at *different scales* (Verdasco 2017, 54). For Manasse, working and performing with disabled people was something that required courage, and it was something he was proud of. The project provided him an opportunity to overcome his prejudice and show solidarity with people he described as "different"—a representation that speaks of the importance it has in the political ordinary of his life, expressing simultaneously foreignness (disabled people as strange for him in their difference) and familiarity (his awareness of being seen as foreign and strange in his difference by other Finns). This did not happen by itself, however, as carving out a subject position in the project that he felt comfortable with required a lot of effort. This is the subject matter of the next chapter on Manasse, chapter 6.2.

5.3 Peer mentor—an ascribed representative: Afrax at work I

It is a regular working day, and Afrax is chairing a meeting of the steering group of a project he works in. I sit with the others on mattresses on the floor in the premises of the NGO that runs the project, a third sector social work unit whose target group is immigrant boys. We form a loose circle: ten social sector professionals—all white, ethnic Finns, middle-aged and middle-class women (I include myself here, as all these definitions fit me too), all but one. Afrax, who sits on the opposite side of the room from me, is black, originally Somalian, but, for a couple of years, a Finnish citizen too, nineteen years old, male, and of working class background (if that—his mother is illiterate and his father has no formal education, but possesses an extraordinary selection of skills, like fixing any electronic equipment just like that). He studies youth work at vocational school, and has an apprenticeship contract, so working in this pilot project is a way for him to finalize his studies.

Only a few months back, Afrax would not have entered this space before two p.m., the official opening hour of the unit. Then, the room is filled with boys and young men from all over the world and with the gabble of many languages—though the majority of the youths will be refugees from crisis areas in the Middle East and Africa, and the most common languages (besides Finnish) will be Farsi/Dari, Arabic and Somali. But today, after about four months of work in a peer mentoring project, Afrax is the centre of the attention among his new colleagues. They listen intently as he explains the progress of the project and its results up to now, roughly the middle of the pilot project. For Afrax, this is a huge leap.

Partly, this leap is the fruit of his own labour: devotion to his studies, the talent he has already shown for social work, proper behaviour in the social work unit and commitment to its activities. But there is another reason, too, and perhaps it carries even more weight: the nine white women who fill up the room *need* him. The purpose of the project is to test whether peer mentoring could be a way of reaching immigrant youth, promoting their employability and preventing their marginalization. The idea is that a peer mentor can offer immigrant youth advice services with a so-called low threshold: as someone who is at the same time a friend and a professional, the peer mentor is supposed to work face-to-face with the youth, providing concrete help and easy access to state services, as well as acting as a role model. For this purpose, the white women had to find a young immigrant employee. Besides Afrax's studies and his talent for youth work, these are his most important qualifications for the job: he is young, he is immigrant, and he has a lot of friends—or "peers".

The reason for launching this pilot project was the experience of a gap between immigrant youths and state services. A city-run integration project had ordered a report on the situation of immigrant youth at regional level, finding that the risk of marginalization is considerably higher for immigrant than for Finnish youth, and, in the city in question, even compared to immigrant youth residing in the rest of

Finland.[32] There was a concern—expressed several times during the meeting described above—that state/municipality services do not "reach" young people, who are left on their own and become so-called NEET-youth (not in education, employment, or training). On the other hand, the social work unit in question had recently held a theme evening of its own, in which the advice and services for finding employment and education available for youths were up for discussion, and during which the youths highlighted the difficulty of getting any advice at all. They were often unable to even find the right office or the right person, as services are increasingly provided via the internet and over the phone, which poses difficulties for those whose Finnish is not fluent—and those without online bank codes, necessary for identifying oneself when using online services (not being able to use online banking is a recurrent problem in Finland for refugees whose alien's passports are marked with a clause stating that it has not been possible to prove their identity). And even if they did manage to get an appointment with an official, the advice they got tended to be unclear, indeed often made matters more complicated, instead of easier. They articulated a strong wish was to get personal advice from one person, someone they could call directly and meet face-to-face, at least sometimes after office hours, and who would have a dialogic and supportive approach.

The pilot project was designed by the social work unit in question, as part of the city-run, ESF-funded immigrant integration project (the same one that had ordered the report mentioned above), to bridge precisely this gap; in the meeting, as well as in other contexts and project materials, Afrax's work was defined as "descending" [*laskeutua*] and "disembarking" [*jalkautua*] among the immigrant youth, and thus providing them "easy-to-approach" access to advice and services with a "low threshold".[33] From the outset, the project was built around the idea of peer mentoring. This is not uncommon: peerness as an approach is increasingly adopted by ESF-funded projects that aim to promote immigrant employability, and ESF-funding in turn has become one of the major drivers of immigrants' integration into labour market in Finland (Heimo et al. 2020, 335–336). But what does working as a "peer mentor" actually mean? In this chapter, my intention is to explore the role and position Afrax was expected to embrace as a peer mentor. I base this examination on the events of the meeting mentioned above and—to a lesser degree—on other of Afrax's work situations I was present in, and the project materials (info leaflets and reports) I have gathered.

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[32] I have omitted the reference in order not to disclose the city I am writing about and thus risk Afrax's anonymity.

[33] ESF stands for European Social Fund.

5.3.1 Peer mentor: a representative of "immigrant youth"

It is a peculiar profession—that your job is to *be what you are*. Or, to be more precise, not who you are as a person, but as a representative of a certain group. In this case, the group is imagined to be "immigrant youth". There is something troubling in this setting, which crystallized in the meeting I described, in the presence of those material bodies, one of which was so clearly differentiated, marked as the representative of the Other. After this particular moment in my fieldwork, I found myself anxiously pacing back and forth in my office, thinking the situation over, but not being able to put my finger on what was "wrong" with it. I started to look for literature that could help me understand what was going on—but there seems to be surprisingly little research concerning these kinds of situations. There is plenty of research, and from various perspectives, on immigrants and their integration (or the problems around it) in working life as such—too much, indeed, to list references, but, for examples of Finnish literature on the topic, see Könönen 2015, Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2007, Tokola et al. 2019 and Wrede & Nordberg 2010. There is also some Finnish research on immigrants' access to particular professions, such as nursing (e.g. Calenda et al. 2019; Nieminen 2011), but nothing regarding immigrants working as professionals of immigration and/or integration. Internationally, I have only been able to find one monograph dealing with this issue, and it has been very helpful for me in thinking about Afrax's job: Lewis's *'Race', Gender, Social Welfare. Encounters in a Postcolonial Society* (2002).

If one approaches the topic from another angle, one can find plenty of academic writing (theoretical and empirical) regarding group representation and its problematics—though mainly from within political science (e.g. Phillips 2007; Young 1997), or from a methodological point of view (e.g. Wilkinson & Kitzinger 1996)—and then there is the extensive discussion of the subaltern voice, especially in the context of postcolonial development work (Spivak 1988, Trinh 1989). To some extent, these are relevant for understanding Afrax's position, as will come out in this chapter. But I have had a hard time finding research—other than Lewis's study—that even mentions the issue of being a group representative as a profession, relating specifically to immigrant/ethnic minority background people. Even the presence of this phenomenon—that working in professions that concern immigrants or certain ethnic groups is one of the employment possibilities that are easier to access for immigrant/ethnic minority background people—is generally not stressed, even if it is mentioned here and there.

Canada seems to be an exception to this rule, and an understanding that such a phenomenon exists seems to be somewhat rooted in research concerning immigrant integration there. In Canada, pronounced multicultural policy has meant that third sector actors running "ethnospecific settlement services" have received financial support from the state and other bodies and become established actors in the field of integration (Ku 2009, 65–66; Valtonen 1999). These organizations readily employ immigrant background people, since their own resettlement experience and cultural background are seen as resources (Ku 2009, 66; Valtonen 1999, 481). On the other hand, Türegün (2012, 601) argues that, as an emerging and underprivileged sector, it allows "permeability" to access employment: since it is not yet professionalized, people without any education or work experience in the field can also find a job in the sector. Both Valtonen (1999, 480–481) and Türegün (2012, 600) see this mostly as a positive thing: it provides an "alternative gate to the labour market" or an option for "professional rebuilding or re-professionalization" for immigrants who have not found access to jobs in their own profession. As Türegün (ibid., 611) puts it, they "[...] reinvent themselves as practitioners of a new profession by making a strategic use of resources at their disposal."

Valtonen, who compares the integration of Vietnamese immigrants in Canada and in Finland, ends her article with a recommendation for the latter: "[...] the public resettlement service sector could open up employment opportunity and incorporate immigrants into its workforce." (Valtonen 1999, 488.) Nearly twenty years later, this recommendation is repeated in a report by Keva (Paakkinen 2016).[34] It is presented as necessary from a user-oriented point of view: as a growing number of the users of Finnish public services have "multicultural backgrounds", this should be reflected in the services and personnel. Immigrants' backgrounds are seen as a resource: their abilities as peer supporters and experts by experience, as well as their diverse language skills and cultural competence, are underlined. Employing immigrants is also seen as a one of the public sector's responsibilities, as immigrants' access to employment is recognized as "challenging", while, on the other hand, a "well integrated" immigrant population is seen to be a "great asset" (ibid., 25; 29).

Is it, then, a win-win situation? From a strict social policy point of view perhaps it is. However, my uneasiness during and after the steering group meeting compels me to think that something else is going on as well. As Keskinen (2012, 303–304) briefly notes, making strategic use of one's cultural competence as a method of legitimating one's expertise and professional skills has its contradictory sides as well. While it is one way of safeguarding a position in an excluding and unequal labour

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[34] Keva is a Finnish pension provider for public sector employees.

market, it brings about tensions as well. One of Keskinen's interviewees described always being an immigrant in the eyes of one's Finnish colleagues, while always being an official in the eyes of their assumed peers, other immigrants. Wrede et al. (2010, 277; emphasis original) are more direct: they see the phenomenon as an integral part of the "ethnic disliking" that immigrants experience in Finnish working life. "A stranger has access to employment often only when there are no other candidates [i.e. low-income "dirty" jobs] or when they carry out an *ethnospecific* job which requires a certain cultural and linguistic background [i.e. work in immigrant integration services]." They see this as an important topic for further research, but the book itself—edited by Wrede & Nordberg—does not include articles on, or deeper reflection of, the issue. Fleeting as these references to the phenomenon are, they nevertheless serve to assure me that I am not alone in my observation that an ethnospecific job market is developing in Finland too. Perhaps it has appeared late in comparison to some other countries, and at a smaller scale (at least in absolute numbers). Yet it exists, and it is surprising that it has not become more of a topic for research so far.

The peer mentoring project Afrax was employed in was not explicitly ethnospecific—none of the texts or discussions defined it as a service targeted at certain ethnic groups. It was always described as a project targeted at all immigrant youth, with no further specifications. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that it was targeted at certain ethnic/racial immigrant groups, and that everybody involved knew that without ever saying it aloud. That this was so reflects the racialized nature of the category "immigrant" in Finnish society on one hand, and shows how the category of this "imaginary immigrant" (discussed in chapter 5.1) is reconstructed through daily practices and discourse on the other. To understand how the simultaneous racialization and silencing of race happened in the context of this project, we can take a closer look at how "peer mentoring" was thought to work in the project. As already mentioned, the main idea of the project was to provide "easy-to-approach" and "low threshold" support for immigrant youth. There were two ways of achieving these aims: first, the mentor was supposed to spend time in the same surroundings as the youth, i.e. not in an office, but in youth clubs, schools and the like. Secondly—and more pronouncedly—the peer mentor was supposed to be young and "of immigrant background" and thus to "have personal experience of immigration, the Finnish education system and labour market".[35] Arguably, Afrax fulfilled all these criteria. But it is unclear how the services provided by Afrax in a

[35] These are direct quotes from the info material regarding the pilot project, but I have omitted the references in order to protect Afrax's anonymity.

secondary school for adults, in which immigrants without comprehensive education could complete a compressed curriculum, would be "easy-to-approach" for a young person of immigrant background who is, say, about to complete their IB degree in the international upper secondary school, and is currently wondering how to get on in life. Afrax neither visited, nor had any "personal experience" of, the kind of educational path provided, for example, by the IB Diploma Program. It is also unclear in which ways he is thought to be this young person's "peer"—what similarities are thought to exist between two young people who share experience of immigration, but whose social, geographic and cultural worlds differ remarkably.

And, of course, in reality Afrax is *not* thought to have similarities with such a young person. He is not considered their peer, nor would he be able to provide them any easy approach to services. It is not this young immigrant who the white social worker women see as difficult to reach and at risk of marginalization. If they did, they would have questioned the working methods and spaces in the meeting, as they did with regard to "immigrant girls" and youths who "don't know how to walk through the door": a long discussion took place concerning what "low threshold" actually means and how to put it into practice. 'How do we find the ones who do not know where to go at all?', one of the women present asked, emphasizing that working in youth clubs, for example, is not always useful in the case of girls, as 'immigrant girls often have duties at home [i.e. cooking, cleaning, taking care of younger siblings] and cannot participate in after school activities'. This heavily stereotyped understanding of the situation of "immigrant girls" was taken for granted, and, consequently, the importance of working in schools highlighted: "disembarking" in schools lowers the threshold for girls as well as for boys. Later in the discussion this was redefined as "descending" among the youth.

Who is Afrax's imagined "peer", then, for whom he is imagined to be easy to approach when, for example, visiting a vocational school? If a group photo had been taken of the meeting, and then contrasted with the photo that decorates the cover of the leaflet of the project, one answer would be indisputable: Afrax with nine white middle-aged women compared to Afrax with six young people of colour. As Afrax is a person of colour, his peers are assumed to be too. Ready as the answer is, it is hardly exhaustive. If the young immigrant completing their IB degree mentioned above were black, this would not make them Afrax's peer either, and the women in the meeting would still not worry about whether Afrax managed to reach them. So there is more to it than "just" being both an immigrant and a person of colour. What the photo does not say directly, but what it nevertheless implies, is the original nationalities of the young people in question. In the meeting, all the women were

white, and were Finnish by birth. The youths in the photo were born in Sudan, Somalia, Angola, Afghanistan and the DR Congo. All of them arrived in Finland as refugees or as family members of recognized refugees. This is what is meant by "having personal experience of immigration", and the imagined similarity shared by these "peers" is their being categorized as non-white refugees from the Global South.

But there were two more qualifications that Afrax promised to fulfill: experience of the Finnish education system and labour market. This is as vague a formulation as can be—one could fulfill it simply by completing comprehensive education and working in this very project. Printing this in the materials about the project hints that Afrax's experience is evaluated as being somehow especially useful and valid with regard to mentoring his presumed peers. When it comes to education, this could refer to the fact that he did not participate in formal schooling at all in Somalia—he went to Quran school and periodically to a UNICEF run school, where basic reading and counting skills were taught—and upon arrival in Finland he had to learn according to the rhythms of Finnish elementary school. Like other immigrant children, he first took part in preparatory teaching and was then transferred to a "normal" class, though at a grade two years below children who had started their schooling in Finland. He was an average student: he was motivated and had ambition, but sometimes playing football and hanging around with friends was too attractive for him to concentrate on school. His parents could not support him in his schoolwork, as his mother is illiterate, and her Finnish skills are not good, and the father's relationship with the family was rather tense. In practice, Afrax did most of his homework in our social work unit, where we tried to help out the best we could with our volunteers. In the end, Afrax completed comprehensive education with fair grades, but was determined to study as little as possible in the future. Thus, he chose vocational education in order to become a youth worker. He did not proceed in the most typical way, but ended up working in this project as part of his studies, in this way also getting personal experience of gaining a degree through the apprenticeship system and the problematics of adapting working with studying (which had turned out to be somewhat stressful, as, at school, "they don't understand that I *really* work").

With regard to his experiences in the "Finnish labour market", they might be described by the saying "good things come to those who wait". Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say, "good things come to those who try and wait, and try and wait". In Somalia, he had been working irregularly in the streets already at the age of ten, but in Finland finding a job turned out to be much more complicated. At a very

young age, he was among the most eager to try applying for summer jobs that I ever met in my years in youth work. Countless are the job applications and CVs I have done with him with utmost care—without success. Sometimes he was invited to an interview, but most often not. And when he was, he didn't get the job. He actually got one of his first proper jobs through our social work unit—a local school had voiced concern about immigrant boys acting restlessly during and after school, and a sports club was set up to offer them meaningful free-time activities at school. Afrax was hired to run the club together with one of our qualified workers. And, from there on, he started to get odd jobs here and there—running other children's sports clubs, or sorting out returned bottles in the recycling room of a grocery store—and he was never picky when it came to job offers. When he started his vocational studies he started to get contacts when doing internships, and got summer jobs in disabled people's homes and the like. And now he finally had a steady job—part-time, but safe.

In sum, Afrax had really to start from scratch, both in terms of education and work. When he came to Finland, he knew how to read, write, and count, but not much more from the perspective of the Finnish educational system (which doesn't give much credit to remembering parts of Quran by heart or to being streetwise in the sense of getting along alone in Mogadishu). Studying was never easy for him, but he has tried his best to gain an education that can guarantee him a job, and he has succeeded. Making his way into the Finnish labour market hasn't been any easier, but he has persistently—stubbornly, I sometimes thought when finalizing yet another CV with him—tried until, finally, the doors have started to open. It is worthy of note that he got his first "real" job because of his background as an immigrant, not despite it: it was an ethnospecific job in the sense that the "immigrant boys" the school was concerned about were thought to share similar background with him.

Put the pieces together, and what do we have? A black, Muslim, uneducated, unqualified and unemployed refugee from the Global South, from a low-income family where the parents are either illiterate and unemployed or uneducated and work sporadically in low-income jobs. All this is true of Afrax during his first years in Finland. He perfectly fits the image of the "imaginary immigrant" discussed in chapter 5.1, and described by Lundström (2017, 79) as "[...] a non-privileged, non-white, non-western (refugee) subject in search of a better future in 'our' country." This is the imagined group of peers Afrax is thought to represent. My point here is not so much to prove (again) that the category of the imaginary immigrant is prevalent in Finnish discourse, but to show how the concept filters into practices that in turn reproduce it, and what kinds of effects categorizing people according to

this concept have. In this case, Afrax is firmly positioned as an immigrant in his job: being a perfect representative of the imaginary immigrant, a literal embodiment of them, is his number one qualification for his job as a peer mentor.[36]

Or, perhaps, not quite, or not only, so. As Lewis (2000, 88) writes, "[...] the racialised bodies of, for example, liaison workers or development workers are simultaneously at one with, and differentiated from, the racialised populations they represent." The differentiation stems from standing in a position of a social worker. There is something about Afrax that made him *the* perfect peer mentor in comparison to other young people who share his background. One of the most important tasks of the peer mentor is defined as being a "role model" for other youths—someone who inspires them "to seek education, to relentlessly proceed and be successful in them".[37] Afrax himself described this, along with giving motivation to other young people, as his number one task. He related, for example, how one girl had complained about never getting a summer job despite years of trying, saying that she didn't have the energy to keep trying anymore. Afrax had told her that he had had at least as much trouble getting a job himself, and that though he did not succeed in the beginning, "one has to keep on trying, then, if you do succeed, it is rewarding." Who would be better for this kind of task than Afrax? Besides being a perfect embodiment of the "imaginary immigrant", he is also a perfect embodiment of the "good well-integrated immigrant"—the resilient young refugee who persistently works in order to get education and create a career despite all odds, and, lo and behold, succeeds in the end. Thus, Afrax was representative in two senses: both an "authentic" member of the minority, and recognized as prominent by the majority. Afrax was chosen to be *the* representative of "immigrant youth" in a fashion parallel to the "representative Negroes" of the late-nineteenth-century United States. (Mack 2012, 5.)

Interestingly, it seems that Afrax's immigrant-ness was considered to be a defining characteristic, to the extent that it overruled all other differences among the group he was thought to represent, even that of gender. While the spaces in which he worked in were evaluated from the perspective of gender, his gender was not considered an obstacle in itself with respect to being "easy-to-approach". At first thought this feels surprising, as all the members of the steering group were women,

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[36] In their research on another ESF-funded project based on the idea of peerness, Heimo et al. (2020, 345) conclude, along the same lines, that peerness between immigrants, assumed to be a homogenic group, was taken for granted, which, in turn, "[...] builds unnecessary categories, can stigmatize or strengthen the otherness of unemployed migrants, and is thus unlikely to empower them for employment."

[37] Again, these are direct quotes from the project materials.

and Afrax's difference from them as a man was tangible. But, on second thought, perhaps this indifference speaks precisely of the gendered nature of social work on one hand, and of the feminization of migrant's bodies (Peterson 2005, 507–508) on the other. In Finland, nearly ninety percent of social workers were women in 2014 (THL 2018, 1), and, possibly, in this context, Afrax was seen more as a "feminized Other" (Peterson 2005, 508) than as a representative of the male gender. In any case, his gender was not discussed directly, though the result—that the pilot project did not reach many girls—perhaps wasn't a surprise, at least for those members of the steering group who had personal experience of working with young people. The inbuilt blindness of the project to gender differences (as long as they were not immediately tied to immigrant-ness, such as immigrant girls' assumed obligation to stay home after school) further underlines its essentializing conceptualization of immigrants as a "uniform, undifferentiated mass" (Leinonen 2012, 218).

5.3.2 Ascribed representation and its constraints

There are some obvious problems in this constellation. In reality, the young people with whom Afrax poses on the cover of the project's leaflet come from various locations across a vast geographical area, from different kinds of socioeconomic backgrounds, and even though they are all refugees, the reasons for their flight differ considerably. Furthermore, so-called second generation immigrant youth are often also categorized as immigrant youth. As Lewis (2000, 91) writes, it is unclear what similarities exist between the needs of "[...] young people who share the same skin colour but who inhabit widely differing social, geographical and cultural worlds." To suggest an essential similarity between these categories, she argues, "[...] is to confuse an enunciation of *political* 'sameness' with cultural 'sameness'." Why is Afrax, who doesn't even have a vocational degree yet, thought to be better than an educated and experienced social worker at "reaching" and "mentoring" a young person who is, say, from an Arabic speaking, Shia Muslim, upper class Iraqi family? Or one whose parents speak Farsi and belong to the revolutionary secular group of Iranians who fled Khomeini's regime at the beginning of the nineties?

Lewis's (2000, 89) argument is that in this kind of essentializing and racializing discourse, professional qualification is not considered necessary because "qualification resides in the skin". There is a tendency, she claims (ibid., 88; emphasis original), to constitute workers who are ethnic/racial Others "[...] as racialized bodies whose qualification to deliver 'ethnically sensitive' services resides in what is seen as

their *natural* ability to act as cultural translators [...]." They are understood to physically embody the necessary skills, and, thus, "[...] the post of development worker constitutes an intensification of processes of racialisation because it focuses almost exclusively on embodiment." (Lewis 2000, 89.) For the workers in question this is paradoxical, as, while it serves to provide them with an employment opportunity, it simultaneously positions them in ways that racialize them, fixing them, "[...] into specific organizational and occupational locations", hence, "constraining their professional autonomy." (Ibid., 117; 206). They are seen, first and foremost, as representatives of the imagined group they are ascribed to, not as professionals (young or experienced) of social work.

Nadim's (2017) concept of *ascribed representation* is useful in understanding the subject position Afrax is offered in his peer mentoring job. Nadim's (ibid., 230) research explores the "[...] conditions for participating in public debate in Norway for people with an ethnic or religious minority background [...]", but, as the position of group representative is its central concern, it provides tools for understanding Afrax's situation as well. The interviewees in Nadim's (ibid., 241; 243; emphasis original) research problematized being ascribed minority status, as it tends to define them entirely: "The challenge [...] is not so much that they are ascribed a minority identity regardless of how they present themselves. It is that they are *reduced* to that identity only." As Nadim (ibid., 243) underlines, it is one thing to be seen as an individual with a minority perspective and quite another to become a representative of the group. In a similar vein, I argue that, in Afrax's case, the problem lies not in hiring a person who has minority perspective and experience—quite the contrary, I do think it is of utmost importance to employ people with minority backgrounds in social work—but in constructing him as a group representative of "immigrant youth". Nadim (ibid., 243; emphasis original) writes: "[...] being cast as *the* Minority will overshadow their professional competence [...]", so that one becomes defined, for example, as the Muslim in the company, instead of as the economist in the company. In Afrax's case, the whole project was built around the idea that hiring *the* immigrant would solve problematic issues naturally, making professional qualification and experience unnecessary. Simultaneously, this made being *the* well-integrated good immigrant Afrax's actual profession. And this is how the project was received: the vice headmaster of the secondary school for adults in which Afrax regularly worked, for example, called him "that immigrant background boy".

This is problematic in itself, as it, yet again, reproduces and reconstructs the essentializing category of the "immigrant youth". But it has further consequences too, two of which of which I would like to elaborate on here. First is what Lewis

(2000, 117; 206) and Nadim (2017, 246) both mention: the constraints ascribed representation set to professional development. Being reduced to one's minority identity might close doors in professional life in two ways: first, it may restrict employment opportunities (one is only hired for jobs in which one works with certain minorities), and, second, it might hinder possibilities for getting further education and promotion to higher-grade posts during one's career, as Lewis discovered: there was clear "[...] clustering of black and other 'ethnic minority' women at the lower end of the professional scale" (Lewis 2000, 98; see also 96–97; 112–117). If one considers Afrax's career as a young youth worker up to now, it seems that the first impediment has indeed affected it. Willing to get different kinds of work experience, he has tried to find employment in other places than in the social work unit in question too, but with little success. At one point, he did manage to get another job—in a reception centre for asylum seekers located in a nearby town. He was enthusiastic when he started out there, wanting to use his skills to organize recreational and participatory activities at the centre where little of the like was a general practice. But he soon became disillusioned: the manager of the centre did not treat him very well, and he was given orders, for example, not to pray or eat with the Muslim inhabitants of the centre. Afrax was shocked by the manager's lack of trust in his professionalism: "Why does he say such things to me?" Why indeed, if he did not see an essential similarity between Afrax and the asylum seekers living in the centre. Also, it came out that, instead of using his professional skills as a youth and recreational worker, Afrax tended to end up working as an interpreter, both in daily conversations between the staff and the inhabitants, and in dramatic situations such as deportations. For him, this was an uncomfortable experience: "I cannot say anything [personal], I have to be like a robot! So, like, what the police says, I translate, that he must be now [deported]. [...] So it is… quite some [job]." He soon quit—more for practical reasons (the journey to and from the centre, for example, was time-consuming and ate up a considerable part of his salary), but had he enjoyed the work the result might have been different.

The second consequence is not as tangible, but at least as profound. If one thinks of Afrax as a subject, sitting in that meeting among those white, educated, social worker women, what kind of space does this constellation offer for him to inhabit? My discomfort in, and after, the meeting had to do with an acute awareness of the power relations that the meeting itself was an outcome and an embodiment of. I would like to suggest that the meeting was an intensification of processes of subjectivation, in the sense discussed by Foucault (1991 [1975]; 1990 [1976]; 1982; 1980) and Butler (2011 [1993], 1997), in this case as part of the making of the

immigrant subject. Kurki (2018, 63) proposes terming this kind of the making of immigrant subjectivity *immigrantization*. For Kurki, it refers to integration policies and practices in education that work to make immigrant subjects of people with widely differing backgrounds and life situations: "[...] integration does not only create 'immigrants'," she argues, "but it immigrantisizes people as if they were 'one'. As immigrants, they then have limited choices of how they would like to be seen by others." Kurki's research concerns multicultural lower secondary schools and pre-vocational immigrant training, but her understanding of integration policies and practices as constituting immigrant subjectivity can be instructive in other contexts of integration work, too. Afrax's job—enhancing integration by being a motivating flesh-and-blood example of a well-integrated immigrant—is an example of such practices par excellence. There is, thus, much more at stake in being positioned as an ascribed representative than possible constraints on one's career; deep-rooted questions about one's subjectivity and its formation that have fundamental and long-standing consequences in people's lives are at stake too. There is an inherent violence in the act of ascription itself, an abuse of power that the "imposition of difference" always is (Fassin 2011, 422–423).

This violence might be difficult for all parties to recognize. For example, the atmosphere of the meeting described at the beginning of the chapter was actually very nice: everybody was friendly and acted supportively with regard to Afrax. Yet, I had a nagging feeling that he was put in a position that was coercive towards him as a subject and, in this sense, violent. In the next section, I explore the position of group representative Afrax was offered in the project in more detail. I try to show how it can be understood to be an outcome, or crystallization, of much larger power relations than seemed to be at play in the meeting at first glance, which, as such, was full of warmth. How Afrax later reflected on his job and position as a peer mentor himself is addressed in the epilogue to this chapter.

5.3.3 Representing the immigrant youth, representing the liberal welfare state, representing the gap in between

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, most of the literature concerned with group representation has not been too helpful in understanding Afrax's position. To a large extent, it deals with political representation and/or working as an advocate of one's "own" minority group, and the problematics of whether the perspective of the Other is represented in decision making in this way or, at least, whether the

"voice" of the Other is heard. Borrowing Spivak's (1999, 4–6) conceptualization, Ku (2009, 67), for example, defines the position of the Canadian immigrant women activist managers she studies as the that of "[...] the Native Informant, a figure that stands in between the absolute Third World Other and the Western Subject." She finds this to be an apt description of women of Third World origin, but well-educated and sufficiently westernized to communicate their community's needs to the state and its representatives. Afrax's position was not quite the same, as he was not representing the immigrant youth in this sense: he was not asked about the youths' needs, or if there were aspects of their experience it would be good to know more about, as the project was built around the assumption that these issues were already familiar to the municipality and NGO actors. There was thought to be no need for communication from the immigrant youth via their representative, Afrax, to the representatives of the state who would then take these issues under consideration. His position is more like that of the black/Asian social workers Lewis (2000) writes about: like those women, Afrax was first and foremost hired to provide "culturally sensitive" services to the population he is imagined to represent. But this definition falls short too: there is more than this going on.

Authorizing agent

Another aspect of the concept of the Native Informant Ku (2009, 67) and Wood (2001) elaborate is of use here: they also function as an "authorizing agent". Writing in the context of postcolonial development work, Wood (ibid., 431) doesn't spare her criticism:

> Construction of the third world woman as Other and victim thus functions to authorize the role of the first world academic and development practitioner as her savior. Since the third world woman cannot save herself from the forces that oppress her, the development expert must save her. Because the third world woman is irrational, ignorant, and uneducated, it is not only unnecessary for the development expert to consult her about the process of development, it would be a mistake to do so. As she is "identical and interchangeable" (Ong 1988, 85) with every other third world woman in the ways that matter for development, knowing one woman, what she needs, and how to fulfill those needs, is sufficient for the development expert to know and develop all other third world women.

I hold that something similar was happening in the peer mentoring project. It was built on a construction of "immigrant youth" as Other and "at risk of marginalization", and the underlying assumption was that if state/municipality services could only "reach" them, this risk would be obviated. Afrax, with his

background, was indeed an authentic enough Native Informant to function as a representative of his group in the role of authorizing agent, confirming the expertise of the white social worker women and putting their plans into practice. His participation in the project made it *seem* like it truly welled from the needs of immigrant youth, imagined to be a uniform group. In this sense, his presence was truly necessary, as I highlighted right at the beginning, but I would suggest that what he was needed for was the performance of Otherness for the white expert women in the limited role of authorizing their agenda. Trinh (1989, 88) describes this as a demand to express one's difference and to paint oneself "thick with authenticity": "Eager not to disappoint, i try my best to offer my benefactors and benefactresses what they most anxiously yearn for: the possibility of a difference, yet a difference or an otherness that will not go so far as to question the foundation of their beings and makings."

Representing and performing the difference of his imagined minority group was Afrax's real job. True, one discussion event was organized prior to designing the project in which some other immigrant background youth were asked about their experiences regarding advice services. At this event, however, "about ten young people" were present, it happened only once and lasted for about two-three hours, and was limited to dealing with advice services from the outset, nothing else. The young people were asked what kind of advice they have received, whether they were satisfied with it or not, and what kind of advice they would like to get—and the conclusion, as mentioned earlier, was: that services are hard to find, confusing, and non-dialogical (project materials, reference omitted). While I don't want to dismiss this effort to engage in a discussion with the immigrant youth, this can hardly be considered "[...] actually entering into a responsibility structure with the subaltern, with responses flowing both ways [...]" (Spivak et al. 1996, 293). Rather, Afrax's "participation", as well as that of the immigrant youth, served to perform difference for the white social worker women, who then spoke about them and designed the project for them—which they then needed Afrax to implement. The immigrant background young people were asked to "speak their pain", but only that, in hooks's (1990, 152) words: "Only do not speak in a voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain."

As Wrede et al. (2010, 280) point out, measures that aim at enhancing the employment of immigrants should not concentrate on the "lack of skills" (language skills, vocational qualifications, CV writing skills) of immigrants—this serves only to redirect attention away from the structural discrimination they encounter. Measures

should concentrate on building bridges to labour markets and, in this way, on deconstructing the exclusion of immigrant background people. Practices and discourses that concentrate on individual factors instead of the general mechanisms that produce the vulnerable position reproduce the thought of immigrants as outsiders as well as the understanding that the problem resides in them, not in the organization of the labour market in Finland. From this perspective, the aim of the peer mentoring project seems quite peculiar: even though the problem was identified to be the risk of immigrant youth dropping out of school and not getting employed, the number one aim was to bring them into the sphere of state services—not in finding concrete pathways to work or providing them with support in their studies. The problem was not located in the discriminatory structures of the Finnish education system and labour market but in the youth themselves, in their being out of reach of the state, in the concern that they don't "know how to walk through the door", as one of the social workers put it in the steering group meeting.

The project was based on the assumption that, if the youth could be brought into the sphere of state services, their problems getting employed or gaining education would somehow miraculously be solved. No measures or resources were included that could have been taken into use once the youth were actually "reached": in practice it was Afrax who was working with the youths, motivating them to apply for jobs or internship programs, guiding them to walk through the right doors to meet the right state officials, and writing applications and polishing CVs with them. In the meeting, he gave an account of the figures from the last working month: over the course of his working hours (and he worked part-time, eighty percent of a full working week) he had encountered an astonishing number of youths, nearly 150, providing personal mentoring for more than half of them in educational matters, with regard to job seeking or other issues (the other half he had met in the scope of group visits or other communication events). Only three percent were guided to seek support from some other service provider. Needless to say, Afrax was left quite alone, with practically no resources and little qualification for meeting the young people in their predicaments. It is not far-fetched to claim that this is a way for the state to evade its responsibilities by outsourcing them to a non-qualified professional representative of the state's Others. While the state withdraws from its social operations, it simultaneously makes use of a modality of government that brings about "[...] governmental results through the devolution of risk onto the 'enterprise' or the individual (now construed as the entrepreneur of his of her own 'firm') and the 'responsibilization' of subjects who are increasingly 'empowered' to discipline themselves [...]" (Ferguson & Gupta 2002, 989).

The withdrawal of the state also makes it easier to understand why the project was designed the way it was. When welfare services are transferred from the public to the private and NGO sectors, organizations find themselves competing for funding—of which ESF-funding forms a significant part—in what Heimo et al. (2020, 2) call "integration project markets". In order to be successful in this competition they are obliged to design projects that meet the goals and interpretations of these funds, which in practice means that the visions and strategies of the EU have a profound impact on the concepts and contents of the projects. And, as projects based on peerness are eagerly funded by EU, the value of peerness tends to be taken for granted without further consideration. (Ibid., 345.) The social worker women who designed and led the project were in this sense between a rock and a hard place in their efforts to provide services to marginalized young people.

5.3.4 Marginal member of the state

As a solution to the problem of finding the out-of-reach youth, "disembarking" was highlighted as one of the cornerstones of the project: Afrax didn't simply sit and wait for the youth to come to look for services, but he moved around and went to places where the youth spend time in their daily lives. In this context, his extrovert personality was highlighted as a benefit, "as he goes and talks with everyone." "Descending" was another commonly used concept: Afrax was described as the worker who descends from the bureaucratic heights to the lower levels of the immigrant youth. "Lowering the threshold" of state services was also recognized as important, but not quite sufficient, as mentioned above. There was, thus, a clear image of the state as an institution that is above its people, and, for some of its marginalized members, too high to be approached—and, on the other hand, itself too high to be able to reach down to the level of these dropouts. This kind of image of the state as "vertical", as somehow "above" the grassroots level of society, is prevalent in both popular and academic understandings of the state, Ferguson & Gupta (2002, 982–983) write. Simultaneously, states are imagined to be encompassing, in the sense that they, "[...] reach down into communities, intervening, in a 'top down' manner, to manipulate or plan society", even to the intimate level of families. State benevolence, as much as its coercive powers, must "make its spatial rounds" in order to reproduce the understanding of the state as both vertical and encompassing: "[...] a host of mundane rituals and procedures are required to animate and naturalize metaphors if states are to succeed in being

imagined as both higher than, and encompassing of, society." The force of this imagined verticality and compass stems from both their embedding in mundane bureaucratic practices and their being reproduced by these routine operations. (Ibid., 984.)

Ferguson & Gupta's (2002) perspective on "state spatialization" is helpful in understanding why the peer mentoring project's aims, and Afrax's position in it, were constructed as they were. If the state is imagined to be both vertical/hierarchical and encompassing, the recognition that some of the people supposed to be under its control are out-of-reach is problematic. To be encompassing, it should reach everyone—or rather, everyone should be already under its scope, in the sense that they "know how to walk through the door" and seek state services when they are supposed to do so. Hence, the gap that separates the state and its dropout members is a problem in itself, and the act of reaching down towards them in order to encompass them becomes an intrinsic value. The project can be understood as part of the "spatial round" of state benevolence, inspired by concern about imperfections in the compass of bureaucratic practices. Simultaneously, it also reproduced the image of the state as vertical/hierarchical, as the project operated on a grassroot level, but was backed up with professionals and funds from different levels of state hierarchy, up to the supranational level of the European Social Fund.

But the project had a third dimension with regard to state spatialization: it also worked to (re)construct the boundaries of the state. While Afrax, in his role as a peer mentor, is an embodiment of the state's encompassing nature—its flesh-and-blood extension, its extra feet, disembarking among the out-of-reach youth, and the extra hands that reach them—he is also its literal middleman, "[...] a figure that stands in between the absolute Third World Other and the Western Subject." (Ku 2009, 67.) It is impossible for the state itself to reach out to this absolute Other. The insurmountable difficulty of bridging the gap between state services and immigrant youth was clearly voiced by the white, women social workers in the meeting, and the specific value of the peer mentoring project, and of Afrax as its executor, was located in his role and the personal skills that enabled him to carry it out. This belief in the inability of the state to reach immigrant dropout youth on one hand, and in the ability of Afrax to do so on the other, worked to construct both the state and its representatives, and the immigrant youth, in an essentializing way, reproducing the image of the gap between them as substantial. And Afrax, standing in between them as a representative of both, was working as a mediator, as a "marginal member of the state" (Ferguson & Gupta 2002, 985). As Ferguson & Gupta write (ibid., 985), marginal members of the state provide a concrete example to others of the verticality

and compass of the state—hence the idea of Afrax drawing youths into the sphere of state services by working as an inspirational role model. In addition, he provided a concrete example of the limits of the compass of the state, of who are counted among its members and who are not: a well-integrated, good immigrant, who is determined to "seek education, to relentlessly proceed and be successful in them" (project materials), is presented as a member of the state—a marginal member, perhaps, but member anyhow. A dropout NEET immigrant young person is not—they are unavoidably out of reach, lost to the state.

5.3.5 Conclusion

To sum up, the subject position of peer mentor Afrax was offered in his job was that of a middleman—of representing immigrant youth to the majority society, and of representing the state to the youths. A cross draft of demands makes this position simultaneously constricting while also working efficiently towards certain kinds of subject formation. Afrax was needed as both the "authentic" disadvantaged immigrant young person, authorizing the expertise and agenda of the white social worker women, and as a representative of a successful, of an approved, immigrant subject, a role model exemplifying that, with adequate resilience, it is possible to make it for the other immigrant youth. He "gives them power", as one of the women in the meeting said. To secure his present job and future job possibilities, Afrax didn't have much choice but to take this framework as given and to try to fulfill the expectations unquestioningly. Even though the steering group meeting evolved in a friendly atmosphere, it was clearly a moment in which Afrax had to prove his devotedness and skills. While the pressures set by the ESF and other funding instances on those who write project applications are tangible, one cannot shift responsibility onto the funders altogether: in this project, the position Afrax was expected to embrace was, in the last resort, constructed in these situations by the social workers who were present.

While living up to these expectations, Afrax had his daily job to do as well: being the flesh-and-blood extension of the benevolence of the state, reaching down to the level of dropout immigrant youth and embracing them, providing personal support in gaining education and employment. Encountering and mentoring the actual youth face-to-face is a job that I know from personal experience to be consuming and heartbreaking at times. Not that spending time with "immigrant youth" would not, as such, be as heart-lifting as any other youth work. But what can you say to a young

person who puts all they have into their studies, despite only barely passing their exams, and, in a tone of resignation and depression, remarking that it is of no use, they will never be offered a job anyhow, so they might just as well spend the rest of their life baking pizza. Afrax was barely given any other tools to work with in this situation than himself, his being a role model and living example of a successful immigrant subject, and this is hardly very much to offer in this situation. "One has to keep on trying, then if you do succeed, it is rewarding," was what he had as a way of providing support for his peers. Here, what is not said aloud is what happens if one gives up and stops trying, or does not succeed despite trying. This silence speaks of the boundary, on the other side of which the failed, abject immigrant is left. In this way, in his job as a peer mentor, Afrax's body became the focal point of the political ordinary; a tool for drawing the border between the state's us and its absolute Others.

Epilogue

"Well, it was amazing," Afrax tells me when we read my text together a couple of years later, and I ask him how he had experienced working in the project. He had found working in a peer role interesting, and now sees that the main aim had been offering role models to immigrant youth. He emphasizes the effect it had on the youths, and the encouragement seeing Afrax in a real job, fulfilling his own dreams, truly did provide them: "In that sense I think it reached its aims well, and I learned a lot myself and saw that it had an effect on [young] people, some got enthusiastic, like, 'okay, I can study something!'." On the other hand, Afrax says that the work was "hectic", as its aims were grand—in principle, the target group was immigrant youth residing in the whole region, and, of course, this was impossible for one employee working eighty percent of the week. Also, he had had feelings of inadequacy: "I was thinking, could I help more? How many young people dropped out because I did not accompany them to the job office, for example, because I was not with them, or they did not have [money to buy] a bus ticket themselves." And finally, he had felt pressured because of being nominated as *the* role model: he felt that he needed to adapt and change his behaviour to meet the ideal of the successful young immigrant person. Afrax now estimates that the project would be worth repeating, but, if possible, he would rather hire several mentors with various backgrounds—both from various professions, such as IT experts for example, and of various races/ethnicities, both with and without immigrant background, so that young people struggling with the difficulties of gaining education and work would have the opportunity to meet and discuss with professionals from different fields, backgrounds and skin colours. Also, he would rather design it so that each young person would have a long-term mentor who would support them through various phases of gaining education and seeking employment. This, Afrax believes, would give them faith in their own possibilities for making their dreams come true, but also realism as to how much, and what kind, of work it requires. Afrax's way of understanding the idea of a role model thus differs from the way it appeared to me in the project materials and work situations—as

giving an empowering example of a good immigrant subject–an issue to which I will return in the next chapter on Afrax.

We contemplate my analysis of his position in the project that I have described as both constrictive and formative, and Afrax seems to embrace the idea quite intuitively. "It is, like, which doors open to you, which get closed ever more tightly, or which doors get closed and which windows open instead." He agrees with the problematics I raise, but also brings out his own agency and responsibility:

> The social worker women have done their best with the resources they had. So, I think it is good to bring [out], I find it interesting how you try to pinpoint what is actually going on and concretize what my position was, whether it was conscious or unconscious [in the way it was designed]. But I had a responsibility too. I was not, like, in a discharge of liability vacuum. You know, I have offered myself [to the job] as well.

Afrax explains how he was looking for a place to do an apprenticeship, and had asked and called around a lot, and how that had effected the way this project was finally put into practice. The project was designed and the money was there, but the final decision on its allocation was done as a result of Afrax's active search.

Afrax's conclusion after our discussion puts the issue into a nutshell: "It is like a paradox, it is at the same time positive and problematic." On one hand, Afrax got a job and apprenticeship he enjoyed and that ensured his graduation, and several young people got encouragement and hope from him. On the other hand, the project reproduced the category of "imaginary immigrants", fixed Afrax within that category, was overwhelming to carry out and did nothing to the structural discrimination that the young people falling into this category meet. Afrax's reflection on my argument that he embodied the imaginary good and successful immigrant subject brings out the painful relevance of both. It also implies that Afrax's body was not only a tool for drawing the border between the state's us and its absolute Others, as I argued above, but the very *site* of drawing that border, as he himself wavers between the need and will to keep on trying and the incentive to finally give up trying altogether:

> The struggles that one goes through because of one's background do not go away, they do not disappear. That you have to put in thousands of applications, even though you might get lucky in the end, still, the fact that your name is Afrax, that has a tremendous effect. But it [getting lucky in the end] does not make me or anyone else a super immigrant, because it does not erase the struggles that you have to go through. In my opinion no-one, especially a child, should ever have to experience these kind of heavily discriminating structures or reception. And this is what does not make me super, because I have hard moments when I feel like giving up completely [*haluan heittää hanskat tiskiin*], you know.

5.4 Reflections

In this set of three subchapters, I have dissected three types of subject position that are recurrently offered to young men with a certain kind of refugee/immigrant background: first, the position of "imaginary immigrant"; second, the position of vulnerable refugee young person; third, the position of an ascribed representative of "imaginary immigrants", of a well-integrated good immigrant subject who can act as a middleman between the Finnish state and its immigrant Others. These are all subject positions for an Other. In the first and the third, racialization of the young people as non-white and non-Finnish plays a key role, albeit in different ways. In the second, differentiation takes place as the constitution of the young person as a "pitiful other" (Tronto 1993, 120; 123), who stands in contrast to the modern autonomous subject due to their being in need of special care and support.

I would like to underline the following conclusions one can make on the basis of my analysis so far: first, in the everyday encounters of young refugee background men in Finland, they are constituted as different both recurrently and in multiple ways that are often but not always directly linked to racialization, as Manasse's case shows. Furthermore, when racialization has central role, it is not "only" openly racist behaviour or xenophobic prejudice that work for Othering. I am prone to believe that encounters in which differentiation is less pronounced, but that take place recurrently in the flux of everyday life have more weight when it comes to the cumulative experience of being constituted as Other. Even though the distance Emanuel's classmates maintain in their relation with him is mostly amiable in tone, the distance is still there, incessantly during the hours he spends at school. And while Manasse's racial/ethnic difference is considered an asset in the band project he participates in, in this case his refugee-ness and immigrant-ness become constituted as a form a disability. And, finally, Afrax is positioned in an intermediary role as a resilient immigrant subject expected to empower other Others in need of special support. The extent to which the various differentiating encounters structure the everyday lives of the refugee background youth makes this an elementary issue of the political ordinary for them.

Second, these processes of the constitution of difference are "double and contradictory" (Ahmed 2000, 96), not simple mechanisms of exclusion. They produce different figures of the Other: stranger strangers (Ahmed 2000, 106) that are too different to be assimilated to the Finnish "us", includable others (Lehtonen et al. 2004, 258–259) that can integrate and be integrated to this "us", and ambivalent figures standing at the margins, drawing the boundary between these groups with

their bodies—like Emanuel, whose position in his class develops into a contradictory one, as he is accepted by his classmates but is aware of this acceptance being an exception. Sometimes these ambivalent figures end up drawing the border within their own bodies, as in the case of Afrax, who balances between the urge to "keep on trying" and empowering others to do the same, and the inclination to finally give up, to choose to become a failed immigrant subject. Hence, the third point I would like to emphasize here is that the processes of the constitution of difference are not simply something that "Finnish people" "do" to people who fall into the category of imaginary immigrants. As I have tried to show, especially in the case of Afrax, the "imposition of difference" (Fassin 2011, 422–423) is productive, in the sense that it has effects on processes of subjectivation: it can be both constraining and formative with regard to one's subjectivity, and it is thus impossible to stand outside these processes. The young people are inevitably participating in the processes themselves, and the discourses regarding understandings of, for example, vulnerability or race not only affect them but are also affected and effected by them. And herein lies the difficulty of grasping what is actually going on: this is far too messy intra-action to be approached with such rigid concepts as power/resistance.

However, as I understand it, everyday encounters are moments that materialize the constitution of difference. One can get a grasp of the processes of differentiation by being attentive to these moments—both from an analytical point of view and from an embodied experience of being party to such encounters. The way one is encountered in various, mundane situations of one's daily life keeps on fluctuating, which, in turn, develops attentiveness towards the various subject positions one is expected to embrace in each encounter and the power relations vested in them. This attentiveness feeds one's agentive capacities and ways of responding to the subject positions on offer. What this can mean in empirical terms is the subject matter of the next set of three chapters.

6 REACTIONS AND ACTS: IMMEDIATE STRATEGIES

In the following three subchapters, I proceed to the question of "what happens next". How do Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax react to the subject positions proposed to them? I start each subchapter below by returning to the situations described in the vignettes that introduce the subchapters of the previous chapter, providing a concise description of how things evolved. In the body of text that follows, I proceed to contextualize the situations and acts of the young people, opening up other moments and discussions we had about them to reach a thick description of those three particular encounters and the mundane political agency the youths displayed in them. In this chapter, my focus is in their "immediate strategies"—facial expressions, gestures, reaching to touch or avoiding touch, looking at or looking away, ways of talking and addressing others—and it would be difficult to recognize these acts and understand their meaning without careful contextualization.

For, as it is, the young people *do* all act. But they all act differently, often in subtle ways. Immediate strategy is a concept I borrow from Pehkonen (Väyrynen et al. 2017, 91; see also Pehkonen 2018) and I have found it extremely useful when trying to grasp those aspects of the young people's bodily choreographies that are political, in the sense that they work for shaking the grounds of the encounters at hand and for affecting the way the youths are positioned in them. I intentionally write "work for" instead of "aim at", for, as Coole & Frost (2010, 20) underline, the creative agency of the material body can take place "before cognition", as embodied improvisation without conscious reflection and aims. In this set of three chapters, I approach the young men's mundane political agency from exactly this perspective, as capacities of their relational material bodies that are constantly intra-acting with other bodies. The focus of my analysis is hence more on what their bodies and their movement communicate, not on how the young men themselves put into words and interpret their own acts. On the other hand, drawing a hard line between acts that spring up from conscious reflection and ones that emerge from the matter of the body is difficult if not impossible. In this chapter, I thus also probe the way these intermingle and feed each other, including in analysis the young men's own reflections to a certain extent.

To say that all the young people act, but that they all act differently, is also to say that the situations and acts analyzed in these subchapters are one of a kind. Hence, at this point, my work moves to a sphere in which the outcomes are not generalizable in any way, and this is not the intention either. Rather, the analysis on "what happens next" presents three examples from a large spectrum of different ways of (re)acting, intriguing exactly in their uniqueness. I ask what kind of immediate strategies each young person adopts in reaction to the subject position proposed to him, and what these immediate strategies work for. Answers to these questions deepen, and makes concrete, understanding both of how the proposed subject positions constrict the space for agency available to the youth, and of how they still manage to maneuver in some ways to stretch these limits. Emanuel teaches a lesson on how to turn the offered subject position on its head, from a pejorative to an empowering position of difference; Manasse provides an example of resistance to the subject position in the form of complete rejection of it; and Afrax shows how one can use small acts and gestures to transform the subject positions available and gently push them in a more agreeable direction.

6.1 Turning around the subject position: Emanuel at school II

Finally, almost all the dishes are ready and served, and the students sit at the long table that one of them has set for the meal. They start to dish food up on their plates and to eat. Due to his problems during the baking task, Emanuel finished his brownies late and is among the last to sit down. The others have taken the aprons and the caps they are expected to wear during cooking off, but he sits down still wearing both. The caps are the kind one is supposed to wear in kitchens to avoid hair falling into food: white, single-use caps made of thin paper-like material, held in place by a loose elastic. Everybody hates these caps and feels embarrassed when forced to wear them, and all the students take the cap off and throw it away immediately whenever permitted. I feel like going and telling Emanuel to take his cap off too, as his troubles in fulfilling the baking task had been so obvious, and sitting there with the silly cap on while all the others have taken theirs off seems to underline his difference to the others even further.

Otherwise, the atmosphere is getting relaxed. The teacher has left the kitchen for a while, and, especially when the students begin to taste the desserts, a lot of talking and joking starts. Nevertheless, both ends of the table chat and joke only among themselves, as if there were an invisible wall between them—there are two cliques sitting at this table, at one end a clique formed by four girls, at the other the one Emanuel usually aligns with. Both have occupied the far ends of the table, leaving empty chairs in between that make this division of the class visible: even though individual students do speak to each other over the divides of the cliques, there is little communication between them when the

groups are together. Emanuel, however, chooses to sit in between the groups on one of the empty chairs. While they eat, he takes part in some of the jokes of his own clique, but, most of the time, he is quiet, sitting very upright as always, with a blank face and the cap on.

But, at some point, Emanuel starts to make a joke out of his cap. He fashions it with his hands, pretending it is his hair, and fashions it into kind of a hairdo. He then addresses the joke to one of the girls in his clique, saying that he is throwing his hair behind his back in the same manner as she always throws her long blond hair behind her back. He mimics her movements, throwing his head backwards and wiping the cap behind his ears with his hands. The students of his clique start to laugh, the girl he is talking to tries to throw her hair back, but, as it happens to be plaited today, it doesn't really work. There is general joking and laughter at this end of the table. Suddenly, Emanuel turns towards the other end of the table and starts telling jokes in that direction too (I can't hear what exactly, as I am sitting on the other side of the room), and soon the group of girls at that end erupt in hearty laughter too. Emanuel wears the cap until the very end of the class.

Once, Emanuel remarked to me that his classmates 'don't see me as Emanuel.' He then explained how they only see and hear his mistakes, which seem all the graver due to his age (he is three or four years older than the other students, as he had to complete a compressed curriculum of basic education before he could apply for vocational schooling). In this sense, the hypervisibility of his body as an imaginary immigrant (standing out from the rest of the class as black, as immigrant, as unskilled despite his older age) makes him invisible as a person, as Emanuel. In Fanon's (2008[1952], 87) words he is "overdetermined from without". As Tyler (2006, 193) has argued, in respect of the figure of the asylum seeker in the UK, the hypervisibility of the figure of the racialized immigrant "works to screen from view" the actual people falling into that category, and Emanuel is highly aware of this. In everyday school situations he constantly feels embarrassed about the mistakes he makes and assumes that the others interpret his troubles as something more than mere language issues: that they take them as a proof of him being the immigrant Other of the class. Having discussed this issue with him several times, I was intently aware of it during the awkward baking task described in the opening vignettes of this and the previous chapter on Emanuel. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which he tries to affect this central issue of the political ordinary in his school environment. First, I will take a brief look at his attempts to evade being both hypervisible and invisible at school by trying to perform as well as possible. Then, I will turn to the strategies that are available to him when this attempt fails—first one that would be readily at use, but that he does not deploy, that of "passing", and then two immediate strategies that I often observed him deploy, that of "enduring" and that of "turning the position around".

6.1.1 Trying to evade hypervisibility/invisibility: proving one's capacities

I was puzzled at first by the extreme effort Emanuel put into his studies despite all the embarrassment and other trouble it caused him. The double degree of normal curricula Emanuel is pursuing is challenging for him, mainly due to language issues, but, to some extent, also because of having a different kind of schooling background. In order to keep up with the others he regularly studies late and, as a consequence, is tired in lessons. Emanuel often talked to me about this, and at some point of the semester I started to study together with him about once a week to try to ease the burden. I made the offer—which he eagerly accepted—after a discussion we had once over a cup of tea after a long and tiresome day at school. We had been talking about the situation in Angola and also Finnish immigration politics, especially the strict family reunification policy, when he suddenly changed the topic, telling me he does not know how he will be able to pull through the degrees. 'I have a table full [of assignments] and more of them are piling up all the time, I don't know how to manage.' I told him that, if it is too much, he should, perhaps, drop one of the degrees and concentrate on completing the other. 'That is not an option,' he objected. I then remarked that he has gotten alright grades in his exams, but he was not satisfied: 'I would like to be right on top,' he said, showing with his hands the location of top students in comparison to the others. I told him that he cannot compare himself to those students who were born in Finland. 'It doesn't work, you should compare yourself with others who also have refugee backgrounds. How many young, refugee background people are even trying to attain a double degree?' Not many, he had to admit, and then he concluded: 'If I compare myself to them, I am at the top, but if I compare myself with the others [students born in Finland], I am right at the bottom.'

For an outsider like me, comparing oneself to students born in Finland seems exorbitant. But if one listens to Emanuel after some of the situations in class that he finds especially disturbing, it starts to make sense:

> The students are expected to make presentations in pairs regarding different patient organizations. Emanuel is paired with one of the other boys, and their subject is the Finnish Rheumatism Association. They give a Power Point presentation in front of the class, reading aloud each slide alternately. It is quite obvious that the other boy has actually made the slides: on the title page, only his name appears under the title of the presentation, and he provides additional explanations regarding the contents of the slides and the theme in general. Emanuel, for his part, simply reads aloud when it is his turn, and with obvious trouble: he reads slowly and makes mistakes, and when a slide that treats the funding of the association comes up, he almost gives up. There are long and abstract concepts that he probably does not understand at all and has

great difficulty reading (like *omaisuustuotto*, income from property). He rubs his forehead, laughs awkwardly, and stumbles through the word.

After school I walk towards the city centre with him. There were other classes after the presentations, but Emanuel starts to talk about it, telling me how displeased he is with himself for failing in the presentation. He was supposed to go through the slides together with the other boy during lunch, but he had forgotten, and therefore didn't know anything about the contents of the slides. 'I totally panicked and could not read and did not understand anything about the presentation.' I assure him several times that an outsider couldn't really notice anything, as he seemed quite calm in the situation. But Emanuel doesn't buy my claim and underlines how important it is for him to perform well: 'It is so embarrassing to be there as an adult among those children, and still not know or understand many things that they do.' This is also why, he explains, it would mean so much for him to do well in maths, because, that way, he could prove that the core problem is merely language, and that otherwise he is smart and capable.

I thus came to understand that demonstrating that he is smart and capable is the only way out from the subject position of an imaginary immigrant for Emanuel, a categorization that screens him from view as a person. He cannot change his background or his skin colour, but proving that he is not intellectually inferior to the other students is a possibility, at least in principle. Yet, as it is, quite good language skills are needed in mathematics, too—both in the kind of mathematics they are taught in the context of the vocational education, like calculating dosages of medicine, and in the more abstract kind of mathematics taught on the secondary school curriculum (this became pretty clear after studying geometry together a couple of times; we had to start from the very basic concepts like line, triangle, parallelogram or area). In any case, Emanuel (and I) put a lot of effort into maths and he performs ok—which, perhaps, compensates a little for his grave troubles in other subjects, but not quite as much as he would like it to. He finds himself daily in situations in which his inability to follow teaching or lack of language comes out in an embarrassing way, as when trying to carry out the baking task in the class on nutrition. In the following sections, I dig into how Emanuel puts up with this political ordinary issue of his class surroundings, and what kind of strategies he uses in these immediate situations in order to shift gears.

6.1.2 Not passing

Once, during one of Emanuel's lessons, wary of the long day in school, I ended up inspecting the students' feet. From where I was sitting, I could count seven pairs of feet, of which five were clad in tennis shoes. Emanuel's were not: he had brown, pointed leather shoes, polished to perfection. Just like he did himself, his shoes stuck out like a sore thumb among the other students in his class. But seeing his shoes, shining among the row of tennis shoes, and one pair of worn-out jogging shoes, directed my attention to his appearance in general. It is not only his shoes that stick out, but his dress code and behaviour in general: the other boys in the class wear hoodies or loose college sweatshirts, tennis or jogging shoes, more or less shabby jeans or jogging pants, and often have their heads covered with a baseball cap, knit cap or a hood (also inside, of course). There is more variation in style among the girls—some often have a carefully selected outfit and makeup, while others dress more casually, occasionally wearing jogging pants and knit caps in similar fashion to the boys. Either way, tight jeans and tennis shoes seem to belong to every girl's wardrobe. Emanuel, on the other hand, wears tightly fitting sweaters or brightly coloured shirts with stiff collars (even pink!), spotless, ironed jeans, pointed leather shoes or shining jogging shoes; he never has any kind of cap on, and always has his hair cut in a smart fashion. A rather big silver cross hangs on his neck, constantly visible. Often, he also wears a wristwatch, of the kind that is so prominent that it can be thought of as kind of men's jewellery—something the other young men in the class would never dream of wearing. When it comes to clothes, then, it is more than obvious that he is not trying to fit in with the crowd in any way—almost the contrary. His neat and stylish outfit only highlights the difference between him and the other students, whose wardrobes seem all the more apparent in comparison to his: very teenage.

Similar differences prevail between his behaviour and that of the rest of the class as well. During the classes, the other boys rock their chairs (and sometimes fall, to everybody's amusement), slouch over their desks, sleep, have play fights with the girls of their clique, banter together over their cell phones, shout loud joking answers from the back rows to the teacher when they are asked a question, and all in all, cause a tremendous amount of hassle. The girls divide into two groups with regard to their behaviour: There are the calm ones, who concentrate in class and eagerly answer the teacher's questions. They form a clique, and tend to sit close to each other, often in the front rows, and work together during classes. And then there is the other group, which causes at least as much hassle as the boys: there is constant traffic as they

change their places to chat with a friend, go to charge their cell phones, brush each other's hair and make hairdos, or negotiate with the teacher about leaving earlier to catch a certain bus or having lunch early because they are so hungry. Towards the end of the school day they get tired, sleep, resting their heads on the desk or on each other's shoulders, and start to caress each other more and more—sitting close to each other and caressing each other's arms and shoulders seems to be a coping strategy for them during the long afternoon lessons.

Occasionally, Emanuel joins some conversation or joke or asks the student sitting next to him a question, but, most of the time, he is not involved in any of the constant bustle in the class. Instead, he sits in an upright position, either feverishly writing notes—when trying to keep up with the teaching—or simply staring at his desk—when too tired or too deep in other thoughts and worries to even try. He often wraps his arms around himself, or covers his neck or forehead with his palm, as if holding himself together or protecting himself from something. Observed from my location—usually the back row, or some desk at the side of the classroom, from where I can see the whole class with one glance—his figure is solitary, somehow aloof from the rest of the class in its quiet stillness.

This is not only so during lessons. As I mentioned in chapter 5.1, during breaks Emanuel usually hangs around with his clique—though quite literally so: he is not often intensely involved in the chitchat and hassle of the clique, but sits or stands nearby, either quietly or sometimes taking part in some joke or discussion. Sometimes, his body is even slightly turned away from the group, giving a peculiar impression of being about to leave. He might have a discussion in Portuguese on his cellphone, or, the longer I have spent at the school, more and more often seek out my company during the breaks, not minding that it might make it obvious for the other students that we actually know each other and that my presence and research might be somehow related to him.

Thus, the distance between Emanuel and the other students in his class is not only built and maintained by the attitude of the other students (as brought out in chapter 5.1), but by his own attitude and behaviour as well. He is among them, and has found some kind of place there as a semi-member of one of the cliques, but makes it clear that he is not one of them. The way he dresses, the way he behaves in class, and the way he relates or does not relate with the other students all underline that he is all but trying to assimilate or blend in. Even though awkwardly conscious of being different from the others and of being hypervisible as the racial and immigrant Other, he does not aspire to invisibility, in the sense Ahmed (2006, 135) defines as "passing": as learning to fade into the white background. Furthermore,

Emanuel distances himself from the masculinities that prevail in Finnish vocational institutions and that the other boys of the class unfalteringly represent too. Even trying to imagine them sitting at their desks upright, wearing pink shirts and a silvery wristwatch feels absurd, yet Emanuel unhesitatingly follows his own code of conduct and dress. Despite the difficulty of this strategy, trying to become one of the others is obviously not his objective, neither in the sense of fading into the white background nor of blending into the masculinities of the class.

6.1.3 Differently different

Nevertheless, Emanuel is unfaltering in his friendliness towards the other students. Though some of them might sometimes be snappish towards him—as the boy who helped him in the baking assignment, described in the beginning of chapter 5.1—I never heard him speak to any of them in an irritated tone. As the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter suggests, he takes note of all the students in the class, too, not only those in his own clique. To me, he notes that they are "nice" and "good, really very good" classmates, and important to him as support and company. Even though he sometimes calls them "children", or says that "they don't think in an adult way", referring to their age difference, which also means differences in interests and life situation, he doesn't seem to do so in any pejorative sense. Hence, the distance he keeps to them in some regards does not have any hostile quality; in my interpretation, it is not about not wanting to be involved with them, but about not wanting to become like them. Emanuel is faced with a dilemma: he is aware of being in/visible in his difference in ways that he considers negative, and yet he does not want to fade in and try to pass as similar enough in order to dissolve his difference. What to do in this situation?

Once, after studying together, Emanuel explained a situation that took place earlier that day in school to me. Again, it was a lesson on nutrition, and the teacher had asked him to tell them whether you can use coconut oil when preparing food for someone who is allergic to milk. Emanuel had answered incorrectly, and then it 'went all silly'. Once more, Emanuel tries to explain to me how he feels when he makes stupid mistakes in front of the others, who, 'do not see me as Emanuel'. 'I cannot take it seriously,' he says. He brings his palms towards his face, turning them around when they almost touch his face and then moves his palms away from his face, saying: 'I have to let things pass like that.' This immediate strategy can be understood as a type of "small agency" (Honkasalo 2013): at first sight it seems

passive, or as "not acting", but as a deed it is not "empty", as Honkasalo (ibid., 43) puts it. It implies a choice to *endure* what is going on and what one cannot affect (ibid., 55), but this enduring can be also instrumental; it can be a tool with which one can achieve some other goal (ibid., 42). By deciding not to take embarrassing situations that he cannot really affect seriously, Emanuel endures them without letting them weigh him down. Letting embarrassing situations "pass like that" resembles forgetting as a form of the "smallest of agencies" Honkasalo (ibid., 56–57) writes about: letting go of things one cannot change in order to be able to endure them and live with them. In this way, Emanuel manages to have his wits about him to act in a way that does change his position when the possibility arrives.

For not taking things seriously and letting them pass is one of his strategies, but not the only one. His hand movements exemplify another one: turning things around. In a previous conversation on the same dilemma, Emanuel had noted that he does not 'get offended or upset' when the others laugh at his mistakes, but rather turns the situations into jokes. He gave me an example of a lesson on care work, where they were practicing helping elderly people go to toilet, and when explaining what he had done in the exercise, he had confused the words "bottom" [*pylly*] and "pussy" [*pillu*]. This, of course, had caused both amusement and resentment among the others (including the teacher), but he had managed to turn the whole situation into a joke.

However, turning the issue at hand into a joke does not always work. These kind of situations arise suddenly and turning them around requires an ability to perceive what is going on immediately and to react in an appropriate way. Doing that means working on two levels, in a way: one level is the actual task at hand, and the other is constant reflection of, and reaction to, the larger situation. This is not always possible, if one wants to concentrate on whatever one is doing—say, baking one's brownies successfully.

Looking at the baking task described at the beginning of the previous chapter on Emanuel (chapter 5.1), and Emanuel's way of acting after it, described at the begininning of this, gives another example of Emanuel's immediate strategies for turning his position around. This time he endured the tedious baking part, not trying to affect how things evolved. But, after the task was over, and it was time to sit together with the other students, he acted in obvious disaccord with them. The bright and white cap he still wore, the only person in the room to do so, the cap that others get rid of as soon as they can as they feel it makes them look ridiculous, was in my eyes at first a sign of his embarrassment—but then, as I understood that it was his way of shifting gears, I came to see it as a sign of his daring and pride. Not only

did he turn the situation around by making a joke out of himself, but he also broke the patterns of social relations prevailing in the class by building bridges between its cliques and creating a common, jocular atmosphere.

In my reading, Emanuel managed to turn a humiliating moment that put him in the subject position of an imaginary immigrant whom his classmates need to help in the simplest of tasks and whose slowness they have to tolerate, into an empowering situation that underlined his difference as a socially skillful person with such good self-esteem that he can make a joke out of his difference. I see keeping the cap on as a way of proclaiming his difference and claiming recognition as such: as a simultaneously proud and considerate black person, who can make a fool of himself and make everyone laugh, as his social intelligence enabled him to break the cliques of the class and make everybody laugh together.

6.1.4 Everyday antiracism

I find Emanuel's strategy in the nutrition lesson extremely eloquent and impressive. He does not try to hide his problems, or try to "pass" by fading into the white, Finnish background. Rather, he points out his difference, but, while doing so, he also manages to point out his social skills and mature behaviour. This is a prime example of what Lamont & Bail (2007, 1; footnote 2) call "everyday equalizing strategies" that members of subordinated ethno-racial groups can use to establish equality with majority groups: "[...] rhetoric and strategic resources deployed by individual members of stigmatized groups to rebut the notion of their inferiority in the course of their daily life." In practice, this means challenging stereotypes about the group they are categorized in, transforming the meanings associated with the group's collective identity, and creating, enacting and demanding new forms of personal interaction. Emanuel's strategies work at least on the first and last fields by challenging stereotypes regarding imaginary immigrants and by enacting new forms of social interaction in the class. As Lamont & Bail (ibid., 2; 7) argue, researching everyday equalization strategies augments understanding of the way discriminated people work towards *bridging group boundaries*, a topic that is often neglected in studies of social exclusion. Emanuel's immediate strategy in the nutrition class is a case in point, since it not only contributed to bridging the boundaries between himself and the rest of the class, but also the boundaries inside the class. As boundary-bridging practices, Lamont & Bail (ibid., 6) consider equalizing strategies a form of everyday antiracism.

Indeed, I also see Emanuel's immediate strategies in his class as practices of everyday antiracism. To use Wimmer's (2008, 1037) vocabulary, he strives for the transvaluation of racialized immigrants as equal with the majority population—despite their possible differences. He is reworking the group boundaries and the positions of different groups in relation to each other, rather than aspiring to cross the boundaries of the majority population in the sense presented in classic research on assimilation (Haikkola 2012, 44). These kinds of practices can be interpreted, as Lamont & Bail (2007, 7) do, as micro-level versions of struggles for recognition (Honneth 1995), or politics of recognition (Taylor 1994). And certainly I think that claiming recognition is at the heart of Emanuel's strategies, too. Yet, in an important respect his situation differs from the cases Lamont & Bail (2007) are working with: their understanding of "stigmatized ethno-racial groups" is based on the idea that individuals identify with these groups (for example, African Americans) and that a sense of shared belonging prevails. This "internal identification" is, in turn, recognized by outsiders, and as a consequence an "objective collective identity" emerges. (Lamont & Bail 2007, 7.) Their understanding of equalizing strategies is thus built on Jenkins's (1996) framework of social identities and as such is closely related to identity politics.

In Emanuel's case, this framework does not work. One cannot say that he would identify with immigrants in the sense Lamont & Bail describe. Of course, he understands what is meant by the category and is also, as I have elaborated, well aware of the different nuances of the words *mamu*, *maahanmuuttaja* (immigrant) or *maahanmuuttajanuori* (immigrant youth). He uses these concepts himself, as we have seen, but not without irony. Of my research participants Emanuel is the one who makes most critical comments on these categorizations, and associates least with other people categorized in the same way. Sure, he has friends who belong to the racialized group of imaginary immigrants, but not as much as the others (of whom some *only* have this kind of friends). As I will show in more detail in the third chapter on Emanuel (7.1), he is active in building relationships in general, and he does not really care where a person is from—he has plenty of ethnic Finns as friends. And, third, he does identify strongly with one stigmatized ethno-racial group—black people (I will come back to this, too, in the next chapter concerning Emanuel). Though this category is often closely intertwined with the category of racialized immigrants in Finnish discourse, it is far from being the same thing.

In the case of Emanuel's equalizing strategies, I suggest that instead of identifying with the subordinated category of imaginary immigrants and claiming recognition for this group of people as a category, he actually dis-identifies or de-identifies

himself in the sense suggested by Rancière: by "[...] breaking away from their given identity in the existing system of positions." (Rancière 2016, 92–93; see also Honneth 2016, 99.) Emanuel claims recognition not as a representative of the group of imaginary immigrants, but rather despite being categorized as such: he claims recognition as himself, for himself, so that others would, "see me as Emanuel." For Rancière, breaking away from a given identity is a moment of subjectivization, of self-constructing oneself as a subject. There is no already existing collective identity that one would identify with, but the act of dis-identifying is an opening for articulating a new kind of subjectivity. (Rancière 2016, 92–93; see also Honneth 2016, 99.)

6.1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shed light on the immediate strategies Emanuel deploys in the everyday school situations in which his attempts to prove his intellectual capacities fails and he time and again finds himself in the embarrassing subject position of the imaginary immigrant. His strategies span from small agency as conceptualized by Honkasalo (2013), that of enduring and letting things pass in order to keep one's wits about one, to that of turning things around. The latter comprises turning embarrassing situations into jokes and, further, turning them into empowering situations that bring out Emanuel's strong social skills. As has become apparent, the equalizing strategies Emanuel deploys not only concern himself and his position in his class, but are also a form of everyday antiracism. They are about deconstructing the category of imaginary immigrants, and, as such, deploying them are significant deeds in the realm of mundane political agency: in my reading, his act of wearing the cap in the nutrition class signals a moment of subjectivization in Rancière's sense. It is a moment in which Emanuel dis-identifies with his prescribed identity and subject position as an imaginary immigrant, and a moment of self-construction as a new kind of subject. What kind of subject position he aspires to is the focus of the third chapter on him. First, however, in the two following chapters I will explore the immediate strategies deployed by Manasse and Afrax in the sphere of the political ordinary of their lives.

6.2 Rejecting the subject position: Manasse on stage II

On stage at Finlandia Hall, Manasse acts in disaccord with the rest of the group. All the other members of the band concentrate, seriously and in a rather introvert way, on playing their instrument, singing the song in question, or doing the right dance moves. They barely move in case they are not supposed to: they stand or sit behind their microphones, still, or swaying slightly along to the music, unless they are supposed to do something else. They don't make any contact with the audience—most of them don't even look at them, but direct their gaze at their instruments, each other, or the floor. This goes both for the young people with mental disabilities and those participating in the project on some other grounds. The instructors, who are also on stage, act in line with the band members: one playing or singing their part, but in quite a plain and inanimate fashion, the other deeply concentrated on supporting the performance of the disabled band members. For most of the gig, they sit on a low stool in front of them with their back to the audience, and help them to keep track of the notes that are marked with symbols designed especially for this purpose. For a band whose inspiration comes, for example, from African music and dance the ensemble gives an astonishing impression of stasis.

With the exception of Manasse. Manasse performs. When he sings, standing behind his microphone, he dances slightly, swinging his arms and legs, if not in a completely relaxed fashion, at least reaching for easiness. He moves on the stage, walking around in an improvised manner, and when singing a duet with the other singer of the group, during the other's solo part he goes over by the drums and plays for a while, returning to his mike just in time to start singing again. During their last song he takes the mike in his hand and dances to the centre of the stage and then back to his place by the stand. He raps, as if with his whole body, the song he has written himself, a song called *Africa*. He makes contact with the audience, perhaps in a slightly shy or wary fashion, but yet he does. He thanks the audience after applause, and starts his songs with some small additions of his own; short utterances like "ye", "yeah", which, despite their simplicity, break the choreography of the group and, in a gentle way, communicate with the audience.

Also, he looks somewhat different from the others. They all wear colourful "ethnic" textiles: the whole group has cloth wrapped around their bodies, either knotted around the shoulder as a kind of cloak, or wrapped underneath the armpits as a kind of dress. All have black T-shirts and black trousers under the fabric. The female participants also have colourful textiles draped around their heads. The male participants are bareheaded, except for Manasse. Somehow, he manages to differ from the others: he wears a black baseball cap—it is backwards, and definitely the kind that is of latest fashion—and black, pointed, leather shoes. His different appearance also has something to do with his posture and his way of walking, which is kind of rakish, and his hand movements reach more toward hip-hop than traditional dances.

To put it briefly: during the whole gig Manasse stands out from the rest of group on stage. If one did not know what kind of project the band was, and who the actual instructors are, one could easily suppose that he were the leader of the band and the project.

It is more than understandable that the band members were near frozen on stage. The capacity of the concert hall is 1700, and simply getting up on stage must require more guts than I can boast of having. Taking this into consideration, I cannot but wonder how Manasse found the courage to act differently from the other band members, and to actually perform on stage. He could have simply blended in with the rest of the group. It is not that it would have been a piece of cake for him: I have seen him on stage several times, and, from his performance at Finlandia Hall, I could see that it did not come naturally or easily—as seems to happen at other times—but that he had to put quite some effort into it. This only underlines the significance of Manasse acting in a way that made him stand out from the rest of the group.

Such differentiation happened on other stages and at other gigs too. In contrast, another kind of differentiation took place between Manasse and the other band members off stage, during soundchecks and what spare time they spent hanging around concert venues, again initiated by Manasse himself. These took the form of bodily choreographies; at a discursive level Manasse was consistent in *not* constructing differences between himself and the other band members, but presenting them as a solid "we". This contradiction in his orientations towards the other band members captivated my attention during the fieldwork. In this chapter, I will thus ask what the contradiction speaks of; what was actually going on in the encounter between Manasse and the band project? I begin by examining the contradiction more closely. In order to do this, I give rather detailed descriptions of some events, concentrating especially on Manasse's movements and physical being in space to shed light on the "visceral responses" (Coole & Frost 2010, 20) of his body as it communicates with other bodies around him. Also, I give space to describing the way he constructs the "we" of the band. I will then move on to analysis of the contradiction between these two with the help of Ahmed's (2000; 2004) theorization of bodily encounters, arguing that what, at the outset, seemed confusing in its contradictoriness makes sense if understood as an immediate bodily strategy for avoiding a categorizing and thus painful encounter. Finally, in the epilogue to this chapter, Manasse brings out his own interpretation of what was taking place and how he perceived the project.

6.2.1 'They are around somewhere': a non-encounter with other band members

My confusion about what was taking place started to develop right from the beginning, when I went to see a kind of rehearsal gig the band played in a small punk and rock club. I had been invited by Manasse the same day by sms: "Today at 19:00 there will be a little gig of a band I'm in. Forgot to tell you earlier. But this is one thing that you could come to participate in." So I went.

> The venue is familiar to me, which makes me feel comfortable going, even though I don't have any idea what the event is about. I enter the club and try to look for Manasse. I can't find him, though, and it doesn't take me long to realize that the majority of the young folks that are present have some kind of mental disability. They are all also white and obviously Finnish. Both things come as a slight surprise to me. After wandering around for a while I see people who look like organizers, and go to ask what the event is about. I am told that bands that have been formed during a music camp for people with mental disabilities will perform, and, in addition, an "ethno-project". Busy, the organizers go about their business, and I start to look for Manasse again.
>
> I find him sitting alone on a couch at the back of the room, almost disappearing under his light-shaded brimmed hat. He is deeply concentrated doing something on his smart phone, and even though he looks up for a second, he doesn't recognize, or even see, me. I sit next to him without saying a word, take out my notebook and pen, and finally, when he peeks up from whatever he is doing, I manage to catch his attention. He smiles and we start to chat. He tells me basic things about the band—that they have been working together for about two months, there are six members and two instructors, and today they will play two songs, one of which was written by one of the instructors, the other by Manasse himself.
>
> Soon, the first band is on stage, and I go over to the bar so that I can see the performance. Manasse spends the whole gig sitting on the couch, again totally concentrated on his phone, not looking up or applauding. After the gig, I go back to the sofa. When sitting down, I notice that, on the other side of the little table in front of us, there is another young person, sitting upright on a bar stool next to a round table, an empty glass in front of them. They are obviously not with any of the bands formed in the band camp, or with anyone else for that matter: they seem to be alone. They have several piercings in their ears and their hair is partly shaven and partly dyed black. They seem to be somehow self-conscious, not in a nervous way, but still aware of their posture and surroundings, and us. Manasse doesn't pay any attention to them, however, and we start to chitchat again. Another band starts to play at some point, I don't get up to see it this time but applaud after each song. Manasse doesn't. I start to wonder where his band is, so I ask him where the other members are. He doesn't look around but just waves his hand vaguely in the air, not pointing to any direction, and says: 'They are around somewhere.'

After a while the only other person of colour in the club comes over. They are middle-aged, and it turns out that they are one of the instructors of the band Manasse is in. They sit next to us on the couch, which starts to feel rather crowded. Pressed against each other's bodies, we start to talk and joke a little, in English this time, as the instructor has African background and doesn't speak Finnish very fluently. When another band comes on stage, I turn so that I can see them. The instructor and Manasse continue talking in English and start to look at something on an iPad.

Soon, the other instructor and organizer of the event asks the "ethno-project" band to come on stage, mentioning the names of the band members. To my surprise, the young person who has been sitting near us on the bar stool gets up and goes over to the stage. Manasse, in turn, takes his time, slowly getting up from the couch, taking his jacket off and instructing me how to take a video of the gig with his smart phone. Then, he finally goes over to the stage and climbs up. As he had said before, they play two songs. In the first, he plays keyboard, and the young person who had sat near us (hereafter "the other singer") sings, backed by another band member. When the second song is about to start, Manasse introduces a third band member [one of those with mental disability], saying that they composed the music and he has written the lyrics, adding that five different languages are used in it. He sings together with the other singer. They stand at each end of the stage behind their mike stands, slightly turned toward each other as a kind of frame for the other band members, who sit or stand a bit further back playing their instruments. They both sing well. Manasse seems relaxed on the stage, singing, eyes sometimes closed, sometimes looking at the audience.

After the applause, Manasse jumps down from the stage and comes straight towards me, smiling widely. I jostle gently his shoulder with mine, complimenting and congratulating him. One woman from the audience comes to thank him, for some reason in English (he did speak Finnish when on stage), and he answers in English. When she leaves, Manasse says to me in a delighted tone: 'See, she liked it!' He seems to relax and we start to chitchat about different things. Soon, the last band of the evening gets on stage and starts to play. The African background instructor comes back to see it with us, and the other singer comes over too, exchanges a word or two with the instructor and stays beside us. Some young people start to dance quite wildly and the band plays alright, but Manasse is distracted by his smart phone again, not paying attention to what is going on. Soon he says a few words to the instructor next to us, and then tells me that he should get going.

Just like that, he left, and left me puzzled. He didn't say a word of goodbye, or nod, or anything, to anyone else than the instructor and me. I didn't see him saying hello, or indeed anything for that matter, to anyone else during the whole evening, except to the instructors while on stage and for the woman from the audience after their gig. He didn't give any sign of knowing the band member who sat so close to us before the gig, facing us, and who came to stand next to us later when the last band was playing. Yet they had worked together for several weeks already, and sang a beautiful duet fluently. Also, he didn't point them out when I asked where the other

band members were. He didn't exactly lie to me when he waved his hand and muttered that they are 'around somewhere', but omitting the other singer in this situation is quite striking.

This was all the more confusing for me, as I know him, and had seen how he usually behaves, both with people that are already familiar to him and with people that are not, both with white Finns and people of colour. I had gotten used to his unfalteringly good behaviour, which means that when you meet someone you know, you always, *always*, say hello, usually shaking hands and exchanging greetings, and at the very least nodding and saying hi. At international youth events, I have also seen him get to know all the other young people present in a matter of a few days (or hours). He is not shy, and is not slow in getting to know new people, and he is open towards people from various backgrounds and to different characters. This includes people with mental disabilities, and this was not the first project he has participated in which some of the young people involved had disabilities. In a word, I would say that he is very fluent socially, and that this is one of his strongest skills. Or rather—I would have said so before following the evening described above.

So I was puzzled. When going to the club I had felt a little nervous about my presence at the event, anticipating that it might be somehow awkward or distracting for Manasse. Afterwards, I was left with a strong feeling that he was actually relieved by my presence, since I was the person with whom he spent almost the entire evening with, shutting everything and everybody else out—except the instructor, who was also a person of colour, and except when on stage and in his role as a performer. At that point, I couldn't see any other reason for his behaviour than that he was completely out of his comfort zone in a framework constructed solely for people with mental disabilities and in no way for people with multicultural backgrounds. Maybe he just did not feel that it was his place to be in any way?

6.2.2 Refusing to relate with other band members, reaching towards certain other people

However, some weeks later I was present at another event in which the band performed and that proved this hypothesis wrong. It was an event that had world music and cultures as its theme, and there were several bands whose members were also of African background. The audience was mixed—there were many white people, but just about as many people of colour. Of course, I could not tell who of the people sitting around at small tables were members of the bands performing at

the event and who were actual spectators, but, all in all, the crowd present was thoroughly multicultural; this time, the youths with mental disabilities were a small and quite invisible minority. The venue was a restaurant in which many gigs and cultural events are organized and that usually attracts both the cultured middle class and some underground artists and musicians: it is not really a youthful place, but this evening there were a few more young people in the crowd than usual, some of them Manasse's friends. It was not a place he would hang out with his friends on a regular evening, but this event was not something one could imagine being out of his comfort zone either. I had come early this time, and followed how first the instructors, then some of the members of the ethno-project band arrived. The instructor, who sat with us at the concert described above, was sitting at the same table as me at the back of the room, and the other together with two band members with mental disabilities and the other singer at another table in the middle of the room, when Manasse arrived. I sat facing the door, so I could see him immediately, while he had difficulties perceiving the dim space after entering from daylight.

> The instructor goes to greet Manasse by the door, and they exchange a couple of words. After they leave, Manasse stands by the door, glancing from his smart phone to the room and back. I lift my hand up and he finally sees me. He walks briskly through the room towards me, paying no attention to other people around, and says in an interrogative tone, 'I sit here?' He sits and we exchange greetings and talk a little about the evening, but some band is in the middle of their soundcheck and the noise makes conversation difficult. Manasse greets the instructor sitting at the same table as us by pressing fists together, but soon gets up and goes to stand by the door, waiting for the soundcheck to finish. When it does, he comes back to our table to chat with me, again not paying attention to the other band members. I ask how their work together as a band has proceeded, and he says that it has been good: 'Everybody has worked really hard.'

Again, I found it salient that Manasse acted as though he did not know, did not even see, the other band members. He enters the room, greets the instructors, and spends quite some time chatting with me—but does not say hello, look at, or in any other way express awareness of the presence of three other band members. He completely shuts them out from his social space, as if they were furniture, or something one takes so much for granted that they no longer attract one's attention at all. The same goes on during their soundcheck; this time the distance he keeps to the other band members is all the more striking as he actively seeks contact with other people on the stage:

> It is their turn for a soundcheck, and Manasse goes over to the stage. Things are progressing slowly and he doesn't seem to know what to do. Finally, an instructor

> asks his help, and he goes to carry some drums and other instruments onto the stage. Both the instructors are busy on stage, organizing mike stands and other stuff, talking with the mixer and negotiating with the previous band about instruments. The other singer brings a seat for one of the instructors and then withdraws to stand nearby, probably also not really knowing how to help. Manasse hangs around two percussionists who played in the previous band and who are still on stage fixing their drum set. They are both people of colour, and I hear them speaking English together. The instructor with an African background is talking with them too, and Manasse stands nearby, following the discussion intently, eyebrows high and eyes wide open, smiling as they talk and nodding a little here and there, but not participating in the discussion. The percussionists continue fixing the drums and Manasse just stands there, following how they tinker around with them with a curious expression on his face.
>
> Then he says something to the percussionists. I can't hear what they talk about, but I can hear that the conversation is in English. Manasse has taken drumsticks in his hands, and is drumming a little on the different drums and cymbals. I can't help smiling at him and he notices, returning my smile, but then turns around, starting to talk to the instructors. The percussionists have finished with their tinkering, and, as they leave the stage, one of them claps Manasse on the back telling him that, 'it's all yours.' Manasse gets behind the drum set, the instructor behind a set of African drums, and they talk together about the drums in English. Three girls get behind microphone stands and three boys take different instruments. The white instructor sits in front of the latter to show them notes, and they start the soundcheck.
>
> After playing one song, they pause; Manasse goes over to the white instructor commenting on the background singers—something about how they should have continued after a certain point, but they tell him that they did exactly that. Manasse goes over to the other instructor and asks something, but turns when the other singer starts to talk to him. He listens to what they have to say, and then they continue the soundcheck. When they are ready, Manasse leaves the stage immediately and comes straight over to my table, sits down and starts a conversation by asking what I will do in the meantime (there are still a few hours until their gig is due to start) and that I will surely wait for their gig. He has to leave to take care of some things regarding his brother's wedding, which is taking place that very week.

During the chaotic beginning of the soundcheck, it would have been quite natural for Manasse to work together with those members of his own band who were also hanging around trying to figure out how to help with things. Yet what Manasse did was idle around with the percussionists, openly showing his interest in what they were doing and saying, and even fiddling with their instruments. He took active contact with them, starting a discussion in English. What other interaction he had during the soundcheck was with the instructors of the band; even when he had some comment regarding what the others were or should be doing, he did not address them directly, but communicated through the instructors. The only time he even

looked at another band member during the soundcheck was when the other singer addressed him, wanting to explain something to him, which he listened to attentively—but that was it. Immediately after the soundcheck, Manasse left the venue for the time before the actual gig, and when he did come back, he came with a bunch of friends, whom he stuck with when not on stage or backstage. And, finally, he sought to join this same bunch soon after the gig was over (a description of the actual gig will follow a bit later):

> After the gig is over I leave the venue, figuring that Manasse must be still backstage with the rest of the band. There is a small terrace outside the venue, quite empty as it has been a rainy evening. I walk through it and out of the gate, and, to my surprise, I find Manasse with a large bunch of young men of colour hanging right outside the terrace fence. One of Manasse's friends has draped the "ethnic" fabric around himself, with a knot above the shoulder in the same way the band members had while performing, and another friend is taking photos of him. 'So it is a fashion show now,' I comment in a joking tone, and the friend taking photos affirms: 'It has been for a while already.' We start talking and joking, enjoying, for example, a hilarious show by one of the young men present regarding Barack Obama's blackness and Africanness, which the youths find dubious. After spending quite some time bantering together, the crowd starts to move and disperse, Manasse heading with the majority of the group for a summer night in town.

If to touch is to reach toward and to invite into a relation, as Manning (2007, xiv) writes, then refusing and turning away from touch is to withdraw from the relation, to prevent it from ever even taking place. It is refusing to relate, to align with, to become a we. In my field description, I have given attention to the touches Manasse receives, gives, reciprocates and negates in order to underline how, on one hand, he reaches towards some people or accepts being drawn into relation with them, and, on the other, how he turns away from others, refusing to relate with them. Of his own initiative, he touches the African background instructor of the band and reaches towards contact with the percussionists of the other band—he gently touches their instruments and stands deliberately close by, as if inviting the touch that in the end does take place. He reaches towards me by coming to sit and stand nearby. He receives my touch with ease and sometimes reciprocates it, often in slightly reserved fashion, yet he does. But when it comes to the band members, he behaves in a way that prevents any touch from happening whatsoever. Most of the other band members take it as it comes, but the other singer tries to break the pattern and to reach toward him a couple of times, though without much effect on his behaviour. As I underlined, this is quite edgy and even rude behaviour on Manasse's part, especially if one compares it with his usual easy bearing in social situations. This

clumsiness and rudeness is, however, in sharp contrast with his smooth act when finally on stage in front of the audience.

6.2.3 Professional performer representing the "we" of the band

During their gig, as on stage at Finlandia Hall, Manasse stands out from the rest of the band as *the* person who is in contact with the audience and who performs with his whole body. This time, the other band members are more relaxed on stage and the difference is not as striking as at the gig at Finlandia Hall. The other singer, for example, thanks the audience once after a song they sing alone, and the background singers dance a little while performing. The band members with mental disabilities are just as concentrated on their playing as at Finlandia hall, but since they are located on the middle of this small stage in bright light, one can see how, for example, the bass player grins like a Cheshire cat throughout the gig. Also, some have friends or family in the audience and they sometimes wave or smile to them directly—though otherwise they avoid looking at the audience, preferring to look at each other, the instructors, or their notes or instruments. Manasse is the one who speaks to the full audience and also the one who seems to enjoy *performing to* it; to dance in front of it, to sing to it, to talk to it. To a spectator it looks like it comes naturally, like he was born to do it. But I saw him perform for the first time at quite a big youth event in front of a rather large audience—and I can tell that it did not come naturally. He was nervous and stiff, and one could see it. It is not that he is a natural born performer, in the sense that getting up on stage requires no effort, but that it is something he aspires to and is ready to work for.

> When the gig is about to start, Manasse comes on stage together with the African background instructor. The instructor interrupts the loud chatter in the room by briefly presenting the band, speaking English. They then ask people to make room in front of the stage for the dance performance. People start to move, and the instructors carry chairs and tables aside in order to clear enough space. Manasse stands alone on the stage behind his mike. When the hassle is over Manasse starts a longer presentation of the band. He begins in English, referring to the instructor's words earlier: "As [they] was saying, this, our band, is called [ethno-project]." Then, he interrupts the presentation to ask the audience whether he should speak English or Finnish, gets joking answers, laughs, and continues in English. While Manasse speaks, the other band members go back and forth, still organizing things. The other singer passes him on the narrow stage and, when, doing so, touches his side slightly with their hand, as if to gently ask for space to walk by. Manasse does not react in any way to the touch but continues talking to the audience as if there were no-one even close to him:

“Ok, so, we have been gathering for now about four months, we practice together, and we dance… Now, we are gonna perform, we have a little performance, a dance performance for you. And then six songs, which, five of them we *made* ourselves. So it’s gonna be a very interesting show. For our band I can say we all come from, different … *kind* of places, so it is really hard to tell how did we get together. But here we are now and we are gonna perform for you!”

The audience gives him big hand, and with two girls he gets down on the floor in front of the stage where space for dancing performance was cleared out. The others stay on stage, each playing an African drum, and singing during their dance. Some spectators are pretty enthusiastic about the dance show, and, after it, a white middle-aged man—somewhat drunk and very happy—goes over and claps Manasse’s back admiringly. Manasse, for his part, turns towards the corner where I am sitting with his friends (all of us taking a video of the gig on our smart phones) and smiles a wide, satisfied smile.

They all get back on stage to sing and play. They change instruments after each song, and Manasse plays the drums in some songs, sings in others. When he is singing, he dances a little or jumps up and down to the rhythm, often making intensive eye contact with someone in the audience, one hand holding his mike while gesturing eloquently with the other—sometimes pointing, for example, at some imaginary thing on the ceiling, or sometimes making tut-tut movements with his index finger. After the songs he thanks the audience, sometimes by words, sometimes by bowing and sometimes by taking his hat off.

During the gig there is another noteworthy thing in Manasse’s behaviour, in addition to his convincing performance. While he takes the role of a kind of a leader of the band, speaking on its behalf to the audience as a matter of course, he is nevertheless unfaltering in always representing the whole band, to which he refers as “we”. Not once does he speak as an “I”: he says that “we practice together” and “we are going to perform”, and that “we have made the songs”. He thanks the audience not for himself but for the collective. He says that “we want the audience to join.” He does not make any distinction, either, between the different band members, by saying, for example, that some have mental disabilities, or anything in that direction. He simply says that “we all come from different kind of places” but “here we are now”.

At one point, during some hassle on stage, Manasse takes the mike and starts to speak—this time, in Finnish:

“Ah, one more thing, the logo that is over there on the background, we made it ourselves, we designed the logo and together we made, that thing [he points to some fabric hanging on the wall behind the stage]. There is the logo of the band and over there [unclear due to applause]. Here comes the next song.”

> In this song, the African background instructor plays a longish drum solo, during which Manasse dances in a relaxed fashion near his mike stand, clapping his hands above his head in rhythm. After the song, he introduces the next one:
>
> "One more song comes from us. It is a bit more energetic piece. We want the audience with us if you want to, if you can, the audience can sing along. Yess. It is quite simple though."
>
> They start the song, and Manasse encourages the audience to participate by waving and clapping his hands and by shouting between the verses "Everybody with!" and "Put your hands in the air!" The two background singers also wave: the white instructor encourages them to do so and it seems to be part of the choreography of the song. Large parts of the audience do join in, waving their hands and singing along with the chorus. When the song finishes, the audience breaks out in loud applause. The white instructor shows that all the band members should stand up, and Manasse thanks the audience several times with kind of a mischievous facial expression. Then he finishes the whole gig, addressing the audience:
>
> "That was the last piece, unfortunately. But, this piece will come out and if one wants to learn it by heart, it will be available later! Thank you again, [ETHNO-PROJECT]!"
>
> While he speaks, the others bow to the audience and then start to leave the stage. But Manasse stands with his mike at the end of the stage where the exit is, and the others form a small queue next to him, waiting to get off while he takes his time to leave the mike and his spot in the limelight.

I read Manasse's consistent accentuation of the band as a common project as a strong signal of respect towards the other band members. In his speeches, Manasse does not lift himself (or anyone else) above the others, nor put anyone down in any way. The band is a "we"—it is almost as if he did not exist at all as a single person on stage, but only as a member of the we of the band. This is in line with the way he spoke to me about their work together: he always expressed respect for the commitment the other band members showed to the project. Of the members with mental disabilities, he said that they were always very peaceful during the rehearsals, able and willing to concentrate and to follow advice. He also underlined that they were "[...] quite a part of that project [...]": they had taken part in composing some songs, coming up with ideas. Overall, he said, everybody in the group had worked hard for the project, and I never heard him say a bad word about anything that had to do with the project or the people involved. Nevertheless, during our discussions it came out that Manasse could not remember the names of the other band members. I found this odd: seeing as they had worked together for several months, forgetting their names seemed like something of an achievement. Also, he could remember the instructors' names without trouble, and was also pretty well up on who they were and what kind of things they work with. Remembering some names but forgetting

others, showing more interest in the doings of the instructors than the other band members is another sign of reaching toward and relating with the former while withdrawing from and refusing to relate with the latter. On the other hand, Manasse also told me that, in the beginning, a few other refugee background young men (most of them his friends or acquaintances) had been involved, too, but they had all dropped out. If he felt uncomfortable participating in the project, it would have been easy to drop out along with the others. "But you stayed," I noted to him, and he confirmed firmly: "I stayed until the end, I did. Yeah."

I have highlighted this contradiction in Manasse's behaviour towards the other band members as the central theme of this chapter: he simultaneously ignores and recognizes them. When off stage and in the same public space as the other members, they do not even exist for Manasse, and he avoids encounters with them, aligning instead with his friends, the instructors, me, or professional African background performers. But, on stage, and in his words, the band forms a "we" that he represents proudly. The confusion this aroused in me during fieldwork, and which has gained more weight in the analysis above, prompts me to ask why Manasse's bodily reactions on encountering the band members were in such contradiction with his representation of the band. In our later discussion (see the epilogue to this chapter) it turned out that Manasse was himself quite unaware of the way he behaved, and was surprised on reading my description of it. I thus consider his reactions as manifestations of the agentic capacities of his material body; as visceral responses that are barely conscious at all. I try to grasp and understand their meaning in the following section with the help of Ahmed's theorization of bodily encounters and emotions.

6.2.4 Refusing to relate as an immediate strategy for refusing the subject position

It is fruitful to think of Manasse's behaviour among his band members as a bodily encounter in Ahmed's (2000, 7) sense, as a face-to-face meeting. Such an encounter requires that subjects get close enough to see and touch each other: there is a movement in both time and space. In bodily encounters, Ahmed (2004, 31–33) writes, "[e]motional responses to others involve the alignment of subjects with and against other others." She considers racism an intercorporeal encounter, in which, "[...] a white racist subject who encounters a racial other may experience an intensity of emotions (fear, hate, disgust, pain). That intensification involves moving away

from the body of the other, or moving towards that body in an act of violence, and then moving away." In this encounter, bodily space is reconstituted—by moving away from the other—and, simultaneously, social space—by hate, aligning the white body with the "we" of the white community or nation, and the black body with the "them" of black people.

Manasse did repeatedly *approach* the other band members, with determination and commitment; altogether, the project lasted for almost a year. Obviously, for him it was not a hate encounter. Moving towards the band members did not involve violent intentions from either side but was a respecting reaching toward. And yet, when a particular face-to-face, eye-to-eye, skin-to-skin encounter was about to happen, Manasse moved away and withdrew from contact. He actively sought my, the instructors' or his friends company, which provided him an escape route from the actual "moment of contact" (Ahmed 2004, 31) with the other band members. His response in these situations is aptly described by Ahmed's (ibid., 32) words: "The bodies that come together, that almost touch and co-mingle, slide away from each other, becoming relived in their apartness."

Emotions attach and connect people to this or that object, place, or person, Ahmed argues (ibid., 27), but they also move us. If hate was not the e-motion that made Manasse move away from the others, what was it? If one tries to read his movement backwards with the help of Ahmed's argument, one ends up in sensations of discomfort, of a painful encounter: moving away is a reaction to a sensation that is recognized as pain.

> I become aware of my body as having a surface only in the event of feeling discomfort (prickly sensations, cramps), that become transformed into pain through an act of reading and recognition ("It hurts!"), which is also a judgement ("It is bad!"). This transformation effected by recognizing a sensation as painful (from "It hurts" to "It is bad" to "Move away") involves the reconstitution of bodily space. (Ahmed 2004, 29.)

I suggest that even though encountering the other band members was not a hate encounter for Manasse, it did involve feelings of pain or at least intense discomfort. In my interpretation, the clumsiness and even rudeness of his moving away, behaviour that deviates from his usual polite and smooth social interaction, speak of this pain. That he acted as if he did not even see the others was his somewhat desperate immediate strategy for avoiding the encounter altogether—in order, paradoxically, to avoid acting impolitely in the encounter that aroused feelings of discomfort in him.

But where did the feelings of discomfort and pain in these encounters spring from? Not from the encounter itself, as when Ahmed (2004, 29) stubs her toe on a table leg. Nor does it stem from the person encountered, as when someone attributes pain experienced in an encounter to the other party involved (when "it hurts", becomes "you hurt me" or "stupid table") (ibid., 30). If Manasse found the others as the cause of his pain, why would he align so strongly with them on the stage, becoming a member of the "we" of the band? His consistently respectful attitude towards them in every other aspect does not support an interpretation that he attributed his pain to the other participants as such. There is something more to it.

A moment of contact is not simply that—a moment without a before and after, a contact between just two subjects—but is shaped by longer histories of contact, Ahmed (2004, 31) argues. A particular encounter always carries traces of broader relationships, reopening past encounters. This concerns not only the subjects' personal prior encounters, but also general relations of power and antagonism that frame a particular encounter. The encounters "[...] *reopen the prior histories of encounter that violate and fix others in regimes of difference* [...]." (Ahmed 2000, 8; emphasis original.) Long-term histories of contact shape how people perceive each other, so that the perception of an other as the cause of one's emotional response is not simply a personal act of attributing the feeling to the other, but is tied to larger histories of power relations. These histories stick and work to fix others as "having" certain characteristics, giving them meaning and value (when "you hurt me" becomes "you are hurtful"). Ahmed refers especially to colonial and post-colonial encounters and the way these histories allow "[...] the proximity of a racial other to be perceived as threatening." (Ahmed 2004, 28; 30–31; 39.)

What is happening here, however, is a bit different. Yet Ahmed's work is useful in understanding that what is at stake is not how Manasse perceives the other members of the project as such. It is not the encounter with them which is the issue. Rather, it is the encounter of a member of this project with something else. It is how the members of this project are themselves encountered and categorized in that encounter, not how they encounter each other. As the project is targeted at vulnerable youth, and the band members are thus categorized as such, aligning with them would mean accepting the subject position of a vulnerable young person. My interpretation is that the feelings of pain and discomfort in encountering the other band members were evoked not by the other young people as such, but by Manasse's prior experience of being encountered as refugee young person and, consequently, as vulnerable. It is this encounter that he is trying to avoid, and the immediate

strategy he uses in order to do so is to refuse relating with the other band members *as* vulnerable, as members of a project targeted at vulnerable young people.

On stage, he does the opposite, eagerly aligning himself with these same people, but carefully situating them in a different position. It is crucial to note that in his presentation of the band, Manasse gives no hint that it is a special youth work project, aimed at youths with different vulnerabilities such as mental disabilities or refugee background. Instead, he says that it is "really hard to tell how did we get together"—which is not true at all, as he could simply mention the organization and project. In this sense, his introduction is almost misleading, since, instead of suggesting that the band members *are* different (which is the way he defines the project to me), he underlines that they *come from different kinds of places*. This is expression is interesting in its vagueness; inserting the words "kinds of"—which he searches for a while and then stresses—fades out the geographic connotations that the sentence would otherwise have, directing attention to the unique life histories of each band member. In this way, his introduction turns the band from a specialized project for vulnerable youth into a band that is one of a kind, special in its uniqueness, and, for that reason, able to make "a very interesting show." And, as extrapolated above, he speaks consistently of "our songs", "our logo", "our performance". In short, he aligns with "our band," but not with the project participants.

I argue that by avoiding relating with the other band members off stage, Manasse did not move away from them as people, but from the subject position of a vulnerable young person. I read it as a strong signal of his mundane political agency: by refusing to accept this subject position, he also refused becoming a party in an encounter with Finnish welfare state—a special kind of encounter with its representatives that categorizes him as vulnerable due to his age, refugee background and immigrant status, fixing him in a regime of difference. It is an encounter framed by a script of vulnerability and the need for care as synonymous with incapacity, weakness and passivity (Tronto 1993, 120; Vaittinen 2015, 102; 111), *and* by histories of colonialism and contemporary postcolonial encounters between compassionate Western subjects with the suffering, helpless refugee (Ahmed 2004, 35–36; Malkki 1996, 387–388). It is this position, reserved for Manasse in these regimes, which he refuses to accept. Instead, he aspires to carve out a position as a professional performer, on stage by both his courageous performance and by embracing the role of leader of the band, and off stage by understanding his position in the project as that of an assisting artist, as he describes in the epilogue below.

Epilogue

"This is quite brutal," Manasse says after reading my second chapter on him, the one regarding his behaviour at the gigs of the band. He looks at me from the corner of his eye, and I ask: "Do you hate me now?", jokingly, yet not only. "It is quite brutal," he repeats. "I am sure that I greeted them, you probably just didn't see it." He is right, in a sense: I did not see eveything that happened, and as I underlined earlier, I was never backstage or at rehearsals, where Manasse's interaction with the other band members was probably different. Missing both the backstage and the rehearsals is a considerable gap in my fieldwork; it would have been instructive to see if Manasse's (non-)relating with the other band members in public space was similar in more private situations, or different.

We talk for quite a while about how Manasse himself perceives the way he behaved and the reasons of it. I insist that the situations that I did see and participate in were as I have described, and that I consciously paid attention to his behaviour in this respect as I was confused about it right from the beginning. Manasse partly agrees, and ends up with the conclusion that my description is not exactly wrong but is too black-and-white due to my missing what happened backstage and in other non-public spaces. "There are also other reasons why I did not maybe socialize so much with them," he suggests. "They were different kind of people," he explains, persistently not categorizing them as disabled:

> 'I have not had so much contact with that kind of young people, and we hadn't known each other for very long. Also, some friends of mine were supposed to join the project, but in the end, they never did, so that I felt there was no-one kind of backing me up. In a way I was alone and so I felt like I need to be extra careful in order not do anything… There is a little bit of fear maybe in it, if you have not had contact with people who are different in that way. Maybe I didn't have the balls or courage to socialize with them so much.'

This is a noteworthy aspect. It does not explain why he didn't socialize either with those members of the band that he knew to be non-disabled, such as the other singer. But, seen in this light, Manasse's deed of participating in this project gains more weight than I had previously understood. "It was an important project of people who are in some ways different, and I wanted to challenge myself and give my support to it," he says. Comprehending that it was not easy for him, that he nearly didn't have the balls to do it, suggests that it was actually a big challenge and required great effort for him. Taking on such a challenge is a significant gesture of solidarity, and Manasse's willingness to stretch his own limits in order to support the project a remarkable political act in itself. Also, his consistency in using the word different instead of disabled, thus implicitly drawing parallels between himself and the people in question—as different from the majority Finns, albeit in different ways—underlines the significance of these acts and supports my earlier interpretation that Manasse has the ability to see beyond a dichotomous understanding of vulnerability and agency. Perhaps his personal experience of being constantly seen as "different" has given him the sensibility to see different differentnesses as something much more nuanced than fixed categories.

With regard to his own position, Manasse is clear. He dismisses the idea of himself as vulnerable due to his background: "I understand that some refugee or immigrant youth can be like that… But to me it feels somehow, like, very categorized, maybe it was one part of the project, but for me it was not important." And he talks about how it doesn't really interest him how some project is "branded"—what matters is what the content is, and if he is interested in the theme, he joins—'it doesn't matter if it is officially for vulnerable youth or something like that.' A seasoned project participator speaks: "No problem, we go along and play like according to the rules, and simultaneously we achieve what often is not how it has been branded. In the end, I gain too."

For Manasse, this specific project was about promoting African culture and music and about working with different kinds of people, and these were the reasons why he joined the project and stayed until the end. "From day one this was what it was for me. I never bought that 'vulnerable young people' theme. I thought of my role as a kind of assistant leader, unofficially though, but contributing my artistic point of view for the project." He is very clear: "It was more about supporting the others with my artistic skills than being a vulnerable immigrant young person receiving support. It is not that I did not *want* to take the role of a vulnerable youth. It is that it's not what I *am*. I am not that."

6.3 Transforming the subject position: Afrax at work II

In the steering group meeting, Afrax does not take much part in the extended discussion regarding what is, and what isn't, "low threshold", how Afrax's personality matters in this regard, and the idea of "disembarking" as central in this project (these discussions are described in the previous chapter, 5.3, on Afrax at work). At the very end, when discussion turns to Afrax's work in schools, he remarks that during the breaks the young people bravely come to talk with him about all kinds of things, especially about things that do not relate directly to his peer mentoring task, noting that this is useful in lowering the threshold. But the conversation in which his extrovert personality comes under scrutiny, in which he is described as disembarking among, and descending to, the level of his peers is a discussion about and beside him, which he follows without comment. The women in the meeting are talkative and have a lot of opinions they don't hesitate to voice, which means that most of the time Afrax briefly presents plans for the future, or reports what he has done, and the women discuss.

There are, however, two moments in which this pattern breaks. The first happens quite early on in the meeting, when Afrax is asked to give a brief report of a study trip to Antwerp he had participated in. He opens his report by smiling—and Afrax's smile is not any kind of smile; it is a warm, toothy, radiant grin that makes his eyes twinkle with friendliness and humor. He even remarked to me once that, 'I have my smile', hinting that he is not completely unaware of the effect it has on people. While smiling, he starts talking about his experiences in Antwerp: "It was pretty much a new world to me, as I am small like this who knows nothing about anything." This provokes amused and benevolent

laughter among the steering group members, and seems to cause a slight change in the orientation of the people present towards Afrax. He himself continues his report, underlining how he found the immigrant youth services of Antwerp to be "on a different level," in many ways more grand and developed than in our city—though not in all respects, as comes out in his reflections which are thorough and nuanced. He dwells on the subject of different working cultures and ways of including parents in the sphere of social youth work, which he finds an important dimension lacking in Finland. All in all, Afrax concludes that he got a lot of inspiration from the visit and that it also strengthened his feeling that he wants to "do this job". Later in the course of the meeting one of the steering group members comes back to the study trip and wants to tell everybody what the head of the youth services of the city (who had also participated the study visit) had told Afrax on their way back: 'He said that Afrax could get a job in youth services of the city any time." Someone comments: "You made an impression," but Afrax himself notes that "I have behaved well" (they had shared a room in the hotel they stayed at).

Towards the end of the meeting, Afrax takes the floor a second time. This time, his slightly more extended stretch of talk is provoked by a question regarding his ability to manage all the tasks and sectors of work included in the project. This was not actually included on the agenda of the meeting, but came up after one of the steering group members had asked if Afrax could help with a bullying problem in the vocational institution she works in, in which some immigrant background students were involved. "We would need some support from a specialist and then it struck me that maybe Afrax—but maybe you don't have time, maybe it is a bit beyond [your tasks]." Afrax answers by underlining the importance of the teacher's attitude and their immediate intervention, but the woman insists that they lack expertise: 'There is also a problem with language here, they speak in a language that the teacher does not understand—was it Arabic or what was it—and, then, there are also issues that concern religion—there is a lot of things that we don't, like, see.' Afrax doesn't really answer this, and she drops the subject as the discussion comes back to the fact that Afrax has a lot on his plate already, perhaps too much. At this point, one of the other steering group members asks Afrax how he stands the pressure that work in combination with his studies creates. Afrax embraces the subject and starts to reflect: "Well, even though I am fast, it has been quite speedy for my taste... It is really great that I get to dabble in this kind of thing, and I have tried to limit [working hours]... I have told my friends that not now, I am not working right now. One has to learn to say [it]." Again, a change in the orientation towards Afrax seems to take place, and this time it provokes a longer discussion in which Afrax's developing understanding of his professional role is addressed. In this context, the publicity Afrax and the project has gotten locally is also brought up, and he is asked how he feels about it. He says that he is not all that into it, he would prefer not to be on the cover of the local newspaper and also feels that some of the people who have contacted him after some of the articles have appeared have perhaps had dubious motives. Afrax's ability to reflect these issues and "keep his feet on the ground" gets credit from the steering group members. During this discussion, it also comes out that job consultation, or any other form of professional counselling, is not included in the project budget and thus, Afrax has no appointed counsellor. The woman from the youth café then offers to support Afrax by providing him with some form of consultation, and concludes the discussion: "This is very important regarding professional growth... One gets the understanding that this is my job."

I concluded the previous chapter regarding Afrax at work by arguing that the subject position he is offered as a peer mentor is both constrictive and formative with regard to his subjectivity, and that he has limited space to maneuver around the preconditions of a job on which he is economically dependent. Yet, both in the steering group meeting and in some other situations in which I was present, some of his gestures, choices of words and concepts, tone of voice, or deciding not to speak at all, hint at efforts to affect his position, often very subtly, though sometimes also less so. In this chapter, I focus on these kinds of mundane political gestures that I have found to be recurrent and consistent in the data concerning Afrax's work (in the steering group meeting and other situations), and try to show how he attempts to transform the subject position offered him into a form that is more agreeable for him. I will start by examining how Afrax seeks to align with professionals of youth work by distancing himself from the position of a peer of immigrant youth that he is expected to embrace. Next, I concentrate on Afrax's attempts to use a professional role to advocate the interests of refugee background youths. Together, these efforts constitute a curious double movement along which Afrax simultaneously denies and affirms his peerness with other immigrant youth; he does not wholly adjust to the design of the project, but adjusts it in order to work for goals he sees as worthwhile.

6.3.1 Becoming professional

Distancing from "our youth"

What is perhaps most striking in the excerpt above is how Afrax openly, and, in comparison with his generally helpful and ready orientation towards the requests and tasks proposed to him in relation to his job, quite straightforwardly turns down the call for specialist help by the woman working in the vocational institution. Instead of embracing the position of expert, offered him quite directly here, he rejects it, stressing the teacher's own expertise, which, he seems to determine, carries more weight in the bullying situation at hand. He does not embarrass the woman by pointing out that, despite his immigrant background, he is in no way more capable of solving language problems, if the languages in question are not Somali or Finnish, or that he might not be more capable, in general, of "seeing" things that relate to religion (here presumably Islam), than the Finnish professionals who work in the field of education. He simply does not express any interest in getting involved, and simultaneously underlines the significance of the teacher's attitude and intervention:

"It is very important: whether they remain quiet or interfere." I consider this rejection of the position of specialist quite remarkable because, as Keskinen (2012, 303) also notes, turning one's "immigrant-ness" into expertise regarding different cultures is one of the few resources available for a person with a background like the one Afrax has.

Not making strategic use of being an expert by experience recurs with respect to the media attention that Afrax has got due to this peer mentoring job. A couple of articles were published in quite small local newspapers, but one article appeared in a major local newspaper with national distribution and a large circulation, publishing both print and electronic editions. These articles worked to spread information about the project, both so that it would be better known among professionals working with immigrant youth and by the young people themselves. In them, Afrax was presented very much in line with the project materials—as a young person who has personal experience of immigration to Finland, and who is easy to approach and "sympathetic". His function as a role model was mentioned several times too, and he was described as being "busy" and "energetic", immersed in both his studies and his work, and as encouraging other immigrant youth to do the same: "In no case should one stay at home just sitting around," he was quoted as saying.[38] If Afrax wanted to profile himself as a specialist in immigration and integration, he certainly had a brilliant chance to do so. But, as he highlighted at the steering group meeting, as well as in our private conversations, he felt uncomfortable with this part of his job: 'I would prefer not to speak publicly at all,' he underlined. Media attention, of course, has its problematic aspects as well, such as becoming a target for harassment from certain racist groups. Indeed, Afrax and his peer mentoring job did attract attention on one Finnish internet forum run by such groups. But, on the other hand, Afrax has not hesitated to use public attention to stand up against and speak out about racism. Indeed, he has done so several times immediately after the time he worked as a peer mentor, speaking both from his professional role as a youth worker and from his personal standpoint, again in forums that reach large audiences (giving, for example, an interview to the same major local newspaper, and giving a speech at a large demonstration against racism). I am thus inclined to conclude that Afrax is willing to use media attention—despite his ambivalent feelings towards it—to promote issues that he finds worthwhile, such as fighting racism and xenophobia, but not in order to consolidate his position in the Finnish job market by making strategic use of his background and profiling himself as an expert in integration work.

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[38] Again, I have omitted references in order to protect Afrax's anonymity.

Sometimes, the way Afrax acts and speaks makes one feel that his orientation is actually the opposite: instead of using his background as a source of justification for his expertise, he seems to distance himself from his background and supposed peers:

> Afrax has agreed to visit the local job centre to meet one of the officials from the team that works with immigrant youth. I accompany him, and we are both invited to the small booth in which the official works with her clients. She (another middle-aged, middle-class, white ethnic Finn, I cannot help noticing) sits at her desk, and we are asked to sit in front of her, in the same way her clients normally would. Before starting the actual discussion, Afrax excuses himself and goes to the lavatory. He is away for quite a while, and I have trouble keeping up small talk with the official and not starting to feel awkward. Finally, Afrax comes back, apologizing and explaining that it took such a long time because he had met one of "our youth" and had stayed in order to "advise him"—there was a recruitment event happening at the job centre, and the young person apparently needed some encouragement to present himself to possible employers. Later, Afrax confesses to me that it was actually his friend—who was also, however, a regular visitor of the youth space in which Afrax now worked.

This was only one of the many times I heard Afrax use the expression "our youth". This is not surprising as such, as, in the NGO unit in question, a strong reluctance prevailed against using expressions that would hint at treating the youth as clients, and the regulars were consistently called "our youth". This expression was used exclusively by the staff—the young people used other concepts to refer to youths who were regularly seen on the premises of the unit (like "bro" [in English], or simply as someone who "frequents the club"). Afrax was astonishingly fast in altering his vocabulary so as to become one of the people who talk about "our youth" instead of being one of the young people referred to by this expression—it happened in only a matter of weeks, so fast that, in the beginning, I couldn't help feeling a bit amused when he did so; as if he were not himself one of "our youth" anymore, I chuckled to myself. If my amusement was understandable, it was also quite pejorative. I now see Afrax's rapid change of vocabulary and orientation towards his former "bros" as an essential part of his immediate strategy to distance himself from them, to not use "peerness" as a source of professional qualification, and to accommodate a professional youth worker's habitus by adopting their vocabulary and ways of relating with the youth instead.

> The official in the job centre is friendly, and willing to support Afrax in gaining knowledge about the services available to immigrant youth. First, she goes through the basics of what to do in case one ends up unemployed, and then starts to expound upon online services, different options available for unemployed youth to gain education, subsidies that employers can get if they hire an unemployed person, support services for vocational selection, personal coaching for working life,

integration benefits immigrant youth are entitled to and how to apply them, and so on. I have trouble keeping up, even though I should already be familiar with most of the stuff. Afrax makes notes intently, every now and then asking the official for clarification. His questions regard the services available, not the terms the official uses or other such obscurities. Afrax shows no sign that he might have trouble taking everything in, and he does not ask for explanation of any of the concepts the official uses, not even ones that are not necessarily readily understandable for native Finnish-speakers (such as "job watch" [*paikkavahti*], a tool that one can use to have suitable job announcements sent straight to one's email from the online search engine for vacancies).

At the end of the meeting, Afrax remarks: "Well, that was a proper package, I hope I could absorb at least some of it!" The official then says that she doesn't expect Afrax to memorize everything and to do the job that is actually hers, but that her objective is to give him an overall idea of the possibilities offered by the job centre and to ensure he knows who to ask. She then gives him her direct number and encourages him to keep in touch. We leave the office, both somewhat overwhelmed with the mass of information. I ask Afrax if he understood all the words and could keep up with the presentation, and he admits that he did not understand some of the concepts used by the official, but as she proceeded so fast he did not want to ask their meaning but instead tried to concentrate on finding out answers to the questions he himself saw as most relevant.

Not revealing that one doesn't understand something is, of course, a common strategy when one feels the necessity to build credibility in a new environment. It's probably a familiar strategy to most of us. However, there is a difference here as Afrax was *not* actually supposed to show competence as a youth worker *but* as a peer of immigrant youth. As he himself remarked, when we figured that maybe the official didn't provide explanations herself because she assumed Afrax to be familiar with them already: "I am exactly the person to whom everything should be explained, so that I can then explain it to others." This is the attitude of a peer mentor—and, yet, this was not the attitude he adopted when surrounded by colleagues. Rather, he tended to behave as in the session at the job centre: he generally chose not to reveal his language problems, and adopted concepts and language with an echo of professional social work quickly. For example, in the steering group meeting he spoke about the "need to anticipate" growth in immigration and "heed the templates" developed in other countries such as Belgium, where the immigrant background population is much larger than in Finland. These expressions struck me at times as almost exaggeratedly typical samples of the discourse of social sector professionals—Afrax's reflection, for example, on how working with whole families was much more advanced in Antwerp, ended in the often heard (even, indeed, in the

course of the actual steering group meeting itself) concern with "outreach": "It is a bit of a problem for us that we do not reach the parents so well."

It is also notable in the sentence above that Afrax situates himself alongside the social workers who have the problem of reaching the parents without hesitation, instead of aligning himself with the immigrant youth whose families are ignored by youth work. I find this move quite interesting, and it is also one of the gestures that Afrax kept repeating. It parallels the shift of position indicated by Afrax's use of the expression "our youth": an attempt not to align with the immigrant youth—despite being their appointed and hired peer mentor—and to distance himself from that group instead in order to align with the professional social and youth workers. I understand his consistency in downplaying his background and experiences as an immigrant, instead of making strategic use of them, in this light too: as yet another immediate strategy he deploys to distance himself from "immigrant-ness" in order to be able to verge on general professionalism. Nowhere in my data does he draw upon his immigrant-ness as a source of professional qualification or as a resource that would make him a specialist on any issue himself. Instead, he positions himself firmly as a *budding professional* in youth work, as someone who is unexperienced and green professionally, but eager to develop and learn; in the steering group meeting, for example, he outspokenly describes himself as "small like this who knows nothing about anything", yet deeply motivated professionally, as someone who "wants to do this job." I find the two moments in the meeting in which Afrax takes the floor and speaks for an extended period as indicative of what he finds as agreeable aspects of the position offered him, and which he not only embraces, but also tries to stress and develop further. In both instances—when reporting back from the study trip to Antwerp, and when reflecting on the pressures of work and studies—what he dwells on first is what he has learned, or still has to learn personally, as a budding professional, and, second, what should or could be learned and developed generally, at the level of immigrant services or the kind of project at hand.

Meaning of the smile

At least to a certain extent, I consider Afrax's strategy effective. At the steering group meeting itself, it worked to introduce a new topic into the discussion and to affect the orientation of the members of the steering group towards him. Both times he took the floor the discussion was reoriented, and Afrax's professional development and also successes—like making an impression on the head of the city youth services, or keeping his feet on the ground despite publicity—were brought up and given

attention. The orientation of the members of the steering group during these reflections was encouraging and warm; some offered him practical help, others advice and support. The way Afrax was both advised on issues regarding his work and studies and rewarded for his good work created an air of supervision, or of tutoring a student of their field: the already qualified and experienced professionals eagerly shared their expertise and gave feedback to Afrax, who was now no longer treated as a specialist in issues regarding immigrant youth—the only one in the room—but as a young person who is about to become a colleague.

This didn't happen of its own accord, however. I would like to suggest that it was not only *what* Afrax started to reflect on, but also *how* he did so that made his strategy successful in the meeting. His smile most certainly played a role here. While the smile has turned out to be an all but unequivocal facial expression when it comes to its function and meaning (e.g. Birdwhistell 1970, 32; Rychlowska et al. 2015, E2429), it is commonly understood to be a social behaviour (rather than a simple outward expression of feelings of happiness), and, as such, one of the most important affiliative signals, though used and judged differently in different contexts and cultures (e.g. Krys et al. 2014, 315; Martin et al. 2017, 872; Mehu & Dunbar 2008; 1747–1748; Park et al. 2018, 103). As a socially potent tool, smiling grabs the attention of others and affects their inferences about the person expressing the smile. In cognitive sciences, smiles are often categorized in three types: "[...] reward smiles that reinforce desired behavior; affiliation smiles that form and maintain social bonds; and dominance smiles that manage social hierarchies." (Martin et al. 2017, 864.) As social behaviour, smiling has also been an object of research in the social sciences. Hochschild (2012 [1983]) shows that smiling is also used as a tool in emotional labour—in tuning one's emotional displays to create a particular emotional state in others—and is even *required* in the emotional labour of the service sector, as in the case of the flight attendants whose work she studied. Or, "smiling work" might be required as part of "institutional passing" as Ahmed (2017) puts it: in institutions of whiteness, persons of colour might need to work in order "[...] to pass into an organisation by passing out of (or trying to pass out of) a stereotype. Passing is about 'softening' your appearance [...]. You have to demonstrate that you are willing to ease the burden of your own difference."

I believe Afrax's smile can be approached from both perspectives: as a "genuine" affiliative signal and as smiling work. The social function of a smile of affiliation is to invite and maintain social bonds, and to signal the potential for mutual positivity and openness to (re-)establishing beneficial bonds (Martin et al. 2017, 867). Although cultural variation exists regarding appropriate contexts of smiling and the way smiles

are perceived, generally speaking smiling individuals are perceived as more attractive, kind, honest, competent and likable than non-smiling individuals. They also elicit more cooperative behaviour and affiliative signals from others. (Krys et al. 2014, 315.) I do believe that Afrax's wide smile was, at least partly, a signal of, and invitation to, warmth/communion (ibid., 315), and as such it fulfilled its function: it seemed to affect at least some of the steering group members in a way that prompted them to respond with expressions of warmth and interest towards Afrax and the topics he brought to the discussion along with his smile.

However, his smile was perhaps also oriented towards managing social hierarchies, and as such might be interpreted as a "dominance smile" that, according to Martin et al. (2017, 868), communicates "[...] an intention to instantiate, destabilize, or maintain asymmetric hierarchical relations between displayer and receiver [...]." They seem to consider dominance smiles essentially a tool for asserting dominance over other/s. Yet, if one takes into account Ahmed's proposal of smiling as a way of softening one's appearance in order to pass into an organization, smiling as a way of managing social hierarchies might also mean the opposite. Taken together, Afrax's smile and the accompanying utterance—"as I am small like this who knows nothing about anything"—seem to signal a certain kind of humbleness, and speak to his willingness to position himself low in the professional hierarchy, as young and unexperienced among seasoned specialists. This willingness is intelligible especially if one understands it as a way of passing out of a stereotype (Ahmed 2017)—in this case, the stereotype of being a representative of imaginary immigrants. I read Afrax's smile as at the same time inviting the others to establish a warm social bond with him and signaling his endeavor to pass into the white institution of social work by proposing a low hierarchical position for himself in its professional ladder.

Such acts of humility recur a few times during the steering group meeting. The way Afrax talks about himself consistently presents himself not only as unexperienced, yet eager to learn, but also as grateful for the opportunity he has been offered as an employee of this project. When asked about the pressures he experiences, he speaks of how "great" it is to get to "dabble in" [*pääsee touhaamaan*] this kind of project, an expression that simultaneously asserts the wonderfulness of the project and the none too elaborate level of his own work in it. Even when the praise from the head of the city youth services is brought up, Afrax modestly brushes it aside by saying "I have behaved well." In this way he was carrying out "smiling work" throughout the meeting in the sense Ahmed (2017) proposes: turning one's body into smile, being constantly "[...] careful of what you say, how you appear, in order to maximize the distance between yourself and their idea of you." That this

was so was brought home to me after the meeting, when the others had left and I was left alone with Afrax and one of his younger colleagues. In the next section, I will start by describing what happened: how he slipped out of the professional role, so carefully constructed, and how that happened on other occasions, albeit few, as well. By examining these instances, I seek to understand the dimensions of Afrax's efforts to transform the subject position offered to him in the project better.

6.3.2 Becoming an advocat

Slips of the tongue, stumbling in praxis

> After the meeting I stay behind, and, when I see Afrax talking with his colleague at the back room, I go and join them. First, we talk a little about the study trip to Antwerp, and then Afrax asks me how I found the steering group meeting. I answer that it was interesting and that I think the discussion was better than it often is in situations like this. Afrax and his colleague utter something affirmative, yet I get the feeling that it is somehow half-hearted. Suddenly Afrax's colleague snaps: "Afrax is under such a pressure here! We all are!" I ask whether this is true, and, after they confirm emphatically, we start to ponder why come it is like this here as well as so many other places—why everyone seems to be so extremely busy and exhausted by their workloads.
>
> To do something to counter this culture of living for work, we decide to go out for some pre-Christmas mulled wine. This turns out to be a bit difficult as our calendars are all chockablock. Compared to the other two, though, mine looks kind of empty, but I add that it is subject to constant change, as much of my job at the moment involves meeting young people and, with them, the situation keeps on fluctuating. As a reaction to this explanation, Afrax snorts in a sarcastic tone: "Yeah, young people are like that…" I object, trying to reformulate what I said to match what I meant: "Actually, I am somewhat annoyed by constant talk about young people not committing to things, they do commit to things they find important." Now Afrax's tone changes and he exclaims: "Yes, that's true! I agree, if things truly take their origin from the youths themselves [*jos asiat lähtee oikeasti nuorista itsestään*], they do commit." I proclaim my unanimity, asking who would commit to things that are not truly important to them.

In the end, the three of us did manage to agree a time for going out and enjoying our free time together. But that's another story. At this point, there are two noteworthy moments in this dialogue: Afrax's sarcastic snort, and our discussion of the assumed lack (or not) of "commitment" [*sitoutuminen*] exhibited by young people. To begin with the latter: this was not an uncommon topic among youth workers during my years in the sector and while I was doing fieldwork. I remember (lack of)

commitment as a kind of keyword that always rose up in situations where any larger project or event that would involve the participation of youths was planned. I have only worked in the sphere of multicultural youth work, and thus cannot tell whether this same discourse has been prevalent in other sectors of youth work. What I can say, is that in the multicultural youth work sector, lack of commitment was taken almost as a natural fact. Yet, as participation started to gain weight as a buzzword during those years, participatory projects could not be brushed aside, and some youth workers did not wish to do so, either. They were genuinely willing to work in a participatory fashion, but were constantly troubled by the lack of sustained interest from the youth, which they interpreted as a lack of commitment. These dynamics came out several times in the family group home during my fieldwork with AK as well. There was, for example, the famous film weekend camp in a cabin that the staff took so much trouble to organize, but which only two young persons turned up at.

> We participate in the monthly house meeting in which the staff and the youth are supposed to talk about common issues and plan the coming weeks. The atmosphere is somehow bleak, the staff seem tired and frustrated and the youth are either restless or quiet and withdrawn. The Christmas holidays is one of the points on the agenda, and the youth are asked if they have ideas of what they would like to do during the holidays—which is, as I later learn with AK, a difficult period for those youths who do not have anywhere to go: there is neither school, nor hobbies or pretty much anything else to do, the house is quiet, there is less staff around, and loneliness seems to condense during the dark stasis of the religious holiday.
>
> Jokingly (but not in an altogether happy tone) the youth make suggestions they know are impossible to realize. Someone suggests that they would travel to Africa to enjoy the sun, someone else talks about a trip to Italy. Then, one of the older ones asks for permission to speak and emphatically pleads that they might go "away from this city" for a week or two. The director of the home looks at them over their reading glasses, turns the corners of their mouth downward and answers that, were something like that to be organized, "one should commit to it." The other educators support them, telling the youth how difficult it is to organize things, if the youth do not participate in them in the end. The discussion ends without a clear answer to the young person's request.
>
> After the meeting, we stay behind to talk with the staff members. They are disappointed by how few of the young people took part in the meeting. 'It is so difficult to know where one stands with these young people, what they are prepared to commit to,' comments one of the social educators. Just before the meeting, the staff had discovered that today is a special day for Shia Muslims, and so several of the young people wanted to go to the mosque instead of the meeting. The social educator brings up the weekend camp in the cabin they had recently organized. On that occasion, they had realized too late that both Muslims and Christians had an important religious celebration that weekend, due to which most didn't participate. 'Its importance came somehow as a surprise to us,' the social educator tells us. The

> director of the house then comments that it is impossible to know if the youth will commit to our research, either, as it is so difficult to predict their behaviour.

Interestingly, in the situation above the staff members' interpretation turns the youth's commitment to religious practice and community into a lack of commitment to the activities of the family group home. This, in turn, leads to questioning the young person's plea for organizing a holiday trip out of town—it is met with suspicious looks and comments, and left hanging in midair. As an outsider, it is not difficult to see how this, again, might contribute to a lack of interest on the youth's part for participating in house meetings; situations that are supposedly meant (also) for hearing about their thoughts, feelings, ideas and wishes, but that sometimes tend to turn into moments of controlling and disciplining them.

This brings out two issues that I have found to crop up recurrently in the discourse of the lack of commitment shown by the youths: first, when they do not show up at all, or cancel at the last moment, their reasons for doing so are rarely taken seriously. In the excerpt above, the staff members' ignorance of the religious celebrations is quite striking: as a vast majority of the youth residing in the house are either devoted Muslims or Christians, one would expect that they would take them into account automatically. However, in other situations where the youth's commitment is questioned, the reasons for their absence might be less obvious but just as pressing. These young people often struggle to keep up at school and spend considerably more time and energy doing so, and taking care of everyday bureaucracy, than native Finns. Working closely with my participants taught me that many (though not all—some also have the problem of not having anything to do or anyone to meet) have serious difficulties in keeping their schedules somehow tolerable and also having enough time to sleep and take care of basic things like shopping, cooking and cleaning.

Second, when the youth do show up, it is not uncommon that part and parcel of the "participatory" project turns out to be disciplining. A telling example was given me by a youth worker who had been coordinating a Youth in Action exchange project in the organization in which Afrax was working. "There was bit of a problem with commitment," they noted to me afterwards, "I was finally nicknamed 'police'." As an ex-youth worker, I know how time and energy consuming it is to organize a project with a group of young people in a truly participatory fashion. It is so much easier to take a few shortcuts and invite them into an at least partly pre-designed project and make many of the decisions and preparations oneself. But when one works in this way, the project does not well from the interests of the youths themselves, and its design does not take those other things they either want or/and

have to organize time for into account. The youth worker's role, then, easily turns into one in which they have to pressure the youth into participating, and whose behaviour betrays their disappointment at the youths' "commitment" levels.

It was this discourse and practice, I believe, that made Afrax snort at my utterance, which he interpreted as hinting at a lack of commitment to agreed meeting times on the part of young people. His quick change of tone after my explanation and enthusiastic affirmation that "[...] if things truly take their origin from youth themselves, they do commit" backs this interpretation up, hinting that I had hit the mark. But what do Afrax's initial reactions, the snort and sarcastic tone, tell us? If one takes his eagerness to embrace professional discourse and jargon, described in detail in the previous section, into account, this slip of the tongue seems remarkable. He is not only dismissing a chance that I, half-accidentally, offer him to practice his new youth worker's habitus, but he explicitly takes a counter stance to this professional discourse. And the way he does so is a case in point: no hint of professional reflection or refined exclamations this time! Just a sarcastic, almost angry utterance "Yeah, young people are like that…" True, this was a moment after the meeting, and Afrax was in quite safe company: there was only me and his closest colleague, who he knew to be firmly on his side. But this didn't tend to happen in other similar situations—the position of a professional Afrax was working to reach was not merely some garb he would assume only in official work environments and put aside in other situations. That is exactly why this slip attracts my attention: it is a rare moment in my data.

I read it as a hint of him actually experiencing feelings of "peerness" with other young people. These peers are not, perhaps, the ones he is supposed to represent in the scope of the project—the imaginary immigrant youth. More likely they are those young people with whom he has developed more or less close-knit relationships while growing up in his Finnish home city, which in practice means that the majority of them are also regulars of this youth work unit, of which he himself used to be a client, and where he now works—and to whom he now most often refers as "our youth". As I have argued, calling his peers by that professional moniker is a strategy he deploys to verge on the subject position of a professional youth worker. However, his snort and sarcasm speak of aligning with the youth, not with professional youth workers, at least on this particular occasion. It was as if he had been personally offended, and his emotional response becomes understandable in this light. At that moment, he behaved as a young person who is being told young people generally do not commit. That this feeling of peerness, of being *also* one of those young people towards whom he was acting from a professional position, was not exceptional, but

recurrent, becomes more evident if one follows Afrax actually working with the youth.

> I have come to an opening of an exhibition about racialized minorities living in Finland, and am not surprised to stumble upon Afrax with a group of youths: they are doing an excursion together from the youth work unit. There are some "older" young people I know already, but also "new" youths that I haven't met, especially one whose Finnish is not fluent and who seems to be a newcomer both to the country and to a lot of the young people. Afrax has his arm wrapped around this boy's shoulders, a gesture that has simultaneously a masculine and protective twist. Together, they follow the opening rituals from a distance, and Afrax interprets parts of the speeches to this boy, who is also of Somali origin. A bit later, when there is a break in the official program, I go over to say hi to him and we exchange basic greetings. Afrax then asks me if I know his companion, and, when I say that I don't, Afrax explains that he is [another young person's] brother, to which I exclaim that I thought he has some features of the family. This short exchange makes the boy laugh, and together the three of us go to explore the exhibition. Some old books capture their interest, the boy laughs and repeats several times the name of Joseph Wandera Owindi's book from the seventies, called "Look, Look, a Negro." The two young men discuss this and other books on display together, among them children's books in Somali.
>
> Later, the group gathers in the room where the tables are set for the reception. The sambusas on offer do not pass the test of this expert crowd, and their refusal turns into a source of lots of joking and fun. Then, the banter takes a more serious turn: I get immersed in a discussion regarding the Finns Party, whose election campaign tent one of the young persons had visited. Next to me, Afrax is talking to the "new" young person in Somali, but suddenly turns to me and the colleague standing next to me, exclaiming abruptly: "that [boy] tells me all the time he is not African!" His colleague asks what does he say then, does he think he is Arab instead of African, to which the boy himself answers in Finnish, looking us both in the eyes: "Yes I am, I am African." But this does not convince Afrax, who, in an irritated tone, tells us that the boy keeps on repeating that he is not African.

Above, Afrax is doing his job; supporting his peer, this time in quite a special, though not completely extraordinary situation. For his job involves not only formal mentoring sessions, but also spending time with the youths and providing them mentoring alongside, by offering information and emotional support when needed, and by being a role model for younger and "newer" youths to learn how to live in Finnish society. And I have to admire the eloquent way he gives special attention to the new boy in the group: how he literally takes care of him by almost constantly having an arm around his shoulder, in a manner that is brotherly and masculine enough not to make him feel embarrassed; how he introduces him to me in a way that makes us both feel that we actually almost already know each other and can

immediately laugh and relax in each other's company; and how he discreetly interprets those things that the boy seems not to understand, while simultaneously encouraging him to speak Finnish. But then, a slip of the tongue, a stumble in professional practice occurs: irritated by the young man's opinion that, as a Somali, he is more an Arab than an African, Afrax turns to me and his colleague, the people present that most of the youths in this group consider to have some kind of authority. I am not saying that one can't have serious discussions and disagreements with the young people one works with, but whether one lets one's emotions rise like this and therefore behave inappropriately during these discussions is another issue. For Afrax, questioning the belonging of Somali people to Africa is a sore point, which I know from our discussions in other situations (I will come back to this issue in chapter 7.3). When faced with this issue, he turns to us, almost as if he were a little boy squealing to adults about some mischief his mate has got up to. He does this in spite of the fact that the boy he squeals about is now one of *his* youth, one of those young people whose professional youth worker he aspires to be. I am left with an impression that the situation got quite awkward for the "new" boy, who found it necessary to convince me and Afrax's colleague in Finnish that he didn't actually mean what he had said. It was a brief moment, but, as such, one in which I felt Afrax wavering between his role as a budding professional and his feelings of peerness with other youth. Let me turn to another, slightly different, instance, in which his role again seems ambiguous.

> Afrax has invited older regulars of the youth club to prepare a hundred sambusas for a group of asylum seekers who are visiting the city from a reception centre located in the countryside some eighty kilometers away. The visit they are making is part of an art project, whose partial purpose is to provide the asylum seekers legal counsel on their cases, which they have a hard time getting in their remote dwelling place. The organization Afrax works for has agreed to cooperate with this project, and helping with the preparations is integrated as a part of their "active citizenship" program. I have promised to come and help with the cooking, but arrive a bit late.
>
> On entering the premises of the organization, the first thing I hear is some nicely grooving music, and then see a young man, wearing a brown apron decorated with white flowers—but covering his back instead of front. He comes singing from a room to the left (where the stereos are) and slowly dances towards the kitchen on the right. In the middle of the passage he notices me, exclaims in a surprised tone "Oh, hi Elina!" and comes to shake hands with me. We enter the kitchen and I find that there is a great amount of bustle: some young people, including Afrax, are feverishly preparing the fillings for the sambusas with the aid of some volunteers from the organization. Some are more pretending to be involved than actually doing anything: one of them, for example, is asked to cut some garlic, a task they willingly agree to do, but manage to spend ages doing it, as every now and then they go to the corridor

to dance for a while, knife in hand. Another complains about their hunger and makes an amazing palaver about frying an egg for himself and finding the perfect spices to garnish it.

Luckily, some of us are a bit more into the task at hand, and slowly we begin to make progress. While working, an intense discussion regarding marriage and arranged marriage keeps us occupied. A female volunteer from the organization, who has Indian roots, tells us the story of her arranged marriage—a happy one—and the young people contemplate the good and bad sides of this practice, and their own wishes for the future. At some point, we share a meal made of the left-over filling, and while eating I realize how loud the banter and singing had been that had filled the kitchen to this point; for a while, we are all quiet as we munch the delicious meal. After eating we continue the work. It is getting late, and Afrax's tone with the youths gets stricter: now, instead of asking them kindly to help he starts to giving quite harsh commands. Up to a point it seems to work; finally, even the loudest but least helpful of the young people take up some task and help washing the dishes and cleaning up. When we start to get ready, Afrax is careful to give the youth plenty of hearty thanks.

At this point, the young people start to beg Afrax, who has a car, for a ride home. At first, he is very determined, telling them that he is not their taxi driver, to which the youths respond by underlining how kind they have been, coming to help out like this, spending several hours preparing food, arguing that it would only be fair if he helped them in turn. Afrax stays strict, however, and, finally, most give up and start making their way towards a nearby bus stop. One of the youths stays behind to try their luck one more time, but Afrax tells them that it would be unfair to give them a lift as the others are getting public transport. That, however, turns out to be a mistake: the youth runs to the bus stop to fetch the others, and Afrax ends up giving them all a lift home.

Here, Afrax seems to waver in the way he relates to the youths again. This time, his wavering is related to being simultaneously their youth worker and their friend—while in the first excerpt, the ambiguity involved his relation to other youth workers and other youths, his assumed generic peers, now it is clearly about his relationship with these *particular* young people. Many of the young people present on this occasion are actually his friends: those long-term, regular visitors to this organization, whom he has grown up with, developing brotherly bonds. Most of the evening Afrax maintains his professional position, giving out tasks, monitoring and motivating the youths to do the work, and helping those who have difficulties finding something to do. Towards the end of the session, this becomes even more clear, as his patience with some of the youths' mucking about ends, and he adopts a more authoritative stance to them. At the very end, he stumbles nevertheless: despite his efforts to stay strictly within his professional role, he finally gives up and surrenders. The other young people are quite clever in taking advantage of the ambiguity they perhaps sense in him, and justify their pleas for a ride home by alluding to the obligations of reciprocity between friends; since we helped you out, it would only be

fair to help us a bit in return. Here, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the young person who stayed longest to try to persuade Afrax was one of his best friends. It turned out to be impossible for a friend to say no to a bro, yet equally impossible for a youth worker to treat the others in an unequal manner—which led to Afrax being a "taxi driver" for all of them.

Afrax was aware of the ambiguities of his role himself. Partly, he seemed to be at ease with this: in the steering group meeting, for example, he reflected on how he has learned to say no to requests for help when spending free time with his friends, asking them to return to the issue during office hours instead. In some other respects, however, he felt uncomfortable with the situation, to the extent of not being willing to speak much about it. He made brief remarks to me on how some of the old regulars of the unit do not respect his authority as a staff member, perhaps finding one of their peers elevated to a higher position than themselves in the unit in this way unfair. Also, Afrax expressed some self-criticism regarding his behaviour in certain situations, in particular in sports activities, in which he was apparently sometimes driven by his emotional reactions to behave in ways inappropriate for a youth worker. This is reflected in some of the feedback material collected from the youths regarding the peer mentoring project: in them, Afrax is mostly described as helpful, warm and easy to approach ("a big heart, there is always space for everybody", and he "takes us seriously, helps us more and offers the help himself [so that one does not need to ask for the help]"), but there are also some critical remarks about him using too harsh language ("peer mentors should not say 'shut up when I am speaking'"), being impolite or too quick to anger in some situations, or in other ways breaking the code expected of staff members by the youths; of behaving in a way the young people themselves are expected, or, at least, allowed to behave, but not the workers, who should always stick to their professional role.

My understanding of Afrax's slips of the tongue and wavering between professional and non-professional praxis with regard to the youths comes from perceiving his efforts to be seen as a professional youth worker when among other professionals as strategic moves. They are strategic in the sense elaborated on in the previous section: attempts to distance himself from "immigrant youth" in order to verge on the position of a professional youth worker instead of the position of an ascribed representative as a peer mentor. Realizing that this distancing from the other youths, and aligning with professionals—turning the other youths from bro's, or regulars, to "our youth"—is, to some extent, superficial, shows this strategy in a distinct light. That he actually does identify, at least to an extent, with the other young people gives an interesting twist to his action in the professional environment. Why

this extra effort? Why does he go to the trouble of not to making strategic use of his background and distancing himself from his ascribed "peers", if, in fact, he actually does relate to (some of) them?

Ascending rather than descending

There might be several reasons for this: one angle of looking at Afrax's way of balancing between different positions could be interpreting it as typical of the growing pains of a young professional. Certain instances in my data, however, make me believe that there is more to it than that. Some of Afrax's expressions and gestures suggest an interpretation that he had his own agenda that did not exactly fit with the project design, but that he was trying to implement as best he could while doing his job. There is, for example, his understanding about the rationale of visiting the job centre.

> We have had lunch together before going to the job centre. After that, while we are walking towards the office, Afrax starts to explain why he is making the visit: "It is somewhat difficult for many to transact with the job centre," Afrax says, "so I try to find paths for them." He then goes on to talk about the endless forms that the Finnish welfare bureaucracy compels one to fill in. 'These forms, even [native] Finns cannot fill them in,' he comments, underlining how impossible they are for young people with less fluent Finnish skills.

Here, Afrax actually seems to be on his way to doing the opposite of what was expected of him: instead of descending among the difficult-to-reach youth, he describes himself as ascending among the difficult-to-transact-with state officials, hidden behind online service systems, forms that are impossible to fill in, and jammed phone services. In Afrax's description, the problem is not that the young people are unaware of their need for support services, and would not try to look for them quite actively, but that it is too difficult to find a path for them—as came out in the epilogue of the previous chapter on Afrax (chapter 5.3), this might also be due to the simple fact of not being able to afford a bus ticket. So, what he does instead is to disembark among the state bureaucrats: he walks into the office, spends time finding someone who is interested enough in the situation of immigrant youth, organizes services for the young people who need them, and also tries to accompany the youths (and provide them with bus tickets) when they have their appointments. During our visit, all the questions Afrax made to the official were about checking what services were available and what could be organized upon request. Afrax asked:

> "How can one transact with the office if one does not have online banking?" The official responds by explaining how jammed the services are due to lack of resources in comparison to demand, hence how difficult getting personal advice is. She advises trying phone services, and assures us that there are some resources available via the integration services provided by the office for personal counseling too.
>
> "How about those who are seventeen, but have not finished comprehensive school, can they continue, for example, through seventh grade [with economic benefits targeted at unemployed adults who are willing to study to gain a profession]?"[39] The answer is yes: in the case of immigrants in integration programs, the age limit regarding this benefit is lower, and they are entitled to study with it.
>
> "Can we come, for example, with a group for some CV workshop?" The answer is yes, this can be organized.
>
> "I once tried that out [online program for choice of vocation], it was quite complicated, so is it possible to book an appointment with a career advisor by phone?" Again, the official promises that some way of getting personal support in choosing one's vocation can be sorted out.
>
> "Is this [applying for integration benefit], then, taken care of for all immigrant youths who are in upper secondary school?" Turns out that it isn't, due to lack of resources, but the official claims that the social welfare office is aware of this and can provide advice if needed.
>
> "I have, already today, one [young person] coming over who has graduated and needs an internship or something, so where could we make contact directly [in order to get support in finding a suitable place]?"

Two of these questions were about ensuring which economic benefits were available for youths with immigrant backgrounds and about checking if their admission is taken care of, or whether someone (read: Afrax) should be aware about it and be able to provide advice on how to apply for them. The remaining questions are about creating contact with officials. The first question is telling: as identification in Finnish official online services is most often done via the online banking system, the path to these services is blocked right from the outset in the case of many refugees who are not (yet) Finnish citizens.[40] The answer he got was none too reassuring: lack of

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[39] In Finland, schooling is compulsory for children aged sixteen or below; up to that age, it is also free for them.

[40] In cases in which they carry passports containing a remark to the effect that it, "has not been possible to confirm the owner's identity" (as is very often the case, if the person has either never had a passport in their home country—as is true of almost all of the Somalis and many Afghans, too—or has been lost or gotten rid of it during their flight), banks were not entitled, before the year 2017, to give them access to online services at all. The massive problems this caused for immigrants in this situation were slowly acknowledged at the beginning of 2010s, and change was made to the law regarding banking services. From 2017 on, banks were obliged to open bank accounts (even this had been problematic in some

resources, an overwhelmed system—but keep on trying via the jammed phone services!

Unable to solve this fundamental problem, Afrax then moves on to try to organize face-to-face services for "our youth". In a matter-of-fact way, he points out the discriminatory nature of online services—be that the fact that they are not available for everyone, or that they are "quite complicated" for people without mastery of Finnish—and then asks the official whether some personal service might be provided instead. Here, Afrax was carrying out smiling work again: when pointing out the problematic issues, his tone and expressions are emphatic in their non-aggressiveness; he almost hides these remarks in subordinate clauses, and does not even hint that he would consider the official in question in any way responsible for the discriminating practices of the organization she works for. Instead, he offers her a dignified way out by asking for alternative solutions. And he manages to milk several promises from the empathetic official, of providing personal advice to the youths Afrax works with, from writing CVs, to choice of vocation, to organizing internships. After all this, Afrax again makes a gesture that underlines his humble attitude: by exclaiming, "well, that was a proper package, I hope I could absorb at least some of it!" he shows that he acknowledges the expertise of the official, and positions himself modestly as someone with remarkably less knowledge. She responds by pointing out that it is sufficient that he knows who to ask—and gives him her direct phone number. With her promises and phone number in his back pocket, Afrax left the office quite satisfied: 'That was useful indeed,' he summarized as we walked away.

Professional status as a tool in advocacy

Useful indeed, at least for the young people who Afrax managed in this way to get into the realm of personal advice and services. This was not exactly what he was expected to do in the scope of the project, though it was not against the grain of the project either. Still, what he was expected to do, first and foremost, was encounter and advise the youth, not so much set up meetings with officials and try to manage things so that they would encounter the youths themselves. In the steering group meeting, it was not meetings with officials and their results that were presented when

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cases) and give access to online services to all immigrants with a residence permit in Finland. This did not entirely remove the problem of using online banking as a method of strong identification for official services, since this right was not included in definitive form in the new law. Afrax's question, which was acute when he made it (in 2014), is still worthwhile at the time of writing. (For more information on this, see for example a report by Finnish Ministry of the Interior 2012.)

Afrax's performance was evaluated, but his encounters with the immigrant youth and the results of these encounters. As mentioned in the previous chapter on Afrax (chapter 5.3), the figures reported from the last working month were quite astonishing, as Afrax had encountered nearly 150 young people. If this was what he was expected to accomplish during his part-time working week, not much time was left for disembarking among bureaucrats. His acts in that realm were thus necessarily few and limited, but he eagerly took the opportunity when it was presented itself.

In this way, Afrax was using his job as an opportunity to advocate racialized immigrant youth and carry out a few, small acts aimed at countering and deconstructing structures and practices that discriminate against them. I argue that Afrax's attempt to claim the position of professional was an essential part of this work. Instead of using the, readily available, opportunity to make strategic use of his background and ensuring his future employment by turning his "immigrant-ness" into his profession, he claims the position of a young professional in social work, which he in turn uses to counter discrimination. Afrax is both carving out space for himself as a budding professional, and, from that position, he concretely tries to carve out space for the youth he represents. Can I bring a group here to get advice, he asks, or where can this particular young person go in order to get support? Who to contact, and how, to ensure these young people are truly encountered and provided the services they need and are entitled to? This work speaks of Afrax's realization that racialized immigrant youth, however different backgrounds they might have, encounter the same discriminating structures and practices. Instead of drawing on an imagined cultural "sameness" (Lewis 2000, 91) with the "immigrant youth" as a source of professional qualification, Afrax's way of working among the bureaucrats seems to well from an understanding that they share *politically similar conditions* and from a need to advocate their rights.

The way Afrax himself described one central aspect of his work, that of being a "role model" to the other young people, strengthens this interpretation. As he brings out in the epilogue to chapter 5.3, he subsequently determined this part to be the most successful aspect of his work. He emphasized the encouragement that seeing him employed truly did provide—but, as he detailed to me, he would rather hire several mentors with as various backgrounds, races/ethnicities and career paths as possible. Thus, the essence of being a role model for him was not so much in giving the young people an example of a proper immigrant subject, who, with hard work, manages to integrate in Finnish society and become a "worker citizen" (Tokola et al. 2019, 22; 27). Rather, it was about countering discriminatory structures by his very presence: about being a living exception among the white Finnish social workers,

teachers, state and municipality officials and so on that the young people encounter in their daily lives. It was about proving that institutions of whiteness are not impermeable and eternal, and that it is possible to change them. "I think that there is a need for this, that one can see some role models, that there are also examples and diverse ones," Afrax said, but underlined that this alone is not enough to counter discrimination: "I would like to break the ice on both sides, in the educational system and in the attitudes of the young people."

6.3.3 Conclusion: double movement

In the above, I have shed light on how Afrax aspires to transform the subject position offered to him in his job as a peer mentor. He does this by performing a delicate double movement: First, he distances himself from his assumed peers and aligns instead with his new colleagues in order to claim presence as a young professional, not as an expert by experience. However, he uses this professional position to carve out space for other youths categorized as imaginary immigrants as well, to advocate their rights, speak for them with the credibility a professional status gives him, and to encourage them by being living proof of passing in an institution of whiteness. I argue that, while not agreeing to the position as culturally similar with other imaginary immigrant youth himself, he does recognize the political "sameness" of their situation, and constructs his relationship to them as their peer on this basis.

When I claim that Afrax's attempt to verge on a professional position is a strategic move that enables his advocacy work, I do not mean that this would be an intentional plan he would have figured out and simply put into practice. I understand it as an immediate strategy growing from the visceral knowledge he has about the relevance of discriminatory structures and practices in the political ordinary, and of sensory attentiveness to the needs of other immigrant background youth, with whom he shares his daily life. I see Afrax's double movement as a form of mundane political agency that comes into being in the process of his body communicating with other bodies through gestures and conduct. It springs from the capacities of the material body and does not entirely pass through conscious thought. But it does also grow out of and simultaneously feed a seedling political awareness he demonstrated during these early months of his career and that, in the wake of the "refugee crisis" soon to follow and the right-wing activities provoked by it, developed into a more elaborate and conscious understanding. The last chapter on Afrax (chapter 7.3) concentrates in more detail on this development and its outcomes.

6.4 Reflections

In the three previous subchapters, I have shown the ways Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax all react and act in the encounters scrutinized. Such gestures, facial expressions and ways of relating to people around them might seem unimportant at first glance, especially if one looks only at a single incident. But, interpreted in the larger context in which each situation takes place, they start to emerge as small, meaningful components of the mundane political strategies these young people deploy in their immediate everyday surroundings in order to shake the ground and alter their positioning, at least slightly. Some of these immediate strategies arise from the realm of corporeality, "before cognition begins" as Coole & Frost (2020, 20) put it, while some are also informed by conscious evaluation. For Afrax, my interpretation of his delicate double movement—of, on the one hand distancing himself from his peers in order to carve out a position as a budding young professional, and, on the other, using this position as a tool in advocating for the youths—was surprising, and, when discussing my analysis, his first reaction was not to take a stand on it: 'I cannot say offhand if this is true or not, I was in it and working and could not distance myself from it like that. Maybe this was what I was doing, but surely it was not something I consciously thought.' His second reaction, nevertheless, was to start a rant about how irritating it is that in all kinds of public bodies whose purpose is to ensure the representation of immigrants, it is always the same few people (in his city, a certain group of older men coming from some Middle Eastern or African countries), who are invited and thought to represent all "immigrants". 'They are so conservative,' he exclaimed, meaning the officials who both stuck with this model of representation and therefore always invited the same representatives, 'it is always the same faces you see sitting in different councils and working groups, it is totally frustrating!' What I meant with "ascribed representation" was thus pretty self-evident for him, and we didn't need to spend much time talking about my argument. Afrax was quick to move to the next (much more difficult) level: how and where to work in order to change this self-reproducing construction. In other words, while his immediate strategies were not consciously developed, they were grounded in an awareness of the power relations that structured his position as a peer mentor.

Manasse, on the other hand, found my argument partly obvious and partly disturbing. That he did not align with other members of the project in the sense of accepting being positioned similarly to them was, for him, something that he had not necessarily verbalized before but that he simply found factual: "I never bought that theme," he said, meaning accentuating the vulnerability of the participants. "I am

not in that category, I was there as an artist." But my observation that he also avoided aligning with the other band members physically, that he excluded them from his social space and avoided encounters with them other than on stage, was a surprise for him and an unpleasant one. His discomfort with my description regarding his behaviour did push me to reconsider my analysis, but I did not end up making fundamental changes, as I consider my interpretation valid. I understand his strategy as partly built on conscious reflection (as a decision to commit himself to the project but to position himself differently from the other participants) and partly emerging from the active matter of his body, the latter taking form as unintentional immediate bodily (re)actions and (non)communication through gestures and conduct in the moments in which encounters were about to take place.

For his part, Emanuel had probably most consciously reflected his position, and working with me provided him a further chance to ponder and verbalize the situation he found himself in at school. His case serves to point out how, in the flux of everyday life and the endless variations of its mundane encounters, he was often forced to act without a chance to stop to reflect the situation and to make conscious decisions. There are moments in which the strategy of letting things pass, of trying not to care about how he was positioned and seen enabled him to endure (Honkasalo 2013) and maintain his strength. But there are also moments in which he grasped the moment, and through his behaviour turned it around, into a joke or even into an encounter which works for equality and antiracism.

The theoretical point I would like to suggest on the basis of my analysis in this chapter is, thus, the following: as much as it is impossible to separate mind and body, it is equally impossible to draw a hard line between acts that spring from the agentive capacities of the material body and ones that spring from the capacities for reflection of a human being with complex subjectivity. Bodies whose cognitive capacities have either completely ceased to exist, as in the case of dead bodies (Stepputat 2014), or are seriously disabled, as in the case of dement, paralyzed and aphasic aging bodies (Vaittinen 2015), still have agentive capacities. This—together with my own empirical data—speaks for the definitive importance of taking into account this "type" of agency. However, in the case of bodies with cognitive capacities agency can, on this level, be informed to a lesser or a greater degree by conscious reflection, and vice versa. In this way, I understand the two as constantly bleeding into each other, and both as serious objects of research. Furthermore, I see anthropologically oriented ethnographic research a particularly apt method for researching the two and their intra-action, as capturing the "field of tension between what people *say* (they do) and

what they actually do" (Kvaale 2011, 242; emphasis original) is one of the classic tenets of anthropology.

As for the empirical observations that emerge from my analysis so far, I would like to underline the following. First, the differentiation that I have approached through specific encounters turns out to be not only recurrent, but, in a certain way, constant: it structures the daily lives of these young men, even though it takes different forms in different situations. Second, as the differentiating structures are constant, so is the alertness of the youths, which comes to the fore when one pays attention to their immediate strategies as manifestations of their mundane political agency. To paraphrase Coole & Frost (2010, 20), their "[...] bodies constantly communicate with other bodies through their gestures and conduct [...]", and ways of (re)acting to differentiation is one part of this ongoing embodied communication.

7 LONG-TERM PROJECTS: WORKING FOR ALTERNATIVE SUBJECT POSITIONS

In the following three subchapters, I turn to the second "type" of mundane political agency that, compellingly, caught my attention in the data concerning Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel. This is the "agency of projects" conceptualized by Ortner (2006, 144): "[...] intentions, purposes, and desires formulated in terms of culturally established 'projects'." These projects, as Ortner (ibid., 147) writes, grow out of the structures of people's lives, not solely, though centrally, the structures of inequality they encounter in everyday life. Emanuel, Manasse and Afrax all work intently in order to further their personal projects, very different as they are. Emanuel dedicates considerable amounts of energy to two things: to his studies and to weaving social networks and cultivating care and safe spaces. As I show in the following subchapter, both of these projects are linked to his desire to be seen as he sees himself: a "Big Man" and a "Black Man". Manasse's project is, on one hand, tangible, as he is furthering his career as a professional African background musician, but, on the other, it turns out to be fragile: how he represents himself and his project stands in contradiction with his actual life situation, a fact that he openly admits, but without giving an inch in his determination to proceed in the aspired direction. As for Afrax, he is not settled on so clear a project as Emanuel and Manasse, his project being about questioning the presumptions dispensed to him, searching for answers that satisfy his critical mind, and looking for political relatedness in a context of rising racism and national populism on one hand, and of emerging political activism around race on the other. These are themes widely relevant to refugee background youth in Finland, and I have thus let the subchapter outgrow the others to an extent.

None of these projects proceed without difficulty. The desire for something different that enables these young men to push through impasses, as Biehl & Locke (2010, 333–334) might put it, is closely linked with disillusionment and even despair when facing foreclosures. It is exactly this pushing through, against all odds, and carving out alternatives—even the smallest!—that enables defining a subjectivity that is not only about determinations but also about swerves and escapes (ibid., 333–334). None of these young men settle for the subject position they are offered and expected to embrace, but throw themselves into an attempt to carve out alternative

positions which enable them to do and be something else, or something more, or something different. None of them accept the differentiation built into the subject position offered to them as given, but question and challenge it by claiming recognition for themselves.

As in the previous chapters, I start each subchapter with a field description that crystallizes central elements of each young man's situation and project. In the cases of Emanuel and Manasse, these situations are directly linked to those of the previous chapters: Emanuel is still at school, and Manasse is talking to me about being on stage. In Afrax's case, I begin with an excerpt that does not follow directly from the previous chapters, as his project is not directly related to his work as a peer mentor. In his case, I proceed to the very personal realm of exploring oneself and one's place in a transnational and interconnected world. To underline the uncompromising way Afrax flings himself into this exploration, the title of the chapter indicates that Afrax is still at work, but this time with himself, not with his peers. The subchapters themselves show how the young men's projects outgrow the particular situations I start from. In this chapter, I move from analyzing the youths' bodily choreographies to examining their activities and ways of leading their lives over a longer time span. In order to do this, I lean both on my observations regarding the ways they navigate their lives, and on our discussions concerning their aims, aspirations, frustrations and confusions. In this way, I try to further illuminate how immediate situations and bodily strategies are intimately linked to, but still different from, long-term projects enabled by complex human subjectivity.

7.1 Big Man, Black Man: Emanuel at school and at home

It is a sunny April morning, and I have come to school a bit early. I sit in the hallway and Emanuel's classmates start to filter in one by one, some greeting me briefly, others not. This is in no way extraordinary: completely disregarding most of their classmates is quite common in this class—most of the students only greet members of their own cliques, and do that only in passing. They tend to use short expressions like *moi* (hi), passing on directly to some conversation, and basically never touching each other when exchanging greetings. I never see them shake hands or hug, even though many do touch each other on other occasions.

I am sitting on a bench behind a small table, facing the door. One of the boys who belongs to Emanuel's clique has sat opposite me, on another bench, on the other side of the table, his back towards the door. There are quite large windows in the door, and I can recognize

Emanuel's dark figure through them when he arrives. I look aside on purpose as if I didn't notice him, so that he would not feel compelled to greet me—even though he seems not to worry anymore whether the other students realize we know each other rather well or not, I do still try to avoid situations in which it might become obvious. From the corner of my eye, I see Emanuel enter the door, walk slowly towards and gently slap the shoulder of the boy sitting in front of me in friendly greeting. Somewhat surprised, the boy looks up, recognizes Emanuel behind him and returns the greeting. Emanuel approaches me, sits next to me on the same bench, and we start to chitchat about mundane things like how we have slept, how tired we feel, and why the teacher is late.

Was that merely yet another ordinary school morning, or did something just happen? I believe so—that Emanuel broke the greeting routines of the class, and that he did so consciously and purposefully. He had pointed out the boy he physically greeted as the one who had been most unfriendly and prejudiced towards him at the beginning of the school year. There were other students sitting in the hallway too, but Emanuel chose to give a warm personal greeting specifically to him, not all or some of the others as well. Moreover, this was one of the few times I saw Emanuel touch any of his classmates. Furthermore, that Emanuel greeted him, but then chose to come to sit next to me to chat—instead of next to him—seems to underline the performative nature of his act. It is almost as if he wanted to show or teach the boy the proper way to greet people in the morning.

And, indeed, in our subsequent discussion, which started with Emanuel expressing his gratitude to his classmates who, in the end, treat him well and help him out a lot, he suddenly changes tone and says to me: 'They have also learned a lot from me, when I behave in a friendly and caring fashion they learn to do so too.' And he describes to me how, after one of the classmates had to go through an operation, he was careful to ask them how the operation had gone and how they were feeling now. He explicitly frames this as an occasion of teaching his classmates how to treat each other well by example. In this way, he transforms his position in relation to his classmates from a less skilled person who needs and receives help from others into an equal partner in a reciprocal process of teaching and learning. In what follows, I will take a closer look at the subject position Emanuel is aiming to carve out with this and other acts of expressing and transmitting mutual care, and, further on in the chapter, by other means such as investing a tremendous amount of energy in his studies.

7.1.1 Greeting as a political act

Another time, when we were talking about Emanuel's summer job (he worked at the same place for several summers), and of how unfriendly he perceived the behaviour of the other workers to be, he told me how he persistently greets everybody amicably every morning in order to act as an example to them. One summer there had been another "foreigner", a Dutch person, who he had developed a daily habit of asking how they had slept in Finnish. The Dutch person soon learned the sentence, and, when they saw each other in the morning, they always called out loudly "*Huomenta! Nukuitko hyvin?*" ("Good morning! Did you sleep well?"). 'Little by little,' Emanuel told me, 'the Finns started to learn a bit and to say hello too'.

Unfriendly behaviour is something that Emanuel considers to be typical for "Finns". In his first months after gaining a residence permit and moving to his present home city, this trait was one of the factors that made him nearly desperate:

> You know, I had a real hard time earlier, seriously. [...] I thought that here, like, in Finland, I have not even one friend, I don't have friends, I was lonely. In a way, Finnish people are quiet, and I felt, like, why am I here, I should go someplace else. Just staying here in Finland, it is in vain.

Emanuel found Finnish people difficult to approach, and despite his persistent efforts (going, for example, to a youth evening a local Pentecostal church organizes every week) he did not get any Finnish friends during his first year in Finland. Then, he realized that not all of them want to keep their distance, but that there are other reasons for the difficulty of creating social relations:

> You know, one has to learn, to know how to get friends, what one has to do. Many foreigners think negatively of Finnish people, that it is not worth the effort to approach them, or that it is difficult to do so and become friends. They don't dare to go to speak to them. I was like that earlier, but then I noticed that we human beings are different from each other. There are a lot of Finnish people who would like to get friends and who are lonely, and who need someone to talk to, and to be with. But in a way they are shy and don't dare to approach or talk to other people.

For Emanuel, this realization has been a turning point in his life in Finland. It helped him to recognize his own social skills and, as he puts it, to become self-confident.

> But I am truly like, if I am interested about some person, I do have the kind of courage that I go to talk with them. And if one needs to ask for Facebook contact, I do ask. If they give me yeah, if don't give they don't, it is the same to me! Earlier I was like "damn, why did I do that!" But it doesn't matter anymore, I don't have to feel insulted.

> Emanuel crosses his hands behind his head and leans on the wall behind us. "Now I have like a wall on which I can lean on." And he taps his chest above the heart with his fist and says: "Now I am self-confident."

So he started to actively approach people, on social media forums, but in all kinds of places too—basically anywhere. His self-reliance grew to such a level that he started to talk to people and actually make friends at bus stops, grocery stores and gyms, a fact that he brings out boldly. His open-minded attitude towards other people and active work of building relationships has produced a social network consisting of different kinds of people with regard to age, ethnicity, religiousness, social class, gender and sexual orientation.

As, for example, Haikkola (2010, 231; see also 2012, 44–45) has noted, differentiating oneself positively from Finnish people as socially more extrovert and skilled is quite a common tactic among young people who are racialized as immigrants. I consider this to be an aspect in Emanuel's strategy too: his self-understanding as a socially skilled person is an integral building block of his self-respect in a situation in which it is constantly under attack due to his being categorized as an imaginary immigrant. There is a sense of pride in the way Emanuel perceives his difference in this regard. Also, I read his accentuated performances of "how to greet each other amicably" as political acts in the sense of making both his skills and the way he sees their effect on his subject position in relation to others explicit. He repeatedly calls himself by the English expression "Big Man", jokingly, yet in such a way that it becomes clear that he sees himself as mature and, in many ways, skilled in comparison to his classmates and to many other Finns, too.[41] However, I think Emanuel's acts go beyond simply differentiating oneself as "better" than "Finnish people" with regard to social skills. That he frames these situations as teaching and learning, and that he repeatedly brings out his empathy towards people left on their own, and the efforts he makes to build social networks, speaks of the deep meaning bringing people together has for him.

7.1.2 Weaving social networks, building safer spaces

> Emanuel shows me photos from a party he had taken some of his friends and siblings to who did not know each other before, and explains: 'Now they all got to know each other.' He forms a cup with his palms and brings his hands together into a circle to show how they had all come together and made friends with each other.

[41] This is his own expression and has no link with the big men of Melanesia, familiar from anthropological writing.

Emanuel dedicates a considerable amount of time and energy to taking care of his—and other people's—relationships. These issues get him talking pretty much every time we meet. He tells me long and complicated stories of his friends, siblings and acquaintances, explaining in detail who has done what, who has reacted to what in which way, and how he has tried to sort things out. He asks my opinion on this or that tricky situation—what should he say to this person, or how could he explain his position, or what kind of message to send in order not to give a wrong impression. I have a hard time keeping track, as there seem to be so many people, and they seem to be related to each other in so many ways, and, as the stories often meander, so that one explanation needs a second to clarify what the first was actually about. Emanuel often omits to mention people's names, to guard their privacy, and I am constantly lost in who was whose girlfriend or who had been upset for what reason, or who was Emanuel's friend at the beginning and what he thinks would be the best outcome of some complicated issue. The longer our friendship, the more he takes these issues up with me, sometimes calling me just in order to talk about his relationships and to ponder how to deal with some issue in a way that would be considerate and respectful towards all the parties involved.

For that is something he gives great emphasis to. The work he does in order to weave networks and teach social skills by example is not something that he does only for himself: for him, making efforts to create relationships between other people too seems to be a way of both expressing care and spreading caring. He organizes parties and little get togethers, each time pondering who to invite in order to bring the right kind of people together and support his lonelier friends in building relationships. He sometimes talks about people he has noticed to be lonely—at work or at school—and to whom he has started to talk just in order to show them that he respects and recognizes them.

This has made me think of Emanuel's action in the light of Forde's (forthcoming) idea of community-building as a political act: of the fundamental importance production of joy and togetherness has in making space for a politically potent community. Forde's work concerns the efforts of community activists in Beetham, an area inhabited by urban poor in Trinidad. Her understanding of the voluntary work done by the women of Beetham, not organized under an NGO or in any other official way, gives emphasis to the affective side of community building. This work enables, as Forde (ibid.) writes, "[...] the slow emergence of familiarity and trust between people [...]. It was work against fear, distrust and anti-social behavior, work that sought to build people's self-esteem and relieve them of the need to constantly be on the defensive."

The work Emanuel does, both in contingent social spaces—such as at school or at work—and in weaving a social network around himself can be understood from this perspective. Spreading friendly and caring behaviour via his own example among class and workmates is a way of diminishing prejudices between people and of building trust, and hence a method of slowly cultivating a general, open-minded attitude towards people from different backgrounds. Actively approaching people in order to befriend them, bringing one's friends and relatives together so that they will "all get to know each other", and dedicating oneself to fostering their relationships is, on the other hand, an effort to build a safe space for oneself and others. In line with classic black feminist thinker Collins (2000 [1990]), Forde (forthcoming) underlines the political significance of this kind of long-term community building; it provides an opportunity for the people involved "[...] to think about themselves and their lives [...]", to freely reflect both one's self, public matters, and the relations of the two.

Emanuel's work has, thus, two directions. Safe spaces are by definition exclusive (Forde forthcoming; see also Collins 2000, 110–111); to be able to freely foster self-inspection, dreaming, questioning and critiquing, a space excluded from those in structurally hegemonic positions is necessary. This can mean different things in different contexts: for African-American women it has meant the inclusion of black women and the exclusion of others (Collins 2000, 111), while in the Beethamian context Forde (forthcoming) describes it also means the exclusion of representatives of the middle and upper classes as well as non-Beethamians. Emanuel's safe spaces are defined differently, perhaps in a more fluctuating manner. His network consists of people from different kinds of backgrounds and situations, and he ponders individually about the appropriate constellation of each get together he initiates in order to guarantee it is safe enough for each participant. Nevertheless, both his network as a whole and each constellation in particular are based on excluding people who put him or some of his friends and siblings on the defensive. While the criteria of excluding and including people vary in different situations, one criteria is never compromised: Emanuel does not tolerate racism, use of the n-word, or any other sign of prejudice against people of colour or immigrants in his network. In this sense, his work of building socialities turns inward, withdrawing from a potentially conflictual zone of general social interaction.

On the other hand, his work also reaches beyond the safe spaces he actively builds. In his everyday surroundings at school and work he does not withdraw completely from social interaction with people who he perceives to be prejudiced. By treating these people in a caring way, or by giving them other examples of friendly

and considerate behaviour, he seeks to diminish prejudices between people and develop these social environments into more trusting and caring communities. Part and parcel of this work is showing where the limits of acceptable behaviour lie: Emanuel is not shy in intervening in discussions or situations he considers racist, nor in defending himself if treated unwell. In this sense his work against fear, distrust and discrimination is also directed towards society at large.

These two directions—withdrawing, or turning inwards, and reaching out—are also reflected in physical space and the way Emanuel inhabits it. While he claims that everyday racism in public space is not a problem for him as he has learned to put up with it, in practice it does have the effect of circumscribing the territory that he spends time in. He has, for example, stopped going to bars in order to avoid serious trouble and bar fights, which, in his experience, are not uncommon parts of nightlife, especially if he, as a person of colour, dances in a club with a white woman, for example. But it is not only outright trouble that works to circumscribe his territory:

> I have met Emanuel in the centre of the city and we decide to go to a nearby café-bar. It is a place I like and go to frequently, and I suggest it as I find the place really relaxing and easy to be in—comfortable—and I know that the usual crowd is the kind that does not tolerate racist behaviour. But when we enter the café I notice that the place is quite full, and that all the other people in it are white. All of them. I am suddenly awkwardly aware of the sea of whiteness (Ahmed 2006, 135) that surrounds us. Only now I realize that the experience of safety and comfort is not necessarily something that we will share in this place.

I think Emanuel was aware of it too: as we sat at a table talking, he kept glancing around and behind his back in a state of constant vigilance, not quite relaxing during the whole time we spent in the café. After this, I decided it should always be Emanuel who chooses the places in which we meet. We never went back to that café. Sometimes we meet in some other cafés that he feels more comfortable in, which basically means cafés in big department stores that are frequented with all kinds of people doing their shopping—also people of colour. But, whenever possible, we meet at home—either mine, or, if he could choose freely, in his own home.

Emanuel's bearing changes when he is at home. When he gets home, he immediately changes into jogging pants and a sleeveless or a T-shirt, in wintertime also woolen socks. He acts in a relaxed fashion, and hosting a guest seems to come to him naturally. It is quite clear that, of all the places I have seen him, this is where he feels most comfortable and safest. One might think that this is obvious—it is his home—but if one considers other young people who have come to Finland as unaccompanied minors, come of age and moved out from the family group home,

it is not. Denis and Adel, the other two young men from the same family group home with whom I worked and whose homes I also visited several times, both spoke of a certain discomfort, even fear, related to their homes. Adel often asked one of his two friends to come over, or went to their places, as he was afraid to stay in, and especially to sleep alone in, his flat. Denis, on the other hand, spoke of boredom and loneliness, of missing his lost family in the most painful way when alone at home. Neither one really wanted to stay at home, and went out simply to hang around and spend time in the city centre. And, while both had quite nice flats with all the basic necessities and both kept them tidy, they had not put too much effort into decorating them. There was a sense of temporariness in both of their homes instead of the finished interior and feeling of calm of Emanuel's home.

It is a beautiful place indeed, his home. It is located in a suburb, but not far from the city centre, only about a ten-minute bus ride from the central square. The suburb is small, between a major road and a small nature reserve, and comprises a few blocks of flats, a grocery store, a bar, a gym and a couple of other shops. Emanuel's home is a small flat in a student apartment building, and he has put a lot of time and energy into decorating it. There are long curtains, always carefully closed, in front of the windows, soft rugs, and, in the living room, a big sofa covered with pillows and blankets, carefully arranged artificial flowers and seashells, copies of a few selected paintings hanging on the walls, and always soft lighting. In the tiny bedroom there is a double bed, always made, and a small desk for working. The kitchen is combined with the living room and comprises a small but inclusive working surface in one corner of the room with a dining table and four chairs next to it. Everything is always clean and orderly, the air in the apartment warm and fresh, and it is always quiet, the only sound some mellow pop music playing on the stereo. We usually sit at the dining table, as we are often studying together, and he takes care to offer me tea and small snacks, or sometimes cooks a full meal for both of us. I like to visit him: they are quiet, comfortable and somehow very soft surroundings, which make me feel relaxed and safe.

It is on the couch of Emanuel's living room where we have the conversation about getting friends, and where he leans his head against the wall, explaining how he has gained self-confidence. And it is at a table of his school's cafeteria that he suddenly starts to reflect on his experience of living in Finland: 'Here, in Finland,' Emanuel says, 'I am all the time like this, ready. I have to be prepared all the time.' The beautiful peace of his home and the caring network of friendships form a bubble of safety, an important space of rest and gaining strength that he has built—not only

for himself but also for those closest to him—in an environment that puts him constantly on the defensive.

7.1.3 Claiming blackness

Collins (2000, 101) writes of safe spaces that "[t]hese spaces are not only safe—they form prime locations for resisting objectification as the Other." The political significance of safe spaces is that they enable "[...] the struggle to replace controlling images with self-defined knowledge [...]," that is, advancing empowerment through self-definition (ibid., 100–101). The process of self-definition is also a journey towards an understanding of how one's personal life has been shaped by intersecting oppressions of, for example, race, gender and class. In this way, independent self-definitions can become foundational for political standpoints. (Ibid., 111–114.) In public non-safe spaces Emanuel is, as he says, "all the time prepared", always on the defensive. But he is not *only* that:

> In my favorite café, surrounded by the sea of whiteness, we walk to the counter to make our orders. Emanuel asks for tea. The bartender goes through the different sorts (there is black, green and white tea, maybe even some more) and asks which he would like to have. Emanuel looks him in the eyes and answers fast: "Black. Of course, as I am black." While saying this, he grips the back of his left hand, pulling his skin outward with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand.

I couldn't help noticing the resemblance of his gesture with Denis's (see the beginning of chapter 5.1), who also gripped the skin of his hand when talking about his difference from his classmates. So I concluded that Emanuel was uncomfortable because of being the only person of colour in the space, and that his spelled-out explanation for ordering black tea was a sign of that discomfort and spoke of a need to defend himself in advance. I took the issue up with Emanuel a few weeks later when discussing experiences of racism and their effect on his life. He contested my interpretation of the situation and his behaviour, telling me that he did not feel the need to defend himself, nor had he felt uncomfortable because of his skin colour. 'I said so [when ordering black tea] because I am proud of my skin colour, I am proud that I am black.' For him, then, it was an act of *claiming blackness* upfront, while I had interpreted it more in the vein of defending his right to dwell in the white space *despite* his skin colour. Thus, while Emanuel rejects the subject position of an imaginary immigrant (as I have shown in the previous chapters on him), he openly

self-identifies as black. Sometimes he even refers to himself as a "Black Man", either in English or in Finnish [*Musta Mies*].

Of my research companions, he is the only one who clearly and outspokenly claims blackness. At the same time, he is also the one who makes the most references to racism and critical comments on the different categorizations of immigrants—sometimes very seriously, but all the more often jokingly. When I walk with him on a rainy day, huddled close to each other under an umbrella and a passing car splashes dirty water all over us, he makes an immediate conclusion that the driver did it on purpose because he got pissed off seeing a white woman together with a black man. But then, in a salad bar we sometimes eat together at, he jokes about the waiter being a racist, as there happens only to be one piece of egg in his salad, while I have two. Or, we might be having an upsetting conversation regarding claims that immigrant background non-white men are more often guilty of rape than Western white men, when, in a matter of seconds, he would turn it into a provocative joke, whispering loudly in my ear to ask what I would do if some of the people surrounding us came to tell me to beware as I was with an African guy who might do anything to me.

Emanuel compares living in Finland to his experiences of France, where he does not feel the need to be "prepared all the time" as he is not hypervisible there in the sense he is in the Finnish white landscape. In Finland he feels he is continually "overdetermined from without", as Fanon (2008 [1952], 85; 87; emphasis original) writes in his classic *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> I wanted to be a man, nothing but a man. [...] And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro!

This imposition of difference, at the heart of racial ascription, writes Fassin (2011, 422; 425), is a form of subjection, a symbolic subordination. But, as he underlines, racial ascription and racial recognition—claiming blackness, for example—work in dialectical form: recognition can become an act of liberation, as the racialized subject identifies with other victims of discrimination, forming a collective political identity. As Fassin (2011, 425) writes, this kind of tension between subjection and subjectivation is at the heart of processes of racialization. In Emanuel's everyday life it is very present. His continuous reflection on racial ascription and racism on one hand, and acts of claiming blackness on the other, speak of a profound tension between the violence and subjugation inherent in others' ascription of him as a racial

and immigrant Other and the liberating or empowering aspect of his self-recognition as black. Being present in public spaces forces Emanuel to repeatedly encounter the violence of racial ascription, but the safe spaces he has tenaciously built enable his struggle to resist his "over-determination from without" and to construct alternative self-definition and self-valuation as a "Black Man".

This is not self-evident in the Finnish context. As Rastas (2019, 357–359), for example, notes, in the Nordic countries "[...] racism as a social fact and the meanings of race for individuals and communities were avoided as topics of discussion for a long time [...]." A naïve self-image of the nation as especially good in this regard, and hence unable to be racist, has been typical of all Nordic countries, which has led to denials of racism and consequently to a lack of "[...] vocabulary for discussions on racialized identities and racialized social relations." However, as Rastas (ibid., 367–368) underlines, social and cultural transformation is currently taking place, as people of colour have increasingly started to question the assumed whiteness of Nordic nations, to speak about themselves as racialized subjects, and to claim presence as citizens in the countries in which they live. While previously the critical voices of immigrant and diaspora communities have remained faint and the participation of non-white people in public discussions nearly absent, "[...] the rapidly growing new generation of non-white people born and/or growing up in the white landscape of the Nordic countries are in a better position to speak about and fight for their rights as racialized subjects [...]." They have both started to use racial(ized) terms of themselves and to "[...] search for and create forums and communities of people with whom they can negotiate their multiple identifications and share their experiences of racism and of living surrounded by normative whiteness."

Emanuel's work in building safe spaces and acts of publicly claiming blackness are parts of this current, furthering social and cultural transformation, and making "[...] race as a powerful social category visible in Nordic countries" (Rastas 2019, 372). Emanuel arrived in Finland in the beginning of 2010s, at a moment when this change was right about to start but was not yet visible.[42] He moved to his present home city in 2013, and started, as I have described, building a social network from scratch. There were few, if any, ready communities based on racial identification that he could have joined, but he persistently started to build his own. To be sure, it is not a network that would primarily be based on racial identification and as such it is

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[42] Some important benchmarks are Ali Jahangiri's and Abdirahman Hussein's radio program *Ali ja Husu* from 2013–2016, Koko Hubara's blog *Ruskeat tytöt* ("Brown Girls"), which she initiated in 2015, and the TV show *Mamu-Suomi-Mamu* ("Immigrant-Finnish-Immigrant") by the racialized rappers Musta Barbaari and Prinssi Jusuf ("Black Barbarian" and "Prince Jusuf", see more in chapter 7.2) from 2015–2016.

not quite comparable with the communities Rastas (ibid.) writes about, but nevertheless it provides Emanuel and some of his intimates a safe space in which they can "resist objectification as the Other", "construct independent self-definitions" (Collins 2000, 101), and "negotiate their multiple identities" (Rastas 2019, 372).

I am in awe of the resourcefulness and strength Emanuel's work speaks of. As Howarth (2002, 251), for example, writes, young people who belong to stigmatized communities do not necessarily have the "representational tools or social capital to acknowledge stigma, let alone develop oppositional representations." Based on her research among young people growing up in Brixton (London), Howarth (ibid., 256) argues that these resources are key to success in the struggle for recognition and assertive, proud identities, and that they emerge from social relationships and institutional cultures. "The school and the family, in particular," Howarth (ibid., 251) writes, "play a crucial role in encouraging critical reflection and positive self-esteem." In Emanuel's case, he has had neither the support of his family, nor the opportunity to go to a school that, like the ones Howarth (ibid., 254) describes as supporting young people's self-valuation, has "[...] the social capital and the commitment to challenge institutional prejudice and encourage self-confidence and cultural awareness [...]." Instead, Emanuel has himself weaved a network that provides him, and others as well, the "love and support of others" that Howarth (ibid., 256) recognizes as key to challenging dominant representations and developing oppositional ones.

7.1.4 Intellectual labour: striving for higher education

Weaving social networks and working for caring social relationships form one major project in Emanuel's life. Alongside this, there is another major task, that of gaining education. As I have already brought out, Emanuel is highly ambitious. The double degree he is struggling to get through is but one part of his larger plan, the ultimate aim of which is to become a doctor. He has been working determinedly for this plan ever since he got his residence permit in Finland and managed to pull himself through the first difficult months. First, he completed the compressed curriculum of basic education with considerable success—he did it faster than many others and graduated with relatively good grades. Then he applied for, and was admitted to, the double degree program, from which he should graduate with both a baccalaureate and as a practical nurse. The next step of the plan is to acquire work experience and

apply to a university of applied sciences to become a registered nurse. And after that, at some point in the future, he plans to apply to the faculty of medicine in some university in order to take his plan to its final goal.

Hence, the weight Emanuel puts on his performance at school is not "only" about gaining recognition in the eyes of his classmates (an aspect I discussed in the previous chapter on Emanuel). It is a much larger project aimed at claiming recognition in society at large and at crafting a life he finds worthwhile. He has decided to dedicate several years of his life to this project, which, in his daily life, keeps him occupied literally day and night.

> It is around seven p.m. on a Sunday evening when I ring Emanuel's doorbell in order to study together. As every Sunday, he has been at church and has enjoyed his time there, but otherwise says he is stressed about an exam he has to take the next day. I ask what it is about, and Emanuel tells me it is about sicknesses and how to medicate them. Together, we try to remember the exact name of the course; all the titles are long, abstract descriptions that everybody has difficulty remembering. We come up with "Careful and Systematical Care Work and Something Something." In practice, the exam is about chronic diseases typical in Finland. Emanuel has a course book on his table, and together we check which parts he is supposed to study for the exam and which of them he has already revised by himself (very little, it turns out). I ask about the Power Point slides I remember the teacher using during classes. Emanuel hadn't realized he should rehearse them, too, and starts to look for them on his computer. This takes quite a while, as he first has to log into the school's electronic communication system to find the messages from the teacher with the links to the slides, at which point it emerges that he also has to log in his Outlook account, the login details of which he cannot remember. He asks for them via WhatsApp from two classmates, and luckily one of them replies quickly and we can log in and download the slides.
>
> There are fifteen sets of slides. I look at the lot and tell Emanuel he has two choices: either he can read through all of the slides very quickly, or we can try to choose the most important ones and he can study them more carefully. He opts for the latter, and we get to work. First, I glance through one set of slides, trying to pick out the principal ones, and then we read these together while I try simultaneously to check the course book to see if there is something there that should also be taken into account. In this way, we go through different kinds of cancers, epilepsy, sensory impairments and sense organ diseases. The jargon is difficult and not familiar to Emanuel, even though he has sat punctually in classes through the whole course. He reads slowly and we check words unfamiliar to him from a dictionary, or I try to explain their meaning as best I can. He should, for example, not only know what glaucoma or ocular hypertension [*silmänpainetauti*] is, but also remember that there are two types of medication for it, one of which reduces the amount of aqueous humor [*kammioneste*] while the other increases drainage [*ulosvirtaus*]. I try to explain, and to simplify, these sentences, to pick out the most important things, and, after each set of slides, to make a quick summary of the main points. After studying fervently for five hours I realize it is midnight and that I am exhausted and should go to sleep.

> Despite the hours we have spent we are far from covering all the slides. Emanuel decides he will study until one a.m. and then leave the rest and get some sleep, for better or worse. Later, it turns out that it was for worse: he did not pass the exam and had to take it again, and dedicate long hours to studying for it before he succeeded.

Now, it is perhaps tempting to say that one should not leave revising for an exam until the night before. Only that Emanuel didn't: he had done his best to participate in the course and to study for the exam as much as he was able to. The simple fact is that studying is several times slower for him than for his classmates, who have much better mastery of Finnish. It is slower in two ways: First, understanding and finding out simple practicalities—such as the names of the courses, the locations of the slides, the right classrooms and the schedule of the classes, which, for some obscure reason, changes every week and is only available in electronic form via the school's intranet, etc.—often only mentioned in passing during classes, and which he therefore misses, takes its time. And, second, the lectures, slides and course books are full of words and expressions unfamiliar to him. Some of these, of course, are not fully understood by his classmates either, but often they have at least some sort of clue what the concept is about, as they are at least partly familiar with them—like "metabolism" [*aineenvaihdunta*], for example, a word the exact meaning of which few probably could explain very precisely, but all still roughly know what it refers to, while, for Emanuel, the whole sentence in which these kinds of words are used remains obscure. The issue is all the more pressing as the teachers do not use plain language (not to speak of easy language) in their teaching and, furthermore, they often use slightly different terms when speaking than those used on their slides. For example, in a lecture regarding different food intolerances and allergies, the teacher speaks of coagulable fiber [*hyytelöityvä kuitu*], while on the slides she has written gelling fiber [*geeliytyvä kuitu*]. This makes listening to the teacher, reading the slides, taking everything in while writing notes simultaneously mission impossible for Emanuel. In the end, he stops writing notes and takes photos of the slides instead, with the intention of going through them later in order to understand them. Which, of course, takes a lot of time—again.

It is not that all this is a piece of cake for the other students either. After a lecture on cardiovascular diseases, for example, I asked Emanuel and one of the boys he was with in the corridor what and where exactly the coronary artery [*sepelvaltimo*] is, a term that had cropped up several times during the lecture and which I had realized that I didn't really know despite often hearing it used. Both of the young men shrugged; neither knew. 'Maybe we will know in three years [when they finish school]', the other commented in a cynical tone. So, I asked Emanuel, during one of

our conversations about his studies, how the other students manage, as it seems to be tough at times for them too. Emanuel had a ready answer: 'They all have parents who help them. For example [one student's] mother has studied mathematics and she helps her do her maths, everybody has someone who always helps them. I don't.'

This is not altogether true, though. He does have people around him who help him. He receives study help from his former social workers, from the staff of the family group home and the employees of the unit that supports the former residents of the family group home, for example. Then there is me, of course, though my help has been limited to few months here and there, when it has been an integral part of my fieldwork, either with AK or for my own research. In addition, I have twice matched him with volunteers who tutor immigrant youth—once to study English and once to study maths. But, of course, this is not at all the same thing as receiving steady support from one's parents at home. First of all, having a bunch of people willing to help him has required a lot of work in terms of networking, as I described in the previous section. In addition, Emanuel always has to ask for help, to organize the meetings, and to travel around the city to meet the people willing to help him. And, when something unexpected comes up, he has to start calling around to find someone who can help him urgently—I have received such calls quite frequently, and also frequently had to tell him I was unable to help, in which case he has politely said that it is no problem, he will ask this or that person instead. All this requires time, energy, and willpower.

I once took this issue up with Afrax, too, who had already graduated as a youth worker and was working as one. He confirmed Emanuel's experience of multiple workloads in comparison with students of Finnish background: especially remote assignments, which each student was supposed to do independently, had taken hours, and made him feel that he had to work "ten times as much as the others"—and, for some students, Afrax claimed, their parents did basically all the work. Afrax could not expect any help from his mother, who is illiterate, or from his father, who was ill and with whom his relationship was somewhat difficult.

Research on the educational performance of immigrant background youth backs up Emanuel's and Afrax's arguments: although there is evidence from both Europe and North America that they are often at an educational disadvantage compared to the majority population (Kilpi-Jakonen 2011, 78), this can be explained to a large extent by their lower family resources (ibid., 92). Family resources refers to monetary resources and parents' educational backgrounds, but importantly also to their ability to assist their children's studies (ibid., 81). In her research, Kilpi-Jakonen (2011, 94) found that having a parent/s who are not in the labour force has a significant

negative effect on the educational performance of their children. This, Kilpi-Jakonen (ibid., 81) writes, is due to the effect employment has on the linguistic abilities and social capital of immigrant parents. Further, immigrant background students who live alone, without parents, are most likely to drop out of school (ibid., 87).

Kilpi-Jakonen's research concentrated on the "second generation", by which she refers to children born to immigrant parents in Finland and to children who have migrated to Finland with their parents more than nine years before finishing comprehensive school (ibid., 83). In the data, some students who live alone were included, but children/young people who arrived in Finland as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers were not. There is very little research regarding the educational pathways of unaccompanied minors in general (Oppedal et al. 2017, 146), and, to my knowledge, nothing has been published with regard to Finland specifically. Recently, some research on the subject has been conducted in the scope of a large research project, *Coming of Age in Exile*, which investigates inequalities in education, on the labour market and in health services that young refugees encounter in four Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (Smith Jervelund et al. 2020). According to this study, Finland and Denmark take the wooden spoon as the countries in which refugee children have the lowest educational achievements (ibid., 2). The part of this research project conducted in Finland regarding education (Malin & Kilpi-Jakonen 2019) is a quantitative register study and its results concerning unaccompanied minors in particular (instead of all refugee and/or immigrant youth) have not been published (Malin 2019). In Norway, some ethnographically oriented research has been conducted on the educational paths of unaccompanied minors who have been granted asylum and residence (e.g. de Wal Pastoor 2017; Oppedal et al. 2017). Oppedal et al. studied the educational development and vocational choices of unaccompanied minors, finding that, for these young people, the "[...] number one priority seemed to be to get an education and start providing for themselves economically, irrespective of age, how long they have been resettled, or their everyday psychosocial functioning." Many had aspirations to gain higher education, but made assessments on their "realistic choices" and were aware of their difficult situations, such as past traumas, lack of sufficient social support networks, language barriers, and discrimination. "In effect, most of them chose 'safe' vocational paths toward earning a living rather than complex roads that led to the realization of their own long-term aspirations." (Ibid., 155–157.)

Oppedal et al. (2017, 157) conclude that one of the important findings of their research is that there is a considerable lack of social support resources available to the youths in question. While the findings of their research cannot be assumed to

hold in the case of Finland too, Emanuel's reflections and strategies do seem to follow a similar pattern. As with the youths Oppedal et al. (2017, 157) studied, he too has to "[...] balance between committing to their own long-term aspirations, and adapting in accordance with their realistic opportunities [...]". Unlike the majority of the youths in Oppedal et al.'s research, Emanuel is holding on, trying to realize his aspirations, and in order to achieve his goals has worked out a very long-term but still realistic plan. He also makes great efforts to patch over the major disadvantages he has: he tirelessly weaves social networks that can, at least to some extent, compensate for the support of parents and other adults that unaccompanied minors tend to lack (ibid., 157); he uses every opportunity to develop his language skills, and simply works hard, a lot, late, and all year round. In this regard, his mode of action is firmly in line with Oppedal et al.'s (ibid., 155) conclusion regarding the resilience of unaccompanied minors: "They displayed impressive willpower to make it through the school system [...]."

And yet, sometimes impressive willpower didn't seem to be enough and all Emanuel's efforts therefore to be in vain. In the conversation around the support from parents that the others have, and he doesn't, he continued: 'And on the other hand, if someone helps me out in some assignment, then the teachers notice that the language is better and they don't believe that I have written it myself and give a worse grade because of that.' And I immediately remember an essay that I helped him with some months earlier, in which he scored 7 (scale from 4 to 10), as the teacher didn't believe that Emanuel had done it himself. He had written it in Portuguese, and we translated it and wrote the Finnish version together. Emanuel is confused: why couldn't he ask for help writing assignments, as it is exactly that kind of process that helps him learn the language? And he finds this quite unfair, as, in the case of native Finnish speakers, the teachers won't notice anything, even though the parents may have written the whole assignment for their child. As the weeks go by Emanuel grows more and more tired and frustrated:

> On a warm and sunny afternoon in May we leave school together and walk towards the centre of the city. 'What are you going to do now,' I inquire, and Emanuel answers: 'I'll just go home and study. My life!' He sighs. Then he tells me that [a worker from the aftercare] had called him and said that they were not able to help him studying for an exam as they had promised earlier, and now he has to figure out what to do about it. I ask him what he is planning to study today, and he first says probably maths and then asks when we can study together, as he needs help in that too. I have a tight schedule and tell him that I can make it today but probably not on any other day, to which he says that it suits him well. I feel exhausted after the day at school and the thought of continuing with the studies feels overwhelming, so I tell Emanuel I need to have some rest and a proper meal before we start to work, and we agree to meet

> at my place later in the afternoon. He arrives as agreed, and we study together for a couple of hours.

I have written in the reflection part of my field notes about that day: "The workload. My fatigue in front of it, which feels like a necessary thing to experience in order to understand even a bit how much work Emanuel has to carry out." There were moments when I thought it simply impossible for him to make it, and I gently proposed that he could drop the double degree plan and concentrate on one of the degrees only. He did not even consider this, though, but continued studying with dogged determination.

Familial trajectories: the weight of separation, loss, and turmoil

This was the situation when I was conducting fieldwork in Emanuel's school, that is, towards the end of his first year in secondary education. Then, his life situation was as stable as it can be for someone with his background: he had been living on his own for couple of years already and was used to taking care of his home and paperwork, his siblings had also been in Finland for a couple of years and were not a constant cause of worry for him anymore, and his economic situation was tolerable—what money he had was scarce and he made it through the last days of each month basically by eating oatmeal porridge, but he was not in debt and could just about make ends meet.

A bit less than a year later, right when Emanuel was supposed to take his first baccalaureate exams, things changed.[43] First, the reverend of their congregation died suddenly, which was a big shock for all the members, not least for Emanuel and his siblings, for whom the church had been an important source of strength and joy. Also, Emanuel felt responsible of taking care of the reverend's wife, who was now widowed, confused and lonely. What had been a factor supporting Emanuel before now turned into a complicated situation that drained his energy and caused him deep sorrow and feelings of insufficiency. But this was only the beginning.

> I meet Emanuel after being away from the city for quite a while. In his WhatsApp messages he has hinted that "things have happened", but not explained what. Now, we go to have salad at our regular place. He eats really quickly and I feel he looks somehow different, but I cannot figure out how—maybe it is just that he looks a bit older, I think. When I ask how he is, he again says that things have happened. 'First,' he starts, 'there was the thing with our reverend.' He tells me the whole story and

[43] In Finland, one can either take them all at a once, or over a maximum of three phases during one and a half years, and Emanuel had decided to do the latter—again, a very realistic plan.

how they had had a commemoration with the congregation, and how terrible that was. 'Everybody was crying,' Emanuel says, 'the reverend's wife, everybody. I know that men should not cry, but I couldn't help it, I had to cry.'

'Then,' Emanuel continues, 'then there was this case with my mother. My mother was found.' I nearly fall off the chair I am sitting on; the news knocks me flat. I had always been told that his parents were most likely dead. The only person who still believed that they might be alive was Emanuel himself. And now his mother reappears! It turns out that she was found about two months ago. She is now staying with relatives and friends. She is not well. Emanuel says that she changes topics abruptly when he talks with her: she must have a lot of trauma. She is not well physically either. The greatest worry for Emanuel is that she has very high blood pressure despite seeing a doctor and getting medication. He and his siblings had immediately sent 400 euros for her relatives to take care of her. But she is not getting better. While we sit and talk about this, a message arrives from her relatives: her blood pressure is too high again. 'I don't like this,' Emanuel says, 'if only she didn't have this problem we could take things easy and see what is the best solution, but now I am so afraid. Now that I know she is alive and found, I don't want her to… Also our reverend died because of high blood pressure, it is a really bad thing, I know it from school too.'

While he talks about his mom he starts to finger his hair. It is cut really short, but on the top of his head there are the beginnings of curls. He tugs and pulls at them. He does not look me in the eyes but faces slightly away, towards the escalators that are behind my left shoulder. Normally, his eye contact lasts so long that I sometimes turn my eyes away, feeling a little strange about the intimacy. Now he barely glimpses at me. He starts to pull his hair with both of his hands and lowers his face towards the table while doing it. He runs his hands from his forehead towards the back of his head, one after the other, pulling at his hair at the back of his head. He continues for a really long time. I notice a spot on his forehead where the hair seems thinner than in other areas and wonder if this is due to this constant tugging. Finally, he lifts his head, eyes wet with tears. I ask if I can hug him, but he laughs a little awkwardly, so I ask if it is better if I start to make jokes. He laughs again. I lean forward and stroke his hand across the table. He looks away, fighting back the tears. Men are not supposed to cry, I remember.

Unsurprisingly, Emanuel's first baccalaureate exams did not go well. He is unhappy with his Finnish exam because he didn't have time to finish it properly. Also, he tells me how he was fully prepared, with good sandwiches and everything, to take the French exam, but it turned out that his name was not on the list—first, he was in the wrong place, and, when he finally found the right place, he was not enrolled at all. So he could not do it. All in all, he tells me, he has been tired and hasn't really done well at school—he got a 5, for example, on the last Finnish course. One can hardly blame him, but the teachers do not know what is going on in his life, and some of them make it quite clear that he should try harder. I ask him how he bears with the situation. Emanuel answers by telling me about the time he was waiting for the

decision regarding the application process for family reunification with his siblings, and how hard that was.

> ‘And now you have to go that through once again, how tough is that,’ I say. He nods in agreement, looking at the table. I ask who he calls if he feels he can’t cope. He says, a little jokingly, that he calls me. I say that I will be in Copenhagen the whole of next month (and he will go to France for an exchange the following month), so who can he call? He looks at the table again, saying that he feels that he has already tired his friends, it is not nice to meet someone who is so anxious. ‘It is good to make jokes and laugh, not to be depressed all the time.’ And soon he changes the topic back to the baccalaureate exams, explaining how their maths teacher had advised them in a funny way to do the easy tasks first, and in this way “pocket” points. He makes a long joke out of that, retelling parts of it several times, showing with his hands how the teacher slapped the back of their hand against their palm every time they talked about pocketing points. I laugh with him. He speaks fast and makes more language mistakes than usual. His laughter is tense. He keeps on shifting posture on his chair, almost trembling. I continue the joke, we laugh together.

Emanuel’s story is, of course, unique. But so are the stories of each of my research participants, and I do not feel capable of evaluating whose hardships have been, or are, the toughest. All the young men who appear on the pages of this dissertation have their own story. Denis’s family is lost. Adel knows where his is, but the knowledge fills him with guilt and worry: ‘I want them to get out of that hell.’ Afrax’s and Manasse’s families are dispersed, some in Finland and others somewhere else, some of them in asylum limbo in Europe or its outskirts. Some are dead.[44]

I cannot but agree with Oppedal et al. (2017, 155) that pulling through the school system and building a social network here up North requires “impressive willpower” from these young people. Not all of them have the stamina and other resources this requires, and, again, I cannot but agree with Oppedal et al. (2017, 157) that this is not due to lack of effort on the part of the young people themselves, but to lack of social support resources and long-lasting relationships with supporting adults. Consider the first time I met Adel alone. He had asked me to help him with his maths, and, due to problematic timetables, we ended up meeting up at his driving school, where we were allowed to use a room to study together.

[44] This is one of the parts of this research where I have had to balance the need to bring out relevant details and the need to protect my research companion’s privacy and anonymity carefully. Their family histories and ties arouse many questions that are of great interest from the perspective of research (such as the background and situation of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers or the significance of transnational ties), but I have to keep the information I reveal about them to a minimum. This is in line with the youths’ express wishes.

> We start to go through the assignments. As such they do not seem to be so very difficult for him, it is more the Finnish that causes him trouble. Concentrating is the biggest problem: his thoughts wander constantly to his family, and he tells me long stories of their life together and apart.
>
> Adel: 'I have been searching for a job so much. [...] This driving school now, it costs a lot, and I have not seen my parents for five years. I thought that next summer…'
> Elina: 'Yeah, that you could go see them.'
> Adel: 'Yeah. That I would save up and go there for a visit. My parents always wanted me to be able to go to school, but they could not [put me through school]. I was like the big man at home. I have three younger siblings. I was working with my dad. My dad went to work early, at five, I can't remember, and then, when I woke up my mom made breakfast for him and I took it to him to work.'
> Elina: 'What kind of work did your father do?'
> Adel: 'He did [he points the laminate slabs of the floor] like these, you know, but of stone.'
> Elina: 'Flagstones?'
> Adel: 'Yeah, flagstones, really heavy, they weighed about seven kilos. I took breakfast to my dad, and there was this machine that presses the flagstones into the ground. And then, in here, there needs to be grease. [Adel describes the machine and its parts with his hands.] So one had to put the grease here, and I was the one who added the grease. And then it was dangerous the thing… The stuff you put in between stones. It made one all red, and one's skin peels off here [shows his fingertips]. My skin came off from these. And my father, he didn't have any skin on his hands at all.'
>
> With his left hand, Adel pets the palm, fingers and fingertips of his right hand, showing the places where his father's hands had lost their skin due to the mortar.
>
> We try to go back to maths. It is about functions and drawing lines in a coordinate system. He does alright, but he has serious trouble in distinguishing whether the lines are parallel with the axis of the coordinate system or transverse. It takes me a while to understand that Finnish concepts of line [*suora*], parallel [*suuntainen*], transverse [*leikkaava*] and axis [*akseli*] are completely abstract to him. I do my best to explain, and I feel he gets the idea more or less. But our work is time and again interrupted by his stories of his life in his previous home country and in Finland. They are too touching and too interesting stories for me to dismiss, so we spend more time talking about these things than concentrating on lines and whether they are parallel or transverse with the axis.

Adel was trying to do what he was supposed to do, both by his family, which sent him away so that he could get schooling and a better life, and by the Finnish society that pushes him to educate himself and to integrate. But these abstract lines drawn in an abstract coordinate system—they didn't seem to parallel his life history in any way, either then or now. How to focus on maths, how to draw a line from these abstract assignments to a concrete future in Finland? Future without one's family? Adel's thoughts did not focus on the tasks, despite the attempt. Time and again, they

drew a line to Iraq, towards his family, a line of worry, a line of hope, a line of guilt. Because, as he said: "one cannot forget."

> Adel: 'Aah, I get, when I talk about these things, my heart goes totally [shows with his hands what happens to his heart: he puts both hands in front of his chest, palms towards the chest and fingers pointing up, squeezing his hands and fingers together as if his heart was being crushed into a little chunk]… How does one say it in Finnish… I guess you know?'
> Elina: 'I, yeah. Of course in my life there has been a lot of things, there has been sorrow and all, but not quite like what you have had. So I cannot quite know how you feel, what is your experience. You say that your heart goes totally [I imitate the movement]. What is this "totally"?'
> Adel: 'It goes sad. The heart goes sad.'

7.1.5 Emotional labour

Again, we concentrated on the assignments. Even if the heart goes sad, one needs to keep on trying. And to pull through, one needs a social network, people who can support you in your efforts. It is too valuable to be lost, both emotionally and practically. Despite the sad heart, despite being afraid that one's recently found mother might die far away, 'it is good to make jokes and laugh, not to be depressed all the time,' notes Emanuel. On another occasion, a couple of years earlier, he had first described to me his efforts to find friends in Finland and his realization that in order to get friends one should be funny and friendly.

And that's what he is. When I first got to know Emanuel, it was kind of impossible not to like him immediately. There was so much warmth in his presence, such a strong impression of him being self-confident, at peace, and filled with joy. He joked all the time, his hug was warm, and our discussions long, deep, and confident. We quickly developed our own jokes, and our text messages were full of them and, very soon, also full of expressions of affection. Early on, Emanuel started to call me his "beloved friend" [*rakas ystävä*], and was not shy to send me heart emojis or write that he misses me.

> Emanuel, via sms: It is wonderful to hear that you are back in [our home city] but I will tell you important [things] about my calendar tomorrow, I miss you soooooooooooo I can't wait to see you [smiley]
> Elina: Well what did your calendar say? For me tomorrow or Thursday afternoon/evening would suit best. But also some other time might be possible! I also miss you a lot!

> Emanuel: Tomorrow I can't make it, maybe Thursday evening and Sunday evening would be possible [smiley]
> Emanuel, again: Yes I want to fly there so that I can see you as I miss you so horribly much!

Emanuel was also superb at expressing how much he appreciated the help I provided. I first worked with him for about four months as AK's research assistant. When I was about to finish, we spent the last night studying, discussing some early conclusions that we had made with AK about the data, and then I gave him a little gift and a card with some words to thank him. Emanuel's mood dropped. He politely thanked me for the gift and the card, but then said that he "feels bad" now that I will finish working. I told that I have also enjoyed getting to know him and that I genuinely hope we will keep on meeting, and showed that I have written my personal phone number inside the card. Emanuel opened the gift, found four free tickets to the movies and seemed surprised: "Four?" I told him that he can go together with his girlfriend, and he then asked could I come too. Of course, I told him, if you invite me, I will come. All these little gestures of his that expressed both affection and appreciation worked to create a solid relationship between us, perhaps best described as sisterly—it was and still is obvious that he seeks support from me, the kind of support one might get from an older sibling. Of the youths that I worked with as AK's research assistant, he is the only one that I continued working with during my own fieldwork and with whom I am still in regular contact.

Emanuel has been persistent and also lucky in the work he has done to build himself an extensive network, and the result is indeed quite impressive. It is even more impressive, if one compares it with the situation of other young people with similar backgrounds, such as Adel, for example. Adel has two friends, both also originally from Iraq, and virtually no adults to support him except for one aftercare worker who meets him weekly to help out with the practical details of living alone and giving some emotional support as well (he is entitled to get this support until he turns twenty-one, at the most, which is the official limit of aftercare).[45] At some point, he had a Finnish girlfriend whose parents seemed to like him, but they broke up. When we talk about his two friends, he says that they are good friends, but he still cannot trust them completely, and openly admits his pressing lack of social network: 'I feel lonely.'

Even though Emanuel's network is far wider and he has both young and adult people around him, there is a certain fragility to it that requires his attention and

[45] Today, this upper limit is twenty-five years (a change was made in 2020).

constant work. It is not the kind of network of family, relatives and longtime friends on whom you can trust to be there for you no matter what happens. Even years after we got to know each other, when his mother reappears and he is in a situation of utmost stress, he is careful in his communication with me. I leave for Copenhagen soon after our meeting, as described above, but we keep in touch via WhatsApp. His messages are always, always decorated with smileys and he never forgets to ask how I am and to send me friendly words, no matter how bad things get and how difficult the struggle for family reunification is. But his anxiousness is manifest both in the messages themselves and between the lines of the forced polite expressions.

> Emanuel via WhatsApp: Hi my beloved friend Elina! Little by little life goes on, but mother is still not well and now it worries [us], as we don't know what to do as the immigration services aren't answering and on the other hand mother's condition is not getting any better, but thank you for asking you are a very good friend [blue heart emoji]
> Emanuel, some minutes later: But it is really nice to hear that you are doing well, let's keep in touch [smiley]

Emanuel seems to consider his social relationships as something he needs to actively take care of by being funny, joking and friendly. He thinks it is reasonable if his friends get tired of his worries about his mother and distance themselves from him. Of course, these kinds of issues are at stake in many social relationships—it is not surprising as such that he ponders over their reciprocity. It is striking that the balance always seems to be unfavorable to him: he should be the one who is always joking and friendly, even in a moment of serious crisis—as if the other part of the relationship could not be expected to tolerate any other kind of behaviour from his part than fun and friendliness. And perhaps this is true. Perhaps the need for practical help and support in his daily life already consumes his relationships in such a way that he cannot count on people being there for him when his world shakes.

I suggest thinking of the work Emanuel constantly does (re)building his social network as a form of emotional labour. Hochschild defines the concept as "[...] the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display [...]," which in turn is tuned to create a particular emotional state in another person (Hochschild 2012 [1983], 18–19). With management of feeling, or emotion management, she refers to the work people do in order to align both their inner emotions and their outward expressions of emotions with normative expectations (social norms about the appropriate kinds of feelings in particular situations) (ibid., 18). In her classic study, Hochschild was particularly interested in paid labour and the role of emotional labour in service jobs, such as flight attendant's work. For her,

private life is the arena of emotion management, while emotional labour is always sold for a wage (ibid., 19). Other researchers, such as Erickson (2005) and Lively & Powell (2006), have turned their attention to emotional labour in the private realm of the home or across the private-public boundary of family and work. Erickson (2005, 338) argues that as much as care work done (by women) in family settings should be considered labour whether it is paid or not, so should emotional labour performed in such intimate relationships as marriage. It does not come naturally (as is often presumed, especially in the case of women), but requires time, energy and skill—the illusion of effortlessness is part of the work itself. Erickson's understanding of emotional labour shifts the emphasis from the inner self-management of the individual to a more comprehensive view of "[...] people's attempts to effectively manage the emotional climate within a relationship." In the private field, emotional labour "of the highest order" consists, for example, of "[o]ffering encouragement, showing your appreciation, listening closely to what someone has to say, and expressing empathy with another person's feelings [...]." (Erickson 2005, 338–339.)

Emanuel does all this, and with skill. When I have had a hard time with chronic pain and the treatments related to it, he has supported me, not only with his gentle humour and words, but also by asking if he can pray for me and, after doing so, informing me that he feels confident that my situation will get better. As described above, he is consistent in expressing appreciation, attention and empathy towards me, even when he has been under the utmost stress himself. Without his work, our relationship would not be as close as it is—it might not even be there at all. Yet, my case is hardly unique: as he himself reflects, with time, he has learned the way to create relationships with people, and he uses considerable amounts of time and energy in doing just that; in building some kind of substitute for the family he has lost. As Daniels argued in 1987 with regard to women's unpaid work at home, it is essential to dignify these efforts as labour in order not to render them invisible. I would like to argue further that it is also essential to understand how racialization affects the forms of emotional labour and its intersection with gender. "A common theme in the literature on emotional labour is that it is gendered work," write Gunaratnam & Lewis (2001, 138), underlining that emotional labour is connected not only to gendered divisions of labour but also to racialized ones. If emotional labour is chiefly understood as work carried out by women, or, in the case of men, as the repression of emotions thought to be feminine, the scale and volume of emotional labour performed by young refugee background men is obscured.

Looking at the work Emanuel carries out from the point of view of emotional labour may also help to understand why many other young people with this kind of

background are lonely, as Adel said, and lack social support, as Oppedal et al. (2017, 157) write. Not all have the resources that the work of building a substitute for a family requires: the time, the energy, the skills, and the courage. Not that Adel and Denis wouldn't be socially very skilled, too. They were always friendly and polite towards me—perhaps even too polite, I felt. For some reason or another, they seemed to be always a little reserved around me, and the relationship between us did not develop into a lasting friendship that would have been a source of support for them in the long term. As mentioned above, finding the courage necessary for approaching people had been an issue for Emanuel, too. He has worked hard to gain enough (self-)confidence to make big emotional investments in his relationships. And, as I have described, he also openly expresses his feelings, managing to make the other person *feel* them, too. He has always made *me* feel that I am a special person for him, that our friendship has great value, and that he trusts me. In this way, he has weaved a strong bond between us. It is in this that the depth of the emotional labour carried out by Emanuel is most evident.

7.1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shed light on how, in different spheres of his life, Emanuel dedicates time and energy to the construction of a subject position that he aspires to and that allows for a way of life he longs for. This is the proud subject position of a black, socially skilled and highly educated person whose worth is recognized by the society he encounters in his everyday life. In addition to the mundane political agency his efforts manifest in general, the avenues he explores in his efforts have several more defined political aspects to them. The first is the one to which I already pointed at at the end of the previous chapter on Emanuel (chaper 6.1): the act of dis-identifying and breaking away from a given identity—in this case that of the imaginary immigrant—and self-constructing oneself as a different kind of subject. The way Emanuel claims blackness and constantly reminds others about racism, while simultaneously dis-identifying with the category of the imaginary immigrant, unveils the racialized nature of this category and thus forces those around him to open their eyes to the meanings race has in present-day Finland. Nevertheless, Emanuel also works for weaving social networks and building safer spaces, projects that build bonds between people with various backgrounds and skin colours and in this way both break normative whiteness and contribute to transversal solidarity between different groups of people living in Finland. His efforts give people chances to break

their prejudices and to learn to treat each other in a caring way, both developments of great significance in the polarizing mental landscape of Finland, and indeed throughout Europe. In light of Väyrynen's (2019) arguments, the kind of encounters Emanuel cultivates in his everyday life can be understood as "embodied micro-practices of peace": of exposing oneself to others and understanding people's mutual dependence and hence enabling the emergence of mundane practices of peace.

As I have emphasized, all of this presumes a great deal of work: emotional labour, intellectual labour, and work that building and maintaining safer social networks requires. At times, I felt that it was simply too much for Emanuel, but his willpower and motivation took me by surprise time and again, and by the time we finished our fieldwork he was still determined to carry out his project. Had we not stayed in contact with each other afterwards, I might have interpreted this as a sign of extraordinary resilience in a similar vein as Oppedal et al. (2017, 156). However, after struggling a few years more to fulfill his dreams of higher education and to keep his family members safe without definite results, Emanuel found himself in a dead end, described in the epilogue below. At the time of writing this text he has not overcome the impasse pursuing his dreams has turned out to be.

Epilogue

Despite the effort Emanuel put into studying, by summer 2019 he had not completed the double degree—he had passed most of the baccalaureate exams, but failed the exam in health education twice by just a few points. He had nevertheless successfully graduated as a practical nurse and was employed in no time flat. First, he worked in a home for the elderly, but later got a job in a rehabilitation unit where different kinds of patients were treated. He was enthusiastic about this job, in which he felt he had the opportunity to learn a lot—which he genuinely enjoys—and where he also got quite positive feedback on his skills.

We discuss these things over the lunch he offers me. He has asked my help in studies once more, this time in order to make a final attempt to pass the remaining baccalaureate exam. We try to chitchat and joke during the meal as usual, but he is both frustrated and angry and the atmosphere is flat compared to other times. The reason for his anger is plain: I had found out some weeks earlier that he is entitled to two extra hours (and, before spring 2019, when the legislation was changed, also extra points) in baccalaureate exams due to not being a native Finnish speaker and the relatively short time he has lived in Finland. No-one had told him this, not to speak of taking care of applying for these special arrangements on his behalf, guaranteed by law for students who have disabilities or problems that cause them extra difficulties in exams. He might have passed the exam with these arrangements, as he had only lacked a couple of points both times he tried. I share his anger and frustration—it feels grossly unjust that he has not gotten even this minimal support from the school. After I told him about this chance, he had gone to meet the student counsellor who then said that yes, he would be entitled to these arrangements

(but didn't even apologize for not applying them earlier) and, after some persuasion, promised to take care of it this time. The counsellor had promised to inform Emanuel how things proceeded, but had not done so, and Emanuel suspects that they have not done what they promised.

In addition to preparing for the baccalaureate's exam once more, Emanuel had applied to a couple of universities of applied sciences in order to study to become a registered nurse. He wasn't successful in the exams: he passed the interviews easily, convincing the psychologists that he has a talent for care work, but the theoretical parts were designed more to test the speed of reading and answering than knowledge, and as Emanuel reads Finnish slowly, he failed these exams. After all the hardships Emanuel has gone through he is still unconditionally determined to continue his studies: 'I want to get higher education,' he says. I feel puzzled by his stubbornness and ask why it is so extremely important to him, but he seems to be confused by this question. The idea of him not doing so is so unthinkable that verbalizing the exact reason for this is kind of difficult. He looks at me as if the question was totally crazy, and says:

> 'I want to be a Big Man! That I would just stay put in this, just be a practical nurse and work as such year in, year out, no way, I cannot. It is my dream to gain higher education, and now that I have a chance to do so I want to take that chance. I don't want to be like some foreigners who do not do anything and just take social benefits or who just study a vocation and then work as such, no. Everybody wants education here, I feel it is like people are competing with each other, and so the valuation of basic education drops. At work, some of the registered nurses and other staff look down at us practical nurses. It makes me feel small. And it is also an economic question, if I get two kids, for example, how could they live on the salary of a practical nurse?'

I insist that many practical nurses do raise children with their salaries, that it is perhaps not always easy, but it is possible—and he has to give in to a point. But from our other discussions concerning Emanuel's and his wife's future plans it becomes clear that they are not going to be funded by the meagre salaries they currently earn. Emanuel aims for what he sees as a decent life for a Big Man and his family; a respectable and well remunerated profession that secures recognition in society and good, upper-middle-class living standards. 'I don't know what to do if I am not able to fulfil my plans. It is my dream…' he sighs.

Half a year after our shared lunch his dream still feels just as difficult to achieve, if not more so. First, there had been the good news: against all odds, he had been accepted at a university of applied sciences in a supplementary search for students, in which five places were open for studies in nursing—though on the other side of the country, nearly 400 kilometers away. Emanuel girded up his loins, arranged everything, and moved—once more—to a completely new town in order to build his life in the direction he so dearly wishes. It was tough, what with both the move, being separated from his wife (who could not move with him, as she got a place to study in their home city), and studying at the new school, which he found to be very demanding. And then, after some months of pulling through against these difficulties, there came the bad news: his mother got a negative decision on her application for an extended residence permit and was given thirty days to leave Finland. Again, Emanuel, as the eldest sibling still alive, is the one

responsible for taking care of everything, of organizing someone to write a complaint about the decision and finding out what else there is they can do. This is the fourth time during his years in Finland that he has to worry about and organize things to ensure his or a family member's right to stay in the country. This is also the first time I hear Emanuel start to hesitate about the sense of putting all the effort he does into his studies.

He has missed several exams because of having to travel to his actual home city to take care of his mother's case, and because of all the time he has to spend calling lawyers, social workers, me (I try to help them out in this difficult situation), and migrant rights' activists; his school is "a total mess", and he ponders aloud:

> 'I am wondering does this make any sense? I have to work and try so hard, but every time there is some obstacle in the way. Usually, it is my language skills—no matter how much and how long I study Finnish, it never seems to be enough. Or if it is not that, then it is something else. And there is always something that I need to try to take care of, to organize, to sort out. It is never-ending, and it is always the same. Nothing changes, and I am not progressing. Before, I had this feeling that I am young, I want to live, that there are many things for me to see and experience, and that I have some kind of chances in life. Maybe I am weak, but now I feel like I don't have that anymore. I feel that if I was to die now, there would be no reason for me to resist. I could just as well die.'

7.2 Professional African performer: Manasse always on stage

I am sitting with Manasse at my worktop, drinking tea and looking at photos and videos of their band's soundcheck and gig. We start by talking about the people involved in the project, but soon discussion turns to the songs they performed, especially the lyrics. We spend an intensive session going through the lyrics (expressions in other languages than Finnish are written in italics):

Manasse: Then there is this song that I had written. I don't know yet if this will be the official song, but at least I will try to get it recorded. The backgrounds might change a bit, because that was more, like, for live performance, and then, one should make it more into, like, hip-hop style.
Elina: What does *baggie* mean? You have to translate these for me!
Manasse: It is, like, kind of African English slang, which is used across Central Africa: Nigeria, Kenya, Congo. That [baggie] is like a kiss, on the cheek.

We start going through the lyrics verse by verse, Manasse translating the expressions I don't understand.

Elina: Well, is this language, or this slang, really, is it the kind you spoke there, or where does it come from?

Manasse: Well, like, I did learn, I mean I did not speak that much English in Africa… But I did learn, I did speak with *fellow* Africans. But I can also speak, like, with a normal accent, I speak like...
Elina: British accent! Can you do a British accent?
Manasse: British accent, American accent! I have tried to learn really a lot of the different accents of English. But yes, I have learned, I have learned also that [African slang]!
Elina: Yeah. From where?
Manasse: Well, from movies, music… Then also by speaking, then it develops, like, by itself. It comes automatically when I speak like with Africans. [...] But [in the lyrics] it is also this kind of like rap slang.
Elina: And it is like exactly your language, you know, I think it is. Yeah, one shouldn't think too much what is, like, exactly correct Finnish. And the language also changes and one can, like, change it.
Manasse: Yeah, it is exactly the same in English, how we Africans speak it, like, in a bit different way, and anyhow, it means like the same thing and like this. We *miss* a word, pronounce a word a little bit differently, and yet it means the same.
Elina: What is this [sentence in the lyrics] then? "*Tries to go to limo zingolimbo*"?
Manasse: I tried to mix languages in there a bit, it is like "another place". And then this means, "*acya nikutoe mzigo*", wait a bit… I cannot, like, explain in Finnish. That *acya* [...] it is like give [...], *mzigo* is like *pain*, usually it means like weight. So, if it is, like, yeah, like, how would it be, let me ease your… well anyhow, it could be pain. *Let me ease your pain!* [...] Now that I have spoken English a lot, Finnish gets like *mixed*, always when I try to translate some words...
Elina: Yeah, it turns into English.
Manasse: Turns, like, automatically first into English and then I try to translate it from there to Finnish and it doesn't work out.
Elina: This [song], was it that you didn't remember the name of it?
Manasse: *Africa* it was, I think. It has *mix*-language. There is a bit mixed languages…
Elina: Yeah, is that the one that you said there is four languages or…
Manasse: Yeah. That is often how it is in the songs of African people. And also often otherwise [than in songs]. Usually, it is like in English or in French, but then one mixes like one's own languages there.

Africa (lyrics by Manasse, in original languages)

Happy day ooh wana wa Africa
From Kenya to Ghana beautiful chicas
I plant my fortune, I go demand it´oh later
Yo playboy perfume no go disallow di sweato
Yeah ooh mama don't tell me to go home
Yeaah ooh mama I no wanna go home

Does it remain the same
Does it hurt just to play
No you no go see them
Behind almighty things in there

Noo daddy don't tell me to go home

Noo daddy ooh I no wanna go home
I see beautiful city I see beautiful people
I see miracle things and it is us who go keep em.
Watu wananiona. Tusalimieni amigos. Ona ona ona ona uzuri wauangano.

Why dem people divided. When we all glad to be part of something unimaginable, magical, amicable
While we people excited cuz we all glad to be part of something unimaginable, love magical

We gon fight till the day we die´oh
Brother sent to life…prison, ain't funyo
Blessed are so few still gifted so many´oh
Yu think ya gyal so cool she dey chop all ya money

Ooh auntie´oh don't tell me to go home
Ooh auntie´oh I no wanna go home

In the previous chapter on Manasse, I already hinted at what kind of subject position he is reaching towards instead of the position of "vulnerable refugee youth", which he rejects. In this chapter, I take a closer look at the subject position he aspires to by investigating his self-representation and its tensions with his lived reality. As a person striving for publicity, Manasse has crafted a careful representation of himself that one can perceive by taking a look at his Instagram account, for example. It is a polished account with carefully taken and edited photos of him in different surroundings with eloquent outfits, from ten years back to date. In his profile, he proclaims himself to be a "Rapper/Singer/DJ/Producer/Designer". In another account he has put up with the group which he formed with his friends during my fieldwork in order to produce music events, they boldly describe themselves as a "Team Of Visionaries" from "East Africa/Finland/[Home town in Finland]". Both accounts and descriptions are in English.

From these descriptions of his Instagram account, the field excerpt above and the previous chapter on Manasse (chapter 6.2), it is possible to pick out a few central elements of the subject position Manasse aspires to. One is Africa: Manasse aligns with people he considers "we Africans", both verbally (as above), and physically (think of him during the soundcheck, not working together with his own band but hanging around the African performers of the other group, fiddling with their instruments, searching for contact). Almost everything he does is related to Africa as a continent (and I will dig into this later on in this chapter). His orientation towards Africa is not nationalist in spirit, but rather has a cosmopolitan character; he presents

himself first and foremost as an English speaker, and aspires to learn not only African English, but also the "British accent, American accent, a lot of different kinds of accents", and Africa/Finland are linked with ease in the Instagram description. There are, thus, constant hints at high mobility between countries, continents, languages and cultures. The third element that is strongly present is Manasse's self-identification as a professional music and media artist: rapper and singer, DJ, producer and designer.

Is that it, then? In some ways, yes: this is a condensed, but, I believe, an accurate description of Manasse's self-representation. The picture, of course, gets complicated when considered further. Take, for example, the question of Manasse's first language. The field excerpt above describes a time, though it is far from the only, Manasse has told me that it is difficult for him to express himself in Finnish, 'as I am multilingual'. And he undoubtedly is: Swahili, Kinyarwanda, French, Finnish and English all belong to his repertoire. What sticks out as noteworthy is that it is English that he underlines—by both explicitly saying so and implicitly by using English expressions in his speech—as the language he thinks in and tends to automatically speak. And yet, English *is not* his first language (Swahili and French are competing for that spot) nor his second (that would be Kinyarwanda and Finnish). As he himself makes clear, he did not speak English too much when he still lived in Africa, and he has made considerable efforts to learn to speak it—and not only to speak it, but to speak it with different accents and to use different slangs fluently. I am not saying that Manasse is lying when he says it is his first language—it most likely is, *now*. The point is that this was not automatic; Manasse has worked hard, and continues to do so, to be(come) someone whose first language is English and its various vernaculars.

There is a similar kind of tension to be found underneath the three elements I picked out as central with regard to Manasse's aspired subject position above. Belonging to Africa, yet being a mobile person who identifies himself as a professional musician, performing and media artist are all complicated on closer scrutiny. Making this complication an object of analysis does not mean that I do not consider his self-representation valid. Quite the contrary! It means taking it seriously, to understand that it is not something that he can simply choose to be. To reach toward the kind of subject position he does, from the position he is in, requires courage and a lot of work. The aim of this chapter is to inquire into the tension between Manasse's self-representation and lived reality from the point of view of mundane political agency. I will look at how he navigates the limitations, possibilities, aspirations and constraints concerning each of the three constituents of his self-

representation, and how, taken together, these can be understood as an act of claiming a subject position that contrasts clearly with the one he was offered in the band project.

7.2.1 Belonging: "we Africans" versus "*meikäläiset*"

Quite early on during our fieldwork together I couldn't help noticing that Africa keeps popping up all over the place in my data regarding Manasse. Almost everything he does seems to be at least somehow related to Africa: the band project, of course, but also an exhibition he is involved in; a football team he puts together with his friends, who all have African background and that is called, as a matter of course, "Africa United"; a festival he performs at, the "African slang" he tells me he uses in his lyrics; the production group he founds with his friends, which they name after an area in DR Congo, and, to kind of crystallize it all, his song *Africa* (printed at the beginning of this chapter). Africa or elements of it are also present on another level in everyday situations, less explicit, but all the more pervasive. A glance at the background of his smart phone (which is seldom out of sight) shows the weather and time in Kigali and Kinshasa; when I complain of rain and wind in the autumn he notes that he doesn't mind it as it is just like winter "over there in Africa"; and our random discussions are constantly drawn towards issues concerning Africa: we sit reading information on population growth in Nigeria, for example, or searching for the roof of the exact house in which they lived in Rwanda from a satellite map.

At one point in my fieldwork, we decide to a have a data session together, so that I can tell him what kind of early observations I have made and we can reflect their accuracy and relevance together. This is one of the points I bring up, asking him if it is a coincidence that everything he does at the moment seems to relate to Africa in one way or another. I get a definite response, obviously based on previous reflection on the issue:

> Manasse: It is not, in fact. It is not a coincidence. It comes, it comes like from there, from one way or the other. You know that I am African.
> Elina: Yeah. And you think that you are African? What about, do you think first and foremost African or do you think Congolese or do you think…?
> Manasse: African. In my opinion it does not matter are you Congolese or where you are from. African.
> Elina: How about Finland, ten years in Finland? Has no effect whatsoever?
> Manasse: Does not really have an effect. I think that my children, my children will also feel the same, no matter where they are [...]. In Finland or in Sweden or in England, or wherever I am. Because in the end I am African, even if I had been born

> in Finland, I would anyhow be African. I have African parents, and even though they had born in Finland I would anyhow have African roots.
> Elina: Mmmm. So do I if we go two million years back in time.
> Manasse: Yeah! You can also be African if you want to!
> Elina: Eh, I don't need to.
> Manasse: You can, because, in Africa I did have, like, white friends too, and there is also a lot of them in South Africa. Like, they are called African there, even though they might have European background.
> Elina: So that it is not about the colour of your skin.
> Manasse: It is not the colour of the skin. I think it is a cultural question, which is like the culture that comes as number one. Because I have lived in Finland long enough so that I have learned to respect the culture of Finland and also to live accordingly. So, which is the culture in your opinion that comes like to you as the first one. I think it is more about that [...]. The African dialect language, it is the kind of language that sounds to you like funny, nice, feels good. The kind of environment I mean, over there in Africa, the kind of environment that is good and in which you enjoy. Almost [...] anything I talk about, so I think like, which place comes as first to me regarding that particular thing, and it is, for me it is Africa. If it is music, it is African music. I like black music and like that. Movies, also those I would say right away Africa [...]. And, yeah, then the culture of course, what kind of habits there are, and exactly because [...] I feel that they are a lot better, some things in the culture are better than let's say in some other culture. [...] I do know a lot of things that are like better here, in European system than in African system. But then [...] mostly [with regard to] the kind of things that affect my life a lot, in my opinion the African system is worth most.

We end up in a long discussion about the differences between raising children in Finland and in DR Congo. Manasse reflects on the effect the habits he defines as African have had on his life and how, thanks to them, he was able to realize later in his teens in Finland that he was going in the wrong direction in his life, getting into "bad ways". In the end he crystallizes the discussion: "That is exactly why Africa comes to me, Africa comes to my mind all the time. I simply love Africa. All its evil and its good."

Taking into account this strong feeling of being an African, of relating nearly everything one does to Africa, of having roots in Africa and loving Africa as it is, it is interesting to note that Manasse never spoke of plans to return there for good, neither to DR Congo nor to any other country. He did actively dream of a large Africa round trip, and had made plans for it with some friends, checking flight prices and putting together an itinerary for several countries: DR Congo, Rwanda, Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania in Central Africa, in the north either Morocco or Egypt, and finally also South Africa. When it comes to where he sees himself living in in the future, however, he didn't even mention Africa as a possibility. In the conversation above regarding his future children he lists Finland, England and Sweden as possible

dwelling places (though in passing he dismisses Sweden, remarking that he does not think it is likely for him to marry a Swede). Many other times he brings out Great Britain as his desired future place of residence (more on this in the next section).

Of course, it is quite possible to live in one place and feel that one belongs to another simultaneously, or to a group of people who live in both places—in Manasse's case, "we Africans", which could, in other words, be defined as Africans living in Africa and the African diaspora. I find no reason to doubt that this is as central in his life as he says it is. Nevertheless, there is another kind of "we" that crops up here and there in his talk. It is a we that, on the level of his everyday life, is much more concrete, in the sense that it is present in his daily encounters in his home city. It overlaps, in some ways, with "we Africans", as many of the people in the group do have African backgrounds. Yet not all of them do, and neither does he, nor anyone else, refer to this group as such. It was this group I found him bantering with *outside* the fence at the world music event (see the previous chapter about Manasse, 6.2). Similarly, it is this group that, at an exhibition opening at which Manasse performs—an exhibition the theme of which is Africa—stays *outside* the doors of the gallery, only entering when Manasse performs and when other guests have left, and then in order to wolf down the leftovers of the delicacies on offer before heading to a nearby parking lot together to blast rap and hang around a car belonging to one of them.

It is a loose group of young people (mostly, though not exclusively, young men) of immigrant background. In practice, this means (with a few exceptions) immigrants from Africa and the Middle East, the overwhelming majority of whom have (either themselves or their parents) refugee background. In his, none-too-big, home city, all young people fitting this description pretty much know each other, if not personally, then at least through friends. Manasse refers to this group explicitly as we: either with the word's literal Finnish counterpart *me*, or with a vernacular expression *meikäläiset*, which has a slightly freer and easier tone.

> '[Local multicultural youth club] is a good place, because one learns a lot in there, one learns how to communicate directly with immigrant youth. [...] It is good that there are places like that where one can learn how to speak and joke with us. As there are so many places where we learn about Finnish people and how one behaves here, it is good that there is some place where Finnish people can learn how to communicate with *meikäläiset*. Because they don't know how to, they are a little afraid, it is weird for them.'

This came from Manasse completely spontaneously—we had met to discuss other things, and, when we were about to take leave of each other, he told me that he was

going to the club to charge his shoes (they had electric lights) and chitchat with the workers. It is possible to read his exclamation in many ways: for example, an element of talking back (hooks 1989) is conspicuous in the way Manasse turns the customary "integration of immigrants" discourse on its head—which he knows full well to be the raison d'être behind the work of the youth club in question, too. For the sake of my argument, the juxtaposition of two intercomparable groups Manasse builds via the act of talking back is of greatest relevance: he represents the existence of a group of "immigrant youth" [*maahanmuuttajanuoret*] as self-evident, comparable to "Finnish people", both of whom have certain characteristics and both of whom need to learn about each other and how to communicate with each other. The Finnish are a bit shy and afraid, they don't know how to joke and banter in a relaxed way, while *meikäläiset* are more extrovert, constantly joking, and tend to test the other person's guts a little:

> Manasse: 'I will go over there and irritate Mia [a worker of the club], it is fun to irritate her, she understands us and our chat and jokes.'
> Elina: 'It is true, she does.'
> Manasse: 'There is a new worker there as well, [name of the worker].'
> Elina: 'Yeah, I have heard. Is she nice too?'
> Manasse: 'She is alright. She will learn to speak with us. Mia was also like that in the beginning, a little shy, then she learned.'

Manasse is far from the only young person of immigrant background I have heard using the concept "we immigrant youth" in such a self-evident way. Quite the contrary, it is quite common to hear it used in this way, at any rate in some cities, among some groups of young people.[46] It is not a precise definition, in the sense that it also includes young people who were born in Finland, but are racialized as immigrants. Here, however, the essential point is not the definition itself, but the group Manasse refers to with it, and that is relevant with regard to his belonging: it is these young people that form the core of his circle of friends, and it is them he explicitly addresses as "we". It is striking that belonging to this group implies non-belonging to Finnish people and Finland, since the group is formed via juxtaposition with them. In the next section, I take a closer look at Manasse's aspirations for a mobile lifestyle, shedding further light on his relation to, and his sense of non-belonging in, Finland.

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[46] Or at any rate it was—a couple of years later when I discuss the issue of terminology with Manasse, he tells me that he (and his friends) have pretty much dropped the word.

7.2.2 Mobility: cosmopolitan versus refugee

If Manasse's future plans did not include moving back to Africa, staying in Finland was out of the question, too. "Finland is good but it is too small for me," he said, and was determined to "escape Finland." In his reflections, Africa is in his heart—whether he wants it or not—but Finland is in his brain. I take this as yet another expression of him feeling firmly rooted in Africa while being based, on a practical, rational, everyday level in Finland. When it comes to his future plans and dreams, however, they concern a totally different, so far unknown geography: the whole world.

His most concrete plan, or dream, is to live in Great Britain. He speaks of this almost every time we meet and have a bit more time to chat. At first, it assumes only vague form, perhaps rather far off in the hoped-for future. Later, it concretizes into a clear plan: at the time Manasse's military service is due, he decides first to carry it out, then apply to a polytechnic to study media, and then to head to a town in Scotland as an exchange student to start his new life in GB.[47]

At the same time, he is constantly talking of travelling. There is the big plan for the great trip around Africa, but also other destinations, stretching from Korea to Australia to South America, are on the map. He proclaims that he wants to learn Mandarin, and believes it should be easy enough for him: even though it is different from all the other languages he masters, he believes that, with his multilingual background and language-learning skills, it should not be a much bigger task than learning any other language—which, he thinks, will happen pretty much by itself, if he just settles in some country. Besides being multilingual, Manasse repeatedly mentions his multicultural background, often framing that as a skill, too. As in the above excerpt of our discussion on Africa and Finland, he speaks of how he respects, and has a deep understanding of, different cultures and religions (especially Islam, which has been strongly present in his social circles both in DR Congo/Rwanda and in Finland). All in all, the way he speaks of the world, its languages and cultures, and of himself travelling here and living there, constructs an image of a true cosmopolitan.

It is not, of course, uncommon for a young person to dream of travelling all over the world and living abroad. In Manasse's case, however, this is both more and less

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[47] Some years later Manasse's future plans have changed shape to a certain extent. Now he does explicitly dream of having a home in Africa—though not living there on a permanent basis, but "having an address", that is having a domicile both in Africa and somewhere in Europe. Nevertheless, he underlines: "I am a citizen of the world, I don't like to stay put in one place for a long time. But it would be good to have a home there, so that I could go over easily."

concrete than for many other youths. He has lived in three different countries among people from different backgrounds and cultures. His extended family is dispersed over several countries on several continents: he has relatives not only in several countries in Africa and Europe, but also in North America and Australia. During our fieldwork, some of his siblings did indeed go abroad as exchange students—though using the word "abroad" feels a little misleading here, as, for Manasse and his siblings, there really does not seem to be any clear distinction between a steady home country with the rest of the world as its counterpart. In this sense, the way Manasse relates to the world in our discussions—as one with no noteworthy borders—seems to be quite in line with his lived reality.

While all this holds, there is also something that doesn't quite fit the picture. If one scrutinizes Manasse's actual, factual mobility, what one finds is not the voluntary, free movement across borders and cultures he describes. So far, his mobility has been forced: first, he fled with his family from DR Congo to Rwanda, and, second, they were placed in a small town in Eastern Finland under the refugee quota system. From there, he and his family have moved to a bigger city in the south of the country—and this is their first non-forced move. After that, Manasse has stayed put in both city and country. He has done a couple of short trips to neighboring countries such as Sweden—and, when doing so, has been spot checked at the border too many times, a reminder of how his mobility, even with a Finnish passport in his back pocket, is not as free as some other people's.

> Manasse: 'This year we have been on a cruise [two night's cruise to Stockholm and back] twice, and both times, on the way back to Finland, we were asked to show our papers and open our suitcases to show what there is. And, of course, it has been just some clothes… It feels a little weird. And if they check someone's papers and suitcase, they should check everybody's.'
> Elina: 'What do you suppose they think, that you come from somewhere else without papers?'
> Manasse: 'I guess so, or then they think we have drugs or something. The second time it happened [a friend] lost his temper, and when they came to ask us for papers he just said that, here, they are in my pocket, come and check, and continued walking.'
> Elina: [Laughing] 'I can imagine that, he is just the kind of person who loses temper in a situation like that! What happened then?'
> Manasse: 'Well, it was a little embarrassing situation then. When he heard that we speak Finnish he guessed we must have papers, and there was quite a lot of people around and all, so in the end he didn't ask again.'

One might be tempted to disregard these incidents as small and without serious consequences (since "you just show your EU passport and open the bag that only has some clothes in it, and that's it"). But, as the research project *The Stopped—Ethnic*

profiling in Finland has proven, ethnic profiling by authorities is a problem that has serious effects on the people it targets. The project found that, "[...] young men belonging to racialized minorities are predominantly targeted by ethnic profiling practices," and that the practices "[...] make the persons stopped aware of the fact that they are perceived of as 'others'—those not belonging to the country where they live and perhaps were also born—and in some cases, as those expected to commit criminal acts because of their ethnic or racial backgrounds." (Keskinen et. al. 2018.) These quotes resonate all too well with Manasse's reflection above. All in all, his present-day experience of making merely short visits to a neighboring country stands in obvious contrast with the ease of doing so while they were living in Rwanda: there, with a bunch of other ten-year-old kids, he would freeride to Uganda by hanging onto the tail end of trucks, buy some stuff, and then freeride back to sell them at a better price in Rwanda.

Also, Manasse has personal experience of the effects of being the target of ethnic profiling at borders in a more severe sense. He is quite aware of the asylum system and the hardships many go through in their effort to gain a residence permit in Finland. Furthermore, while I was working with him, one of his siblings, who had stayed in Africa when the rest of the family left, tried to enter Finland in order to seek asylum. They were caught on the way while crossing the border to another EU country. There, as the result of complex series of events, their asylum application was rejected, but they could not be deported because of the situation in their home country. Caught in this legal limbo, and facing a meaningless life in an isolated deportation centre, the sibling traveled back to Africa on his own.

In the end, Manasse's plans of travelling extensively and leaving Finland for good—which, at the time of writing, date back several years—have not come true. He has not had any large trips, has not applied to become an exchange student, and has not concretized his dream of moving out of Finland. In short, his mobility, so far, has been either forced or non-realized. A stark contrast prevails between his self-representation as a voluntarily highly mobile citizen of the world and his factual immobility and background as a forced migrant. It is as if he were stuck, only in a country in which he is constantly reminded of his non-belonging, which, in turn, is strongly reflected in the way he aligns with immigrant youth and "we Africans" as opposed to "the Finnish people". As he puts it himself: "there is this feeling of being an outsider."

How to understand Manasse's im/mobility? Either way, there is no concrete obstacle that might be pointed out as the element that keeps him put or pushes him away. He does have Finnish citizenship, and in this sense is an acknowledged

member of Finnish society. He could, therefore, also take advantage of free movement within the Schengen area. Yet he does not do so (something holds him back), and, yet, he constantly expresses his non-belonging in Finland (something rejects him). In this sense, his mobility is comparable to the "marginal mobilities" that Juntunen et al. (2014, 16) describe. They write:

> The conventional classification of mobilities as either voluntary mobilities (tourism, lifestyle migration, business travel) or forced mobilities (asylum migration or economic migrants in search of employment or improved economic position) bears hardly any relevance to marginal mobilities. The people that we have encountered in our ethnographic fieldworks are characteristically neither entirely free nor forced to adopt life on the road. Rather, marginal mobile people typically conceive themselves as being pushed from behind in a variety of ways and marginalised by the background society.

The concept of marginal mobility is substantially accurate in Manasse's case—only in a kind of reversed version to that developed by Juntunen et al.. Their informants are constantly on the road: "The key feature of these people is their apparent dislocation from everywhere [...]. They have no particular aimed destination and as a result the movement, rather than settlement in a specific destination, characterises distinctively the lifestyle of these people." (Ibid., 12.) While Manasse has no particular destination in mind (there are too many of them for any one of them to be a true aim) and is, equally, dislocated from everywhere, it is not movement that characterizes his life, but immobility. If constant movement with no destination may be understood as marginality in the sense of a "position in-between" (ibid., 13), so, too, can the kind of *immobility in dislocation* Manasse's situation communicates.

7.2.3 Self-identification: professional African background performer versus immigrant "Suomiräppäri"

Performing—either singing, playing or dancing—is, for Manasse, a chance to "just do what I love." He enjoys being on stage, and is not picky when it comes to accepting gigs or participating in projects involving performing. But, as he brings out in the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter, his own genre is hip-hop. He is working hard to build a career of his own, though is still searching for his artistic self a bit—during my fieldwork he changed his stage name twice. When I started working with Manasse, he had recently been successful in a contest in which new rap talents were being sought. The contest was organized by a smallish firm working in advertisement, event production and recording. The contest itself had several

rounds, but Manasse was picked out from the other twelve competitors already in the first. Straight away, the firm agreed a record contract with him and started working as his agent, and in a month they released his first single.

However, in contrast with Manasse's self-representation as an English speaker, his first single was in Finnish. His whole stage persona was planned as Finnish speaking: in their introduction, the record company called Manasse a "[...] versatile artist who performs in Finnish. With him, we will publish music ranging from peaceful love pieces to rough, gangsta-style raps." In the long run, the cooperation with the record company did not prove fruitful and there were no further recordings. "I was enthusiastic about it," as Manasse later explained to me:

> I wanted to take my own style and music there, while, of course, respecting what the other artists were doing as well. But somehow the studio sessions always went, like, pushing [me] towards a certain kind of manner and musical style which was what they wanted me to do. And this is not really my thing.

Manasse didn't release music for a couple of years—the whole time we worked together. After this break, he has released new songs with a new stage name, and been active, both performing and in organizing small-scale events here and there. The first song he released following this hiatus was entirely in English, and it was his own production. It hasn't gained too much interest—at the time of writing, it has, for example, only been played about 2200 times on Spotify. Other of the songs Manasse has released are co-productions with a couple of other young artists. He describes these projects more as acts of supporting the new artists than as furthering his own projects. These co-productions have reached a much wider audience; the most listened to had been played about 70 000 times on Spotify. The main language on all these songs is Finnish—though not any kind of Finnish, but a peculiar one, born out of Finnish rap slang (to put it as Manasse would) and the kind of creative use of language that Manasse and his co-performers, who all have multilingual backgrounds, are capable of.

The tension between the weight Manasse gives to learning English, and to being an English speaker, and the fact that his music (his most central form of self-expression!) is actually mostly in Finnish is intense.[48] One reason behind this contradiction is quite simple, though. If one wishes to build a career as a hip-hop artist based in Finland, one naturally has to start with the local scene. There is quite a strong rap scene in Finland, explicitly labelled as "Suomirap", which, since the turn

[48] The multilingual band project I have described in previous chapters on Manasse is an exception in the context of his work as a musician beginning his career.

of the millennium, has developed its lyrics quite exclusively in Finnish (Tervo 2014, 177). It is Finnish of its own kind, of course, a slang that has strong mutual interplay with the vernaculars spoken in the Finnish capital region and other parts of Finland, but developed in its own distinctive direction. Rather recently—since about 2010—a kind of subgenre of "emergent migrant rap" (Westinen 2017, 335; 338) has developed under Suomirap, in which the artists either have immigrant background, or are categorized as immigrants on racial grounds. Today, artists belonging to this group generally perform in Finnish (Westinen 2017, 338), though in their own specific way. The emergence of this subgenre came to the knowledge of a wider public by 2013 at the latest, when Musta Barbaari ("The Black Barbarian") released *Salil eka, salil vika* ("First at the gym, last at the gym"), which was a pretty big hit. It is an elaborate and ironic critique of stereotypes, playing with classic racist slurs, the sexualizing of black bodies and the white gaze (for a thorough analysis of the lyrics and video, see Westinen 2017).

Other racialized rap artists like Prinssi Jusuf with *Vuoden mamu* ("The immigrant of the year"), Seksikäs-Suklaa ("Sexy-Chocolate") and Dosdela with their *Niiku97* ("Like97", which refers to a well-known brawl in 1997, when neo-Nazi skinheads attacked a group of Somalis on a football field in a suburb of Helsinki) have continued along similar lines, producing an explicit and finely nuanced ironic critique of racism and xenophobia in the Finnish context. There are a couple of artists who have immigrant backgrounds, Biniyam and Gracias, for instance, whose profile is a little bit different and who rap in English (though Gracias has made a turn to Finnish recently too). But, as Biniyam himself notes, and research confirms (Tervo 2014, 177), the basic contemporary rap scene in Finland is "[...] rap in Finnish language and next to it a small quota of English rap" (Vedenpää 2015).

So, for a young immigrant background artist working to build a career as a rapper in Finland there is kind of a natural niche available. To fit that niche and reach wider audiences, you need to do your music in Finnish. That is what Manasse now does with his co-performers, who also fall into the same category. In some ways, then, he is compromising the kind of self and artist he is striving to be because of the constricted role of immigrant rapper available to him. He explains that his own project is still mostly on pause—when he has time from co-productions he does work on his own songs, but he has limited time for this. "But I am in no hurry at all, I do everything, like, step by step," he notes. Instead, at the moment Manasse puts his energy into promoting those young artists whose style he considers promising, since, despite his dream of leaving Finland for good, he does want to contribute to Finnish hip-hop culture:

> I want to build some kind of genre in the Finnish music scene, to leave my legacy. To build some kind of base in [his home city], so that not everything would turn towards the capital city. So that not everyone would go there to do music, to some indie companies in which dozens of artists do the same thing.

Thus, while compromising in some areas (such as language), Manasse and his co-artists are actively trying to carve out space for their own expression. If one compares their videos to the ones produced by the "immigrant rappers" based in the Finnish capital region, one can notice obvious differences with regard to at least two of the three elements Tervo (2014, 173–174) mentions as basic for music videos: the subject/lyrics of the songs, and the visualization (staging and clothing of the artists).[49] To start with, Manasse and his co-performers' songs are not about racism or racist stereotypes per se—these are not the main topic of any of the songs they have produced and released together.[50] If these themes do crop up, they do so only in a few subordinate clauses and with a matter-of-fact air, as if there was really nothing much to add about them. Instead, the number one topic of the songs is girls—though not, however, in the sexist way classic to rap—and the second is life in their home city (in comparison to the capital) and in one's own hoods, one's status on the local scene and coming success in the Suomirap scene. A third theme, which is not consistent, but pops up in a few verses, is criticism of machismo. This theme is more explicitly addressed in one of the pieces Manasse names as his favourites, a story about school bullying.

Second, the staging and clothing in Manasse and his co-performers' videos differs from other "immigrant rappers'" videos. Some of their videos stand in such marked contrast to Musta Barbaari's *Salil eka, salil vika* that one is tempted to read them as a critical commentary to it (and to others similar to it). To begin with, the crew in these videos is visibly different from that in other "immigrant rap" videos. In MB's video, for example, the crew consists of black men working out, rapping and dancing in the gym: "[...]muscular, half-dressed and aestheticized. They are often zoomed in on or watched in slow motion, which visually emphasizes their 'Blackness', masculinity and muscularity," as Westinen (2017, 344) observes. In Manasse and his co-artists' videos, the crews are formed by teenage boys (sometimes girls are visible too) of different phenotypes, and their behaviour does not, in general, underline toughness or masculinity—some do in some poses, but the majority do not. Most of their outfits

[49] With my limited knowledge of hip-hop I won't venture into an evaluation of the third element Tervo lists, the music and its background influences.

[50] With the exception of one video produced in the context of an anti-racist project, which Manasse and some of his co-performers took part in. This is explicitly and only about racism and equality.

are in line with hip-hop fashion—many wear baseball caps, oversized gold chains and hoodies—but their style is far from uniform, and quite unique styles of dress and dance are given visibility. In contrast to the masculine gym setting of MB's video, theirs are shot in several places, most of which communicate the artists' everyday surroundings as not especially masculine and tough. There is a living room, for example, a cellar of some generic block of flats, school surroundings, and an underground car park. There is seriousness but not aggression in their rapping, proudness, but sometimes also playfulness, sadness or a kind of insecurity in their posing and dance—and a willingness to show all this, instead of concealing it, which speaks to me of great daring. In the piece about school bullying, mentioned as Manasse's personal favourite above, the young performers plead for stopping bullying and speak about finding their brothers badly beaten up or friends crying. This goes completely against the grain of MB's video that emphasizes masculinity and toughness (despite its ironic twist).

All in all, the videos and songs Manasse and his co-performers have released give the impression that, instead of trying to fit a certain kind of rap imagery, they are working on building their own kind of expression. They are not shy about presenting their everyday life surroundings and habitus as it is; they neither pretend to be gangsta rappers nor follow in the footsteps of other "immigrant rappers" on the Finnish rap scene, but have chosen a path of their own. Notably, this path leads, in part, towards diversification of (black) masculinities and a broadening of the space available for racialized rappers in Finland, reaching beyond the restricted position of talking back to the mainstream white hip-hop scene and negotiating one's role in it (cf. Westinen 2019, 237). Manasse is outspoken about the importance the messages carried by their co-authored pieces have for him. While it is obvious that Manasse and his co-artists are only at the beginning of their careers, that the videos are made with few resources, and that they still have a long way to go if they want to gain a name, it is equally clear that they are working to create a style of their own that distinguishes them from that which would be most readily available to them. This is not easy, since, as Manasse puts it, "people do not take it in, they do not feel it, because it is not what they expect [to hear]." He summarizes:

> We would like to surprise people or somehow force the Finnish music scene to be able to accept this new thing we are trying to do, to insert it in the back of their head, to open up their brain. I would not like to even start by doing that [what is expected from "immigrant rappers"], because when you get stuck in that category you cannot somehow broaden it. You do it until you, like, lose yourself completely.

7.2.4 Claiming presence as an Afropolitan

> They (read: we) are Afropolitans—the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie's kitchen. Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the various institutions that know us for our famed focus. *We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world.* [...] This new demographic—dispersed across Brixton, Bethesda, Boston, Berlin—has come of age in the 21st century, redefining what it means to be African. Where our parents sought safety in traditional professions like doctoring, lawyering, banking, engineering, we are branching into fields like media, politics, music, venture capital, design. Nor are we shy about expressing our African influences (such as they are) in our work. Artists such as Keziah Jones, Trace founder and editor Claude Gruzintsky, architect David Adjaye, novelist Chimamanda Achidie—all exemplify what Gruzintsky calls the '21st century African.' (Selasi 2005, emphasis mine.)

When I first read Selasi's text on Afropolitans, I felt I had found a perfect description of Manasse. Multilingual, accents, urban vernaculars, both Romantic and indigenous tongues? Check. Fashion, success, ethics? Check. A place in Africa to which a sense of self is tied? Check. Media, music, design? Check. European affect, African influences? Check. Conclusion: Manasse is an Afropolitan: a culturally, linguistically and physically highly mobile world citizen, whose roots are tightly planted in African soil and who uses this as an inspiration in his work as a music and media professional. Manasse: a "cosmopolitan with African roots," as Gehrmann (2016, 61) would put it. And Manasse himself, too: when I read Selasi's text to him, he embraced it as an apt description of himself.[51]

But, as I have tried to outline in this chapter, something does not quite match. The most obvious crack in the picture is "the G8 city or two"—the cities Manasse knows like the back of his hand are his home city in Finland and the city in Rwanda where the refugee camp was located, both considerable centres in their own regions, but totally peripheral from a G8 point of view. Living in a city of a G8 country is, for Manasse, a *dream*, not a reality. Instead of being like the Afropolitans Selasi

[51] Afropolitanism as a concept and discussion was born in, and exists in relation to, Pan-Africanist discourses that date back to the 18th century and the discourse on the African diaspora, and is not without tension (e.g. Akom Ankobrey 2019).

describes—“[...] African young people working and living in cities around the globe, they belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many [...]”—he does not “feel at home” in the geography he is stuck with, nor is he able to fulfil his dream of “working and living in cities around the globe”. Also, Manasse’s ambitions regarding media work, music and performing, and designing fashion are far from realized. He is working for them in a determined way, but has to balance the possibilities/constrictions being a refugee background young man in a smallish Finnish city places on him.

For Selasi’s understanding of Afropolitanism is problematic: a “[...] damning weakness of the term, as has been pointed out by many critics, is in its exclusivity and elitism” (Eze 2014, 240). In its celebration of the successful newest generation of African emigrants, it closes its eyes to the unequal opportunities for joining its circles created by factors such as class, reasons for migrating, and ethnic background. For Manasse, whose family is originally from the upper classes—or, as he put it, “semi-rich”—their downward social mobility and forced/non-free physical mobility linked to their place of refuge is a hard fact. He is trying to make quite a leap from the position of a refugee background youth with vocational education and limited economic resources to the successful Afropolitan elite.

Some thinkers—such as Eze (2014, 242) himself—have tried to strip the term of its elitist attributes by likening it to cosmopolitanism understood in the way Hannerz (1996, 103) does, as first and foremost an orientation of openness towards divergent cultural experiences and engagement with Others. Eze (ibid., 244) concludes:

> I propose that Afropolitanism, explored within a cosmopolitan context, promises some moral re-examination of the world. [...] I use the term ‘moral’ here in a broad sense as the attitude to the world that predisposes us to judge something or to impute value to something or someone and therefore to view it or him as acceptable or not acceptable. In this sense, morality embraces ethics, which is about one’s relation to the other. I am interested in how person A relates to person B regardless of person B’s gender, ethnic, religious, or cultural background.

In a similar vein, though referring to Appiah in place of Hannerz, Gehrmann notes that the moral virtues of cosmopolitanism are not at odds with Afropolitanism. Curiosity beyond the habitual capacity for cross-cultural conversations, and respect for pluralism together with a special bond with Africa are, for her, indispensable components of Afropolitanism. (Gehrmann 2016, 63.) In this sense, Afropolitanism does describe Manasse, who explicitly gives value to understanding and respecting different cultures, and whose background has also provided him with the skills for accomplishing this, aptly.

Yet, understanding the concept in this way should not conceal those power relations that work to enable some people's mobility while hindering others': "[...] we can use practices of mobility, and the challenges to such practices, as 'diagnostics of power' [...]", argues Gaudette (2013, 306). As Ogbechie (2008) underlines in his text "*Afropolitanism": Africa without Africans II*, while a few African background emigrants belonging to a global elite enjoy high mobility, the majority of "[...] Africans have almost absolute immobility in a contemporary global world that works very hard to keep Africans in their place on the African continent." It is not only Africa-based professionals whose mobility is strictly controlled, Ogbechie notes, but it is difficult "[...] even for highly accomplished African scholars based in Western institutions to secure visas and humiliation-free passage through Western airports [...]." For Gaudette, this means that they are not accepted as citizens in the world system, "[...] neither wanted nor welcomed outside their 'enclave', their 'homeland'." Cosmopolitan citizenship is, thus, not available for the overwhelming majority of Africans, either Africa-based or not. (Gaudette 2013, 307.)

Against this background, I understand Manasse's self-representation as an English-speaking, highly mobile professional performer with African roots as a *pronounced prefigurative act*: as representing oneself and already acting as what one aspires to be. I find this claiming of presence a vigorous form of mundane political agency. In the discussion around Afropolitanism, I find Mbembé's (2007, 28–29; emphasis mine) understanding of it the one that sheds most light on Manasse's way of claiming his aspired subject position: "It [Afropolitanism] is a way of being in the world, *refusing on principle any form of victim identity*—which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world." In Manasse's self-representation, there is no trace of the "vulnerable young person of refugee background", a position offered to him repeatedly. The subject position he claims via his prefigurative self-representation as an Afropolitan, English-speaking and multilingual, a highly and voluntarily mobile professional musician is pretty much its exact opposite. I cannot but appreciate Manasse's courage and determination in acting this way.

Indeed, courage was one of the things we discussed together—courage to do what one wants and loves to do, which, in Manasse's case, means also being on stage before the eyes of the public. We talked about the stage fright he suffers from time to time, but which he nevertheless finds rather easy to overcome: "I have always been like that, like courageous, and for that reason experimented with many different kinds of things already now, even though I haven't lived even half of my life. And I will probably experiment in the future, too. I don't know where I got my courage

from, but I got it from somewhere and I am thankful for that." It is not only on stage that Manasse distinguishes himself from others around him: his interest in designing clothes manifests itself in his appearance, which is upfront and anything but blends in. "He is like an exclamation mark in the street view," I wrote once in my field notes after waiting for him to arrive and observing how he walked through city space from distance. He has developed a flaming style of his own that, as he says, "distinguishes me from other people". During my fieldwork this meant brimmed hats, long jackets, strongly contrasting colours, and electronics that match the rest—headphones of bright colours, or the aforementioned shoes with integrated lights. His appearance has a profound meaning for his sense of self: in the right kind of clothing "[...] I am myself, I have the feeling that I am comfortable." But expressing who he is also by his outfit means, in some way, always being on stage:

> Manasse: I always stick out from the crowd. [...] I have not changed because of my surroundings or what the gang wants a person [to be] like.
> Elina: You mean like others, like other young people think you should be like this or like that?
> Manasse: Yeah, yeah, or because they themselves are like that. No. That is why, of course, I am different. I don't want to hide that difference, I want to be myself. I know a lot of people who are different. But in some places they are unlike [themselves] and in some other places they are truly themselves. But I think why, why are people like that, why does one have to be another person according to the posse you are in. If you are in a crowd that feels that it does not fit you then leave it, you don't have to force yourself to blend in.

7.3 Big questions, deep confusion: Afrax at work with himself

Afrax stands with me in front of a showcase in the only ethnographic museum in Finland, the Helinä Rautavaara Museum, which exhibits objects that Rautavaara collected from Africa, Asia and Latin America during her extensive trips from the 1950s and on. We have come to the museum as part of our common fieldwork trip to Helsinki and environs, where our number one aim is to see some of the movies being screened at the Helsinki African Film Festival. The Film Festival is cooperating with a street festival organized in one of the suburbs of Helsinki, and we had been there the previous day to see what their "African Village" looked like and to see some free short films from Africa.

Now we are contemplating the objects exhibited in the "Africa room" of the museum. The exhibition cabinets in this room mostly present objects from Western and Central Africa, while objects from North Africa are exhibited in a room for the "Middle East and North Africa". We spend quite a while looking at the different objects, including clothes, especially those used in different kind of rituals, sculptures, pictures and small objects

used in magic. In the middle of the room there are some objects that visitors are allowed to touch, and Afrax goes over, takes each in his hands in turn, and examines them closely. He asks whether I want to touch them too, and I hold some items in my hands as well, feeling the fabrics and woods with my fingers. Afrax stands quietly for an extended period in front of a vitrine exhibiting eloquent wooden sculptures, admiring the pieces, before exclaiming: 'And these have been made for millions or at least thousands of years over there.' Later, he reflects that seeing the objects was wonderful, that he feels he learns so much more this way and gets interested in history in a different way than if he just reads about it.

We proceed to the "Middle East and North Africa" room. Now, Afrax finds some familiar items, such as a picture that represents a white horse with a woman's face. 'We had that on the wall,' he exclaims with enthusiasm, 'or our aunt had, or someone, I am sure I have seen it someplace!' He doesn't know what the picture is about, though, and neither do I, nor is it explained on the info board. There are other familiar objects in this room too, especially in the showcase regarding Ethiopia. But there is nothing from Somalia itself, and jokingly, but still seriously, Afrax expresses disappointment about Helinä Rautavaara not having enough time to make it as far as Somalia. He laments that most historical artifacts have probably been destroyed in Somalia during the 'longest conflict of the world', as he puts it.

We have to leave, as we want to make it to one more movie at the film festival. On our way there, Afrax reflects on how the museum concretized the difference between the cultures of West and Central Africa in comparison to North Africa, where the influence of Arabic culture has been strong. Afrax wonders: 'What does that make of Somalia, then?' We talk about this and the "African Village" we had visited the day before, and Afrax underlines how that was almost exclusively about West and Central African cultures with only 'a totally tiny Morocco next to it' (there was a tea tent where Moroccan mint tea was served and short movies were presented). Afrax concludes that the museum was similar in this respect: it didn't include Africa itself, but presented 'an image of Africa'. In Western countries, Afrax contemplates, this image tends to be based mostly on the cultures (and "images" thereof) of Western and Central Africa.

"I want to explore myself!" Afrax once exclaimed to me during one of our long discussions regarding the world, history, contemporary times, different cultures and religions, rights and wrongs—and, in relation to all that, our selves. The exclamation was passionate, and there was a strong sense of being disturbed by this need, by the challenge it set him:

> Afrax: Sometimes I think what would have happened if I had born 200 years before the present world. Would I feel more at ease. [...] I don't understand myself even, I am, like, I try to think about things, like, "why, why?"
> Elina: Yeah, I think it is also about, that you don't take things as given, without questioning, you don't accept if someone says that it is like this or like that, that you would just be like "ok, so it must be like that then."
> Afrax: No, no, I am exactly against that: "explain to me!" and "why is it so?"

The complexity of the "present world", which Afrax experiences as overwhelming, has been understood by the social sciences as a result of increasing global interconnectedness (Vertovec 2009, 2). It is not only that people move more and more across national boundaries, but also that "[...] a growing range of media reach across borders to make claims on our senses" (Hannerz 1996, 4). Transnationalism is a conceptualization often used to capture these sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges across national borders among individuals, NGOs and businesses (Vertovec 2009, 3). These processes, which gained increasing scholarly attention already around the turn of the millennium, are tangible in Afrax's life. Both "migrant transnationalism" (ibid., 13), practices that link migrants both to their countries of origin and to diaspora communities, and global interconnectedness in general contribute to his confusion. He doubts, he feels disoriented, and he asks questions, both of himself and of others. In some ways, he can be thought to be lost, without clear aims—and he certainly often feels so, to a point of deep anxiety that he describes as "being caught in the middle of a storm".

While Manasse and Emanuel have clear projects they are trying to further, Afrax does not. Yet his urge to "explore himself" might be seen to be his project: to question in order "not to get stuck", as he says, to "step out from the comfort zone" and to "develop oneself". Earlier, I argued that Afrax's body became a focal point of the political ordinary in his job, of practices that work to integrate or exclude immigrant background youth. The weight of the questions that he asks himself stems partly from the same source. They are fundamental questions for a multicultural youth work professional, whose job entails supporting youths' integration. In this chapter, I detail some of the work involved in these explorations, which I had the privilege of accompanying Afrax in and that are all present in some ways in the visit to the Helinä Rautavaara Museum described above: our common exploration of Africa and its representations, and Afrax's personal exploration of his belonging (or not belonging); his struggles regarding his life values and experience of "living between two cultures" as he puts it; and, finally, his explorations in the realm of political activism. Along with Afrax's search, this chapter reaches out in several directions, perhaps in a slightly less coherent way than those investigating Emanuel's and Manasse's projects. The topics Afrax leads me to inquire into deepen understanding of the larger transnational contexts of their lives, too—such as racialized social relations among people of African descent, or the rise of national populism and the process of politicizing race in Finland. I thus find it worthwhile to dedicate a bit more space for exploring what it means to grow up in the "present

world" of interconnectedness—but also of prominent inter-ruptures, as the first section on our exploration of Africa indicates.

7.3.1 Exploration of Africa(nness)

When I began this research with these young people, I offered them the possibility of doing some kind of project together. Afrax was the only one who took this offer up:

> We are having lunch together and have talked at length about our life situations, which in both cases are quite complicated. At some point we start to discuss my research project. I have also mentioned it previously, but this time ask Afrax directly if he wants to be one of the young people with whom I will work closely. I explain what that means in practice, and give him a sheet of A4 paper on which I have summarized the idea and practicalities. He reads it, makes some comments, and then says that he would like to be involved, at least to some extent. I start to clarify some points in the summary, what, for example, I mean by doing some common project together. Previously, Afrax had mentioned that he didn't know much of the history of Somalia and would like to know more, so I suggest:
>
> Elina: 'It could be, for example, studying the history of Somalia together, or…'
> Afrax [eyes beginning to sparkle]: 'Or African history!'
> Elina: 'Yeah! But it should be also something else than just reading about it, or what do you think?'
>
> Afrax starts to envision an exploration of Africa in the spirit of classic expeditions, describing how we might find some coffer full of precious items, and how we would open that… I then suggest that it could be something to the direction of an Indiana Jones style expedition, and Afrax develops the joke further, envisioning how it would get a totally different twist as, in this case, one of the explorers would be white (and thus European) and the other black (and thus African). At some point we quit joking, and Afrax asks in a more serious tone: 'But how could we really do it?' I say we can think about it and Afrax encourages us to 'throw wild ideas'.

For the time being, we left this initiative open. I was inspired by the thought, and Afrax seemed to be too. As time passed, we started to do things related to this idea, for example by going to see movies or exhibitions related to Africa, by discussing what we had seen and the thoughts it provoked in us, and by going on the field trip to the Helsinki African Film Festival and the Helinä Rautavaara museum described in the intro to this chapter (and an Ethiopian restaurant in between, as we figured that food culture is an elemental part of exploring a region). I also lent Afrax the only general history of Africa in Finnish (Kaikkonen et al. 1989)—a tough read, dry

and full of jargon from the eighties. When returning it to me, Afrax told me never to give it to any other young person interested in the history of Africa. He was both serious and joking: he had learned a lot while reading the book, but the process had been rather painful. The fact that he actually struggled through it speaks of the deep meaning our common project, jokingly as we began it, had for him.

And, actually, the expedition envisioned by us did come true, in the sense that both aspects embedded in the joke—the real and the imaginary—were present throughout our project: in the beginning, we were perhaps searching for the "real" Africa and its "true" history, but quite soon realized that there is no direct access to either. Hence, we started to inquire more and more into the "image" of Africa, as Afrax put it in the introduction to this chapter, the relationships between Europe(ans) and Africa(ns), of whiteness and blackness, and Afrax's own relatedness and belonging.

"How Africa is presented?"

> As a start to our common field trip to Helsinki and environs, we go to the street festival and its "African village", primarily in order to go to the film tent to see short films from Africa. But our timing is bad: we come in the middle of one movie, and stay outside the tent to wait for it to end so that we might see the following film from the beginning. While waiting for this we take a glance around the actual Africa tent: there are African clothes, drums and food for sale. We stay outside and look at a dance performance going on in the "village square": there are about ten white women—probably most, if not all, of them ethnic Finns—performing an "Afro dance", led by their black male teacher, who is from Madagascar. The audience stands in a circle around them, and we join the outer ring. The audience seems to be diverse, including white and non-white Finns and people of other nationalities. I find the setting interesting in its strangeness: here we have a group of white Northern European women performing supposedly African dances to an audience, many of whom have roots in Africa. My interest in the scene turns into a strong experience of awkwardness as a very drunk white Finnish couple settles by some big drums that are on display, starts to beat them in a totally random fashion and shout loud drunken comments. Finally, the man takes his shirt off, exposing his big white belly to everybody present. I feel somehow ashamed, but Afrax seems to be more amused than annoyed and laughs at the scene.
>
> I have taken the book on the history of Africa (Kaikkonen et al. 1989) with me on our trip, and we leaf through it sporadically—we try to look for maps, for example, when Afrax tells me about the way he fled from Somalia to Kenya with his mother and siblings. The one we find does help us in locating their route, but it also makes Afrax extremely annoyed: the Somali clan families and their respective geographical areas are marked clearly on that map, and Afrax is highly critical of the clan system. 'The clans are the worst poison there is in Somalia,' he exclaims, and then reformulates, 'or maybe our parents have used them in a wrong way.'

The next time we meet, we discuss the history book's introduction and the thoughts provoked by it for a long time. The very beginning of the book, which we read together, sets the tone of our discussion. Kaikkonen et al. (1989, 8) start by quoting a book on world history published in Finland in the fifties:

"Until recently, Africa has been its own world, and in a sense it still is, inaccessible and uncommunicative. Strangers have not gotten much further than the coastal areas. Of its own populations, only the Egyptians have developed into a civilized nation, and outside the Nile only in Abyssinia and in parts of Sudan have the natives progressed to the level of statehood. The different races and tribes in the dark continent of Africa speak many languages and have no history." (Suolahti et al. 1953, 435; my translation.)

Elina: Oh, quite rough already that first bit, I just started reading from here, at the beginning [...] "The different races and tribes in the dark continent of Africa speak many languages and have no history!" [Starts to laugh out loud.]
Afrax: Yeah! Yeah, so, because of that I wanted to read, like, what is going on here! [Laughs a bit as well.] And, of course, I was like, uh uh, does it make sense to read, but like, anyhow, to know a little.
Elina: So, here is a critique of exactly this, of how it is a narrow understanding of history, and why it was thought like that at that time is then explained.
Afrax: And then I understood somehow from this text, also, people did not want to go there [to Africa] because, that originally they were not interested… Or, in one way it was interesting, but as it was so, how can I say it, well, here it sounds like it was uncommunicative. So, it was uncommunicative and then like people did not [want to go]… except when they needed something like…
Elina: Gold? Slaves?
Afrax: Yeah, exactly, or something… and then maybe because of that an interest has grown [...].

Afrax remembers what he had been told in Somalia, that the people living there did not let Europeans inland at all, that they simply traded with them along the coast and then asked them to leave:

Afrax: And I also heard, I don't know if this is some kind of myth or some legend, but, anyhow, I heard that, at some point, they did it so that they closed the deals *at sea*, and then they [the strangers] had to go their own way, so that they were not even allowed *to land*!

In the passages above, all from field notes and taped discussions during the first month of our common expedition, we encounter several "Africas" together. There is the one displayed at the festival, of which Afrax makes an accurate observation (in the introduction of this chapter), when he points out that, geographically, it drew its inspiration quite selectively despite being called the "African village". Also, this Africa was on display chiefly in order to be consumed: as clothes, drums, and food

on sale, and as entertainment—though with an interesting twist, as the performers were partly white Europeans.

Then there is the Africa the quote from the world history book from the fifties conjures up: uncommunicative, inaccessible, uncivilized and without history. The pejorative tone is interestingly reversed in the oral history version of this Africa that Afrax had heard in Somalia: according to this version, which Afrax tells with enthusiasm, inaccessibility was chosen, and, for quite a while, a triumphant strategy for protecting local communities from intruding strangers. And, finally, there is the official story, the book on the history of Africa written by historians—who begin by highlighting the lack of trustworthy written records and the subsequent necessity for "open-minded rejection of conventional research methods"; of turning towards such sources of information as oral tradition and work done by anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists et cetera. These, however, "produce ambiguous and hypothetical results", the writers underline. (Kaikkonen et al. 1989, 11.) The Helinä Rautavaara Museum's exhibition parallels this, in the sense that it attempts to provide objective information on the cultures and histories of different African countries. But, as Afrax is quick to point out, this is also just a partial "image" of Africa, and in many respects insufficient—as in the absence of Somalia.[52]

A few weeks after our visit to the museum, Afrax shows me a photo someone had posted on Facebook. It is dated 1910, and, in it, a group of about twenty men poses in front of a hut built of wood and straw. The men have spears and shields and are dressed in a fashion that is or pretends to be traditional. The text in the photo informs us that it is a Somali village, and the men form a "group of warriors". Afrax is enthusiastic about the photo and the fierce looking men in it: 'They are warriors!' Yet, what soon catches my attention is the text describing where the photo had been taken: in Edinburgh's Portobello, Marin Gardens. We google it and soon realize that the photo is from a national exhibition held in Edinburgh in the style of the grand World Expositions. The Somali village comprised a "human zoo" as part of the exhibition, and, according to *The Scotsman*, seventy native Somalis were shipped over to Edinburgh for this purpose, made to live in mud huts in the exhibition compounds and to perform mock fights for the audience (McLean, 2013). I feel sorry about crushing Afrax's joy at finding a historical photo of Somali people by disclosing what the "human zoos" were about. Again, instead of an actual photo

[52] The collection of the museum was originally brought together by Helinä Rautavaara, a white Finnish journalist and researcher who travelled the world extensively. It is thus firmly rooted in colonial relations, though the decolonizing museums movement has now reached the HR museum too (see Rastas & Koivunen, forthcoming).

from Somalia, he is left with a representation of his people's history literally constructed by Western colonizers for their own entertainment.

Thus, our haphazard but persistent attempts at approaching Africa and its various cultures and peoples makes us stumble repeatedly on the realization that our points of access to both the history and the present of the continent are limited and tinted. It goes without saying that this applies, to a certain extent, to all history and attempts to describe reality—it is not like we were looking for "direct" access to "truth". But there is considerable difference, for example, between Afrax's possibilities for grasping the past and present of his country of origin, and my possibilities for grasping mine, as his following reflection points out:

> It does interest me—where I hail from! And then I figure that if I had been in school in Somalia, if we would have had a good system, they would teach at school and one would go to a museum to see different kinds of objects or different kind of things, what has the life of Somalians been, say, for example a hundred years ago, or *hundreds* of years ago, so if these things would have existed… But they don't, because they have been destroyed!

Here, I cannot but recall how impressed Afrax was at the Helinä Rautavaara Museum in front of the showcases displaying wooden sculptures from Central and Western Africa. Also, the earnest moment he spent feeling the few objects that visitors were allowed to touch, and the way he urged me to take them in my hands too, gains momentum when contrasted with Afrax's acute awareness of the destruction of the material history of his native country, which his hands cannot touch. At this point, I direct discussion to oral tradition, as I think it might provide Afrax one avenue to his roots worth probing:

> Elina: Yeah. But nevertheless I have often gotten the impression with Somalian background youth that many of them still know quite a lot of the country's history, even compared to some Finnish youth for example. Or I have gotten the impression that some youths' parents talk quite a lot, so that it perhaps transfers like that…
> Afrax: From generation to generation? Well, yes, also in our [family] a lot of different stories are told, but maybe… How to say it? … As it is not theory, you know, or like it is not in any book. And then you just know that your mom said it went like this. And, of course, they are as valid, but in some way maybe I have gotten too used to this Finnish society [laughs a bit], so that they have theory and things have been written down somewhere and all…
> Elina: So that everything is written down and, when it is written down, then it is somehow more true than…
> Afrax: Yeah, yeah... I don't know. In our [family], too, quite a lot of things have been told about history, and also about present events, like what has happened and all. [...] Some things one hears as larger history and some things are told from the perspective

> of one's own community [or kin]. But at least about history they do tell from quite large perspective. Or at least I think so!
> Elina: But the book is missing. [Laughs.]
> Afrax: Well, maybe it is also because even the Somali alphabet was invented just a while ago, it is not a long time!

> We end up discussing the recent translation to Finnish of Lewis's book *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland* (1993), and the criticism it got from some Finnish Somalis.

> Elina: But maybe one should write a better [book] then. Think about all the stories that are told in different families, what if one would make a book out of them?
> Afrax: But I am thinking about history in the upper grades in Finnish comprehensive school. I think they [the history books] have been written pretty badly, because things have been explained in a one-sided way and also it feels that those people write history from the winner's perspective. That is how I feel. And then, like, what kind of photos there were, for example, say, of Africans, Indians, and then when you talk about Arabs, and when you talk about Europeans, or, for example, Napoleon! For example the Arabs, when you talk about the region of Palestine, and then [in a photo] he has a weapon in his hand, and he has a robe and the thing like this [shows with his hands that he means the Arab headgear]. This photo truly has a big effect.
> Elina: Do you remember this kind of photo? You have it in your mind now?
> Afrax: Yeah! Yeah, I do remember! He has a weapon in his hand like that. I remember a photo like that. [...] And then when you talk about Napoleon, there was a nicely drawn picture of him in golden apparel, with high-heeled shoes, fancy sword and horse and all, and then if you think of all the things he did, too. He killed people just as well. So it makes one think that he is glorified in a way. [...] And then about Nelson Mandela there might be some really small [story]—actually I did not learn almost anything about Nelson Mandela during comprehensive school!

We return to the question of knowledge and its production time and again. In another discussion, revolving around the book on the history of Africa, Afrax concludes: "I do not think that science produces it [the truth]. There are many avenues that produces them, how to say it, the facts or the truth… that produce knowledge. All peoples are civilized in some way, you know."

Several months later we decide to take our expedition to the next level and apply for a small grant for a study trip to London, where we want to join the celebration of Black History Month and visit some interesting exhibitions in the city's famous museums. The grant application is a kind of crystallization of the evolution our thinking went through during our common project, and it includes the questions (in italics) that had become central to Afrax along the way (the questions in the application are his, even though I facilitated writing them):

> We are both interested in Africa and Africa's relationships with Arab and Western countries, both today and throughout history. We wish to do be able to complete an important study trip around Africanness in Europe by participating in Black History

> Month, organized in Great Britain in October. BHM is an annual event that aims to highlight the significance of the African diaspora. [...] In addition to participating in BHM events, we would also like to visit the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition Black Heritage, and the Black Cultural Archives. The aim of our visit is to *explore, in particular, the ways in which Africa and Africanness are presented* in these events and museums. *How is Africa treated in the West? Are Africa and Africans presented as uniform and essential? How are cultural differences inside Africa treated?*

These questions, regarding how Africa (and other [post-]colonial Others), its past, present, and peoples, are presented in different forums; to audiences in museums or art exhibitions, to pupils in classrooms, or the public in general through various media, which now perplex Afrax, are also being asked in academic (and activist) forums (e.g. Cain 2011; Giblin et al. 2019; Ngcobo 2018; Nothias 2018; Routley 2016; Scott 2015). In other words, it is the politics of representation that now occupies Afrax's thoughts. This also means that his inquiries are, to a growing extent, directed towards questions regarding race and racialized social relations both in his present home country and in a larger perspective—including Somalia and the Somali diaspora. The latter will be part of the discussion of the following subsection, in which I will concentrate on Afrax's sense of belonging (or not belonging). I will address the former, and our study visit to London, in more detail in the last section of this chapter, "Searching for political relatedness".

"What does that make of Somalia, then?"

Afrax's disappointment at the absence of Somalia in the Helinä Rautavaara museum's permanent exhibition is somehow very telling.[53] Also, Afrax's question about where one should locate Somalia with regard to understandings whereby North Africa and the rest of Africa differ significantly, is telling. If Rautavaara had made it to Somalia and managed to bring some items with her to Finland, which room would they be on display in? The "Africa" room, or the "Middle East and North Africa" room? For Afrax, this question is far from being "just" theoretical or historical; it is deeply personal and actual. We talked extensively about this topic after, for example, watching a documentary together:

> Elina: But I was also left thinking about this "Africa" thing, you know?

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[53] To give due respect to the work of the museum, it is worth mentioning that they have had at least one temporary exhibition about Somali wedding traditions and another about the history and present of Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. When we visited the museum, however, there was only the permanent exhibition on display, and Somalia was completely absent.

Afrax: Yeah, "Leaving Africa" [name of the movie]. Maybe it also produces that, that Africa is thought to be one country. And Uganda is one city.
Elina: Yeah, yeah, so I was also thinking about that. Or like, I don't especially feel like I am European…
Afrax: You don't? Okay, that is really odd. What do feel you are, then?
Elina: I don't know. [Starts to laugh.]
Afrax: World citizen?
Elina: Well, no, I don't [serious tone]. I don't know. Neither very strongly Finnish.
Afrax: Okay. [Laughs a bit.] Quite strange!
Elina: Yeah. Are you, what are you, if you should…
Afrax: What am I? I don't know. I, I am Somalian. Or, like, I am Somalian, but, yeah.
Elina: Are you African?
Afrax: Ayayayayyyh… [With a tone of resignation.] I want to believe that I am African.
Elina: But there is something… unclear?
Afrax: There is, you know, to myself there is nothing unclear about it, I would like to be African, but like… if I think about what kind of feedback you get, for example if you are from Somalia. In general, sometimes we have gone, for example, to play football, with Africans—see, with Africans!
Elina: Mmm [starts to laugh]. You got caught!
Afrax: Precisely! As if I wasn't an African! But exactly this kind of thing, because they differentiate exactly like that, that today we play with the *somppu*s[54]. And, like, they are like one Africa, be they from Nigeria, Uganda, they are one Africa. But Somalia is distinct.
Elina: Oh, they differentiate Somalia as distinct?
Afrax: Yeah, or maybe also Somalians do want to differentiate themselves out of there. Or, I don't know, Somalians feel, or like some Somalians say that we are Arabs.
Elina: Mmm, yeah, true. There is that issue. But there are also other Africans that are Arabs, are they not counted as Africans? Morocco, Algeria… Are they not part of Africa?
Afrax: Yeah, I wonder. Well, I do think there are African Arabs. But who are really Africans? Like, North Africans, they are Africans too, even though their skin colour is different.
Elina: Yes. And the culture is like with an Arab influence...
Afrax: Mmm. But it disturbs me really a lot exactly like Somalians, okay, at least in South Africa I have heard that they say that Ethiopians, Somalians, they don't look like Africans.
Elina: And you know, I checked, as last time we talked about this thing, so I checked what the University of Helsinki teaches in African Studies, and it is Sub-Saharan Africa. So, like, that is their "Africa", in the Department of African Studies.
Afrax: Interesting!
Elina: Yeah! So why does it not include North Africa?
Afrax: Yeah. And I have thought quite many times why the other Somalian [official] language is Arabic! Where does that come from? Or has it been accepted simply

[54] *Somppu* is a common (sometimes pejorative) Finnish vernacular term for a Somali background person.

> because there is Islam. [...] But well, these are exactly the kind of things… I think that I would like to be African, I don't want to be Arab. Truly. I *want* to be African.
> Elina: One cannot be both?
> Afrax: No, I mean, *I* don't want to be Arab. I want to be African.
> Elina: Why?
> Afrax: Because I feel myself African.
> Elina: How do you know?
> [Both laugh.]
> Afrax: How do I know? It is that, where I was born, it is Africa, and not, precisely, the Arabian Peninsula. So, that is probably one [thing] which I know. Mmm... And somehow, I don't know, it can also be due to some notions that I have gotten from Arabs, or what I have encountered with them. It can be also because of that.
> Elina: That you don't want to, or that it doesn't feel your own.
> Afrax: Yeah, I don't want to, it does not feel my own.

Here, we are at the heart of one of Afrax's burning dilemmas. He identifies with Somalia and Somali people without hesitation, which is typical for Somali background people living in Finland (both those who have themselves emigrated, and those born in Finland), as Rastas (2013, 166–167) notes. According to her, cherishing Somali identity—despite, or perhaps because of, the harsh racism that Somalis encounter in Finland—can be explained by, for example, the relatively large size of the Somali community in comparison to other African background minorities in Finland and, in the case of the youth, the fact that they are provided with teaching in Somali and Islam in Finnish comprehensive schools. (Ibid., 167.) However, as Rastas extrapolates, cherishing Somali identity seems to be linked with weaker identification with the African diaspora in comparison to other African background minorities in Finland. One of Rastas' Somali interlocutors brings out how at least some Somali background people seem to want to differentiate themselves from other Africans out of a sense of superiority. This, in turn, is also linked to the specific history of Somalia and the internal racism developed during it, which takes the form of discrimination against people or groups considered to be, or look, "African". (Ibid., 167–168; see also Duh et al. 2014, 239.)

And, indeed, there seems to be fierce discussion around these topics, both among the Somali background youth Afrax knows personally (remember, for example, the argument between Afrax and the other Somali young man at the exhibition opening in chapter 6.3) and far more dispersed geographically on the internet. If you search using some of the keywords mentioned above (such as Somali and Arab, or Somalia and Africa), the result is an extensive list of links to different discussion forums, in which a heated debate goes on around questions such as "Are Somalis Arab?", "Is a Somali an African or an Arab?", "Why are Somalis considered Arab?", "Why do

Arabs try to claim Somalia as being Arab when Somalis are Black African people?", "Why do Somalis look different than other Africans? Why is their hair long and soft as opposed to West Africans'?", and even "Why do Somalis look white? Are Somali people Caucasians with black skin?" In addition to these arguments on the forums, several YouTube videos treating of these issues are readily available. Opponents in these discussions, who mostly claim to be Somalis themselves, promote quite different views: some argue that Somalis are Arabs or Afro-Arabs, many that they are of their own unique kind—neither Arabs nor Africans but Somalis (be that "black Caucasians" or something else), and some that Somalis are black Africans. That this discussion is carried on in English too suggests that it has high relevance for people of the Somali diaspora. I have not, however, been able to find academic research on the subject. Research on the historical construction of the (imagined) Somali community, on the other hand, has been conducted for some decades—though not without controversy.

The pioneer and classic in the field is Lewis, who has written several ethnographic books and numerous articles concerning Somalia. Put in a nutshell, according to him Somali society consists of six patrilineal clan-families that are formed by the descendants of legendary Arabic ancestors. In this segmentary lineage structure, each clan-family comprises in turn a variable number of patrilineally related clans that further comprise several kinship groups. In this kind of structure, lineages are "the fundamental principle of personal and social identity" (Lewis 2004, 490): each individual is thought to belong to a series of groups by blood relation, from the extended patrilineal family unit to the minimal lineage to clan and, finally, to clan-family. (Lewis 1998, 101; 2004, 490–495; for a thorough analysis of the lineage system see Lewis 1961). Besteman (1999, 3–4) claims that, due to the influence of Lewis's work, Somali society is usually described as "[...] an egalitarian and ethnically homogenous population of nomadic pastoralists who shared an overarching genealogical system and a common language, culture, and religion." Despite the merits of Lewis's work, the model in which tensions between sub-clans and lineages are inherent has also contributed to explanations of the collapse of the Somalian nation state and the eruption of the civil war, whereby the conflict is understood to be inbuilt and nearly inevitable, Besteman argues. She challenges both this explanation (not as completely erroneous, but as "inadequate") and the understanding of Somali society as homogenous and egalitarian, suggesting that "[...] the dissolution of the Somali nation-state can be understood only by analyzing the turbulent history of race, class, and regional dynamics over the past century and a

half—processes which produced a deeply stratified and fragmented society." (Ibid., 4.)[55]

Afrax happens to be one of those Somalis who do not look "Somalian", or, at least, what is constructed as the archetype of an "authentic" Somali in some of the aforementioned internet discussions and in the racialized social relations that have developed among Somalis during their history. It is not uncommon for Afrax to hear comments from ethnic Finns that he does not look like a Somali (to my embarrassment, I have to admit that I have made similar comments to him at some point), to say nothing of other Somali background people around him. A revealing example is an anecdote Afrax told me about his sister's wedding: one of the guests went to warn their mother about his sister dancing with some young bloke, and not only that—the young man in question was "tiin jareer". The mother took a glance at what was happening before answering the moralizing guest (who, in turn, later apologized for their rudeness): 'It is my son she is dancing with.' *Tiin jareer* (hard/rough hair) or simply *jareer* (hard/rough) is a Somali expression originally used to refer to the people living in the Gosha area and the farmers of the Shabeelle valley, collectively lumped together and positioned as lower status within Somali society (Besteman 1999, 115–118; see also endnote 9).[56] According to Besteman (1999, 7), the history of the latter is unclear, but the ancestors of the people living in Gosha arrived in Somalia in the nineteenth century as slaves taken from an area in what today is Kenya and Mozambique to work on Somali-owned plantations. The descendants of slaves settled in Gosha and were termed *jareer*, which not only denotes rough and tightly curled hair, but encompasses other physical features as well, such as broad, flat noses or bulkier fingers than those of "authentic" Somalis (ibid., 116). "Most significantly, the jareer category is equated with 'African'—and thus slave—ancestry, as distinguished form the (mythical) 'Arabic' ancestry of Somalis." Hence, in addition to certain physical features, the label refers to a person's historical origins as a non-Somali pagan slave, a history "devalued in Somali culture and ideology." (Ibid., 118.)

[55] Lewis responded to Besteman's criticism, and their disagreement on the significance of the clans on one hand, and race and class on the other to the politics of Somalia is stark (Besteman 1998; Lewis 1998). I will not go into that discussion here. In understanding Afrax's sense of belonging or not belonging both views are relevant, as will be apparent here with regard to the attention Besteman gives to racialized social relations among Somalis (which Lewis [1998, 104], for his part, denies is of central importance).

[56] In some contexts, the term Somali Bantu is also used to refer to these people. Space does not allow me to go into the rather complicated development of this concept, but Besteman (2012) and Declich (2000) are instructive on this subject.

Over centuries there has been complex interactions and mobility between different groups, and they have intermingled in ways that are impossible to track (Declich 2000, 29; 35). According to Besteman (1998, 115), the people in question regard themselves as "religiously, linguistically, culturally and legally full Somalis". Nevertheless, both Italian and British colonial authorities made use of the local categories (ibid., 31–32; Besteman 1999, 118), which nurtured the perception of "pure" Somalis and certain other groups, such as *jareer*, as "highly distinct and unequal social groups" (ibid., 121; Declich 2000, 33–34; Tiilikainen et al. 2016, 46). From the sixties on, laws have been introduced to ban the use of words that signify racial disdain—such as *jareer*—but "[...] in practice discrimination continued and worsened with the eruption of civil war at the end of 1990" (Declich 2000, 34). The category of the *jareer* remains a sensitive issue and a basis for discrimination among Somali people despite its impreciseness: one might appear *jareer* despite having no direct relation to Gosha or the Shabeelle valley—and vice versa: one might not look *jareer* even though direct relations could be tracked (Besteman 1999, 118; endnote 20; Declich 2000, 34–35).

Even though racism among Somalis has not been a topic of public discussion in Finland so far (Rastas 2013, 168), Afrax is not shy of talking about it out loud: 'Over there, around our hoods, there is so much of it [racism], there is really a lot of it.' Differentiating between *tiin jareer* and "pure" Somalis is only one form of this racism: especially some caste communities also face racialization and discrimination (Declich 2000, 34; Eno & Kusow 2014, 93). Perhaps being repeatedly categorized as *jareer* is one of the reasons Afrax is more inclined than some of his Somali peers to identify with Africa and to experience a sense of strangeness in relation to Arabs. Perhaps Afrax, despite identifying with Somalia, also experiences a sense of not belonging, because of encountering discrimination inside the community, and because of other feelings of being different and unlike the majority.

There is the clan question, for example. As came out earlier in this chapter, Afrax is highly critical of the clan system. This is in contrast to the attitude Hautaniemi found to be prevalent among young Somali background men in Finland around the turn of the millennium and which I have also understood to prevail among the youth today too: highlighting the importance of the clans is seen to be more characteristic of previous generations than as something very important among the youth, but belonging to a certain clan is never understated (Hautaniemi 2004, 51), or at least not directly challenged (my observations). As among the Somali boys Hautaniemi (2004, 50–51) worked with, family itself has had, and continues to have, a central position in Afrax's life—both for good and for bad: it has been vital for him, for

example, in the sense that it was through family reunification that he gained a residence permit in Finland in the first place, and he remains deeply committed to his family members living in Finland, and to some extent to those who are still living in Somalia too. On the other hand, balancing between the hopes and expectations of his family members' and his own aspirations is demanding at times, and especially his relationship with his father has at times been difficult. However, despite Afrax's commitment to his family, clan does not have a bearing upon his sense of belonging—or, if anything, it is negative. This, if we are to believe Lewis (2004), is exceptional: according to him, clanship remains a more powerful focus of identity than ethnicity in Somali society (ibid., 511), and clanship, on the other hand, is equated with kinship to the point that the terms are interchangeable (ibid., 507). Yet, one central reason for the strong distinction Afrax makes between kin and clan, and identifying with Somalis in general while rejecting clanship, can be found in his family history: he describes his extended family, clustered in and around the house his grandmother owned in Mogadishu, as one in which people had gotten married with folks from all around the country and from different clans, and no-one was interested in or disturbed by the differences. 'Before moving to Kenya,' Afrax explains, 'I didn't even know the clans exist!' The negative attitude towards the significance of the clanships he has since developed might be an aspect that sets him apart from those Somali background people for whom it might be a much more powerful focus of identification. On the other hand, the fact that Afrax's extended family has never given much weight to clanship might speak of greater variety among Somalis' attitudes concerning the clan system than Lewis recognizes.

Then there are the relations between Somalis living in Somalia and those living in the diaspora. Even though Afrax and his parents arrived in Finland cherishing hopes of returning home someday, as so many other refugees do, this does not seem to be a realistic option for Afrax nowadays. He is well aware of both the interdependence (especially, but not only, in the form of remittances which form a considerable part of the GDP of Somalia) and the frictions between those living in their home country and those living in diaspora.[57] For example, we once speculated on what the population of Somalia might be, and Afrax estimated that it could be around 10 million, while those living outside Somalia might number up to 20 million.[58] 'Think if all were to return there, there would not be enough space! My mother also says

[57] In 2016, remittances were estimated at 1.4 billion US dollars, forming 23% of Somalia's GDP (Aid Coordination Unit 2017, 4).

[58] The latter is bit of an overestimation, the right number being somewhere around 2 million (Connor & Krogstad 2016).

that it would be necessary to put them on top of each other!' In the background of this joking there lurks uncertainty around how one would be received upon moving back: Afrax has followed the discussions in which people returning are accused of snatching jobs from locals; with the education they gained in Western countries, they tend to get any job, no matter how much education other applicants have gained locally. And it is not only this, either: once we discuss how we would be treated if we were to go to Somalia as researchers, and Afrax is strongly of the opinion that I would fare fine, while he would be treated like trash. 'What, does he fancy himself?' is the attitude he expects to encounter.

Whether all this is accurate or not is beside the point here. The point is Afrax's experience: his ambivalent position in regard to Somalia and other Somalis, Africa and other people with African background, and Arabia and people who identify as Arabs. He identifies as a Somali, though it comes with a "but". He knows many other Somalis consider him *tiin jareer*—and most of these with pejorative connotations. Afrax sometimes even uses the word to describe himself, in a fashion that can be interpreted as a step towards reclaiming the concept. He is not at home with the clan system but rejects it. He does not feel that he would be welcomed back without complication, and is aware that the Somalia he knew as a boy does not exist anymore: his other family members have made some trips to Somalia to meet their relatives, and have come back with news about their way of life, which has changed considerably. Afrax does not want to identify with Arab populations, because he doesn't feel like an Arab, doesn't want to be one either, and doesn't feel Arabic culture is his "own". The direction to which he is strongly drawn, that of black Africa and the African diaspora, is not unambiguous either. As a Somali he is either considered to be distinct from "Africans" or considered to differentiate himself from them. This doesn't always happen, perhaps, but often enough to make him feel his belonging to Africa is in doubt: "I would like to be African," Afrax says. "I want to believe that I am African," he says, and "I *want* to be African." Not once during our discussion does he say that he *is* African.

Afrax may well not be alone with his dilemma—of experiencing belonging to Africa, but not finding this experience accepted by others—it could quite conceivably speak of larger changes going on among racialized minorities in Finland. Right around the time we had these discussions, Rastas (2013, 168) anticipated the focusses' of identification among Somali background children and youth in particular might start to change quite soon, and that, due to the nature of the racialized social relations in Finland, these young people might start to look for ways to identify with the African diaspora. This development nestles among larger social

and cultural transformations in Finland and Northern Europe; during the last couple of years, racialized minorities in this area have started to speak publicly about questions relating to race, to act within the field of anti-racism and to create new identity politics; "[...] new solidarities and spaces and vocabularies for racial identifications." (Rastas 2019, 358.) Afrax's search for recognition as African takes place in the context of these transformations, both by being informed by them and contributing to them. I will return to this in the last section of this chapter. Before that, I examine Afrax's search and confusion in a wider transnational context that stretches beyond relating to Africa and Somalia, taking into consideration the challenges he faces while growing up in an interconnected world in which everyday life is saturated by intersecting beliefs, norms, customs, cultures and subcultures.

7.3.2 Challenging oneself: professional ambition, personal development, moral confusion

When I started to work with Afrax, he was about to complete his studies as a youth worker. Working as a peer mentor was, as mentioned earlier, part of his studies, and he graduated a bit after the project was finished. He soon got employed at a reception centre and was enthusiastic about it. Afrax considered it "a great opportunity to get a new experience and learn", and he was excited about having the possibility of seeing what working in a reception centre was like. This job turned out to be short-term, but it did not take long for Afrax to get employed again in the same NGO unit (but in a different project) in which he had been working as a peer mentor. In a way, then, he was in a good situation; he was employed pretty much directly from the school bench, and did not have to spend long periods unemployed. But Afrax was not quite satisfied. He felt that returning to work in the same NGO unit was in some way too "safe": even though working there was demanding, and his new duties included inspiring and novel parts, he still felt that it was like staying put in the same place or even going a step backwards, instead of developing and forging ahead. Soon, he started to apply for places at universities of applied sciences, but, alas, didn't succeed despite several attempts. Simultaneously, his will to develop and move ahead only grew, and, finally, he started to dream about studying at university—perhaps international relations—and, in order to gain a place, he took half a year off from his job to take a preparatory course for immigrant background applicants.

These reflections on his will to develop professionally and intellectually led me to understand that they reflect Afrax's mode in general. During the years we worked

together, Afrax repeatedly talked about his will and need to "cross my boundaries", to "step out of comfort zone", to get out of the "same old circles", to learn and develop. This attitude does not only apply to his education and career but seems to be an encompassing approach towards the world and a driving force for Afrax. He takes part in very different kinds of projects—international youth exchanges, voluntary work projects in reception centres, or local, multicultural celebrations of Finland's independence day—often expressing afterwards how "thankful" he is for having an opportunity to see different kinds of places and to learn new things. He even applied, and was accepted, to European Youth Event (EYE), the European Parliament's flagship biennial event for young people in Strasbourg, which brings together thousands of youths from all over the European Union to meet each other and exchange their views with experts and some MEPs. Afrax was excited, but also quite nervous about this opportunity, worrying especially about his lack of English. In the end he fared pretty well, but came back with a rather critical view of the spectacle the young people were presented with in Strasbourg. The transnational frame of Afrax's life thus reaches well beyond Finland and Somalia.

There is, however, a noticeable tension in the way Afrax talks about his will to develop: learning and moving ahead is not only inspiring and exiting, but also demanding. It requires stepping into a zone of discomfort, leaving behind a place of safety, stretching and crossing one's own boundaries and saying goodbye to familiar people, places and truths. It is quite a challenge he sets to himself, but there seems to be no other option for him: getting stuck, staying put, and not moving forward are described as equally or even more distressing in his reflections. This tension prevails not only on the practical level of Afrax's life described above—that of studies, work, and personal development—but stretches to a deep level, of his values and a tormenting confusion about them.

"Or like, what are my values?"

> Afrax: 'Living between two cultures is not good for me. I have grown up over there, and grown to certain values, and I don't want to give that up. But now I have to question and ponder things, and it is hard. I don't want to stay put in it [the culture in which he has grown] but I want to be open: I feel that I learn from all people and from all cultures, and it does not mean that I would abandon my own culture.'

This is Afrax's other burning dilemma: he simultaneously wants to cherish what he calls "my own culture" *and* to be open to new people and other cultures. He both feels the need to question—as brought out in the introduction, he doesn't take things as given but wants and needs justifications and explanations—*and* feels worn out and

tormented by this need. He might exclaim "I want to explore myself" and "it would be better for me to live under someone else's guidance, so that I wouldn't need to think" during one and same discussion.

There is plenty of non-academic literature and other material on "growing up between two cultures" and so called "Third Culture Kids". It is not surprising that Afrax uses this expression of himself: if he had not been familiarized with the term by social workers or teachers during his teenage years in Finland, he would surely have bumped into it while studying multicultural youth work. Worry about immigrant children "falling between two cultures" gained prominence in Finnish public discourse during the nineties (Hautaniemi 1997, 16). As a consequence, there are several NGO-based projects in Finland that provide support for families bringing their children up "between two cultures" and young people who are growing up in this kind of setting. Education on the issue is also provided in different institutions (including universities) for people training as professionals in education and the social sector. More often than not, the underlying or explicit assumption is that children who grow up "between two cultures" are children of "imaginary immigrants": the issues covered in these materials tend to include such topics as honour-related violence, differing views between parents and children regarding dating and sexuality, and the risk of forced marriages.

Interestingly, while "immigrant children" are often understood to grow up or even fall "between" cultures, children of so-called expatriates—a term often used to refer to so-called high-skilled or lifestyle migrants, to "privileged migrants", in short—are generally termed "Third Culture Kids" or "TCKs" (Fechter & Korpela 2016, 423). While Hoosain & Salili (2014, 3–4) define the former as children who "[...] have to cope with two different cultures and two languages, the language and culture of home and that of the school and the society in which they live", Pollock & Van Reken (2001, 26–31) define the latter as children who develop a sense of relationship to both their parents' home culture and the culture of the country/ies in which they grow up, incorporating elements of each culture into their life experience and developing a sense of belonging with others who have similar backgrounds. In a similar fashion as "growing up between two cultures", "TCKs" are presumed to be troubled and to have identity problems due to growing up in a different culture than the culture their parents represent. "TCKs" are therefore considered to lack strong bonds to their "own culture", which is assumed to be a problem (Korpela 2016, 473), and "between two cultures kids" to have trouble in maintaining continuity between the cultural identity given to them by their parents and the culture of their present home country (Hoosain & Salili 2014, 10).

According to Korpela (2016, 471), the literature on "Third Culture Kids" consists predominantly of guidance and advice materials targeted at "TCKs" and their parents, based on comparatively little convincing research (Korpela 2016, 471). To some extent, however, these terms are used by scholars as well, and the research on the children and young people referred to with these labels has extended to the social sciences (Fechter & Korpela 2016, 424; Hoosain & Salili, 2014). Fechter and Korpela (2016, 425; Korpela 2016, 471–474; see also Tanu 2015) criticize this discourse for its narrow terms, and the "TCKs" concept itself for the essentializing of cultures it implicitly presumes. In my view, similar problems trouble the (limited) existing scholarly literature on children "growing up between two cultures", and the discussions I have shared with Afrax during the years we worked together point in the same direction. This is not to say that his own interpretation—that living "between cultures" is tough for him—wouldn't be accurate, or that child migrants would not face special circumstances and certain challenges in general. As Korpela (2016, 471) notes, there is a need to conceptualize their experiences. Also, I do not mean to imply that concern among social workers and other actors around practices that seriously circumscribe some young people's lives or expose them to violence (be it honour-related or not) is mistaken as such. I wish to emphasize that the issue at hand is much more intricate than the way the literature tends to present it, and that an essentializing understanding of cultures is misleading if one wishes to capture the multifariousness of the experiences of child migrants.

While, for some migrant and Muslim background youth growing up in "secular Western countries", the issues brought up by Hoosain and Salili (2014, 7–8) might be of major significance—for example the question of how to adjust one's religious duties to the practices and daily rhythms of a non-Muslim country of residence, and how to do so in a fashion that is not "uncool"—Afrax's dilemma is about something else. It is not simply about a teenage identity crisis either, in which he, like other "between two cultures kids", would need to find integrity "[...] through maintenance of continuity with the identity given to them by their parents and the culture of the country in which they now live" (ibid., 10). As Korpela (2016, 472) argues of "TCK" literature, in this kind of description, cultures are defined as ethnic or national entities that are "neat, ready-made packages", as "blocks" into which children should integrate. This "[...] overemphasizes culture as an encompassing agent while disregarding diversity, processes and people [...], including the agency, experiences and practices [...] of children themselves" (ibid., 474). The daily reality of these young people is, to quote Golbert (2001, 725), "[...] embedded in a transnational frontier of intersecting ideas, relationships, histories and identities [...]." Thus, as Hautaniemi

(2004, 95) writes concerning boys coming from Somalia who grew up in Finland in the late 90s, the question is not simply about what it is like to be a Somali or a Finn in Finland, but also about what it means to be a culturally categorized person in today's integrative and transnational world.

As I showed in the previous section, the key reference points for Afrax's sense of identity and sense of belonging are Somalia, Africa and people of African descent, and the Arab world—Finland or Europe as cultural or geographical areas do not seem to play a big role for him in that respect, at least not during our years of working together. The questions he brings up regarding his uneasiness with "living between two cultures" are of quite different nature. They involve religion, in the sense that he has started to question some of his previous fundamental beliefs. Nevertheless, what is at issue for him in this respect is not really how to balance religious and secular life, nor how to negotiate between the differing expectations his kin and Finnish society might have of him. Unsurprisingly, these issues do come up sometimes, but they are not the ones that make him feel disturbingly confused, even "tormented". They are of different level altogether: they concern what he considers to be his own "values"—or, rather, what he considers to be "complete confusion" regarding them.

There is a deeply moral undertone to Afrax's pondering. He has learned to consider some things as serious sins in the eyes of Islam and some peoples as enemies of Muslims. Yet his golden rule is 'to encounter people as whole [persons] and accept them as they are,' and he says he has started to consider this more important than whether something a person does is sinful according to Islam. In this way, encountering people with an open mind forces Afrax to question some of the basic beliefs he has grown to take for granted. One of the difficult issues is homosexuality. The first time I had a serious conversation regarding homosexuality with Afrax was nearly ten years ago, when we were at a youth training event (Afrax as the young person, I as the youth worker). A Finnish man, who was one of the organizers of the event, overheard our exchange, and, when we were about to finish, he came to tell us in a friendly but firm tone that he has lived with his boyfriend for seven years and would love to get married with him, if only that were legal in Finland.[59] Only a moment ago, Afrax had said quite openly that the Islam he professes considers homosexuality a serious sin, and his jaw dropped when this man came out about his own homosexuality. Later, when we were having dinner together, Afrax exclaimed: 'That [organizer], he is the most courageous person I know!' Afrax

[59] At that time, homosexuals were only able to register their relationship, not to get married. The law has now been changed and marriages between people of the same sex are now possible in Finland.

was impressed by the person's outspokenness, and consequently was pushed to review his way of relating to LBGTQ minorities. Several years later, at the time of my fieldwork, Afrax is at a point in which he says he acknowledges the existence of homosexuals and wants to accept it, despite what the teachers of religion have taught him.

Another major issue is the relationship with Israeli Jews. Once Afrax tells me a story about an international youth event he had attended in Europe, where he had had to sleep in the same room with Jewish youth from Israel.

> One can only imagine how the first night felt. I cannot explain how it felt to be in the same space with them, to realize that I will have to spend a week with them. But I also broke big prejudices I had… I don't know, it was, but it was also funny. I asked them what they think, should Palestinians have their own country. And they were young like that and they said that yes they should, so that we could also have peace, so that both could have peace. [...] So, somehow we became closer to each other. Breaking the prejudices like that was really great. Somehow, I don't *need* to hate all Israelis or Jews! So, it was great. I thought like, maybe religions also teach some kind of hate to us. I like my religion, but in some way, when I asked [about this] myself, I saw things differently. And we were like best friends, played football together and all, like that, it was really interesting. I felt good afterwards, if I hadn't asked about it I would've regretted. There would have remained like this distance [between us].

Again, it is Afrax's will power and ability to encounter people with an open mind that led him to question fundamental beliefs he had grown to take for granted. There is a sense of relief and joy in the way he behaves and reflects on these situations. At the same time, he bears a burden of worry around how this questioning might "change my personality", as Afrax puts it. 'I want to be critical in respect to my religion,' he says, but then brings out his deep concern: 'Maybe I am not a true believer then.' He tells me about another boy he has discussed this with, who was of the opinion that, if one is a devout believer, one has to believe everything that is taught in one's religion. Afrax disagrees: 'I am of the opinion that in no case should one believe everything, and that you do not need to be some kind of sheik to be a believer.'[60]

It is not only his "own culture" Afrax is critical of. He seems to explore everything he encounters with a keen sight, and questions some of the central assumptions he encounters in Finland too. Once, for example, we end up discussing equality, and the understanding that Western countries are more egalitarian than his own country of origin—an idea that has been dished up for him time and again as taken for given.

[60] With the word *sheik*, Afrax refers to religiously learned leaders of Muslim communities.

> I was just thinking that is equality best implemented here? Things are different here. But then I think is it in the end so egalitarian? Is it egalitarian, for example, that people with mental disabilities have their own schools while normal, so-called normal people, have their own? It is like, I think, it is quite different [than in Somalia]. Some things [that create inequality] are like accepted here, but over there [for example in Somalia] they are not accepted.

And he spends time exposing himself to different cultures and reflects on what these encounters provoke in him: one of his favorite TV-programs is "Madventures", a travel documentary made by two Finns, Riku Rantala and Tunna Milonoff, who travel around the world as backpackers, exploring a multitude of destinations and taking part in local customs. Afrax often talks about what he has seen through the eyes of Riku and Tunna and what kind of thoughts he has about these things:

> They [some tribe that was visited in the program] think differently about these things. They [scar tattoos] are like a respectable thing in their community and they are like uniform, because it is done to every child. They [the children] are accepted as members of the tribe according to their customs. And then over here quite many would think that how horrible it is, that the child is cut, also myself I think like "Oh my, like, it is very wrong" and like this… But the explanation that he gave was like "Aha, one can think like this." It was quite intriguing.

This questioning and critical attitude towards both the religious beliefs related to Islam and the practices and norms he encounters in his present home country leads Afrax to face a much more fundamental dilemma than the individual questions regarding, for example, LBGTQ minorities or supposed enemies of Muslims. During one of our discussions, I suggest that Afrax should study anthropology, as he is so interested in exposing himself to different kinds of beliefs and worldviews, and is so able to question some of his own most central beliefs. But he rejects my suggestion, telling me that he is not interested in different cultures and beliefs as such, but in his own values and morals, which he feels an acute need to reflect and discover:

> Afrax: It is about *morals*! It is like, it is exactly that kind of thing that I ponder, a person has to have moral [principles]. So, like, a person has to have a kind of, like, that some things your mind does not let you to do, or like, you don't even come to think of it. [...] A person has to have morals, so that it is a different thing, it is not like any religion or something but a person has to have that kind of [principles]. But I don't know where they come from.
> Elina: That are independent…
> Afrax: Yes, yes!
> Elina: …of religion and...
> Afrax: That are independent of *everything* else! So, like, it is the same thing as that you approve some things and some things you do not approve.

> Elina: Yeah, yeah… But I don't know if you can ever attain that kind of unconditional [morals], or, in a way, like, my first reaction that I get when you say that is that, yeah, I do not accept like causing suffering to a human being, ever. But, then I do accept it anyhow, because if we take a situation in which one person causes suffering to another person then I do think one has to resist it. In which case you cause suffering to that [first] person… You know, I am not a pacifist in the sense that I would, for example, think that if someone attacks me violently… sure as hell I would hit back!
> Afrax: Of course, of course!
> [Both laugh.]
> Elina: So, in that way things get immediately more complicated as it is not… So that I do accept causing suffering to people who cause suffering to me. Or to you. So it is not an absolute, it is not like causing suffering would be always wrong, in my perspective.
> Afrax: No. It is exactly these kind of questions at which I am quite a lot, so like, for example something that I do, or that I have done once. Does it make me like, does it change my personality? And that kind of, like, I ponder quite a lot by myself what I do and what this is and, I don't know, I guess I have some kind of morals for sure…
> Elina: Sure you do, I think you have very strong, or in a way exactly that in the first place you think so much about those things so that tells that it is like… One can be confused with it, but...
> Afrax: I am completely confused.
> Elina: Yeah, but that doesn't mean that you wouldn't have very strong, like, striving for that.
> Afrax: Eeh, yeah.

I have given this somewhat lengthy description of our evolving discussion to show how, layer by layer, I started to approach and gain understanding of the core of Afrax's dilemma. The fundamental question is not whether homosexuality is a sin or not, nor whether one should consider Israeli Jews enemies, despite the weight of these issues as such. These questions materialize conflicting views that, in the last resort, boil down to profound questions about right and wrong, about treating others and acting in a just way, and a deep confusion about what to base one's moral principles on in an interconnected and integrative world in which various beliefs, norms, customs, cultures and subcultures develop and are present in everyday life (Hannerz 1996, 5–6; 38–39). Even though Afrax uses the expression "between two cultures" of himself, when he actually envisions the place that would ease the torment in which he finds himself it is not the Somalia of today. As in the introduction to this chapter, he repeatedly pronounces a wish to have been born 200 years ago and lived under someone else's command, so that he would not need to think and be confused. He thus seems to have an intuitive understanding of the inapplicability of concepts such as "integration" or "acculturation" to "the culture of the surrounding society", or of "building bridges" or "maintaining continuity"

between two separate cultures (that of a home culture and that of the surrounding society) in the reality in which he lives: a transnational world in which people might experience relatedness to several places, cultures and subcultures, of which not all are territorially based and to whose evolution one might contribute via one's own agency (Hannerz 1996, 8; Hautaniemi 2004, 168; Korpela 2016, 476; 482).

Unshareable shared experience

As Korpela (2016, 473; 478) underlines, the children of the lifestyle migrants living in Goa she studied do not simply passively integrate to those readymade packages called "cultures" in much of the "TCK" literature, but they can and do create their own cultural practices too. Korpela (ibid., 480–481) suggests that, for the children and teenagers she has studied, youth subcultures (such as hip-hop, breakdance and skateboarding) may be more significant than the national cultures of their parents or the local culture, to which they have quite limited contacts. Similarly, it can be argued that many refugee background young people in Finland experience a sense of belonging to the subcultures they actively participate in—like, for example, Manasse, who is part of the Finnish rap scene, and strives to develop it in a direction in which "immigrant rappers" have more space and artistic freedom (see chapter 7.2)—and that, in their immediate lives, this might have greater importance than the national cultures of their parents and Finnish society.

Afrax's situation, however, differs in the sense that he experiences loneliness and dissimilarity because of his will to constantly develop and move on, and the considerations that occupy his mind. Several times he says that he feels older than his age, that he does not fit in with his peers—most of whom share a background as refugees or children of refugees—and that they consider his reflections strange and uninteresting. Despite his extensive social network and several mates with whom he can spend time, he feels that he does not have true friends to whom he could talk about his thoughts and doubts. He has tried, but feels that his mates do not understand him and that they think he is like some old man among careless youth if he brings the things that trouble him up. And some things he has kept to himself:

> Afrax: There is a high threshold, it is not that I would not tell, but there is a high threshold to tell, because, like, you don't even dare to say it to yourself in the mirror! Things like that.
> Elina: But my experience is that if you sit in private with a young person, quite often there starts to come things that are like…
> Afrax: Surprising?

> Elina: Yeah, quite, kind of [deep reflections]… But apparently it is quite difficult to [share them].
> Afrax: Once when we were [at some youth event], so, on the last night I sat with one [young person] from Sri Lanka, and the other was French, and we talked about things that I had never talked about with anyone, like, with my friends. It was like wow! I don't know, maybe you don't dare to tell all things to your own friends, because you might be afraid that they tease you, or that there will come some issues and you won't be accepted anymore. [...] But it was really great, or, like, one of the most fulfilling discussions, and those kinds of things leave a very positive [feeling].
> Elina: Yeah, so that you can encounter people, and be really open.
> Afrax: Yeah.

As I bring up in our discussion, many other young people with whom I have spent time intensively seem to be grappling with very deep reflections. Several times I have talked extensively with Manasse, for example, about how to raise children, whether it is better for children that some physical discipline is included in their upbringing or not, and about the moral issues linked to these questions. And, with Emanuel, we have had several conversations around questions regarding living as a devout Christian and a young man—the questions that have bothered him have had to do with premarital sex, of acceptable ways of dating, and of his ability to serve as a role model in his voluntary work with the teenagers of his parish, again, all moral questions. Perhaps these are too delicate issues to talk about openly with one's mates, and I, as an older woman, have ended up being a kind of big sister, with whom one can reflect on things that are too tricky to bring up among other young men. Hence, while Afrax feels that his deep reflections alienate him from his peers, going through these kind of ponderings might actually be a shared experience—only one that is too difficult to be open about. In order to support other young people struggling with similar questions, developing more nuanced understandings and insightful conceptualizations regarding their experiences of growing up with a refugee background in a transnational context and interconnected world is essential. The essentializing views on cultures that the "TCK" and "between two culture kids" literatures and popular understandings now offer work more to blur than to help attempts to understand individual life situations embedded in a "transnational frontier" (Golbert 2001, 725). This kind of insight is most certainly needed in the field of youth and social work, where rigid understandings of "our" and "their" culture too often complicate giving the support young people (of Finnish or other origin) lack.

7.3.3 Searching for political relatedness

> One profound unknowable will be whether some, or many, nation-states will be sites for anti-globalization/anti-transnationalism backlash. Alongside debates around economic protectionism, this is already witnessed in limited ways through calls to tighten borders, limit citizenship, unravel multiculturalism and enforce migrants' assimilation. As suggested above, broad patterns of transformation entailing the gradual acknowledgement of increasing diversity, complexity and multiple attachments are already underway, and perhaps the forms of backlash are but last gasps of a bygone model of the nation-state.

The above quote from Vertovec (2009, 162) aptly (though perhaps over-optimistically) describes two developments in Finnish society that have direct consequences for refugee background youth, Afrax among others. The first is the rise of anti-immigrant nationalist populism that has picked up speed during the years Afrax has lived and grown up in Finland and that reached one of its culminations during the "refugee crisis". The second, partly provoked by the first, is anti-fascist and anti-racist action and, during the most recent years, efforts by racialized minorities to politicize race and bring out the effects of racialization on their lives. In this section I look at how Afrax relates to these developments, searching for a political point of reference.

Afrax and the rise of national populism in Finland

In July 2015, when the so-called refugee crisis was already a hot topic in Europe, and just a few months before it reached Finland, Olli Immonen, a member of the Finnish parliament representing the Finns Party, wrote the following Facebook post (original in English):

> I am dreaming of a strong, brave nation that will defeat this nightmare called multiculturalism. This ugly bubble that our enemies live in, will soon enough burst into a million little pieces. Our lives are entwined in very harsh times. These are the days that will forever leave a mark on our nation's future. I have a strong belief in my fellow fighters. We will fight until the end for our homeland and one true Finnish nation. Victory will be ours.

This post was the final straw for many Finns, who were getting fed up with the openly racist outbursts from certain MPs in the realm of official politics. As a counter-reaction, a demonstration was organized in just two days, with "We have a dream" as its title, and turned out to be massive (on a Finnish scale). According to police estimates, around 15 000 people turned up to take part in it and to listen to

speakers and performers, many of whom are big names in Finland. Even the incumbent president, Sauli Niinistö, wrote a letter to be read to the demonstrators. In Afrax's home city, some NGOs and anti-racist activists decided to organize a support demonstration as well. Afrax was already involved in their network as part of his job, and took part in organizing the local event, which gathered around 1500 people—a surprising result in the city in question and in a demonstration called with just twenty-four hours notice. I was not there, as the speedy organizational work was done via Facebook, and I do not have an account. But Afrax called me later that day to talk about issues concerning his work and study plans, and to tell me about the demonstration. He filled me in on the background and about the work they had done for the demo in his home city, before saying, with an arch tone of voice: "And guess what?" I, of course, asked impatiently what, and he answered: "I gave a speech over there!" Afrax explained how he had written "with emotion" a post on his own Facebook wall regarding Olli Immonen's post, and, when the other organizers of the demonstration had seen it, they had asked Afrax to read it at the demonstration. The post and speech went as follows (translation mine):

> I guess I tried to close my eyes to the truth. Everything a foreigner does in a strange country, whether they were dark, red or light skinned, it is all taken notice of and categorized. This all affects, in some ways, other individuals' lives.
>
> I want to say these things: religion does not wage war, human beings wage war; culture does not commit horrendous acts, human beings commit horrendous acts; and skin colour does not hurt human beings but human beings hurt each other. All we human beings have good and bad sides, all communities have good and bad habits.
>
> Sometimes it feels like we forget that in the end we are all just human beings.
>
> I wish that this world would be better for all of us, that we could live in harmony and forgive each other.
>
> Let us break our prejudices, help each other, and learn to forgive each other.

This was Afrax's first personal public appearance—the previous ones had been in connection with his work as a peer mentor, and were not of political nature. This time he spoke his own mind, spoke as an individual, as someone who has lived half his life in Finland, but is still not accepted by certain MPs as a member of the "true Finnish nation" and is designated as its "enemy", as part and parcel of the "nightmare called multiculturalism".

Afrax arrived in Finland around 2008, at a time when the support of nationalist-populist parties was well-established in many parts of Europe and was currently rising in Northern countries too—including the Finns Party (Lentin & Titley 2011,

1–4; Nikunen 2015, 24). The Finns Party was founded in 1995, but, during its initial years, didn't gain much foothold. In 2008, however, it gained ground in local elections, and became the third biggest party in parliament only three years later. As elsewhere in Europe, the rise of nationalist populism was closely connected with an anti-immigrant agenda and growing criticism of the so-called "failed experiment of multiculturalism" (Lentin & Titley 2011, 2; Nikunen 2015, 24). These debates have provided a forum on which racist views and rhetorics have been "laundered" and re-legitimized as a form of "cultural" racism (Lentin & Titley 2011, 16–17). Immonen's Facebook post is both a result and sign of this development: even though it met criticism, Immonen was not sanctioned in any way, and is still an MP for the Finns Party, currently also acting as a member of the Constitutional Law Committee.[61] The furore around Immonen's post indicates the importance social media has had as an arena for the rise of populism and anti-immigrant agendas. Online chat forums not only provide an anonymous space for aggressive and hate speech, but also structure public discussions in general (Nikunen 2015, 21): in Finland, Pöyhtäri et al. (2013, 225–227) have shown how traditional mass media circulate both the expressions and tone used in online discussions, thus contributing to a change of atmosphere towards a more aggressive and provocative tone in society at large.

The rise of national populism in Finland is not constricted to party politics—rather, it exists in parallel with other far-right and even neo-Nazi movements. Earlier, in the summer 2015, Immonen had been seen taking part in a commemoration of Eugen Schauman together with members of the openly neo-Nazi Finnish Resistance Movement (Suomen Vastarintaliike, or SVL, which is part of the Nordic Resistance Movement) (Muraja 2015).[62] Immonen is not the only member of the Finns Party with connections to the small but persistent far-right nationalist groups in Finland (Koivulaakso et al. 2012), such as SVL and the organization called Suomen Sisu. At SVL's demonstration in Jyväskylä in Central Finland four days after the large anti-racist demonstrations provoked by Immonen's post, three bystanders were assaulted by about ten of the SVL demonstrators. When the "refugee crisis" reached Finland in the early autumn of 2015, it gave impetus to these groups and to a number of new groups, such as the Rajat kiinni! movement ("Close the Borders!") and Soldiers of Odin group, both founded during the autumn.

[61] After the splash regarding his post, Immonen resigned from the Finns Party group in parliament, but continued as MP and member of the party. After about two months he was welcomed back into the parliamentary group as well.

[62] Schauman was a Finnish nationalist who assassinated the Governor-General of Finland, Nikolai Bobrikov, in 1904 when Finland was still part of Russia.

During the winter of 2015–2016, Soldiers of Odin started self-proclaimed street patrols in order to ensure "safety" in several cities in Finland, including Afrax's home city. He inevitably bumped into them—he once called, for example, and told me how he had been in the city centre when about 150 "soldiers" had marched the streets. 'I went intentionally right to the edge of the sidewalk. None of them looked at me, they all looked away,' he said, and claimed that, as he cannot do anything about it, he tries not to spend energy getting anxious. But he also told that some immigrant background young people of colour with whom he works were constantly afraid in public space due to these patrols, and were confused as the police did nothing about them. Encountering racism in the streets was, of course, not new to Afrax and his peers as such. But Afrax's own hunch was that, following the events of 2015, such abuse became more and more commonplace, and escalated more often to physical assaults. A telling example is our exchange of words in the autumn of 2016 during our common field trip to London:

> We exit the underground station in Brixton and start to walk towards the street where our Airbnb accommodation is. It is nearly midnight: we have been in the centre of London to see a play based on Amiri Baraka's (aka LeRoy James) *The Slave*, and to have soft drinks after it in order to discuss what we had seen. It is Saturday night and Halloween, and I am uncomfortably aware of the restless streets and the fact that this is an area marked with darkest red on the Metropolitan Police's map, indicating the highest levels of crime in general and crimes of violent nature in particular. But Afrax, walking next to me, sighs with relief.
>
> Afrax: 'I am not afraid here! I am more afraid in my home city, like, in the high street, a lot more than here. Here folks merely look at me like "some young fella over there, who cares". But in my home city it has become so to say normal that there will be some trouble, especially if you go out with friends.'
>
> And, as an example, Afrax tells me of a recent evening when he had been with some friends on the high street of their home city, the others waiting while one of them was getting cash from an ATM. A group of white Finns had passed them, and one of them had purposefully barged Afrax's friend hard with his shoulder while walking past. The friend had gotten irritated and an argument had erupted. Soon, the police arrived, and Afrax is still angry when he describes how the police were more inclined to listen to the white people than him and his friends. Finally, he adds: 'And what was also super irritating was that their girlfriends kept on hitting our backs all the time!' And he goes on to tell me about other incidents that he has experienced recently, of how some white Finns are either afraid of him—which also hurts him—or aggressive. Once, some passerby actually called the police when he found Afrax with his friends trying to help a drunkard who had hurt himself, accusing the youths, who had called an ambulance and were waiting for it to arrive, of maltreating the man.

These stories seem to be unending, and while most are about psychological violence, some have elements of serious physical violence, too. Afrax's Somali background friend, for example, was attacked by a group of skinhead-looking young men, maltreated in many ways, and only managed to escape through his wits and good luck. As awareness of the normalization of street racism, and the experiences of it by the young people Afrax worked with kept accumulating, he spoke out publicly about the issue a second time. About two years after the We Have a Dream demonstration he gave an interview to Finland's national public broadcasting company. In it, he tells how people who "look like foreigners" are more and more cautious about moving in public space: "When one moves during the hours of darkness, one often has to glance behind one's back." The journalist who wrote the story had had difficulties in finding anyone willing to give an interview with their name and face exposed. Afrax was the one who agreed to do so, and without sparing his words: "It feels like humanness does not apply to me. Sombre thoughts come to one's mind. [...] One young person I know says that he used to think Finland was a safe country, but that now he feels that his own life is threatened."[63]

From antifascist activism to politicizing race

As is also evident from the incidents described above, the growth of anti-immigrant national populism, hand in hand with racism and xenophobia, has also provoked counter-reactions in Finland. Throughout the years 2015 and 2016 existing antifascist and anarchist groups and networks—such as Varis, A-ryhmä, Alusta and others—organized several counter demonstrations against the marches by the Finnish Resistance Movement and other racist, neo-Nazi and far-right nationalist groups. In winter 2016, a clown group, Loldiers of Odin, developed a different technique of countering racism by starting a campaign of mockery against Soldiers of Odin, managing to ridicule the street patrols and gaining notable national and international public attention to their cause. A large mass movement against racism and fascism was born only the next autumn, after a member of SVL kicked Jimi Karttunen, a young, white Finnish man who had started to argue with them, during a rally. The kick was hard and Karttunen fell, hit his head on the pavement, suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and, after a week, died. After this incident, according to police estimates about 15 000 or more people gathered in a demonstration called "Halt the Game—Let's Break the Silence" (Peli poikki – Rikotaan hiljaisuus) in Helsinki, and several support demonstrations were organized in other Finnish cities at which

[63] Reference omitted in order to protect Afrax's anonymity.

hundreds of people participated. These demonstrations were supported by some government ministers, and, at least in Helsinki, the Finnish National Anthem was played by a symphony orchestra.

However, as Rastas (2019, 366–367) observes, "[p]rojects and campaigns against racism have often been planned and organized by people who represent white majority perspectives." All the movements described above, from the initial We Have a Dream demonstration, to the smaller scale antifascist and anarchist actions, to the Halt the Game mass movement, were predominantly organized by white ethnic Finns. The first was initiated by a small group formed of white Finnish journalists, politicians and producers, some with activist backgrounds. Some of these central figures were also involved in the Halt the Game demonstration, which was organized in cooperation with several big NGOs (such as Amnesty International Finland, Plan International Finland, UN Women and a long list of Finnish NGOs). As for the antifascist and anarchist scene of activists in Finland, it is predominantly white. As Rastas (ibid., 366) notes, representatives of minorities are often invited to participate in the events organized by people from the white majority as "experts by experience" and as representatives of people who actually do face racism. In my eyes, especially the Halt the Game demonstration, where the National Anthem was played, turned more into an act of reclaiming the idea of the Finnish nation as non-racist than into an act of bringing out how race as a social fact affects the lives of people who belong to racialized minorities in Finland.[64]

Afrax was involved to some extent in these movements. As already mentioned, he took part in the organization of the We Have a Dream demonstration in his home city, and, after that, he was not very actively involved, but still followed the work of migrants' rights activists, and took part in organizing the practicalities of some demonstrations and in translating info materials into Somali. Nevertheless, he never really seemed to find his place in this network of people, and, over time, his participation in its work diminished. Also, he got to know the activist and anarchist scene in his home city, and started to participate in some of their events and actions, being, for example, the only person of colour in the local anarchist football team. Afrax also got loosely involved with the local branch of Left Youth, a nationwide political youth organization. In the long run, none of these groups seemed to offer

[64] During these years, racialized minorities did have a notable role in demonstrations organized for migrants' rights, but these aimed at defending the right to legalize one's status in Finland and stopping deportations, not racism as such. Also, this movement predominantly involved cooperation between white Finnish migrants' rights activists and newly arrived asylum seekers, as its culmination, a five-month demonstration and tent camp called "Right to Live" at Railway Square in Helsinki in 2017 exemplifies.

the kind of aims or socialities which Afrax could really relate with politically, and his involvement with them remains somewhat up in the air.

During our common field trip to London, we did end up in a group to which Afrax seemed to relate to, at least more than I did:

> Afrax stands next to me on Trafalgar square. We are surrounded by a rather big crowd of people: black, brown and white; adults, elderly people, children. Many have small cardboard signs with different slogans, some groups have bigger banners, and some elaborate fabrics on which they have painted or sewn names and pictures of their loved ones, most often young black men.
>
> I have traveled to London with Afrax to finish our fieldwork in a grand way: we want to participate in the happenings of Black History Month, celebrated in GB every October. We have already visited the Black Cultural Archives to see their exhibition *Rights of Passage—a Century of People Power* and in a Black Words Matter poetry happening the previous day, and, by chance, taken part in a fund-raising event of a neighborhood project targeted at the kids of Brixton. Today, we had decided to have some time off and go experience the must-sees in central London. We had jumped randomly on a double-decker bus, which, luckily, did take us to the centre—but there, as we headed to Trafalgar square, we ended up in this demonstration completely by accident.
>
> I hesitate at first, wondering if this is uninteresting—it is not exactly our cause (or rather, perhaps, it isn't my cause)—or uncomfortable for Afrax, who is not altogether unexperienced when it comes to social movements or demonstrations, but who I have interpreted as a bit too pacifist for this kind of demonstration (remember his plea at the We Have a Dream demonstration: "Let us learn to forgive each other"). It is against police violence against black people, and it is loud and outspoken, though not aggressive in a physical way. It soon becomes clear that Afrax wants to stay. So we stand in the crowd in Trafalgar square, read all the leaflets we are given, talk a little with people around, and admire the carefully prepared banners. There are several Black Lives Matter banners, one with a text "London Against Police Violence" and a picture of a brown fist that grabs a white hand holding a truncheon ready to strike, and beautiful fabrics that tell the fate of victims of police violence. One of them, for example, reads "Justice for Ricky Bishop 1976–22. NOV 2001", and "Killed in Brixton police station". A stylized black and white painting of Ricky's face is in the centre of the banner, which is carried by a black woman and a white man, and followed by a black boy of about ten years carrying a bunch of white roses.
>
> When the crowd starts to move we follow along, and, when people start to shout slogans, Afrax joins them without hesitation. Along with others, he rises his fist in the air, and shouts: "No justice—no peace! No racist police!"

We experienced this about a month after a banner at the Halt the Game demonstration in Helsinki had provoked a small sensation: in it, a text "No Peace Without Justice" was accompanied by a painting in which a fist crushes the logos of

the Nordic Resistance Movement, the Finnish police, far-right nationalist organization Suomen Sisu, and the Finnish Lion (a figure of the coat of arms of Finland). Some were quite upset and felt that people were fooled into taking part in an anarchist demonstration (Savonlahti 2016). The organizers quickly announced that they had no idea who brought the banner and suspected that it had been done by one or two individuals, probably in order to troll the demonstration (Vesa 2016). Critiquing the racism of the Finnish police and state seemed to be out of question in Finland, where a belief in so-called Nordic exceptionalism still prevails: as in other Nordic countries, national identity in Finland is largely built on an image of the nation as detached from histories of colonialism and imperialism, and hence innocent or even incapable of racism (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012; Mulinari et al. 2009, 1–2).

Yet, as already brought out in the third chapter regarding Emanuel (chapter 7.3), a social and cultural transformation is currently taking place in Finland, too (Rastas 2019). Immigrants, and especially their offspring, have increasingly started to speak about themselves as racialized subjects and express their discomfort "[...] with the roles offered to them by many anti-racist projects led and controlled by white people with majority background." (Ibid., 367.) They are currently creating forums and communities of people with whom they can share their experiences of racism and act politically in order to make the meanings of the category of race visible. But the current needs and efforts to politicize race cannot be implemented with a "cookie-cutter formula", as Gorani puts it, but have to take into account how differently people belonging to distinct racialized minorities "[...] understand and relate to issues of race and ethnicity, to our culture and country of origin, and how that plays out in our understanding, response and strategies of dealing with racism and discrimination in the West" (Duh et al. 2014, 244). The complexity of Afrax's sense of belonging in comparison with the identification of many other Somali background youth, for example, suggests some of the diversity with regard to these issues. This only underlines how elemental the kind of struggle Afrax was going through in regard to his belonging and values during the years we were doing fieldwork together are for the formation of the vocabularies needed in order to discuss racialized identities and social relations, for forming communities in which negotiating identities and sharing experiences is possible, and for politicizing race. As Afrax brings out, sharing some of the personal experiences related to these issues is demanding: it is difficult even to "dare to say it to yourself in the mirror". Simultaneously, Afrax's own experiences show that when a safe enough community does take form—even momentarily, for one night—and one is able to share these issues, it is highly empowering. In this

sense, Afrax's continuous urge to challenge himself and step out of his comfort zone is a necessary, though at times tormenting, attitude in order to be able to work for politicizing race. As for the demonstration we bumped into in London, he reflected afterwards that, while he wanted to participate in it and support the cause, it still did not give him the feeling of being "the thing": his quest for finding a political home is still ongoing.

7.3.4 Conclusion

Afrax's uncompromising quest for cultural, geographical, and political relatedness and a solid base on which to build his beliefs and morals teaches an invaluable lesson on the complexity of the social and cultural field in which young refugee background men navigate. While the subject positions Emanuel and Manasse work for are rather clearly defined and serve as targets at which they aim, Afrax's aspired position is one of openness, development and moving on. Yet in order to move on one first needs to know where one is standing, and an important part of his search is related to this: trying to find out where he hails from culturally and historically. The field in which Afrax conducts his explorations is by no means limited to Finland and Somalia but stretches in several directions both geographically, historically and culturally: to Africa as a continent and to the African diaspora, to colonial and postcolonial relations and knowledge production, to political movements concerning race and migration, to treatment of other minorities (racial/ethnic, religious and sexual), and to racialized social relations on several levels (from anti-immigrant movements in Finland to the construction of the category of *tiin jareer* in Somalia). It is a thoroughly transnational field in which the interconnections are nevertheless uneven, some passages leading to dead ends, as evidenced by our attempts to get a grip on the history and present of Africa. Understanding this complexity and conceptualizing the experience of growing up within it is a necessity if one wishes to support young people (refugee background and others) trying to navigate it.

In his persistent search for answers to the questions he poses himself, and to the "present world", Afrax recoils from the position of the well-integrated refugee subject whose job is now supporting others in the task of integrating to Finnish society. But neither does he opt for failing integration by giving up, tempted as he sometimes is to do so. Instead, Afrax continues to challenge himself and others by asking his questions, disturbing in their profoundness. From this vantage point, his quest appears as mundane political agency in its purest form: as posing the very

question of what kind of subject positions are, should be, or could be possible for a refugee background young man in Finland of today.

7.4 Reflections

The preceding three chapters each concentrate on a unique life situation and personal aspirations. There are, nonetheless, a few common features, three of which I would like to underline here. The first is that of work: Manasse, Emanuel and Afrax each invest a considerable amount of time and energy in advancing their projects. This work takes many forms. Paid labour is one of them, and it is certainly a necessary element in the lives of all these young men: Afrax and Emanuel in particular have had to work hard in order to fund their studies and to be able to help their family members economically. For Manasse, this burden has been lighter, as his family is better-off and has, at times, been able to support him economically instead of vice versa, but he has also had to get independent in this sense quite early too. Nevertheless, paid labour is only one form of the work these young men carry out, and, as it is more visible and easier to recognize than other forms of labour, these tend to slip out of sight.

There is the intellectual work, the enormous effort that Emanuel puts into his studies, Mannasse in advancing his career as a musician without compromising his artistic vision too much, and Afrax in developing and forging ahead both careerwise and personally. There is the networking Emanuel carries out in order to build a safety net for himself and for others around him, and Manasse engages in to connect with professional performers and consolidate his standing in the music and art scenes. Then, there is the emotional labour that I have shown Emanuel, in particular, carrying out as a method of weaving networks and attempting to keep them together even in situations of utmost stress, but which Afrax needed to carry out in his job in the form of smiling work as well. And, finally, there is the work Afrax performs in his frantic efforts to "explore himself". This latter is, perhaps, the one that resembles least what is commonly understood as "work". Discussion on apt definitions of work or labour are not, however, relevant for the sake of my main argument, which is to emphasize the considerable effort these young men put into carving out alternative subject positions for themselves. As much as they are continuously alert in their everyday life situations and deploy a multitude of immediate bodily strategies in them, they spend a notable part of their everyday life in working for this, in one way or another.

The second common feature is that the projects these young men try to further are all at least partly about claiming recognition, albeit in differing ways. For Emanuel the driving force at school and in his efforts to gain education—besides getting better job opportunities and better salary—is gaining recognition both as himself and as a capable individual. He strives to be seen as himself, as Emanuel, and for not having to "feel small" among other Finnish people. For him, claiming blackness is part of this project, and building safe spaces, reflecting race and racialized social relations, and everyday anti-racism are central in his life. For Manasse, on the other hand, being African is a source of strength that he draws from in his attempt to build a career as a musician. He is claiming the position of an Afropolitan, a professional African background cosmopolitan, and does so in a prefigurative way that demonstrates courage. Of these three young men, he is the least preoccupied by questions regarding race. Yet, as the previous chapters on him have brought out, he understands race and immigrant-ness as one form of difference among others (such as mental disabilities), and is capable of and willing to think and act beyond these categories. And Afrax, finding himself buffeted by the confusing crosswinds of a transnational and postcolonial world, refuses to take anything for granted and keeps on questioning, challenging both himself and others in his search for a cultural and geographical, moral, and political home. His search aptly demonstrates how questions regarding race and belonging are not simply about being racialized as a white Finn or black/brown immigrant. In his willingness to claim Africanness and blackness Afrax finds himself caught in a complex web of racialized social relations, and he seeks recognition not only as an acknowledged member of Finnish society but also as a member of *both* African *and* Somali diasporas.

The third aspect I wish to emphasize is that during the time I worked with these young men, each of them found themselves in more or less of a dead end. Emanuel's was perhaps the most total, and his desperation was deep, as his chances for passing the baccalaureate exams, going on to further education and keeping his family unified seemed non-existent. Afrax also went through tough times, both in terms of his need to "explore himself" and in terms of the rise of racism and right-wing national populism, several times feeling like giving up. Manasse, on the other hand, had perhaps the most grounded approach to his project; he was consciously building his aspired future step by step, and he always had a plan b figured out in case his project of building an international career as a professional performer didn't work out. As we discussed his situation together—that of identifying as a highly mobile Afropolitan, but in practice being stuck in his home city in Finland—he said that he does feel "stuck", but yet does not want force himself ahead just because of that. He

wanted to build a sure and safe way to get ahead and not spoil his plans by rushing and pushing too much and too early. "It is about building the base so that you don't get lost, so that the world does not kick you back when you do leave," he reflected. In practice, this is the way Emanuel and Afrax proceeded too, somehow always pulling themselves together and proceeding by baby steps if nothing else worked out. This was perhaps not as consciously formed a plan as in Manasse's case, but all of them were "stubbornly alluding to—and sometimes [...] living, in a seedling state—hope for something different", as Biehl & Locke (2010, 333–334) describe what they call an everyday life force that enables people to carve out "small life chances against the odds." Afrax, Emanuel and Manasse are certainly stubborn in their attempts to carve out possibilities and alternative positionings for themselves. This stubbornness is not merely resilience; sometimes it seems to lead to dead ends rather than finding solutions to the problems at hand. The life chances the young men are trying to carve out are not about adaptation to the situation at hand, but about *not* accepting things as they are, about desiring something different instead, a different world and a different future. The ongoing work of carving out alternatives is thus mundane political agency in essence.

I suggest that this kind of agency of projects (Ortner 2006, 139), of working hard year after year to make one's dreams come true, is, to an extent, intentional, based on conscious reflection of one's situation and future aspirations. To say that it is intentional is not to consider it the calculative acts of freely choosing liberal subjects. I do not suggest that the sociocultural contexts—or the "constituting constraints" (Mahmood 2005, 17)—the young men are embedded in would be transparent to them. Afrax's deep confusion is illustrative of the impossibility of "standing outside" (Ortner 2006, 127) one's circumstances. Simultaneously, it is illustrative of the reflective capacities that culture provides and the complex human subjectivities this enables. Cultural multilayeredness is only accentuated in the case of migrant youth with transnational social and cultural relations that enable intense reflective movement between intimacy and estrangement. The reflexivity of complex subjectivity constitutes the grounds for questioning and criticizing the world and thus for imagining, desiring and working for different kinds of possibilities than those already available.

8 CONCLUSION

If I could travel back in time to that moment in chapter 5.1.3 where Samiullah suggested that my research is about how "we [immigrant youth] deviate from the majority population", I would now respond to him with the following, more considered, alteration of the proposition: on the contrary, this dissertation is about how they are repeatedly deviated and how they persistently act in response to it, to the brink of stubbornness. Over the course of the previous nine chapters I have illustrated how refugee background young men are constituted as different in recurrent and multiple ways in their everyday encounters, how they deploy a multitude of immediate strategies in order to react to the various subject positions of differentness they are expected to embrace and shake the ground of these encounters, and how they work hard and determinedly to realize their long-term projects of carving out alternative positions and a wider range of possibilities for themselves.

In the first set of three subchapters, "Setting the stage", I answered my first research question, on the subject positions proposed to the youths in their everyday encounters, by examining three situations emerging from my data as both typical and especially illustrative. Emanuel was framed in his school environment in the classic subject position of an imaginary immigrant; Manasse, in the music project he took part in, in the subject position of a vulnerable refugee young person; and Afrax, in his job as a peer mentor, was assigned the subject position of a representative of imaginary immigrant youth and a marginal member of the Finnish state who was expected to act as a middleman between it and its immigrant Others. In the following two chapters, I answered my second research question, concerning the ways the young men react and act in relation to these subject positions. First, in the subchapters comprising chapter 6 on immediate strategies, I looked at the various bodily choreographies the youths deployed on the spot in reaction to these subject positions. These strategies ranged from enduring as a form of small agency, to turning the subject position around by highlighting one's difference in a positive sense, to rejecting the subject position by avoiding physical and social alignment with others categorized similarly, to transforming the subject position by performing smiling work and by attempting to align with professional colleagues instead of

immigrant peers. Second, in chapter 7 on long-term projects, I concentrated on the future-oriented projects that the youths try to further, which, again, are highly various, from ardent efforts to gain education or build a career as a musician, to weaving networks and building safe spaces, to claiming blackness and/or Africanness and politicizing race, to challenging presuppositions and searching for answers to profound questions regarding one's self, morals, and belonging.

8.1 Connecting threads: three key findings

As is typical in ethnographic research, the diversity of the observations I have made along the way is considerable, and the conclusions based on them point in several directions. What one considers most worthwhile or important very much depends on the reader. I sincerely hope that my observations about the obstacles Emanuel encountered in his studies, for example, or the way Manasse and Afrax negotiated their positions in the projects they were involved in, will inspire other researchers and professionals of these fields to inquire further into these issues and develop more functional methods. Sometimes, this does not even require great changes: if one thinks of teaching, for example, would it be truly unthinkable to use plain language, to simplify one's Power Point slides and use photos to illustrate the points in them, to take care that what one says aloud is in line with what is written in the teaching materials, and to ensure that everybody in the class has easy access to teaching materials and resources? This would not only support (instead of hindering) the efforts of those who find following the teaching in Finnish a challenge, but also those with other kinds of challenges, such as dyslexia or learning difficulties. Or, one could, perhaps, further develop the attitude the leaders of the band project displayed: they gave Manasse space to outgrow the subject position that was designed for him in the project—maybe they did not exactly encourage him to do so, but the readiness they showed to let him change the premises of the project could be developed into a method for youth work. As for Afrax, he promptly asked me to explain how and on what level we should work in order not to keep on repeating the kind of paradoxical practices that work for Othering despite contrary intentions. This was a question I couldn't answer at that moment, and I still can't. It would be a somewhat lazy answer to insist that, for example, those white social worker women who had designed and who steered the peer mentoring project should take a good look at themselves, get a grip, and design a better project—as it is, that better project might never get funding, and the Afrax-to-be would remain unemployed. Even so, it would

be equally lazy to say that they could not do anything: as I answered Afrax, even though people often find themselves caught in constraining circumstances, they are still responsible for what they do and should at least try to counter practices and ways of encountering people that work for Othering.

More of these kind of details, and their possible implications, are discussed in the main body of this work. At this point, I would like to dedicate the remaining pages to the three findings I deem most central, in that they cut across my observations and relate immediately to my research topic. These are the following.

"It is difficult to hold on to something that does not hold on to you"

The first concerns the profound effects that being recurrently encountered as different and being offered the subject position of an Other has. This is eloquently crystallized in the quote above from Geoffrey Erista (Parkkinen 2020; my translation), a Finnish actor and dancer with refugee background, who is trying to illustrate how, after living in Finland for twenty-five years, he still feels he is considered a stranger by mainstream society. He underlines how the prevalence and weight of structural racism, such as discrimination in job or housing markets, should be recognized in addition to street racism, online hate speech or everyday microaggression (such acts as not sitting next to a person of colour on public transport, or assuming that they do not speak Finnish), and understood to be at least as relevant with regard to not feeling accepted. My research raises Othering that takes place in everyday encounters as another weighty factor that works to generate this experience. Some forms of this differentiation might be even more difficult to recognize than the kind of racist structures brought out by Erista; they might not be openly discriminatory, indeed are often even intended to work for the contrary. No matter how well-intended such encounters are, as, for example, in projects that aim to empower vulnerable youth or mentor immigrants, they nevertheless reconstitute the young person as an Other. I find it imperative to understand this and to recognize that, in addition to the street racism and structural discrimination these young people recurrently meet, these kind of Othering encounters undermine both their chances and their willingness to belong to Finnish society. If participation in it is considered a value, as reports and research regarding the issue seem to communicate, this problem should be given due attention. Holding on to someone does not happen by underlining time and again their difference, nor by offering them the constricted subject positions of an Other. Pre-eminently, understanding of this should be taken into account when designing research projects regarding these young people. There

is a substantial need for research that takes the youths' vantage point, not that of society, as its point of departure, if we want to understand their lived realities.

"It describes the whole struggle"

This research demonstrates that if the political agency of refugee background young men is investigated from their vantage point, these young people appear to be highly active in the realm of the political ordinary. This is the second central finding of this research. Dealing with Othering and its implications—the whole struggle, as Emanuel crystallized it in my introduction—is all but perpetual. There are some safe, or at least safer, spaces in which one can relax, or one can at least try to build them oneself if they are not readily available. But in such everyday surroundings as school, work, and free-time activities, in which the youth encounter Finnish society and its other (non-)citizens, they are almost incessantly alert, or, to paraphrase Emanuel again, "prepared". This struggle regarding the subject positions that are available for the youths and their attempts to stretch, transform or reject them, or to carve out other possibilities, happens both on the visceral level of the material body and its choreographies and on the level of the intentional, future-oriented projects of subjects capable of conscious reflection. As I have shown, the repertoire of strategies the young people deploy and projects they further is large, spanning from dogged enduring as a form of small agency to courageous prefigurative acts of living as if one's situation was already the kind one desires it to be.

That refugee background young men are actively engaged in mundane political agency might be somewhat surprising in the light of concern about their passivity expressed in reports regarding voter turnout or the societal participation of these young people more broadly. Their incessant and persistent struggle easily goes unnoticed, if the agency of these youths is approached from the point of view of Finnish society, for example as political or societal participation in it, or as resilience in adapting to life within it. Few of the acts described in this dissertation fall readily into the realm of parliamentary politics, civic activity, participation in public discussion or the like—though these are not altogether absent either. The sites and modes of the acts and aspirations I have sought to highlight are generally not recognized as political due to their ordinariness. I have found feminist new materialist insight on the political significance of the material body's capacity to relate, and to refuse to relate to, other bodies a potent tool for shedding light on the youth's acts and immediate strategies. On the other hand, when it comes to the alternative subject positions the young people are working to carve out by furthering

their long-term projects, they are not necessarily recognized at all (not to mention the political significance of these projects), perhaps because they fall out of the existing categories, or because their central reference point is not Finnish society, but something else—Afropolitan community, for example. If looked at from the point of view of resilience, understood as adaptation to a new home country and coping despite adversity, some of the efforts of these young men might seem to work to the contrary: if Emanuel was content to work as a nurse and did not aspire for higher education, or Manasse satisfied himself with being an immigrant Suomi rapper instead of trying to build a more unique career as a musician with African roots, or if Afrax did not challenge himself to the brink of being tormented, they would not find themselves repeatedly in dead ends and might thus appear much more resilient, and, to be sure, better integrated. Accepting a subordinate position in society, internalizing that "in Finland you are number two", is an attitude some refugee background young people embrace in order to cope with discrimination on, for example, the labour market (Onodera & Zaidan 2021, 132). None of my research companions embrace this strategy, but stubbornly struggle to carve out alternatives, a struggle that is political to its core, even if not necessarily in appearance.

Some aspects of the acts of my research companions are still pretty obviously politically oriented, as, for example, the kind of everyday anti-racism carried out by Emanuel or taking part in the current that politicizes race the way Afrax does, or Manasse's open claims for Africanness. Even these acts, more easily recognizable as political, remain unobserved if the starting point of research is not designed so as to enable their recognition. In this light, I find the argument I made in chapter 4.2.1 regarding the use of the concept of citizenship as denoting political agency in general ever more relevant (cf. Lazar 2013b; Lazar & Nuijten 2013). Not even these acts, more readily recognizable as political, are only about claiming membership in a political community. In some, claiming membership of, or resisting exclusion from, such political community are present, but in no way exhaust them. Furthermore, if one takes the multitude of other acts I have shown the youth as engaged in, many of which do not have an obvious political aspect to them, into consideration, the perspective that equates political agency with citizenship turns out to be even more limited. It does not aid recognition of political acts that do not speak the language of citizenship—however comprehensively defined—in order to claim membership of a political community (cf. Lazar 2013b, 13–14), acts such as Emanuel's work for weaving social networks and building safe spaces, or Manasse's attempt to overcome and act beyond different categorizations of difference (such as refugee-ness or disabled-ness), or the smiling work Afrax carries out in order to pass into an

institution of whiteness, and, from that position, to advocate other immigrant background young people. The multifariousness of the acts these young people carry out cannot be reduced to "a positive politics of dissent and resistance" provoked by exclusion (ibid., 15), and, from that point of view, the political nature of these acts escapes attention.

This is not to say that discussion on, and research conducted from, the vantage points of participation, resilience or citizenship are unimportant, mistaken, or insufficient as such. But it is to say that these perspectives leave noteworthy aspects of the young people's political agency out of sight. In order to shed light on, and gain better understanding of, this, I have suggested using the framework of mundane political agency to approach the multifaceted, ordinary political existence of refugee background youth. I have done so notwithstanding, yet taking account of, the problematics of theorizing agency and using it as an analytical concept. In order to try to grasp the various nuances of the youths' agency, I have looked at it from two perspectives: from the feminist new materialist perspective that underlines the agentic properties inherent to nature and all matter (Barad 2007; Coole & Frost 2010), and from an anthropological perspective that underlines the agentive capacities of complex human subjectivity (Keane 2003; Ortner 2006). This is an analytical separation and, as such, rigid; hence I have clarified along the way how I see these two "types" of agency as two sides of the same coin and as constantly bleeding into each other. I find that this framework has enabled me to discover both the plenitude and diversity of the young people's acts and the complex relationship of their agency and subject formation.

In the chapters regarding Afrax, in particular, I have tried to show how the way he is constituted as different is both constrictive and formative for his subjectivity, how he is compelled to take this situation as given and cannot question it straightforwardly, but nevertheless uses immediate strategies that work for transforming the subject position available and hence stretching the limits it sets to his subjectivity and altering the directions to which it tends, however slightly. In this way, I have tried to capture something of the difficult-to-grasp processes of subjectivation and agency. If power is understood to be productive of subjectivities rather than simply coercive, and if human beings are understood to have agentive capacities—both as material bodies and as sociocultural beings—how can one approach this "intra-action" (Barad 2007, 139) analytically? In this dissertation, I have tried to distill moments in which subjectivation intensifies and agency takes material bodily forms, and orientations towards futures which simultaneously manifest the constraints and reflective capacities of human beings as sociocultural

by their very biology. I thus hope to contribute theoretically to the work currently in progress of conceptualizing agency and its different types (such as agency of power or agency of projects (Ortner 2006, 145–147), or agency of material bodies (Coole & Frost 2010; Väyrynen et al. 2017). I hope and believe that my work, for its own small part, confirms the need for the concept of agency in anthropology, despite its problematics, and not only in the form proposed by some citizenship scholars.

"It's not what I *am*"—"they don't see *me*"

Investigating mundane political agency in the sense outlined here, entailed anthropologically oriented ethnographic research. Observing what the young people do, listening to what they say and engaging in a dialogue with them has enabled me to grasp things that are not transparent to themselves and that, thus, cannot be asked about or verbalized directly and completely. I certainly hope that the possibilities ethnographic research provides for reaching beyond words (Honkasalo 2008, 66–67) will be cherished in anthropology in the future, too, and that other forms of data than discourse will be given their due value—when or if the COVID-19 pandemic allows. In my fieldwork, I focused on observing bodily encounters, which I found a fruitful way for approaching the young people's mundane political agency. Developing further methods of observing, and also of taking notes on, "techniques of the body" (Mauss 1973 [1934]), or "bodily choreographies" (Puumala et al. 2011), might be an avenue worth pursuing. Perhaps "immersing oneself in the field" in the classic anthropological sense is neither intellectually nor practically sound objective in a "world in motion" (Rapport 2000, 73), but the value of long-term engagement and participant observation remains. Time consuming as it is, the ability to observe both doings and sayings and interpreting their intra-action is one of the specific contributions of anthropology. It enables grasping the complex interlinkage of the "constituting constraints" (Butler 2011 [1993], xxiii) of human existence and the diversity of individual lives.

The third central finding of my research springs from the potency of ethnographic research: dissecting the modes of agency of refugee background young men has concretized the way they, and their life situations, are structured by certain social and cultural factors, including that of forced migration, but are nevertheless always unique and multifaceted. My research participants are all refugee background young men living in Finland, but what this means in concrete terms for each is as multifarious as the modes of agency they develop in response to their situation. Ethnographic sensitivity to these details and variations enables understanding of

human beings as individuals; not as those liberal autonomous subjects of certain Western intellectual traditions, but as variously socially, culturally and geographically related living beings, capable of reflection and agency. Understanding the individuality and diversity of life histories and situations is necessary to deconstruct essentializing categorizations that are harmful in many ways, be it in research, in social work, or in society at large. Rigid understandings of cultures and their bearings on people's lives, or categorizing understandings of refugee-ness, work to screen from view (Tyler 2006, 193) the actual people, as Manasse's and Emanuel's remarks above on not being what they are presumed to be, or not being seen as themselves, highlight. These kind of categorizations are not helpful in an attempt to understand the life situations of refugee background youths and to support them in confusing experiences of growing up transnationally.

For they certainly need and deserve support, albeit of different kinds and to different extents, taking into account how they are each agentive and vulnerable at different scales (Verdasco 2017, 54). Recognizing the diversity of refugee background youth in cultural, social, geographical terms, and in terms of the course of their lives, enables understanding that what combines them is the "political sameness" (Lewis 2000, 91) of their situation in Finland. Their lives are structured by militarized global apartheid (Besteman 2019), tight Finnish migration and family reunification policies, structural and everyday racism, and practices of perpetual Othering. My research companions—Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel—are all relatively well-resourced: they have all had some factors (such as rather well-off families either economically and/or in the sense of mutual care, or relatively good educational backgrounds, or confidential bonds with dedicated teachers and youth workers in Finland) in their lives that have enabled them to grow into intelligent, ambitious, and socially skilled young men who have managed to build support networks for themselves in Finland. But still they repeatedly find themselves in dead ends and on the brink of giving up. If this is the case for these young people, what about those with fewer resources? I am thinking of Adel, for example, who has grown up in an environment hostile to the ethnic group his family belongs to, had not attended school at all before coming to Finland, has practically no social network here and carries deep worry and guilt in relation to his family. Or Denis, who has grown up amidst a civil war and lost his whole family, and struggles with intense awareness of his difference and a fear of being deemed "completely stupid" by others. If relatively well-resourced refugee background young men, such as Afrax, Manasse and Emanuel, are at times overwhelmed with all the labour gaining recognition and carving out possibilities for themselves presumes, the ones with fewer resources are

even more so. Expecting these young people to either want to, or be able to, hold on to Finnish society is quite unreasonable, if Finnish society does not show more interest in holding on to them by encountering them as individuals and carrying its responsibility in sharing the burden of the emotional, intellectual, social and other labours they have to carry out. The Finnish ethos of coping on one's own (Honkatukia et al. 2021, 96) pushes too much responsibility on the shoulders of these young people, who are in fragile positions in so many ways.

8.2 Acknowledging the message: one major implication

The need to encounter refugee background youths as individuals and to tailor support measures to them accordingly is, still, a minor point in relation to the paramount message the mundane agency of refugee background young men communicates. Although the forms and objectives of the mundane political agency they display are diverse, there is an aspect that combines many of them: cultivating respectful communality. In one way or the other, all my research companions exhibited forms of agency that contribute to this, either by building links between people who are differently different, as in the case of Manasse, or by cherishing social bonds and caring treatment of each other, as in the case of Emanuel, or by fostering accepting attitudes towards all the people one encounters, even if that presumes challenging one's own beliefs in a profound way, as in the case of Afrax. All these young men work in various ways for building communality, transversal solidarities and respectful coexistence, both by claiming recognition for themselves and by displaying recognition of others. This finding is in striking contrast with the public discourse on the presence of refugee background young men in Finnish society as disorderly and risky. Here, however, it is essential to notice that what is at stake in the young men's agency is *not* acting for or participation in *Finnish society* as such—though it does not absolutely exclude it either. Their agency is about building *other kinds* of socialities. It takes place both as immediate strategies, as cultivating respecting and caring attitudes towards the people one encounters, and as a desire for and dedication to carving out alternatives along with arduous long-term projects.

Recognizing what the young people pursue and listening to what their mundane political agency communicates is vital. This means agreeing to acknowledge their expertise in their situations, of hearing it as *knowledge* (Tuori 2013, 37). And to "really listen" (ibid., 38) to the message the agency of these young people carries is to concede that, if Finnish society truly wants to recognize refugee background youth

as its members, the solution does not lie in individual support measures that aim to integrate them into society as it is. It is not about including them by tolerating their difference (to an extent) and helping them to participate in mainstream Finnish society. Instead of expecting their participation, the latter should acknowledge its responsibility to participate in the projects that the young people have initiated themselves. It is a project of desiring and working for another kind of society, one in which people who belong to minorities would be recognized without having to claim recognition and encountered in an open way without circumscribing categorizations. For refugee background young men—as most likely for representatives of other minoritized groups as well—in a society determined by the white majority population, the subject positions available are few and constricting. To admit the value of the knowledge the refugee background young men have about this society, is to concede that its very structures and ethos need to change, if it wishes its Others to be able to relate to it and participate in it. This change requires the primacy of the involvement of minorities being recognized, though this does not mean that they should be left on their own and cast as individual "agents of change" (Tuori 2013, 38). Instead, the majority should acknowledge their positions of hegemony, step aside and give the minorities both space and means for bringing their views to the centre of a dialogue. The resulting structural changes would most likely be profound, for example by putting basic human rights, such as children's rights and everyone's right to family life before the regulations of the Finnish Aliens Act and its interpretation in immigration policy.

Challenging the power structures of society in this way might sound like a massive undertaking. But, as these young people show, it can and does happen on many levels, also that of everyday encounters. Instead of being moments in which the majority population reproduce and reconstruct the difference of Others, they could be moments of deconstructing differentiation and hegemonic positions and thus of building social relations and society anew.

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