

# Undocumented residents as navigators

*Social navigation in the shelter of the Foundation for Emergency Care  
to Refugees*

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## Abstract

This thesis will present the case of undocumented residents of the SNOV shelter in Nijmegen to illustrate how undocumented people are affected by the unstable and ever-changing environment they find themselves in. Officially, these people are not allowed to be in the Netherlands, yet there are tens of thousands living here. The data that was gathered during this qualitative research is based on twelve residents of SNOV, which are predominantly men. This thesis will provide insights on how undocumented residents build towards a future in which they hold an official status. Moreover, it will show how these residents experience place by regarding their feelings of displacement, processes of place making, belonging and place attachment. The evidence presented in this thesis demonstrates how the undocumented residents of SNOV show to be social navigators as they adapt varying strategies to flexibly navigate the unstable environment. This thesis sheds light on the agency of these people as they anticipate possible trajectories that might occur in the future. Additionally, it will show how experience of place affects these social navigators.

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# 1. Introduction

*Excited and slightly nervous, I enter the main men's shelter of the foundation for emergency care to refugees (SNOV) to commence my first day as a volunteer. SNOV, so I have learned from my intake with the general coordinator, provides "bed, bath, bread" (basic needs) facilities to undocumented people in Nijmegen. More specifically, SNOV's initial purpose was to be a night shelter. The aspect about this organisation that especially sparked my interest was that SNOV just started working with a programme called "Zorgen voor Morgen". In this programme, undocumented residents are offered the chance to renew skills and learn something next to being accommodated in the night.*

*On my way in, I get greeted by the shelter's general coordinator, who will also supervise me as a volunteer. He introduces me to another volunteer who is there that morning and several of the men living at the shelter. Everyone comes across as friendly and one of the men starts making some jokes; I immediately feel more comfortable. After being shown around, I was surprised to see that this shelter was 'just' a regular house in Nijmegen as I expected it to be like a small centre for asylum seekers.*

*I started talking to the men present and found out where they have been and where they would like to go in life. Later on, resident B stated: "I am [name], I came to the Netherlands five years ago. I am trying to build my life here. This is such a beautiful country with all opportunities there could be. Yes, I am also in a difficult situation at the moment, but I make the best of it" (a4:1). I wondered; how can these men work towards a future while they experience limitations from having an unofficial status in the Netherlands?*

## 1.1 Introduction: socially navigating one's place and position

People of non-European descent that are seeking residence in Europe have been a sensitive topic in discussions and debates in the Netherlands for several decades now. Governments are implementing laws and rules to make access and legal residency difficult for outsiders (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). This results in a substantial amount of people 'illegally' residing in the Netherlands. These people are not in possession of official documents, such as a Dutch residence permit or ID card, that are needed to live here. Extremist right-wing political parties are outspoken against these people and are increasing in popularity (Kymlicka, 2018). At the same time, other political parties are searching for a way to shelter these undocumented people, even if just temporarily. Clearly there are differing opinions regarding this matter and there are ongoing debates on how to shelter these unofficial, undocumented people.

The SNOV shelter houses these undocumented people in Nijmegen. As undocumented residents do not have an official status, they are officially not allowed to stay in the Netherlands. Therefore, the residents' identities and location of the shelter must remain unknown. It can be argued that this aspect of not having an official status causes the undocumented residents to experience certain limitations and might evoke feelings of displacement and uncertainty. In addition to this, the original purpose of the shelter was to host undocumented people for a short period in of time while they were waiting for their claim to be processed (SNOV, 2019). The residents of the shelter were not meant to stay long. However, some of them have been there for multiple years (d1:02). Thus, while they are supposed to leave quickly and not attach, they often stay for a substantial number of years and consequently often do attach to this place.

In this research, I will show how the undocumented residents of SNOV make sense of the place they live and how they cope with the changing social environment of their everyday lives. I will not focus on where they have been and what traumas they have endured, but rather on what residents are doing to actively make sense of their environment, what their dreams are and how they flexibly work towards a future. Furthermore, I will examine the difference between near and distant futures and how undocumented residents cope with limitations they experience. I will do this through applying Vigh's (2009) social navigation to the practical case of the undocumented residents of SNOV.

Social navigation is a concept that focuses on the unstable social environments of people and how people act in this environment (Vigh, 2009). As these environments are unstable and ever-changing, people have to adapt and cope with oncoming change in order to work towards a future. Social navigation is often used in terms of conflict (Vigh, 2007). However, in this research I will examine this concept in terms of migration. Relating the lived experiences of undocumented residents to the concept of social navigation will contribute to today's understandings on how social navigation interacts with specific populations and situations, in this case the undocumented residents of the SNOV shelter in Nijmegen. This will constitute a social, practical dimension that is related to social navigation. Thus, by focusing on the social navigation of the aforementioned undocumented residents in a specific context, this research adds a social, practical dimension to the concept of social navigation.

By placing social navigation in the context of undocumented residents in Nijmegen, this research examines the relation between place and social navigation. Different aspects of place – location, locale and sense of place – distinguished by Cresswell (2015), affect possible positions and trajectories of the undocumented residents. For example, if an undocumented resident wishes to decrease feelings of displacement and experience a sense of belonging, they

engage in processes of place making and become attached to a certain place (Lems, 2016; Pemberton & Phillimore, 2018; Rishbeth & Powell, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006). These concepts are important to consider when discussing social navigation as this can provide insights on how undocumented residents socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen.

With this research, I wish to contribute to a better understanding of how undocumented residents cope with limitations and navigate aspirations in an unstable environment. This provides an in-depth understanding of the intersection of the concepts of social navigation and place. Moreover, I hope that this research can be used by organisations or policy makers that are thinking about starting a programme similar to “Zorgen voor Morgen”. The insights provided by this research can contribute to a programme that is well-adjusted to the needs of undocumented residents.

## 1.2 Research objective and questions

This research will focus on the way undocumented residents socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen. With this research, I hope to increase understanding of the lived experiences of residents as well as their ability to cope with a certain unstable environment and changing forces. This provides insights in how social navigation can be regarded in practice and contributes to the understanding on the navigation of undocumented residents’ position and place. Based on this objective, I formulated the following research question:

“In what way can undocumented residents socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen?”

This question can be divided in three sub-questions:

1. “In what way do undocumented residents experience place?”
2. “In what way do undocumented residents navigate the limitations they experience?”
3. “In what way do undocumented residents navigate their aspirations?”

In order to answer these questions, this thesis is composed of several chapters. After this introduction, I will provide a context in which this research is placed in the second chapter. I will create an understanding of when a person is considered undocumented, discuss the bed, bath, bread debate, provide information on SNOV and touch upon the corona crisis. In the third chapter, I will provide a theoretical framework. This serves as a lens through which to regard the everyday lives of the undocumented residents of SNOV. By using this theoretical framework, I am able to analyse the empirical data that was gathered during my research. In



the fourth chapter, I will outline the methods I have used while conducting this research. Additionally, the effects of the outbreak of the coronavirus on this research will be discussed as well as the importance of ethics. In the fifth chapter, I will introduce the undocumented residents that participated in this research and their experience of place. This chapter will answer the first sub-question. In the sixth chapter, I will examine the unstable environment that undocumented residents find themselves in and look at how they cope with this. Additionally, I will analyse the residents' capacity to plan for, and work towards, the future as well as what aspirations they hold. This chapter will answer the second and third sub-questions. Finally, in the seventh chapter, I will conclude this research and provide an answer to the research question. I will also reflect on this research, provide recommendations and make a suggestion for further research.

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Being undocumented

One of the most important terms that should be explained with regard to this research is the term *undocumented*. In the Netherlands, a person is regarded as undocumented when he or she does not hold a Dutch residence permit (Amnesty International, N.D.). Undocumented can sometimes also refer to people who have never been documented or recorded (Koser, 2007), but in this research, I have adapted the term undocumented residents to describe those living at SNOV who do not possess a Dutch residence permit or ID card. One can become undocumented for various reasons including, but not limited to: the failure of an asylum seeker's application for a residence permit, the inability of stateless people to return to their country of origin, being a victim of human trafficking but not lodging a complaint, and not submitting an application for asylum after crossing a border (and therefore not being regarded as asylum seekers or granted refugee status) (Amnesty International, N.D.; Koser, 2007).

Undocumented people have been increasingly repressed and this has resulted in the detention and deportation of many of these people (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). However, most undocumented people are not detained and deported, yet are not officially allowed to stay in the Netherlands. Amnesty International estimates that there are at least tens of thousands of undocumented people living in the Netherlands (Amnesty International, N.D.). The responsibility for housing these undocumented people in the Netherlands lies with the local government, municipalities. This has been implemented in reaction to the statement by the European Court of Justice directing the Netherlands to create active policies regarding the many undocumented and homeless refugees (SNOV, 2019).

### 2.2 The bed, bath, bread debate

The housing of these people is a much-debated topic in politics. The leading party in the Dutch Parliament, the VVD, was against providing facilities to those without a legal residence permit (BNNVARA, 2018). Because multiple other parties supported this idea of facilitation for undocumented people, the second chamber of parliament, in accordance with Dutch municipalities, have come to a so-called bed-bath-bread agreement.

The municipalities became responsible for sheltering all foreign nationals without a legal residence permit. This shelter had to provide basic facilities. The municipalities receive funding from the parliament to offer these people without a legal residence permit modest

accommodation which included night shelter, meals in the morning and evening, and sanitary facilities (VNG, 2015). This is called the bed-bath-bread agreement.

In Nijmegen, SNOV was appointed to become the local bed, bath, bread facility (the BBB). This was decided by the local municipality and other local organisations that are involved with people that do not hold a residence permit (SNOV, 2019). The initial idea was that municipalities would provide these facilities only temporarily for a maximum of two months (BNNVARA, 2018). However, in practice, this turned out not to be feasible.

## 2.3 SNOV

SNOV is an abbreviation for “Stichting Noodopvang Vluchtelingen”, which literally translates to “foundation for emergency care to refugees” (SNOV, 2019). However, they specifically provide accommodation for undocumented people who have been unsuccessful in obtaining a Dutch residence permit. SNOV is officially a bed, bath, bread facility – essentially a night shelter. Therefore, the residents are only accommodated between 18:00 in the evening and 10:00 in the morning.

The SNOV shelter is divided between different houses that are located in various neighbourhoods in Nijmegen. The exact locations of these houses remain secret in order to prevent neighbours from complaining and contacting the police. Since the undocumented residents are in fact illegally residing in the Netherlands, complaints and interference of the police can result in the displacement of the shelters, but also the deportation of its residents.<sup>1</sup> This results in the neighbours holding a certain position of power. If someone complains about the SNOV residents, they may be evicted or even deported. The residents themselves have to keep the shelter quiet and make sure that neighbours do not experience nuisance.

The houses accommodate varying numbers of people. One of the houses is assigned as the main men’s shelter. At any given moment, there are roughly nine to eleven men living there. Another house is assigned as the main women’s shelter, with around six residents. Additionally, there are four houses which each accommodate two people; of these, three are inhabited by men and one is for women. Only the residents of these two-person houses are allowed to stay inside during the day.

Several volunteers are involved with the SNOV shelter, myself included. The volunteers’ job is to ensure that the residents housed in the main men’s shelter leave the house by 10:00 each morning. Most are involved in a programme called “Zorgen voor Morgen”:

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<sup>1</sup> General coordinator of SNOV, personal communication, November 8, 2019.

taking care of tomorrow. Under this programme, the general coordinator and volunteers inquire with the residents how they would like to, productively, spend their time during the day, and search for a possibility to do this.

## 2.4 The corona crisis

The situation stemming from the spread of the novel coronavirus, also known as the COVID-19 disease, has made a profound global impact. As well as the rest of the Dutch society, undocumented residents are affected. The outbreak of the coronavirus resulted in the Dutch government implementing an ‘intelligent lock-down’ (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Numerous rules were applied in order to prevent the disease from spreading quickly. For example, people were and still are expected to keep one-and-a-half-metre distance from each other (Rijksoverheid, 2020).

Undocumented residents in the Netherlands are especially vulnerable as a group because they have limited – or no – access to medical care if they would get sick, and are therefore expected to be especially cautious. Their grasp of the Dutch language is often not sufficient to be fully informed about the coronavirus and the restrictions imposed by the government (Pilon, 2020). This will be expanded upon in Chapter 6.

The SNOV board has endeavoured to update its residents continuously during the corona crisis. This was mostly done by sending text messages and distributing flyers with information on them. Residents living with someone who is infected, but are not infected themselves, were and still are expected to stay away as much as possible from the infected resident’s room. Furthermore, if possible, they have to use a different toilet and bathroom, and clean these everyday while ensuring proper ventilation. Residents have access to a help-line on weekdays from 13:00-17:00 if they become sick (Pilon, 2020), and translation services are provided. When the residents have specific health issues, they can immediately call the general practitioner; however, they must not visit the doctor in person. The changes and inconsistency of rules concerning the corona crisis turned out to be confusing to undocumented residents as well as many other people in the Netherlands.

All residents were now permitted to stay indoors during the day, as the places they would typically spend their days were closed. The time the residents now spent indoors was used productively when volunteers were paired with residents in order to help them improve their Dutch.

Undocumented residents and their lives were affected in various ways by the coronavirus. One of these is the area of work; a substantial number of residents perform

undeclared work in order to earn some money. Most of these jobs involve indoor construction work such as painting, plastering, laying floors or removals. However, as most people hire labourers during the day when they are not at home, this work is now rarely available since the lockdown was implemented. Some residents still continue to work, and this is now largely outside the house such as moving furniture and outdoor construction work.

Aside from day-to-day life, the coronavirus has equally affected administrative procedures. Immediately prior to the outbreak, one SNOV resident recommenced his procedure to obtain a residence permit at Ter Apel, an admission centre where asylum seekers can begin their asylum procedure. He was one of the last applicants to be admitted there before the asylum centre was temporarily closed from March 15<sup>th</sup> until May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, 2020a). Ter Apel has since reopened its doors.

Volunteers working at SNOV have been directed to modify their behaviour due to the pandemic. They have received an email containing a protocol that should be followed by the volunteers as well as the residents of all the SNOV shelters. Apart from the general advice such as not shaking hands, using paper tissues, coughing and sneezing into one's elbow and washing hands regularly, there are clear instructions on what to do in specific cases of the virus. If someone is showing symptoms of the virus, they must retreat themselves to one room in the shelter and use separate cutlery, plates and cups.

The information that was provided in this chapter is needed to understand the contextual background of this research. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the theoretical background. This is essential in order to be able to analyse empirical findings.

### 3. Theoretical and conceptual framework

#### 3.1 Introduction

The two core concepts of this research are *place* and *social navigation*. These have been chosen as core concepts since they can provide a framework through which the reality of undocumented people can be understood. Other concepts that are related to the core of place and social navigation are *intersectionality*, *place attachment*, *place making*, *displacement*, *belonging* and *secrecy*. These concepts and the way they are interrelated are used as a theoretical framework through which the empirical data of this research was analysed, in order to better understand how the undocumented residents of SNOV socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen.

Place strongly influences social navigation, as social navigation refers to the social environments of actors, actants, individuals and institutions, and the way people act in these environments (Vigh, 2009). Cresswell's (2015) definition of place can be applied to social navigation as the changing and unstable environment that the actors, which in the case of this research are the undocumented residents of the SNOV shelter, find themselves in. The different aspects of place that Cresswell distinguishes – location, locale and sense of place – all together, affect possible positions and trajectories of the undocumented residents (Vigh, 2009). This chapter will elaborate on the dynamics of these core concepts.

Displacement, place making, place attachment and belonging are concepts through which the undocumented residents' experience of place will be regarded. Through processes of place making, feelings of displacement can decrease (Lems, 2016). As undocumented residents construct their lives in Nijmegen, they become more attached to the city. Emotionally, they can feel like they belong here but politically do not (Yuval-Davis, 2006). As a result of not belonging here politically, the location of the SNOV shelter is supposed to be a secret and this can cause constrictions to the residents. This chapter will provide insights on how these concepts intertwine and provide a theoretical lens through which one can explain reality.

Primarily, this chapter will elaborate on the intersectional approach to social navigation, place and the dynamic of these concepts. Secondly, the concept of social navigation and its relationship with migration will be studied. This section focuses on the debate surrounding social navigation and how it can be applied in migration studies. Thirdly, place as a concept will be analysed while also discussing how the concepts of place making, place attachment and belonging are part of the relationship between place and social navigation. This section will also focus on displacement. Lastly, the concept of secrecy will be highlighted as a specific

theme in this research. This last section highlights the specific circumstances in which the residents of the SNOV shelter find themselves.

### 3.2 Intersectionality

This research takes an intersectional approach on social navigation. An intersectional approach means that other aspects than solely ethnicity are taken into account when researching different persons (Vertovec, 2012). Aspects such as gender, class and religion are also important when analysing diversity within groups of people. Different aspects of one individual should be examined all together instead of separately, as this provides a more thorough understanding of a person's identity (Vertovec, 2012; Ahmadi, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2006). This contributes to interpreting the participant's reality.

However, the intersectionality that Vertovec (2012) has introduced is still limited. Vertovec's look at diversity is detached from history, Ahmadi (2018) argues. Especially colonial history is being forgotten by Vertovec. Furthermore, shared history of people should also be taken into account as this can create cohesion between these people (Ahmadi, 2018): the sharing of history can create a bond or provide an explanation for certain existing relationships. This shared history can be relatively short but is still important to take in consideration when regarding the residents of the SNOV shelter.

The aspect of shared history is particularly important in this thesis as it can be argued that it is the sole identifier all participants have in common. Every individual has their own history but the history of the past years seems – at least partially – similar. Everyone that participated in this research was at one point an asylum seeker and became an undocumented resident at SNOV. Other identifiers, such as age, class and religion were taken into account as well when analysing the gathered data. Considering age, there is one group between 20 and 38 years old and one group of 55 years and older. In case of religion, some residents go to the same Protestant church and this is a substantial part of their activities and social networks. Other residents identify with various other religions. Moreover, two residents have attended university and can therefore be regarded as of a higher social class before moving to a lower class as undocumented people. These identifiers are especially important regarding the individual narratives which help to construct identities.

Vertovec (2012) argues that the diversity within groups is often greater than diversity between groups. It is therefore important to acknowledge this diversity in a group that often gets labelled the same: as undocumented migrants or even 'invaders' who do not deserve to be somewhere (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). Through applying an intersectional

approach to social navigation and place, a clear distinction can be made between the participants in this research, but similarities can also be discovered. Different expressions of social navigation can be the result of different identifiers. It is thus meaningful to maintain an intersectional approach to social navigation and place.

### 3.3 Social navigation and migration

The concept of social navigation is often defined in terms of conflict: social navigation was and still is applied to describe the situation that people in conflict find themselves in and how they act in this given environment (Vigh, 2007). However, this concept is applicable for analysis in migration studies as well, as when a person migrates, they may find themselves in an unstable and ever-changing environment. Social navigation is about the relationship between agency and social forces (Vigh, 2009). According to Vigh's proposition: "*[social navigation] is used when referring to how people act in difficult or uncertain circumstances and in describing how they disentangle themselves from confining structures, plot their escape and move towards better positions*" (Vigh, 2009, p. 419). It is the intersection of how social formations move and change over time and how agents move within these formations.

The undocumented residents of SNOV that participated in this research find themselves in difficult and uncertain circumstances. These circumstances originate from them migrating and becoming undocumented residents in the Netherlands and more specifically, a shelter in Nijmegen whose location is supposed to remain secretive. This however does not mean that these residents stop moving, even if this movement is figurative. They are in a constant flow; they are in motion. The residents are moving towards the future and moving forward in life. The concept of social navigation is therefore useful to apply while analysing the data of these participants as it figures as a theoretical framework through which to regard the residents' everyday lives.

Social navigation is a motion within motion (Vigh, 2009). The latter motion refers to the environment that is unstable as a result of migration and the unofficial character of the undocumented residents' position in Nijmegen. The former motion refers to the navigation of these residents in this environment. It can be argued that social navigation is a strategy and process of demarcating space and the ways in which to navigate those spaces. People anticipate their next steps in order to protect their presence in a changing environment. The residents of SNOV are in a constant motion of anticipating their future and – figuratively – moving forward to get there. Vigh (2009) applies an analytical view that regards the environment not as a



landscape – a view – but as a seascape; an environment in motion while the studied object is also in motion.

The concept of social navigation tends to bypass the debate on structure and agency that is taking place in the social sciences. This debate evolves around the question if structure or agency is more important. However, similar to what Vigh (2009) argues through using the concept of social navigation, authors such as Fuchs (2001) argue that structure and agency should rather be regarded as reiterative and not as natural opposites. Persons do act, but in an environment with circumstances that are not of their choosing (Fuchs, 2001).

It can be argued that Vigh's description of social navigation is somewhat in line with Fuchs's take on structure and agency. Even though Vigh specifically mentions agency a lot in his work, he explains the squared motion. This view on social navigation describes the motion of the environment in relation to the motion of a person in this environment and therefore recognises the interwovenness of structure and agency. The social action an agent undertakes – thus the agency of a person – is adjusted to their surroundings, being the environment and the structure. This process is also reciprocated, with social actions being influenced by the surroundings. Accordingly, there is no dichotomy between structure and agency: the undocumented residents of SNOV act as social navigators in an environment and circumstances over which they have no control.

The current environment of COVID-19 (otherwise referred to as the corona crisis) is a suitable example of such an environment that is in motion and uncontrolled by undocumented residents. People are challenged to show social vigilance as it still remains uncertain how this situation will unravel. The prediction and foresight of the unfolding of political and economic happenings is a substantial part of social navigation (Vigh, 2009). This is rather difficult given the unstable character of the corona crisis, but the residents still make sense of their environment and move forward in life.

A substantial part of the social navigation of undocumented residents depends on their network. Some key studies on undocumented migrants insist on the agency of migrants and their use of social networks (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). This is also the case in the current situation regarding the corona crisis. Oftentimes, migrants are assigned to a Dutch buddy or volunteer who can help them in the difficult and uncertain circumstances that come with this crisis (Pilon, 2020). Deploying contacts, such as these buddies, is a way in which undocumented residents can actively make sense of their environment and base decisions they take upon this.

Because social navigation recognises a constant redefining of the socially produced environment, the concept goes beyond the idea that a person's life is set in a stable and solidified social setting (Vigh, 2009). Therefore, by applying the concept of social navigation to the case of the undocumented residents of SNOV, the interplay of an unstable and ever-changing environment and a person's agency become apparent.

### 3.4 Navigating places

There are multiple ways to define place. The most straightforward and common definition of place is a meaningful location (Cresswell, 2015). This can be applied to a vast number of different sorts of place. There are three fundamental aspects of place: location, locale and sense of place (Agnew in Cresswell, 2015). The *location* is about where a place is. This can be a fixed position on a map, but also a moving position like a ship. In the case of this research, the location refers to the SNOV shelter, placed in Nijmegen. The fundamental aspect *locale* on the other hand, is rather about social settings of a location; a place in which people conduct their lives as men or women, religious or non-religious, upper class or lower class. This concerns the physical landscape that surrounds a person. In the case of this research, this involves mostly men and solely two women, who find themselves in the lower class because of their status as undocumented person. The fundamental aspect *sense of place* can best be described as the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place. These are the meanings – personal and shared – that are associated with a particular locale (Cresswell, 2015).

When combining the three fundamental aspects of place, one can see resemblance with what Lems (2016) and Pemberton and Philimore (2018) describe as place making and what Rishbeth and Powell (2013) describe as place attachment. Place making looks into the capacity a person has to make a place their own. It is about creating a sense of being-part-of, a sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006), and decreasing feelings of displacement. Doing, making and building things is a way of creating one's own place (Lems, 2016), and thus a form of place making. The sense of place is associated with the locale that locations entail (Cresswell, 2015). If a person experiences a sense of being-part-of, they create a subjective and emotional attachment.

While the place in which a person finds themselves changes, it affects this person in the way they move within their social environment and it affects possible positions and trajectories. The sense of being-part-of, the sense of belonging, can be altered because of this changing environment. Agents have to anticipate their next steps in order to protect their presence in this environment (Vigh, 2009). As the presence of undocumented residents in Nijmegen is

uncertain, they adapt strategies such as place making in order to protect this presence for the future.

### 3.4.1 Displacement

Place as a concept can be regarded through different perspectives, one of which is displacement. Focusing on an individual's behaviour, acts of place making and narrating create a nuanced conception of displacement (Lems, 2016). This conceptualisation allows for a thorough understanding of the ways place and displacement intersect, and how social life is grounded. Lems (2016) argues that people are now thought of as continuously moving through a flexible, open-ended and contested space, instead of being bound by an everlasting and stable place. The ever-changing and unstable character of these spaces explains the concept of displacement. In these unstable and changing grounds, a person can experience a sense of displacement. The sense of displacement occurs by the unfamiliarity of a place and feeling estranged, like one does not belong to this flexible space.

Migrants and refugees have become the symbolic figures in the change of understanding movement through a stable place to understanding movement through flexible, open-ended and contested space (Lems, 2016). It is therefore not difficult to associate displacement with the undocumented residents this research focuses on. The undocumented residents that participated in this research, found themselves in an unfamiliar place when they arrived in Nijmegen. They had no – social – networks and were not grounded in this place; they felt estranged. Using the concept of displacement can contribute to creating a theoretical understanding of the reasons why undocumented residents felt estranged and also how they can overcome these; how they can navigate their position as displaced person. Even so, Lems (2016) calls to apply the concept of displacement not solely to migrants and refugees but others as well.

Through storytelling, one can find out the manner in which the concept of displacement takes shape in the case of different groups of people (Lems, 2016). Storytelling can contribute to a more thorough understanding of displacement for each person individually. She argues that the “placement” in displacement should not be overlooked. By this she refers to recognising the way people feel placed and not only displaced. Lems (2016) argues that attention should be paid to the ways people actively make sense of displacement in their everyday lives. The individual stories people tell help to move away from theoretical explanations and representations, and really reveal nuances in all experiences. Lems's conceptualisation of displacement offers a theoretical lens through which the experiences of the undocumented residents of SNOV can be explained. Following Lems's argument on displacement, I have used

the undocumented residents' storytelling – in the form of self-representation – to comprehend in what way the concepts place and displacement take shape in the residents' lives.

### 3.4.2 Place and belonging among undocumented people

Place making is inherently connected to agency (Lems, 2016; Pemberton & Phillimore, 2018). It evolves around the capacity a person has to make their own place and attach meaning to the environment, socially and physically. Place making can be understood as a mechanism for migrants to construct and maintain a collective identity in host populations, but also to establish validity and aspirations of a new community (Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). The being-part-of is an important aspect of place making (Lems, 2016). When a person feels out-of-place because of displacement, they can have to socially navigate their position as displaced person in certain ways in order to become engaged with the place they find themselves in and experience a sense of being-part-of or being-at-home.

In order to make sense of this environment, undocumented residents start processes of place making. This is their way of navigating an unstable environment as undocumented people. The residents find themselves thrown into situations that are out of their control; they are set in a certain place or situation (Lems, 2016). This is in accordance with Fuchs's (2001) argument of people acting in an environment with circumstances that are not one's own choosing. These grounds are the spaces that are ever-changing and not stable and have to be socially navigated by the residents. As the undocumented residents find themselves in such a situation and environment they cannot control, it is interesting to look at possibilities they have to make sense of their surroundings and place themselves in it. The grounds on which a sense of displacement can be experienced, the process of place making occurs. Place making processes can in turn result in place attachment and sense of belonging, which can diminish feelings of displacement.

Where Lems (2016) is trying to broaden the perspective of objects to study concerning place making and displacement, Pemberton and Philimore (2018) apply the concept of place making mostly on migrants living in a super-diverse neighbourhood. They distinguish four stages of a linear process through which place making occurs. The first stage they recognise is when migrants agree on a common identity through place. The second stage involves people who are new to the place and associating with it, without being excluded or having to abandon significant aspects of their identity. The third stage of the process is when the majority community is accepting of the migrant place making. The fourth stage occurs when newly arriving migrants develop affinity with the existing migrant places and their identities are sustained. However, Pemberton and Philimore (2018) acknowledge that this is solely

theoretical and therefore limited as the process of place making should be examined by how difficulties, risks and contingencies play out in actual neighbourhoods. For this reason and the fact that this research does not take the super-diverse character of the neighbourhood into account but primarily focuses on the SNOV shelters by itself, I have applied the theoretical lens provided by Lems (2016) when analysing the ways in which undocumented residents navigate place.

Through looking into the undocumented residents' everyday lives, the process of place making becomes clear (Lems, 2016; Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). The place attributes to certain constrictions, construction of particular identities and the visibility of migrants (Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). Though oftentimes, if a process of place making occurs, it evolves around networks of people and not so much the place itself. Lems (2016) and Pemberton and Philimore (2018) argue that connecting with networks and different people is a way of place making. Thus, the people that are present in the place where undocumented residents find themselves, strongly influence their process of place making. Doing, making and building things such as making friends and partaking in activities with these friends is a way in which undocumented residents can navigate their environment and also experience being-part-of. The acts with which undocumented residents invest in their surroundings – the place they find themselves in – make the connection between place, and being and identity clear.

In order to analyse the way undocumented residents experience being-part-of, I will use the concept of belonging as a theoretical lens. Belonging concerns the construction of identities and identifications – which are about individual and collective narratives of self and other – presentation and labelling, and the connection to a place and networks of people (Yuval-Davis, 2006). By using the concept of belonging as an analytical tool, the way undocumented residents construct their identities and identifications and their connection to place can be studied.

Belonging can be applied in two different ways: Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that there is a distinction between a sense of belonging and the politics of belonging. A *sense of belonging* is emotional, and is about attachment. It focuses on when and how a person feels rooted or at home; when and how they feel like they belong and what they see as their identity. These can result from place making processes. The *politics of belonging* concerns the politics of citizenship, entitlement and status. One could argue that a sense of belonging evolves around the informal aspect of citizenship and identity and the politics of belonging evolves around the formal aspect.

Belonging is a concept that combines formal citizenship and identity with informal citizenship and identity. The formal aspect concerns meanings of membership, rights, and

duties (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For the purposes of this research, the formal part of citizenship involves the government's verdict on who is or is not an official member of society, and therefore does or does not have the right to belong in the Netherlands; the informal aspect of belonging concerns emotions that such a formal citizenship and identity evoke (Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, in the case of undocumented residents, I will also look into informal belonging and the residents' attachment to Nijmegen regardless of being a formal citizen, as the residents can experience a sense of belonging in the Netherlands or Nijmegen, even if they formally do not belong here.

Theoretically, the construction of a sense of belonging can be divided into three analytical levels, of which the first is social locations (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Social locations are the aspects which can distinguish one person from another. These are, for example, a person's gender, ethnicity, class, profession or kinship group. Yuval-Davis (2006) takes an intersectional approach to her concept that is similar to the one explained by the articles of Vertovec (2012) and Ahmadi (2018) in the beginning of this chapter. However, the way Yuval-Davis applies the intersectional approach is more overarching. She mentions that the different categories of these aspects bring forward a certain positionality along an axis of power; certain categories are placed higher or lower in power than others. These power positionings are fluid and dependent on historical context. Social locations are seldom constructed along one power axis of difference, even though identity politics often do construct them this way (Yuval-Davis, 2006). It is therefore important to apply an extended intersectional approach to social locations, mostly because a social division can never be made by solely focussing on the categories of one location and because these categories can also be fluid.

The second analytical level is the individual's identifications and emotional attachments to different groups (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This is similar to the sense of place that Cresswell (2015) describes, only instead of places, this attachment is to groups of people. This focuses on the narratives and stories that often directly or indirectly relate to perceptions of oneself and others regarding what being a member of a certain group entails. In addition to this, a collective identity narrative often becomes a resource for an individual narrative. However, the construction of belonging does not solely depend on narratives. Yuval-Davis (2006) applies the sense of belonging and the way it is constructed to narratives as well as the emotional investments and desires for attachment that these reflect. The undocumented residents of SNOV have a collective identity of being undocumented in Nijmegen. If these residents identify with each other or other citizens of Nijmegen, they can experience an emotional attachment to this place or long to belong here.

Emotional attachments can shift in different situations. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that when people feel threatened and less secure, the emotional components of which people construct themselves, become more defining for what they attach to. When people are not threatened or secure, they might attach emotionally to a different place or different people. In this case, other components such as surroundings at that certain moment can be more dominant. This shows the performative dimension of how belonging is constructed. Some emotions are inherently related to specific social objects (Ahmed in Yuval-Davis, 2006). To explain this in terms of this research: if an undocumented resident's family is living in a dangerous place, the resident feels threatened and less secure, and might want to visit their family to share their fate. Even if this results in the resident themselves not being safe; they strongly attach to their family because of this insecure feeling. Furthermore, if the undocumented residents feel secure, the components of their surroundings might be more important regarding their attachment. In this case, they are more likely to attach to Nijmegen or the SNOV shelter and the people living at these places.

The third analytical level that is applied involves the ethical and political value systems through which people judge their own belonging and that of others (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Belonging is also about the ways in which social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments are valued and judged. Certain attitudes concerning how and where boundaries between categories and identities are or should be drawn are part of belonging, but can be formed in the politics of belonging. Neighbours can play a significant role in this. Research shows that in order to be 'legitimised' as a neighbour, one has to participate in by the community approved activities (Vollebergh, 2016). This can for example involve having a drink together or striking up a conversation on the street. If the undocumented residents of SNOV partake in these activities, their neighbours can consider them to belong to the neighbourhood or Nijmegen.

Building further on the third analytical level, Yuval-Davis (2006) writes more specifically about the politics of belonging. This relates to the politics of citizenship and entitlement and status which instead of the emotional component of citizenship, concerns the formal component. It is important to distinguish the politics of belonging from belonging, since the latter tends to be naturalised (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Belonging often only becomes politicised when it is threatened in one way or another. The politics of belonging entails that the government decides on who belongs to a certain place and who does not. To put this in terms of this research: the government has decided through laws that people who do not hold a legal Dutch residence permit, do not belong in the Netherlands. Undocumented residents could

navigate their position of officially not belonging in the Netherlands, through owning official documents. This is a difficult process however. One can imagine that a person who does not belong in the Netherlands according to the politics of belonging, attaches differently to this place as well.

Through using Rishbeth and Powell's (2013) concept of place attachment, I can analyse the ways in which undocumented residents attach to the Netherlands and Nijmegen and experience a sense of belonging. Place attachment is a concept that focuses on emotional, symbolic and affective dimensions of people's ideas on and feelings for places (Rishbeth & Powell, 2013). It means that the studied undocumented residents have a profound resonance with specific locations. When living in a certain place for a longer period of time, one is likely to experience place attachment.

According to Rishbeth and Powell (2013), place attachment is established by memories. They create the connections between places migrants now live in and the places that are familiar to them from their earlier life in other countries. Connecting aspects of the migrant's country of origin to aspects in their host country can result in place attachment. In addition to this, since the attaching to a place happens emotionally and is defined by time and space, it is important to maintain a flexible understanding of what exactly are past and present spaces. If undocumented residents make memories in the present space of Nijmegen, place attachment can occur as well. The resonance with a location can be the undocumented residents' way of socially navigating their position in this location.

Furthermore, expectations of places should also be taken into account when researching place attachment. A place might disappoint, meet expectations or even exceed them. If a migrant has certain expectations of a place that are not met when they arrive, they can long for the place they used to live in or experience attachment to that place of the past. Memories as well as emotional responses to expected and imagined places all contribute to the degree in which a person experiences place attachment (Rishbeth & Powell, 2013). This temporal aspect of place attachment also plays a significant role in social navigation. Social formations within places move and change over time, and the concept of social navigation allows to see insights on how this intersects with the way people move within these formations (Vigh, 2009). Thus, the combined aspects of place and time are significant to both social navigation and place attachment, especially regarding expectations of places.

The passing of time causes a growing familiarity for people who are attaching to a new place. Rishbeth and Powell (2013) argue that primarily, place attachment is characterised by people comparing their country of the past and country of the future. Afterwards, this will have



changed into becoming familiar with the country of the present and experiencing a sense of belonging there. Personal changes such as ageing and experiences play a substantial part in this process. Developing knowledge about places that only insiders have can provide a sense of establishment (Rishbeth & Powell, 2013). This also signifies the break from a 'newcomer status'. The moving away from being a newcomer and developing of place attachment can affect migrants in a way that it increases feelings of security and comfort among vulnerable groups. Rishbeth and Powell (2013) state that the process of becoming familiar, combined with the development of recent memories of the current place, can support a sense of belonging and legitimacy.

This experience of a sense of belonging through becoming familiar and developing memories of the current place is something I have researched in the case of the residents of the SNOV shelter. If people live in a certain place for a longer period of time, they can start to feel at home – and experience a sense of belonging – because the places and people they are surrounded by become familiar to them. When the residents are attached to a place and familiar with the environment, this can create a feeling of belonging. It can therefore be argued that place attachment can create a feeling of belonging.

An example of how place attachment and the lack thereof could be a way of social navigation, is when people make a choice not to have emotional, symbolic or affective attachment to a certain place. An understandable reason for someone to not attach to a place, is because they imagine their future elsewhere. In this case, that person anticipates the changing forces in their environment. This may be a means of self-protection. The anticipation of a changing environment shows agency (Vigh, 2009). In this case, choosing to not attach to a place can be a form of social navigation. Thus, if one chooses not to attach to a place, this can be a form of social navigation, based on a changing environment.

The concepts of place attachment, displacement and place making recognise that place is socially constructed and produced. This is similar to the concept of social navigation. It recognises that people – agents – move through a space that is continually changing – it (re)constructs and (re)produces – in a fluid manner and that these people actively make sense of this space (Vigh, 2009). Undocumented residents are being prevented from attaching to a certain place because of the politics of belonging. This relates to the politics of citizenship and entitlement and status (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In the case of this research, therefore, it means that undocumented residents are not legally entitled to live in the Netherlands, nor do they hold any official status. As a result of how this place is constructed and produced, undocumented

residents have an unofficial status and there is a possibility of deportation and extradition which puts them in a subordinate and vulnerable position (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014).

Despite this exclusion from formal citizenship and society, undocumented residents can still attain informal citizenship and attach to a place. This can be brought about by active civic participation, for instance by participating in activities organised by institutions such as the church (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Retaining such an informal citizenship can increase a sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006) as well as visibility (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). As an undocumented resident that has an unofficial status in the Netherlands, one has to be invisible in order to prevent deportation. Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas (2014) argue that being part of society through informal citizenship makes a person more visible and at the same time helps with anonymity because visibility is unexpected.

Creating one's own place – place making – can contribute to the process of blending in and therefore influence a person's visibility. It is important to keep in mind that undocumented residents find themselves in the SNOV shelter because they do not have documents that confirm their belonging – such as an official residence permit or ID card – and with this place come constrictions and limitations. For example, the possibility of getting deported as a result of not following certain rules. Furthermore, the process of place making can help residents with creating an experience of being-part-of. When a person feels like they are a part of something, this influences their sense of belonging. If undocumented residents experience being-part-of and feel like they belong in Nijmegen, they are more likely to blend in and camouflage their unofficial position. In this case, experiencing a sense of belonging and blending in as a result of place making, figures as a way through which undocumented residents navigate their position and place in Nijmegen.

This also works the other way around: one can feel as if they are not in place, like they do not belong in Nijmegen. In this case, undocumented residents would not experience the being-part-of something and this causes them to lack a sense of belonging. This could result in not having a certain camouflage that protects their position. Then, undocumented residents would have to navigate their position and place in Nijmegen through another way in order to not get detected.

For the purposes of this research, the politics of belonging in a way render those without a legal residence permit as not belonging in the Netherlands. This leads to undocumented residents experiencing certain restrictions and limitations. These restrictions and limitations influence the way undocumented residents should act in the given environment (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). In order to socially navigate their position and place in the

Netherlands, they have to adapt certain strategies. For example, since they are officially not allowed to be here, they are supposed to keep the location of the SNOV shelter secret. In addition to this, when undocumented residents have to adapt their behaviour in order to keep the location of the shelter and themselves unknown, this could alter their sense of belonging.

### 3.5 The aspect of secrecy in the undocumented residents' lives

The effects of keeping the location of the SNOV shelter and the identity of its residents unknown can be analysed through the concept of secrecy. Walters (2015) theorises the concept of secrecy within the field of security. In order to understand the concept of secrecy, one must take a multisided, circumstantial and open-ended view of the relationship between security, public action and democratic politics argues Walters (2015). This is to foster reflexivity: instead of looking into the vagueness and indeterminacies of security policy, it evolves around the reworking of this policy in relation to democratic concerns and public action.

The implemented policies on how to deal with undocumented people were – and still are – needed to deal with the number of undocumented residents and homeless refugees in the Netherlands. The municipality decided that the public must not be aware of SNOV's location. If the public were to know where SNOV is located, this would undermine the security of the shelter and its residents.

Walters (2015) mentions that secrecy facilitates the relationship between security and publicness. Publicness in the case of SNOV equals revelation of its locations and residents. The fear of revelation is a bespoken subject in literature and also in the practical example of the SNOV shelter. Through regulating the inflow and outflow of people, the location and the residents' ability to live in the shelter is secured. Policies imposed by the municipality state that the location and the identity of the undocumented residents should remain secret (SNOV, 2019), as it is the only way to secure them from being evicted or even deported.

The residents themselves are responsible to keep the location of the SNOV shelter secret and their behaviour should be adjusted to this. For them it means that guests are not allowed in order to prevent causing suspicion. Furthermore, they have to stay off the streets and cannot make too much noise. But most importantly, they cannot draw attention to themselves. This secret aspect of the shelter they live in is an important part of an undocumented resident's environment and is something that has to be acted upon. Because the residents of the shelter are undocumented, they have to behave in a certain way in this given environment. If they do not, this has consequences such as eviction or deportation. Secrecy therefore relates to the non-physical aspect of social navigation; residents aspire to go somewhere or move towards a better

position, but have to keep in mind the secretive aspect of their lives and are limited because of this. They have to adapt certain strategies and think of creative solutions in order to overcome this limitation and socially navigate their position in Nijmegen.

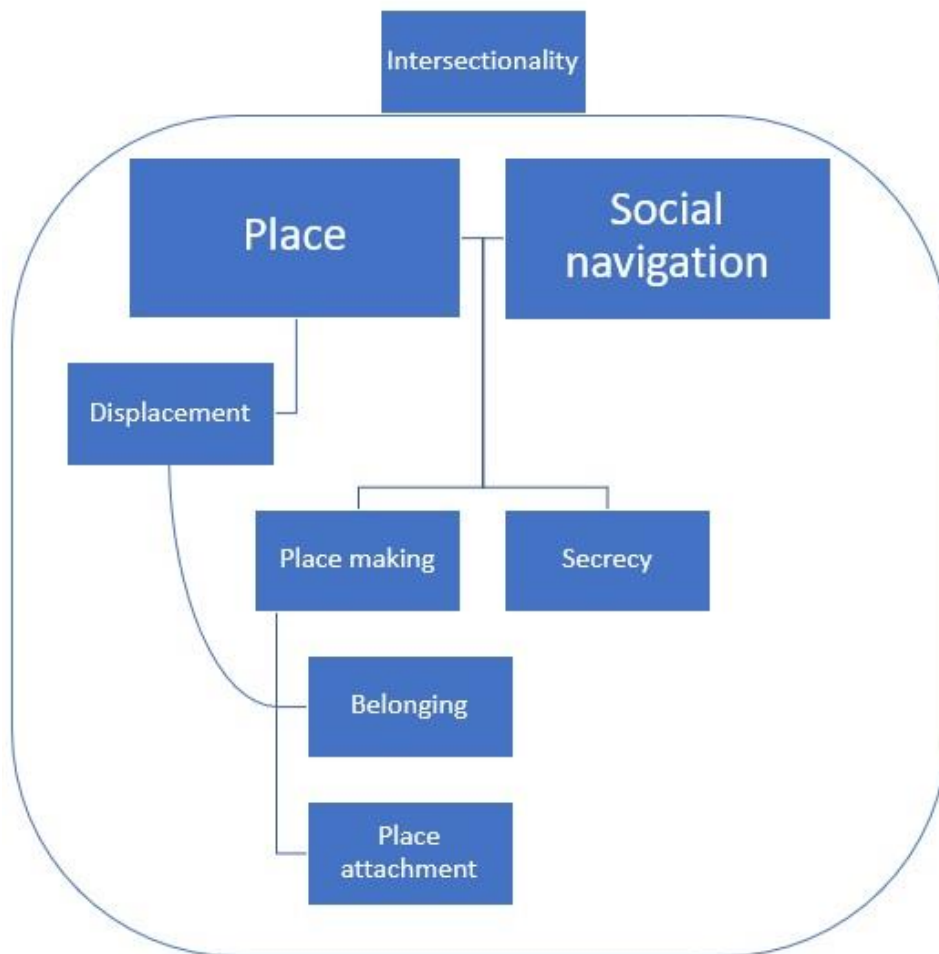
### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented multiple concepts through which the empirical data that was collected for this research can be analysed. I have used an intersectional approach when analysing these concepts and chose to use the work of authors that also adapted this intersectionality. Through the use of several concepts, I have connected Vigh's (2009) conceptualisation of social navigation and Cresswell's (2015) conceptualisation of place. With the concepts I have described in this chapter and the theoretical framework that followed from this, I am able to provide an in-depth understanding of the ways undocumented residents socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen in their everyday lives.

The experience of place can play a significant part in the social navigation of an undocumented resident. The place undocumented residents find themselves in, can bring forward multiple constrictions and limitations such as the aspect of secrecy and not having an official status. They have to find ways to cope with these. Processes of place making can be regarded as a form of social navigation as those can be applied as a strategy to anticipate the possible routes and trajectories that will occur in the future and cause the undocumented residents to be prepared. It helps to decrease feelings of displacement (Lems, 2016). These same place making processes can then lead to a sense of belonging and place attachment. Especially the emotional component of belonging and place attachment should be taken into consideration as undocumented residents, following the politics of belonging, do not belong in the Netherlands.

In the following chapter I will explain the methods I have used and the choices I made while researching undocumented residents' social navigation of their position and place in Nijmegen. Furthermore, the ethics that were involved in this research and the results of the outbreak of the coronavirus on this research will be discussed.

The conceptual framework that follows from this chapter:



1. Intersectionality is used as a lens through which to regard the other concepts.
2. Place and social navigation are the core concepts and connected to each other through the concepts of place making and secrecy.
3. Additionally, place is related to displacement which can affect belonging.
4. Place making can lead to belonging and place attachment.

## 4. Being an ethnographic researcher and volunteer

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the methods that were used in this research in order to investigate the social navigation of undocumented residents of the SNOV shelter. I will explain the choices I made and provide insights several variables that influenced the way this research was conducted.

I will start with a description of what ethnographic methods are and why these were suited to conduct this research. Additionally, I will provide an explanation on how I chose the residents of SNOV that participated in this research. Secondly, I will provide a general description of myself as a research instrument. It is important to take into account my characteristics as this has influenced the methods I used and the results that followed from these methods. Thirdly, I will examine the questions of ethics that arose in conducting this research. Subsequently, I elaborate on how the outbreak of the coronavirus affected my methods and therefore this research, and lastly I will describe the practice of data analysis.

### 4.1 Ethnography and choice of participants

Ethnographic methods bring forward qualitative results rather than quantitative as people or groups of people are described rather than structures or whole populations (Gobo, 2008). I obtained data with the purpose of collecting feelings, experiences and attitudes of the people that participated in this research. Ethnographic methods are well-suited to adopt in this research, because this research evolves around the actions of undocumented residents that are influenced by feelings, experiences and attitudes. Besides, the purpose of this research is to focus on a specific group of people and creating an in-depth understanding of their social navigation, rather than providing a cross-section of a large population. Therefore, I believe that data collection via ethnographic methods would provide the most grounded outcomes for this specific research.

“Being present” in the field is a vital aspect of this research form (Gobo, 2008). This way, the researcher can get a clear view of feelings, experiences and attitudes of the people that are researched. My field of research was the SNOV shelter in Nijmegen and I was able to be present here through working as a volunteer while also making my role as a researcher known. The fact that I got to be present in the field contributed to the possibility of collecting data on feelings, experiences and attitudes of the people that participated in this research.

Starting November 2019, I went to the main men’s shelter of SNOV twice a week to start exploring the field and getting to know the men living in this specific location of the SNOV shelter. My work as a volunteer involved acting as a host. Hosts are present to sustain a good

atmosphere in the shelter and provide a homely feeling by being present at previously defined times and interacting with the men. Additionally, I was occupied with the “Zorgen voor Morgen” programme which the coordinators at SNOV started in order to provide a helping hand to the residents regarding their future. The undocumented residents could take this opportunity to spend the time they are in the shelter productively, by partaking in activities that would give them useful skills for later on in life. Examples of this programme are Dutch classes, carpentry workshops, and jewellery making.

Through being present and working as a volunteer, I was able to conduct participant observation. This is “*a method to collect data which enables objectivation of the activities and experiences of certain actors*” (Hughes in Gobo, 2008, p. 38). I engaged in participant observation in order to grasp the perspective of social actors and see the reality from their point of view. In the case of this research, this entailed partaking in the residents’ morning and evening activities at the shelter. In the morning, this generally involves drinking tea or coffee together while discussing the upcoming day, week or past weekend. In the evening, these activities involve watching a football game on television, playing a game and having general conversation or interesting discussions. On one occasion I was invited to join a resident to an activity hosted outside the SNOV shelter. I would have liked this to be more frequent, but this was not possible given the outbreak of the coronavirus (section 4.4 will provide further insights on this).

The first several months of my time at the SNOV shelter were used to get to know the people that I would research. The data I collected then largely consisted of notes I made in my observation diary based on participant observation and small talk. When I was familiar with SNOV’s residents and my position at SNOV, I started collecting in-depth data through conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants.

The participants in this research were found through theoretical sampling. This means that groups were selected based on their relevance to the research questions (Gobo, 2008). My research questions all contain one specific group of people: undocumented people. Because of the limited time I had for this research and the connections I wanted to make with undocumented residents, I limited this group to undocumented people in Nijmegen living at the SNOV shelter.

In the shelter, I approached as many people as I could. When asking them to do an interview with me, I explained what topic I was going to research, how they could help me and that everything would be anonymous. Some were not willing to participate while others were. The residents that were willing to participate agreed to do a semi-structured interview which I

would record. Others were not willing to do an interview, but willing to participate in small talk.

In this research, I only conducted semi-structured interviews as I wanted to keep open to suggestions made by the participants themselves and be able to have a conversation rather than a 'Q&A session'. This way, I could stay flexible regarding the course of the conversation and zoom in on the participant's emotions, opinions and experiences.

#### 4.2 Description of me, the research instrument

I want to provide a short, general background of myself as my characteristics affected the methods used while conducting this research and most likely influenced participant observations and findings. It is essential to understand the background of a researcher as these can lead to certain decisions being made. Furthermore, the people that participate in the research 'judge' the researcher on their characteristics as well, which might also lead to a different process or different outcomes.

I am a 23-year-old female student with a background in cultural anthropology and development studies. During these studies, I learned to conduct qualitative, ethnographic research. As I am familiar with the ethnographic methods and satisfied with the sort of results that come from this, I wished to adopt these methods while conducting the research for this thesis. One year ago, in September 2019, I started with my studies in human geography.

I was born and raised in a small village in the Netherlands, more specifically Limburg, and come from a middle-class family. I have a mother and father who are divorced and I have one younger sister. It is important to me to let people feel heard, as their opinion and story matters. I am interested in listening to stories about people's lives and ideas and therefore wanted to integrate this in the research I conducted.

#### 4.3 Ethics

While conducting this research, ethics were important to uphold. There are different practical arguments for researchers to behave ethically. These can be divided in three categories: "*1) ethical behaviour protects the rights of individuals, communities and environments involved in, or affected by, our research; (...) 2) ethical behaviour helps establish a favourable climate for the continued conduct of scientific inquiry; (...) 3) institutions such as universities must protect themselves legally from possible unethical actions of a student or employee*" (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie & French, 2016, p. 31-32). Additionally, participants must be given complete



information about the aims of the research, then they can decide whether or not they give permission to gather data based on them (Gobo, 2008). In order to uphold ethical codes and behave ethically as a researcher, I informed residents of the SNOV shelter about everything my research involved and then asked them if they wanted to participate via a semi-structured interview.

Ensuring the anonymity of the residents of SNOV was an important component of the ethical codes of this research. As they are undocumented and do not hold an official status, they are officially not allowed to be in the Netherlands. If their identity would be revealed, this could result in their arrest and deportation. This is something I wanted to prevent at any cost. Therefore, I refer to the residents with letters that do not hold any connection to their names. I assigned a letter to each of them in alphabetical order. Moreover, I tried to not connect multiple identifiers to one person as this might reveal their identity. The residents can however recognise themselves by reading the quotes that are used in this research.

Confidentiality was another vital aspect of this research's ethical codes. While writing, I had to be aware of what I would like to say, what I could say and what I had to say (Gobo, 2008). Confidentiality is important to uphold in order to not influence the relationship between researcher and participant. Moreover, I asked the undocumented residents that participated to inform me when they did not want me to use certain statements they made for the purpose of my research or in conversations with my supervisor at SNOV. I took their wishes into account during my writing process and during discussions with my supervisor.

I did not want to make the residents of SNOV feel as if I 'used' them for research purposes and I found it important to contribute something to the SNOV shelter, the same way its residents contributed to my research. Therefore, I did volunteer work but also offered my help when residents needed some. I gave my number to everyone who asked and used this contact to stay updated on each other and be available for a friendly conversation or questions. Additionally, I enrolled in a Dutch-programme ran by volunteers and started giving Dutch lessons to one resident.

#### 4.4 How the outbreak of the coronavirus affected this research

The outbreak of the coronavirus affected this research in more than one way. At the beginning of the period that I had designated to collect data, the Dutch government implemented rules in order to control the virus. The government conceived an 'intelligent lock-down' (Rijksoverheid, 2020). This involved staying indoors as much as possible, only going to places if it was out of

necessity, preventing physical contact with people outside your household and quarantining oneself for two weeks when showing symptoms of the coronavirus.

As the lock-down commenced in the start of spring, I was often experiencing troubles from, presumably, hay fever. Yet, the symptoms of my hay fever partially matched the symptoms of the coronavirus. Because of the fear evolving around being infected by the virus or infecting others, I did not visit the SNOV shelter for about a month. I chose to do so because I did not want to take any risks, especially because the participants in this research are considered a highly vulnerable population group as they have limited access to health care.

During this period of absence, I tried to keep in touch with the residents of SNOV via my phone and online applications. With some residents, I was able to maintain contact during this time but with others not so much. I found that this heavily depended on the residents' mental health and familiarity with technological devices and texting. With those who were already familiar with such devices and texting, and were in a good mental state, I could keep in touch. With two residents, I was even able to conduct an interview over WhatsApp.

I could only return after the rules imposed by the government were slightly less strict. When I returned to the shelter in person and started conducting interviews, I decided to include the effects of the outbreak of the coronavirus and the crisis that came with it in my research by adjusting my topic list for the interviews.

The changed and unstable environment caused by the coronavirus provided a chance for me to regard the social navigation of undocumented residents in times of a pandemic. I asked about limitations they experienced because of the corona crisis, what their daily activities look like and what they have missed since the outbreak. At the end of every interview, I asked for feedback regarding the bespoke topics and questions and all residents considered the added topic of the corona to be valuable. The reason they gave was mostly that they liked thinking about what they can do against boredom and still invest their time in something useful. Thus, apart from the hazards I experienced because of the corona crisis when conducting this research, I also found a way of using this for this research's benefit.

#### 4.5 Data analysis

The ethnographic material this research is based on was collected by applying methods of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, keeping an observation diary and document analyses. Through these ethnographic methods, I tried to understand the reality from the participants' point of view. I tried to uncover how the concept of social navigation is applied in the practical case of undocumented residents from SNOV.

I analysed this data with the programme Atlas.ti, which is a software programme for qualitative data analysis. In order to categorise the textual material, I assigned codes to different statements based on the operationalisation of my topic list (this can be found in the appendices). During the coding process, I started to notice certain patterns of linked codes such as *limitations* and *corona*, *future* and *uncertainty*, and *SNOV card* and *security* or *identity*. Through looking at these connected codes, I was able to analyse my findings and, when relevant, compare the results from one participant with the results of another and seek for nuances.

While coding, I constantly went back and forth between these codes – and the textual material they were related to – and the theory. Since I wanted to write about the participants' social navigation and the participants themselves, I chose to introduce them through self-representation. I consider the best way to write from the residents' point of view is to let them tell the story. I searched for how I could theoretically explain what the undocumented residents told me.

The references to the data that I personally gathered for the purpose of this thesis are structured as follows. When a reference starts with “a”, this refers to information gathered through an interview. The number that follows designates which interview it was. After the first number comes a colon which is followed by another number. The latter refers to a specific quote that was coded in Atlas.ti. If a reference starts with “d1”, this refers to information written in my observation diary. As I only had one diary, all references with “d” are followed by the number “1”. After the colon is the number that I connected to this specific piece of information.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the undocumented residents of SNOV that participated in this research through self-representation. I will present that residents by using their own quotes from interviews. Furthermore, I will analyse how they experience place by looking at the concepts of displacement, place making, place attachment and belonging.

## 5. Introducing the residents and their experience of place

*My conversation with resident G took place in the house he shares with one other resident. When I arrived, he was working in the vegetable garden he planted himself. Enthusiastically, he showed me the different crops and told me why he assigned the crops to different structures of ground. Afterwards, I asked him how he learned how to do this and he told me: “back at home, my grandfather used to have a land as big as three hectares on which he grew all kinds of food for personal usage. He is the one that taught me” (d1:51).*

*During the conversation with resident G, I noticed that he often talked about “my country [Iran]” and the Netherlands. He also distinguished the Iranian culture from the Dutch on various occasions, at which he referred to his “own culture” and referred to the Dutch culture by addressing me with “you people”. During our conversation, this made me feel as if I was the representation of Dutch people. It was therefore at times difficult for me to try and maintain an open, perhaps somewhat objective, position and not be assigned to the role of ‘the Dutch person’. It was important to me to regard the things resident G – and others – mentioned through their own perspectives and not as ‘the Dutch person’. Therefore, I have chosen to describe the residents that participated in this research through self-representation.*

### 5.1 Introduction

During the interviews and conversations with undocumented residents, identity was a recurring topic. The opening of this chapter is an example of the ways in which this happened; the words resident G used in his answers, imply that he strongly identifies with Iran (“back at home”, “own culture”, “my country”). This says something about who he is. I noticed that several residents identify thus strongly with their country of origin, that they refer to it as “my country” or “back at home”. However, this chapter will provide insights into, not solely what the residents’ country of origin is, but who they are as a person and how this influences their experience of place. With this intention, I will not elaborate on the hardships they had to endure as most of the respondents did not refer to this or did this only shortly. There is plentiful more that makes the residents who they are than just their ethnicity.

In this chapter, the social settings of the residents will be discussed while using an intersectional approach that was introduced in chapter 3, following Ahmadi’s (2018) description of intersectionality. Other than ethnicity, the aspects of history, class, gender and education will be taken into consideration when writing about who the undocumented residents that participated in this research, are. I will not try to show a pattern based on these identifiers,

but simply refer to these to provide the general background of a specific person, while preserving their anonymity, and show that even though the residents may differ in age or gender, this does not necessarily result in different experiences.

All undocumented residents that participated in this research were living in one of the SNOV shelters at the time of participating. The majority – seven out of twelve – were living in the main men’s shelter. The respondents are mostly men; ten men and two women participated in this research. The two women are a mother and daughter and live together in one of the private SNOV shelters. The residents come from different backgrounds; seven from the Middle East (Iran, Afghanistan and Palestine), three from sub-Sahara Africa (Congo, Guinea, Ethiopia), one from Armenia, and one from Albania. Most of these residents are between the age of 20 and 38 years old, three are above the age of 55 years. Two of them have children. One of these children lives in the Netherlands, the children of the other resident live in Congo. Also, four of the residents are married or in a relationship. Moreover, two out of twelve residents have studied at university, one has studied the equivalent of MBO and the remainder have been educated through their work.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that while I refer to this group of people as undocumented residents, they all referred to themselves by using different words. Most residents called themselves “*illegal*”. Only two out of twelve did not do this. Resident B used the word “*refugee*” and resident G “*uitgeprocedeerde*” (this refers to a person who finished their procedure of getting a Dutch residence permit). Thus, while I refer to these people as a group of undocumented residents, they have very different perspectives on who they are exactly.

Furthermore, insights into the residents’ ideas, opinions and behaviour will be elaborated on in order to comprehend their place making and place attachment. This chapter will provide insights into the feelings of displacement that undocumented residents may or may not have experienced as they are moving through and open-ended, flexible and contested space, as described by Lems (2016). Looking into the ways undocumented residents construct and maintain a collective identity in host populations – such as argued by resident G in the opening of this chapter – provides a projection of what place making entails (Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). This mostly includes attachment to Nijmegen and not the country of origin.

In this chapter, I will firstly introduce the undocumented residents via self-representation. I will then analyse the undocumented residents’ processes of place making and feelings of displacement. This will be done through describing the residents in the way they described themselves and via the topics they considered to be important. Next, I will analyse the ways in which place making has led to a sense of belonging and place attachment for the

residents. For example, the identification with a certain place that resident G shows in the opening of this chapter is also in line with what Yuval-Davis (2006) refers to as belonging.

## 5.2 Introducing the residents through self-representation

I did not want to make assumptions on who the undocumented residents are and what they stand for. Therefore, I will describe them via the way they describe themselves. The four main participants of this research, introduced themselves in the following ways:

1. Resident D introduced himself as: *“me, I am [name], I am a man of enthusiasm. I am a man of people; when I see a lot of people, it’s good for me. I like being with people, moving around”* (a7:14).
2. Resident J mentioned: *“I am a sensitive girl ... instead of only looking at problems, I want to fix them. I want to work as a psychologist so that I can help people with this”* (a2:17-19) and *“my faith is really my own. No one can take this away from me, which is good. It is important to me. It [religion] is like love; it does everything for me. I live like Him, and if He is nothing, I am also nothing”* (a2:46-47).
3. Resident B argued: *“I do not need help right now, from nobody. I helped myself so well that I think I did the best anyone ever did in this country. I am talking as a foreigner now, as a refugee, and not as someone who was born here”* (a4:41) and *“When it [sickness and death] comes, it was my day, I cannot help it. If I live, I will be happy. But if not, I will still say thank you God for this little bit of life you gave me. At least I saw the sun”* (a4:29).
4. Resident G stated: *“I would like to go to nursing school here. I like to take care of people. I am social and I like having contact with other people”* (a5:42).

The four abovementioned residents are examples of residents who told me about who they are and what they stand for in a direct way. With others, I had to listen more carefully to find out how they represented themselves. In order to do so, I tried to discover what they find important by listening to things they mentioned frequently. In specific order, the four topics I heard most were: contact with other people, religion, work and adapting a certain attitude.

### 5.2.1 Contact with other people

Almost all residents have expressed they find contact with other people important. Many residents described themselves as peoples-persons. Resident D from the introduction of this section – who was very vocal about who he is – provides an example. This resident explains that it is important to him to be with a lot of people. He also states that he wants to move around,

he wants to visit them. To him, being mobile is a vital point of life as it makes him forget about the bad things (a7:55). It can be stated that having contacts with other people while being mobile is important to this resident in order to feel good, to experience, as Lems (2016) described, being-part-of. According to Lems (2016) and Pemberton and Philimore (2018), this contact with different people and networks is a way of place making. The undocumented residents generally do this via visiting friends or family at least once a week (a1:26; a2:8; a4:27).

Resident H also mentioned that he values human contact: *“I am social and a happy man. If I am in contact with people, I learn many things such as the law, folklore, the culture. I like this very much because I want to live here. Then I must know the culture of the people here”* (a3:36-37). To resident H, having contact with people helps him understand the locale. He considers being informed on local law, folklore and culture to be a vital aspect of being able to live in the Netherlands in the future. Through the information he gathers via contacts, he socially navigates his place here. To resident D and H, being in touch with other people while moving around or learning about the locale, is a way of place making.

Four residents especially appreciate this contact with other people because it can help them improve their Dutch language skills. Three of these residents belong to the age group of 55 years and older and one to the age group of 20 to 38 years old. One resident voiced his wish to speak to different people but feels he cannot do so because he barely speaks Dutch (a8:67). Not being able to talk to people causes him to feel displaced. Because of his inability to speak Dutch, he started practicing with a volunteer in order to decrease this feeling of displacement and distance to other people. To these older residents, many activities they partake in and places they go to evolve around practicing Dutch and conversing with other people in this language. These residents make their own place by doing things such as going to activities where they can practice Dutch. This is a form of investing in their surroundings and thus, place making (Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). The way these residents are place making, is also a form of social navigation (Vigh 2009). Since they are in the Netherlands as undocumented people, they want to improve their Dutch in order to work towards a possible future here.

Whilst most residents solely refer to friends or family while talking about contact with other people, two residents add other people to the list of whom they would like contact with. Resident A states: *“I don’t really go to Gezellig anymore but if there are pretty women, then I would happily come to an activity. They should be between the age of 20 and 38 years old, that’s good for me. I also like it when there are different groups of people, especially Dutch people; then I can talk to them”* (a1:75-76). Resident F agrees with resident A, both are men who belong to the youngest group of residents; 20 to 38 years old. Age is an important identifier

in this case as it figures as an incentive when deciding whether or not to go to a certain place or activities. It can be implied that the presence of Dutch-speaking people and young, attractive women motivates these residents to go certain places and participate in activities.

Paradoxically enough, both of them expressed discontent with a volunteer at Gezellig, who is only present when these young women are too (d1:21). To my opinion, this originates from insecurity regarding approaching these women; resident B – who frequently mentions that he has two girlfriends – states that these other residents often ask him for tips on how to do this. As they see others in their environment in relationships with people in the Netherlands, these residents would like this as well. Being in a relationship at the place where one lives, is a way of constructing networks and connections to other people and therefore contribute to being grounded (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The contact with this specific group of people is to these residents, a form of place making.

### 5.2.2 Religion

The second topic that proved to be important to the residents, was religion. Although many undocumented residents that participated in this research are from middle-eastern countries, only two of them identify as Muslim (along with one resident from Ethiopia). The rest of the residents from these countries identify as Protestant. Other residents identified as Christian, Pentecostal or religious without mentioning a certain religion. None of the residents claimed to not be religious in any way. In most cases, the residents have been practicing this religion all their lives, but one of them became Christian when he came to the Netherlands. He did this because it can help with getting papers. Christians are a minority in Afghanistan, his country of origin. Hence, if he converted himself, it would not be safe for him to return and he is more likely to get a Dutch residence permit (d1:30). This resident anticipates his chances of getting a Dutch residence permit to increase by changing his religion and thereby socially navigates his position.

For many residents, going to the church or mosque is a significant part of their lives. The majority of residents argue that they usually – before the corona crisis – go there weekly (a3:16). To them, the church or mosque figures as a platform through which one can construct a collective identity, which is a form of place making (Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). While visiting these religious places and practicing one's religion there, the residents construct their collective identity as religious people in their host society, the Netherlands. However, visiting the church or mosque is about more than practicing their religion; the contact with people is important to the residents as well. When these residents visit religious places, they meet a group



of people that are also practicing their faith in that same place. Being able to talk to them about their religion, but also other topics, is valued strongly by the residents as it makes them experience being-part-of (a1:21; a6:7). Practicing one's religion in the Netherlands and being in contact with people who share this religion is a way of making one's own place in the case of these residents.

One of the Muslim residents that goes to the mosque explained that he would like to go more. He clarified that here in the Netherlands, most visitors of the mosque are not Arabic, like in his country of origin, but from Turkish or Moroccan descent. This results in that the language that is used in the mosque differs from the one he is used to. He cannot read the Quran or flags here and is therefore less likely to visit the mosque (a1:17). He also mentioned that he is "less religious" here than at his country of origin (d1:21). Not going to the mosque and therefore feeling a greater distance to his religion can have caused this. In this case, the locale that Cresswell (2015) defined as a fundamental aspect of place, strongly affected this resident's sense of place as he is less likely to visit the mosque in the Netherlands than in his country of origin and caused him to feel less religious.

### 5.2.3 Work

The next topic of importance is work. All undocumented residents – except one, who has problems regarding his health and physique – that participated in this research have some form of work. Most of them work as a construction worker – or so called "handy-man" – others work as a volunteer at one of SNOV's partner organisations, some work as a gardener and a few have jobs as a cleaner. All these jobs are undeclared work. As the residents are undocumented, they do not apply for insurance or other terms of employment. Therefore, all the work they do is via non-legal ways.

This work is important to undocumented residents as it helps them to incorporate into their direct social environment, accumulate good conduct and work towards a future in which they hold a Dutch residence permit (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). Finding undeclared work is also a way in which residents make sense of their social environment and invest in a professional environment; it is a way of showing agency. The unstable environment the undocumented residents experience from being undocumented officially confines them to work. However, the residents find ways to work in order to be able to build a future, even if it is not through official means. Therefore, finding work is a form of place making, but also demonstrates social navigation.

To many residents, it is important to have a job as this gives them a chance to provide for themselves, to incorporate into their direct social environment and build towards a future in which they hold a Dutch residence permit (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Besides, it serves as an activity during the day that helps against boredom, something that was a visible hazard to many of the residents in the main men's shelter.

There were three residents that in general worked the most. All of them belong to the youngest group of undocumented residents and two of them did not refer to themselves as undocumented. These residents flexibly adapted to the circumstances of being undocumented by using their youthful bodies to do physically challenging work, at jobs where they are welcomed (a1:78; a4:18; a5:1). A possible explanation for why two of these residents do not call themselves illegal can be that as these residents work the most, they are also the most grounded in their professional environment. People specifically ask them to work, which places them in this environment and therefore prevents these residents from feeling "illegal".

Most undocumented residents found a job by deploying their contacts. Some are facilitated via SNOV: the female residents are doing (volunteer) work at a partner organisation of SNOV. They prepare food and bring this to different shelters in Nijmegen (d1:35). For some of the activities the women do, they get paid there. This helps them in providing for themselves. Other residents have obtained work via another undocumented resident. They help each other by bringing them to a construction job, or pass on work when they are already fully booked (d1:28). The residents that help others to find work, do this since they are in the same situation; they are all undocumented people and know how difficult it can be to find work. In the case of finding work with the help of SNOV or other undocumented residents, different actors contribute to the process of place making. In this case, the process of place making is visible from the residents doing things and building a future (Lems, 2016), and helping each other to do so. Thus, deploying contacts is a way for undocumented residents to socially navigate their position in the social environment and invest in a professional environment.

Resident A has found a way through which people keep asking him to come back to work: *"sometimes I work for 1 or 1,5 hours without asking for money. Then, the next time, people give me work. This is the way I get jobs"* (a1:43). Regarding the way he mentioned this, it appeared as though they trust him because he sometimes works for free. This resident's agency is visible from his ability to get several jobs: after the employers trust him because he sometimes worked for free, they give him more work and recommend him to friends and family. This is one of the few residents that still had work in times of corona. Because he anticipated

what his employers want, he could prevent a loss of work, and navigate his position in the professional environment even though he, unsurprisingly, did not foresee the corona crisis.

#### 5.2.4 Adapting a certain attitude

The last topic residents mentioned to be important involves having a certain attitude. Many residents expressed the importance of having a certain attitude towards other people or specific matters such as work. To resident B, equality is important. He explained that all of us are humans and we do not have to be scared because of where we come from: *“you don’t have to be afraid or shy [to go somewhere or do something], you are a human as well. Everybody is a human. The only thing is that there are different countries”* (4:57). The attitude presented by resident B, focuses on having a collective identity, as humans. He implied that he does not want people to feel excluded because of their country of origin, and that everyone is equal because everyone is a human.

By arguing this, resident B placed himself above the debate on how identity is constructed. Pemberton and Philimore (2018) argue that in the process of place making, people construct a collective identity based on the place they find themselves at. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that whichever one regards as their identity is connected to when and how a person feels at home. However, resident B stated that everyone is a human, even if we come from different countries, and implied that all are equal because of this. Therefore, he does not produce a strong identity based on where he is located, nor to when and where he feels at home; he ascribes a common identity to all humans, everywhere in the world. This implies that when it comes to constructing a collective identity, his process of place making is not limited to his location in Nijmegen or the Netherlands, but extended to the whole world.

This resident is also one of the two that did not refer to himself as illegal but as refugee. By calling himself a refugee, resident B acknowledges that he fled the situation in his country of origin and came to another country, the Netherlands. I believe that the reason behind him not considering himself to be illegal can be found in that in his view, he – along with everyone else – belongs to the human race. Everyone is solely divided by the countries they came from. Therefore, as he is a human, just like everyone else, he cannot be illegal somewhere, he just has another country of origin.

Somewhat in line with what resident B mentioned about everyone being human and therefore equal, resident C values this ‘just’ being a human, and being humane, above all else: *“it does not matter if a person has the same religion, it is more important that a person stays humane. This has also changed because of corona, people have become more afraid and they*

*don't trust each other, I can feel it. This has a bad influence on people's psychology"* (a8:58-59). Resident C has mentioned humanity on multiple occasions. He expressed that the humanity within people is decreasing, partially because of the corona crisis. This made him experience feelings of displacement. Resident C hopes that with the decrease of the corona crisis, there will be an increase in becoming humane. Therefore, resident C considered the corona crisis as an opportunity to make a change in people's attitudes. If people become more humane again and trust each other, this resident's feelings of displacement will decrease and experience increased feelings of being-part-of.

Something else that was mentioned by several residents was their attitude towards helping others. Resident B mentioned that in order to help people, they have to want to help themselves first (a4:36). Providing work for other undocumented residents is an example of this. When the other residents do their best at work, he wants to help them get a job. Resident B received help himself when he just got to Nijmegen. He had nothing and no contacts but used the help he received to make his own life; he got a bed to sleep in and contacts with whom he could inquire about work (a4:39). I believe he wants to give others the same experience. The ways in which the residents wish to help others, will be discussed in chapter 6.

The attitude towards helping others can be regarded as a way of place making. At first, resident B was displaced; he was placed in an unfamiliar environment and did not have anything or any contacts (a4:40). He was not grounded in Nijmegen and out-of-place (Lems, 2016). He searched help because he did not want to live in the streets. Furthermore, he wanted to deploy this help with finding a job in order to sustain himself. After he received help, this resident had the ability to create his own place as he was able to sleep somewhere and from there, find work through his newfound contacts. When he was grounded in this way, he had the ability to provide for himself and not be dependent on his helper. This process of place making is inherently connected to agency (Lems, 2016; Pemberton & Phillimore, 2018). The agency of this resident is visible from his ability to make his own place by building his own life and to now help others do the same.

A reason why undocumented residents would like to help people who are in a similar position as they are can be found in the fact that they were also helped themselves. The residents have expressed their gratefulness for the help they received from SNOV's coordinators (a2:38; a9:3; a10:2), and I assume that helping others who are in a similar position is a way of doing good themselves and making a contribution to another person's future. By expressing the wish to help others, they distance themselves from feeling displaced and place themselves in their surroundings; they are grounded. To rephrase this in Vigh's (2009) description of social

navigation: they disentangle themselves from the confining structure they are placed in as undocumented residents and move towards a better position. Thus, they are grounded in the way that they can help others who still experience feelings of displacement, which they used to have as well.

### 5.3 Belonging and attaching to a place

The undocumented residents have become grounded in Nijmegen through their respective processes of place making. Multiple residents also expressed a sense of belonging towards Nijmegen even though according to the politics of belonging, undocumented residents do not belong here. Having a sense of belonging can be achieved through place attachment, which evolves around emotional, symbolic and affective dimensions of people's thinking and feeling for places (Rishbeth & Powell, 2013). The politics of belonging centres around someone's right to be somewhere and someone's formal citizenship. A residence permit and ID card are proof of formal citizenship, and prove a certain identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006); they show who belongs in the Netherlands and can create a feeling of security through their formal character. None of the undocumented residents own such official documents. This section will focus on processes of place attachment and belonging as well as provide insights on how undocumented residents became familiar with the location where they live.

#### 5.3.1 Becoming familiar to a place

Becoming familiar with a place is an important part of place attachment and experiencing a sense of belonging. Nearly all undocumented residents that participated in this research have lived in Nijmegen for multiple years. Resident B mentioned that he strongly identifies with Nijmegen since everyone is nice to him there. It is his city; his best friends, one of his two girlfriends, his work and his home are all there (a4:7). Most of the residents also feel like they belong in Nijmegen. This sub-section will focus on where this sense of belonging and place attachment originate from and on the changes that some of the residents have noticed in themselves.

Various residents argued that they "have everything here". When I asked what everything to them means, they generally referred to contacts, specifically friends, and work. As mentioned above, these play a significant role in the place making processes of undocumented residents. Besides, having contacts and work has also led to place attachment.

Most of the undocumented residents' friends are living in or near Nijmegen. Resident J mentioned: *"it is important to me to have contacts in Nijmegen, I would like to have even more."*

*That is very nice for me. I feel at home in Nijmegen. I know a lot of people already, that is because I have been in Nijmegen for almost four years. My work is here, my church is here, everything”* (a2:60). This resident stated that since she has been in Nijmegen for almost four years, she has gained numerous contacts. This is one of the reasons that she feels at home here. She implied that the time she has lived in Nijmegen played a significant part in this as it contributed to getting to know many people. Because her contacts, church and work are situated in Nijmegen, she developed an emotional attachment to this location; she is grounded here and feels good because of it.

The emotional attachment that resident J expressed is in line with what Rishbeth and Powell (2013) refer to as place attachment and what Yuval-Davis (2006) refers to as having a sense of belonging. As being surrounded by contacts is important to this resident's sense of belonging, this can be increased through having more contacts. Getting more contacts is a way of place making to this resident, that eventually leads to an increased place attachment and sense of belonging. Resident J is an example of how place attachment and a sense of belonging result from place making.

Resident D explicitly mentioned his work when talking about where he feels at home: *“if I feel good, I work well and I feel at home because I love what I am doing for 100 percent”* (a7:48). By this statement, resident D implied that wherever he feels good, he can work well and this results in him feeling at home. To him, place attachment is thus constructed by working well because to him, this is related to having positive feelings. Hence, it can be argued that wherever this resident can work and enjoys what he is doing, he feels at home. His sense of belonging is therefore constructed through his positive feelings about work.

Only two residents, resident B and G, mentioned their friendly neighbours as part of the reason they feel at home in Nijmegen (a4:98; a5:53). The language barrier was proven to be the main reason for other residents to not connect with the neighbours (a8:61). The residents that did mention their friendly neighbours are also the only ones who took initiative in getting to know them and the ones that did not call themselves illegal. Resident B's neighbours are young people whom he saw drink beers and smoke cigarettes multiple times in their yard. Following this, he visited them with some beers on various occasions and went over to “chill” with them, which resulted in them having a good understanding at the moment (a4:99). At first, resident B thought people in the neighbourhood were against his presence there. However, now he feels accepted (a4:100). This is a clear example of what Vollebergh (2016) argues to be the concept of the Neighbour; in order to get legitimised as a neighbour, one has to participate in by the community approved activities. In this case, the community is the people that live in the house

near resident B and the approved activity is drinking beers together; this helped him get acquainted and feel accepted as a neighbour.

Resident G often talked to his neighbour when they are both outside (a5:24). His neighbour is an older woman with a dog. He argued that other neighbours might be scared to meet up – because of corona – or that they are simply too occupied with other things. However, by striking up a conversation, resident G and his neighbour have become acquainted. To him, it is nice to have a good understanding with people that live near you and this causes him to feel at home (a5:22-23), to experience a sense of belonging. It can be argued that resident B and G experience being-part-of because their familiarity with the neighbours and therefore increase their attachment to Nijmegen as a place.

Having a good understanding with one's neighbours can also be the reason why these two residents referred to themselves as refugee and *uitgeprocedeerde* and not illegal. Being in contact with their neighbours and feeling accepted by them, in this case, grounds the residents in their surroundings even though their identity and the location of the shelter have to stay secret. The third analytical level that Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes involves the judgement of people on their belonging and the belonging of others. When these neighbours accept the undocumented residents as their neighbours, they indirectly validate the residents' right to be there. According to their judgement, the undocumented residents belong to this neighbourhood. By making themselves known to their neighbours, resident B and G are blending in. Thus, their visibility has contributed to their being grounded. The validation given by the neighbours seems the opposite of being illegal and causes an increase in how grounded the residents are as they are now placed in the neighbourhood and validated as neighbours.

Both the residents – B and G – that partly attached to Nijmegen through their neighbours mentioned that they noticed a change in themselves after coming to the Netherlands. This was unlike the other undocumented residents. They noticed a change in who they are and what they stand for, and that this resulted in a certain way of how they place themselves in the Netherlands – or more specifically, Nijmegen. Both residents experienced this change while they were in Nijmegen. To state this in terms of what Cresswell (2015) considers to be the fundamental aspects of place: the location and locale have influenced these residents' sense of place.

Resident B argues: *“when I came to the Netherlands, I was a nobody. In the beginning it was difficult for me to start a new life, in this country and in this city where I am right now. But five years later, I am a guy who has two girlfriends! The street brought me here, I met nice people. And if I give respect now, one day I get it back”* (a4:12-39). This resident voiced his change of being “a nobody” at first, to becoming the guy who has two girlfriends. By stating

that he now two girlfriends, this resident differentiated himself from the person he was before; “a nobody”. The change he noticed in himself was caused by gaining multiple contacts, which resulted in getting two girlfriends. This led to an increased attachment to Nijmegen and formed the person who he is today; his identity has changed since he first arrived here. Thus, it can be argued that his process of place attachment influenced this resident’s sense of place and identity.

Resident G has experienced a change within himself in another way: “*we came from a totally closed society and here everything is different. I saw two women, maybe they were lesbians, I don’t know, but they were kissing each other in the street. I thought: ‘this is unbelievable, this cannot be true! What would people in our culture think of them?’ It was the same with men and women being equal to each other here. With us, this is completely different; then you come here and there is no difference between them. Honestly, I could not accept this quickly. This takes a lot of time for people like us to accept these things, five or six years at least. It takes a long time, but we have to. I got used to it; it is good that things are this way*” (a5:78-79). This resident has lived in Nijmegen for five years and explained in this quote that this was also the time he needed in order to get used to the way certain things are in the specific locale of Nijmegen. Now, he feels at home here. At first, he thought that matters such as people from the same sex kissing each other were impossible. However, over time, he accepted that this is part of the value system of the location he finds himself and also agreed with this value system.

Unlike the argument by Rishbeth and Powell (2013), this resident did not attach to a place because of the connections between the place he lives now and the place he lived before. This resident attached to a place because he took time to get familiar with certain customs, eventually agreeing with those and therefore placing himself in surroundings where these customs are accepted. Moreover, he felt that he belongs to this specific place because he agrees with the value system of this place. This is in line with what Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes as one of the levels of belonging: the resident adopts an ethical and political value system specific to this place in order to judge his own belonging.

Furthermore, through adapting the value system that is evident in Nijmegen, this resident has also shown how he socially navigated his own position. In order to experience being-part-of, this resident found that he had to accept the value systems that are in place, even if it takes a long time. He anticipates that he will live here for some time and therefore did his best to get accustomed to these value systems.



### 5.3.2 'Proving' identity as a part of belonging

I expected that becoming grounded in Nijmegen through processes of place making would be increased through the residents' ownership of the so-called SNOV card. This card states who they are and that they are housed by SNOV. Each of them individually owns one and it is supposed to function as an ID. I wanted to ask them about this, since it was mentioned by the general coordinator mentioned that this card is the closest to having an official document such as a residence permit or an ID card (d1:4). A residence permit and ID card are proof of formal citizenship, which presents a certain identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006); it shows who belongs in the Netherlands and can create a feeling of security by its formal character. However, insecurity turned out to be significant to the residents. The undocumented residents were generally insecure regarding their identity, and more specifically, how to 'prove' this.

There were some varying answers to the question on the residents' opinions regarding the SNOV card. The majority of residents stated that it is not of any use, since it is not an official document such as a residence permit or ID card. Resident A explained: *"this is nothing, I cannot go to the discotheque with this"* (a1:13). Resident G and J argued: *"it does nothing. It is just some information on who you are and where you live, but other than that, it does nothing"* (a5:62; d1:35). These three residents – who all belong to the youngest group of residents, of 20 to 38 years old – do not value the SNOV card because, unlike an official document, it does not break through barriers they experience.

The difference between these residents is that resident A referred specifically to not being able to go to the discotheque with his SNOV card while the other two residents did not. It can be argued that this is therefore important to him and something he finds frustrating in not being able to do so. Going to the discotheque to him, is part of life in Nijmegen. He is a young man who, just like many of his peers, likes to go out dancing and meet girls (d1:29). It can be argued that this makes him experience being-in-place. Cresswell (2015) and Yuval-Davis (2006) consider this being-in-place to be an important element of attaching to a place and groups of people. Going to the discotheque lets resident A attach to and identify with a certain group of people in Nijmegen that is also young and likes to go out dancing in the city, and being the owner of an official document can contribute to this.

Three residents find the SNOV card valuable. They mention the same reasons as the other residents, yet they consider this card to have meaning as it gives them the feeling that they are allowed to be somewhere. It is noteworthy that resident B is the only resident who did not call himself illegal that found the SNOV card valuable and that the other resident who did not refer to himself as illegal, does not. Resident B stated: *"to me, this card means a lot because I*

*have an address, I have a home, I am not outside and I don't have a problem with the police"* (a4:70). To resident B, the SNOV card proves that he is allowed to be here, that he belongs in the SNOV shelter. Thus, even though the SNOV card is not an official document, which according to the politics of belonging would be necessary in order to belong somewhere (Yuval-Davis, 2006), it makes him feel less out of place and thus probably less illegal. Becoming less illegal can be achieved by becoming less detectable or less deportable (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Owning a SNOV card makes undocumented residents less detectable and deportable as they can prove that they belong somewhere and are not simply roaming around in the streets, this card can make them feel at home and like they are allowed to be here.

The opinion of resident I on this matter was in line with that of resident B. Resident I highlighted how the SNOV card is a reflection of her being: *"if I would not have a card, this would be bad for me. Who am I? Why am I alive? In this card, you can see what your identity is. I feel that I have an identity"* (a6:43-44). Resident I and her daughter, resident J – who interestingly enough does not find the SNOV card valuable – use this card when they collect food at the Voedselbank. This is a place where people who do not have money to buy enough food, can collect a food package each week. Resident I argued that the lady behind the counter saw the SNOV card as evidence that they are allowed to go to the Voedselbank and when they went there next time, they did not have to show this card again. It is interesting that even though the two residents use this card in the same way, resident I sees this card as evidence of her identity and finds it useful, but resident J does not. The reason why resident I finds the SNOV card valuable is that she considers this card to be a confirmation of who she is and that she is allowed to be somewhere, which is then acknowledged by other people such as the lady behind the counter at the Voedselbank. If she does not have an official ID card to prove this, at least she has the SNOV card to do so.

Resident D argued: *"[the card] gives a bit of security, because this card comes from this organisation. It is like an ID, evidence. Wherever you are, you can say that you are in this organisation and confirm it"* (a7:63-64). To resident D, the SNOV card provides security. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that this is related to emotional attachment to a place; whenever someone feels secure, the emotional components by which a person constructs themselves become less central. In this case, the resident's surroundings at this certain moment are more dominant in where he attaches to a place (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This is also the case with resident D. He feels secure and expressed that he considers himself to be part of a certain organisation (SNOV). This resident has a profound resonance with the specific location of Nijmegen and the SNOV

shelter. The surroundings of resident D are indeed dominant in his process of place attachment and experiencing a sense of belonging.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a number of fragments of self-representations by the undocumented residents to introduce these residents as well as demonstrate the ways they experience place by making their own place, overcoming feelings of displacement and attaching to Nijmegen and the SNOV shelter. The four most important topics in the residents' everyday lives were contacts, religion, work and adapting a certain mindset. This chapter showed that contacts and work both figure as tools which the undocumented residents used to socially navigate their positions in Nijmegen. Through having numerous contacts, the residents are more grounded in their social environment because they experience being-part-of. Being able to work places the residents in a professional environment and enables them to provide for themselves. As the residents are grounded in their environments, they have the agency to help others who are still in a displaced or agency-less position that the residents themselves were in before.

This chapter also showed the emotional and political sides to belonging. Even though undocumented residents are not allowed to be in the Netherlands – and therefore have to keep their identity and location of accommodation secret – according to the politics of belonging, they still experience a sense of belonging here. On the emotional side, they have become attached to the Netherlands, and often more specifically, Nijmegen. The ways in which residents made their own place contribute to their sense of belonging and attachment to a place. On the political side, they do not possess any official documents to prove that they are allowed to be here. I expected that owning a SNOV card would contribute to an increased sense of belonging as it is the closest to an official document that is needed according to the politics of belonging. However, it only contributed to this in a few cases. Furthermore, I expected that the residents who did not refer to themselves as illegal both found this card valuable in order to 'validate' their identity and belonging, but this turned out not to be the case as only one of them did. To the undocumented residents, the emotional side of belonging – the sense of belonging – weighed more heavily than the political side – the politics of belonging. All of them felt like they belong here, in most cases solely based on their emotional attachment to this place.

In the next chapter I will elaborate on limitations that occur to the undocumented residents – such as from not having an official status – and how they socially navigate their place in order to overcome these. Additionally, I will look into the residents' aspirations and explain the connection between both the limitations and aspirations.

## 6. Navigating limitations and aspirations

*It was a warm, sunny day when my interview with resident B took place, so we went out for ice cream and had a chat in the park before the interview. Here, he told me: “I want to pay, but then we cannot go to the nice ice cream shop, I am sorry”. I asked him why and said that we should just go to the nice shop, that I would like to pay as a thank you for his time. Later on, he explained: “if I want to eat nice ice cream, I cannot pay in cash, especially now with corona. I do not have a bank account and cash money is not allowed at the good place [the place where they have different flavours of ice cream instead of only a cone with ‘softijs’]. If I want to go somewhere, I cannot. I do not have the right to go everywhere” (a4:2). Later in our conversation, I asked resident B what his perfect day would look like, if he would have documents. His response was: “if I have papers, I would help a lot of people by giving them a job. I will not have one company; I will have ten! Other people can do something then; not stay at home and sleep all day. I am sure I can help people if I get papers in the future. Because then I can start companies” (a4:88). He told me he sees his future in the Netherlands, preferably in Nijmegen, but any other city in the Netherlands will suffice too. “If I get papers into my hands right now, I will do this from here. I will not move and I will tell people: give me this car, give me this supermarket. I will try to buy it all” (a4:92).*

### 6.1 Introduction

The undocumented residents have expressed different ways in which they felt limited in their everyday lives. This was mostly caused by the social settings of the place they find themselves in. Resident B in the opening of this chapter provides an example of how these social settings limit him. The social settings that were influenced because of the outbreak of the coronavirus, limited this resident as he cannot go to certain places where cash is not allowed. This is problematic to him because he does not have a bank card. The corona crisis has played a significant part in the limitations undocumented residents experience, as it has created an even more unstable and changing environment than before. The crisis can therefore be regarded to as an example of the motion of the environment that Vigh (2009) mentions in his article about social navigation. Corona has brought forward even bigger insecurities than before. Anticipating what should be done to cope with this environment in motion, can result in the residents’ alteration of their plans and behaviour. This anticipation by the subject is a motion within a motion (Vigh 2009); the flexible steps which the residents takes to cope with a changing environment.

In this chapter, I will provide insights on the way undocumented residents socially navigate limitations and aspirations through their agency and thereby create an understanding of what Vigh's (2009) motion within a motion looks like. The place in which people find themselves affects their position and trajectories (Vigh, 2009). This place is about the literal location on a map, the social settings of this location and the subjective and emotional attachment people have to this place (Cresswell, 2015). Since place affects people in a significant way, it is important to regard the residents' limitation and aspirations within this specific place. In the following sections, I will discuss and analyse the limitations that undocumented residents experience and how these can be treated as opportunities. Additionally, I will discuss the aspirations that the residents have and how they navigate these.

## 6.2 Limitations and opportunities

Like the fragment presented in the beginning of this chapter, the undocumented residents experience numerous limitations. Through navigating themselves, the residents can turn these limitations into opportunities. Limitations that were mentioned by the residents were: corona, not having a bank account, lacking a certain level of Dutch and not owning an ID card or residence permit. Each one of them has other approaches to deal with these limitations, and how to turn them into opportunities.

### 6.2.1 Corona as a limitation

All residents that participated in this research experience limitations in one way or another. On top of the usual limitations that undocumented residents experience, the corona crisis has created an even more unstable environment in which residents have to cope. Insecurity and the implementation of the 'intelligent lock-down' and varying rules that came with it, caused an unstable environment for undocumented residents. Nevertheless, the outbreak turned out to be an opportunity as well. The residents were challenged to show their agency and flexibility in order to socially navigate their position in this unstable environment.

Many of the undocumented residents were limited by means of work because of the outbreak of the coronavirus. This turned out to be the case for a substantial number of undocumented people in the Netherlands (Kennisplatform Intergratie en Samenleving, 2020). Some have entirely lost their work, while others have only experienced a decrease in work. This happened largely because the government decided to close public locations, which was bad for business, and because both employers and employees were wary of becoming infected. Since all the work undocumented residents conduct is undeclared, they cannot make a claim for

continued payment or insurance. Despite this, some residents found a way to cope with this struggle.

The undocumented residents that worked as handy-men – which mostly involves construction work, the painting and the plastering of walls, cleaning of tiles and sometimes working as a mover – did not lose their jobs. Most, however, experienced a decrease in work load. The undocumented residents whose employers allowed them to work – these were all construction workers – flexibly adapted to the rules that had to be upheld concerning corona. They did not go inside the house and kept as much distance from their employers as possible (a4:24). If they needed to go inside the house, they would wear gloves so that if they or their employers were infected with the coronavirus, they would not transfer this to each other.

One resident – resident B – did not experience any decrease in work load at all, while the others did. He explained the reason behind this: *“I did not lose any work like my colleagues did. I think it comes because I tell people what I do every day, I tell them when I was there, what I am going to do and when I will finish. They know what I am doing so they say: you are welcome, please keep working”* (a4:26). This resident implied that his work load did not decrease because he kept his employers updated on what he does, in contrast to his colleagues. Apparently, he applies his own strategy in navigating his position as employee through the unstable environment of corona. This shows his agency: as his employers were satisfied with him because of his actions, and they wanted him to keep working. This strategy is thus proven to be a successful way to move forward and cope with the occurring obstacles caused by corona.

The outbreak of the coronavirus not only affected job opportunities of the undocumented residents, but also limited their social network. All residents expressed their discontent regarding this matter during our conversations. The fact that the residents’ social network got limited, causes them to feel displaced (Lems, 2016). The distance they mention refers to physical distance, but also emotional distance. Because they are not able to stand close to or touch someone, they experience colder, more distant feelings and therefore experience a feeling of displacement. Resident D argued: *“life is unbalanced because of this corona crisis. We do not share life like before, we have a closed-off life now. I feel isolated”* (a7:69). By stating this, he expressed how this made him feel out of touch with others. This resident likes to be surrounded by many people (a7:14), and because of the rules that were implemented to control the coronavirus, this is not possible anymore. This caused him to feel isolated and experience feelings of displacement. Even though this resident lives in the main men’s shelter and is therefore constantly surrounded by other people, he still feels this.

The corona crisis has made it difficult to visit friends and family. Resident H is scared that he or his loved ones might get sick if he visits them (a3:40), and residents I and J go out as little as possible because they want to avoid public transportation (a6:17); they all feel a physical and mental distance to their loved ones. Residents argued that corona did not only affect them, as undocumented people, in creating distance between people, but affected everyone in the Netherlands in this way. In order to cope with this, various residents found that applications on their phones such as Whatsapp and Facebook helped bridging this distance (a1:123; a2:31; a5:64). These applications allow them to text, call and see their friends and family through video. All of them explained this was not enough to replace human contact but it still a way of showing agency by being flexible and coping with the changing environment caused by corona.

Online applications were also used for religious purposes. Protestant residents have replaced their visits to church with a WhatsApp-group. They talk about religion, the coronavirus and share tips for activities on how to keep themselves occupied in a time of boredom (a6:72). Additionally, the church started to host ZOOM sessions. During these sessions, the residents talk about anything with other Protestant people that usually go to this church or someone gives a sermon (a5:32). While this seems like a good alternative, the people in this church are missed, just like the residents' family and friends. Resident I explained: *"I miss going to church, I want to see the people. But if we cannot go to church, at least we can do something at home"* (a6:7-24). Resident G agrees and provides an insight on how this is intertwined with the importance of having contact with other people: *"I can do things by myself, at home, but I would rather go to church. Because then I can feel for myself how other people are doing, what they are feeling. I find this different from WhatsApp or something like that"* (a5:33). Also in the case of religion, online applications are no complete substitution but the usage of WhatsApp and ZOOM is the residents' way of navigating their position in an unstable environment as it enables them to maintain a connection with their church and the people that go there.

Another limitation that was experienced by residents because of the coronavirus involved the procedure of applying for a Dutch residence permit. Two of the undocumented residents were in this process of getting their papers. Both are men from the age group of 55 years and older. For instance, resident C mentioned: *"I started the process, it was going to work but then the virus broke out. I had medical papers that described my health issues, this was supposed to help me with getting my papers. It is still not submitted because of the virus"* (a8:44). Resident H was in a similar position: *"I would actually have to go to court, but now because of corona, there is no court. The IND told me that I cannot go back to Iran because*

*this would be dangerous for me. I have this paper now, but they still do not grant me a status [of official Dutch resident]” (a 3:50).* Usually, if the IND considers someone deserving to be in the Netherlands, they will offer them a legal status (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). However, even though resident H already has proof that the IND considers him deserving to be in the Netherlands, this did not result in a legal residence permit. Both of these residents thought that corona was the cause for a delay in their procedure of getting a Dutch residence permit.

This might seem like a situation which is out of the hands of the residents. Resident C explained: *“future? When the future comes, we will see. We do not have documents, so what future are you talking about?” (a8:23).* Nevertheless, he and the other resident are acting to improve their respective situations. Resident C is in contact with one of the coordinators at SNOV who can help him with the procedure (a8:44). This shows agency as this resident devised a strategy to navigate his position and work on his future. The other resident is envisioning his future after getting his documents. He would like to open a second-hand store with his niece (a3:52), and getting documents is the first step to getting there.

#### 6.2.2 Not being able to own a bank account

As an undocumented person, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get a bank account. SNOV’s general coordinator argued that foundation Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland has tried creating bank accounts for undocumented people before, but this failed (d1:46). Personally, resident A asked me if I knew how to get an account. I searched for him but found that it is not possible to get one – that was legitimate – without an address. Since the shelter’s address is not supposed to be known, this is not possible. Not having a bank account is a limitation that undocumented residents cannot overcome at the moment. However, creative solutions can be found and figure as a way of socially navigating the residents’ position in this situation.

Resident A and B have on various occasions mentioned their discontent about not having a bank account. The fact that specifically these two residents have stated this, is characteristic. Out of all residents, resident A and B work the most hours per week by far. Therefore, it is important to them to have a bank account through which they can receive and spend their money. Furthermore, as the work undocumented residents do is all undeclared, they are mostly paid in cash. Since these residents work the most, they are most likely to experience discomfort in not having a bank account. Resident A explained: *“it would be good for my work to have a bank-card. Sometimes people do not have cash and they ask me where they can send the money to. I have to tell them that I do not have one. If I want to get paid, I need to take the bus or cycle to Dukenburg or Beuningen to get it. This is really difficult; it is not good” (a1:138).*



In saying this, resident A revealed that it is difficult and inconvenient for him to have to travel to different places in order to get paid. This costs time and effort; it would be more straightforward if he would have a bank account.

Resident B expressed that not having a bank account limits him when he tries to buy things. For example, in the fragment at the opening of this chapter, he mentioned that he does not own a bank account, he is not able to buy the ice cream he prefers (a4:2). Nevertheless, he found a way to overcome this limitation. *“I know nice people that help me whenever I need something. If I need to buy something, they can order this for me via internet and I pay them back with cash”* (a4:4). Whenever resident B needed something, he used his network in order to get it. This proves that he was a social navigator as he deployed his network in order to get the things he wants to buy.

Solutions such as making use of friends that do have a bank account and asking help with searching information on the possibilities of getting one are ways to navigate one's position through the limitation of not having one. The act of navigation *“designates motion within fluid and changeable matter”* (Vigh, 2009, 420). The residents in this case were trying to find a way of moving through this matter. Both of them did this via their social network, which is a way of showing agency (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). Resident B did this by using people in his network that have a bank account to pay first and then pay them back, resident A did this by asking help with finding information about it.

### 6.2.3 Insufficient level of Dutch as a limitation

Another limitation that most of the undocumented residents experience – but can be overcome – is their insufficient level of Dutch. Resident C argued: *“it would be nice to be able to speak Dutch, to be understood, to be able to say something. If I would speak Dutch, I would talk about anything; I am very social normally”* (a8:18). This resident is of older age and explained that even though he tries to learn Dutch, he forgets something as soon as he learns it because of this age (a8:19). This causes him to be unable to speak to other – Dutch – people. Thus, he has the motivation to try and overcome this limitation, but it takes, and will continue to take, effort to do so.

All undocumented residents except for resident B – who is fine with combining Dutch and English – have voiced their wishes to improve their Dutch language skills and most are also working on this. Resident J argued that if she would know how to speak Dutch better, she could also study here: *“if I would speak Dutch very well, maybe I could follow a study here in the Netherlands”* (a2:14). This already provides information about her aspirations, which will be

further explained in section 6.3. These aspirations differ from other residents as no one else stated that they want to improve their Dutch in order to study in the Netherlands and feel limited to do so as their level is insufficient. They want to improve their Dutch mostly to feel confident while talking to someone.

In order to improve their Dutch, almost all residents were enrolled in classes at an organisation called STEP. Here, they learned Dutch in small groups. Because of the corona crisis, STEP closed. Lessons in which the residents were enrolled ended on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Because it closed, most have used this time as an opportunity to improve their Dutch skills on their own. Resident I states: *“I have a lot of time now, and I want to use it wisely. For example, I am learning Dutch and I can cook more extensively”* (a6:59). Resident J agrees: *“I want to do good things in the time I have. I am also learning Dutch and I study the theory for my driver’s license”* (a2:29). These two residents are trying to spend their time as productively as possible by anticipating what they need in the future. This is a clear example of what Vigh (2009) describes as social navigation. The residents are making sense of their environment and actively taking decisions in order to adapt to certain circumstances. In this case, the residents are following the movement of the social environment by regarding this as an opportunity instead of solely a limitation. They do this in order to improve their situation.

Other residents, such as residents A, C, D, E and F, started a programme implemented by the volunteers of SNOV. The volunteers, including myself, are each paired with one resident, to help them and give Dutch lessons. As both volunteers and residents generally had fewer obligations during the day because of corona, Dutch lessons could be given more intensively and adjusted to the needs of the resident. In this case, SNOV has provided a helping hand in helping the residents improve their Dutch. The residents took this opportunity to study Dutch and improve their skills.

The only resident that did not show interest in improving his Dutch skills, was resident B, one of the two residents that does not refer to themselves as illegal. A possible explanation for this could be that he uses other ways to socially navigate his position in Nijmegen. He feels like Nijmegen is completely his city and already has several close contacts there with whom he speaks a bit of Dutch and a bit of English (a4:7). Thus, he argued that he does not need to fluently speak Dutch in order to have contact with people and it does not limit him in his everyday life. Therefore, improving his Dutch would not contribute to this resident’s everyday life and not working on this is an active decision he took when looking at his social environment.

Not having sufficient knowledge about the Dutch language can be problematic in terms of being properly informed, specifically concerning the corona crisis. Oftentimes migrants – and more specifically, undocumented residents – in the Netherlands lack sufficient Dutch skills and familiarity with digital devices to be well-informed (Pilon, 2020). People such as these residents are especially vulnerable to fake news as it is more difficult for them to check facts after receiving information. However, those residents whose Dutch is not of a sufficient level, are studying in order to improve. For the time being, they are informed about updates by contacts. Keeping updated by contacts is their way of navigating the limitation they experience from not having an adequate level of Dutch.

#### 6.2.4 Limitations caused by not owning official documents

The majority of residents expressed that they feel limited by not having an ID card or residence permit. Because of this, the residents argued that they cannot make future plans. However, the future these residents are talking about mostly concerns the near future; the residents do make plans for the distant future when they expect to have an official status. Vigh explains how to act in an unstable environment while envisioning a future via the term *dubriagem*. This is directed at “*both the near and distant future as the practice of moving along an envisioned, yet frail and tentative, trajectory in an unstable environment*” (Vigh, 2009, 424).

Resident H provided a good example for feeling limited towards the near future. He argued: “*I am illegal, so [I am] not allowed to go everywhere because I have no ID card*” (a3:19). If he would have papers, he would go to the park, cinema, city centre and the lake in Wijchen (a3:20). He explains why he does not do this: “*I have no ID card, what if the police come to me and ask me [who I am]? I am not scared of the police, but one of my friends in the night shelter gave his card to the police, and they took it and brought him to prison*” (a3:21-22). This resident explained that to him, not having an ID card is intertwined with not being able to go anywhere. He implied that this idea results from his friend being arrested while showing the SNOV card to the police. Because he does not want to be arrested, this resident stays away from public places. Not going to public places is a strategy this resident adapted in order to prevent getting arrested for not having an ID or residence permit which would officially allow him to be here. Despite his ability to cope with the barrier of not having official documents, this resident still experiences hardships from not having an official status in the Netherlands and therefore cannot make plans in the near future – plans such as going to the cinema or park with friends.

Resident H's friend that got arrested, resident L, also experiences hardships he tries to cope with. During our conversation I could sense that his encounter with the police is limiting him in more than just one way. He stated: *"one year ago, my Dutch level was A2, because of my problems [the police arrest] it is now A1. I cannot write anymore, there is too much on my mind. I am frustrated. I constantly notice if the police or municipality is coming to get me. They want to see my belongings; they search my room and closet. That is not good"* (a10:13-14). Being undocumented and his encounter with the police deeply affected the state of mind of resident L. This is visible from the stress he is mentioning, the decrease of his Dutch level.

The stress this resident experiences it is also visible from his aspirations for the near future: *"before I do anything else, I need to be at rest. If I look at people – a family – walking down the street, just calmly, I think: 'that is what I want as well'"* (a10:11). This resident aspires to be at rest, to calmly be with his family. Having aspirations like these emphasises the distress he felt when he was taken to prison. This resident acts as a social navigator through partaking in activities that make him feel at ease again and let him work on improving his state of mind in the near future. He anticipates that when his state of mind has improved, he can take up a bit more challenging activities such as studying Dutch. Resident L will cope with his environment and navigate his position for the distant future after he feels better in the near future.

### 6.3 Aspirations

The majority of the undocumented residents mention that they need to have papers before they can think about the future. However, they all have aspirations. This shows the difference between the socially immediate and the socially imagined (Vigh, 2009). The residents' first response to the question about how they see their future, was always that they first need documents and then they can think about other things. This is regarding the socially immediate as it would help them gain control over their situation and the surroundings they find themselves in. However, when asking what they still want to achieve or what their perfect day would look like when they would have an official status and everything would be possible, different answers came forward. Then, it turned out the undocumented residents did have an idea of what they envision in their future: the majority wants to live in Nijmegen in the future, some aspire to own a house or company, others want to renew their skills and most of the residents said they want to help people, in whichever way possible. This involves the socially imagined and shows that the residents anticipate their distant future. The aspirations undocumented residents talked about and the way they move towards a better – distant – future, provides insights on their social navigation.

### 6.3.1 Envisioning a future in Nijmegen

Most residents have a significant amount of contacts, a job, volunteer work or are taking courses in Nijmegen. Having contacts is an evident reason to undocumented residents when choosing where to live as the process of place making evolves around networks of people (Pemberton & Philimore, 2018). All residents have expressed their wishes to stay in the Netherlands, at least for some amount of time. The majority of them call Nijmegen their home, and they hope to build a future here – as mentioned before, many are studying Dutch and investing in their social and professional environment to be able to build this future. Most of them have lived in Nijmegen for three to six years and are grounded here. Being grounded in the social environment is a significant part of feeling at home somewhere and as the majority of residents feel at home in Nijmegen, they want to stay here.

During the interviews, the wish to stay in the Netherlands, and more specifically Nijmegen, was often mentioned in the same breath as being scared of getting deported. As nearly all residents would like to stay in Nijmegen, the fear of deportation is apparent. The residents built a social life for themselves in Nijmegen, they see this city as a possible home in the distant future and plan on expanding their social life here. Resident J provided an example of this: *“I wish to have a house on my own. A husband, a child, a peaceful life. Preferably in Nijmegen. Without stress, then I would not be scared if we can stay or not, what we have to do, whether or not we are getting a ticket by the IND. Yes, a peaceful life”* (a2:53).

Resident I explained: *“it is a bit frightening when I see the police, I directly go to my daughter [resident J] then. It is because I am illegal. I wish to have an original card [an ID card]”* (a6:46-49). The words of resident J and I are in line with those of resident L; these residents aspire to be at ease, to live somewhere without fearing they might have to leave again. They have grown emotionally attached to Nijmegen and invested in this place. Therefore, they feel the fear of getting deported. They aspire to live in Nijmegen, yet feel limited because they might get deported. Starting a life in Nijmegen with documents would mean the end of stress regarding the possibility to being forced to leave. It is noteworthy that the residents who did not call themselves illegal, also did not voice the fear of deportation.

One resident – resident H – mentioned he would rather live in Eindhoven than Nijmegen. This resident has lived in Nijmegen the longest – six years – and is also the oldest resident of SNOV. He experienced problems with his heart for the past few years and expects to not live more than 5 years (a3:52). He wants to move to Eindhoven because his niece lives there and because there are good health facilities (a3:54). Resident H expressed that he wants to be close to his family and the hospital because the cardiology department there is well

developed. Moving to Eindhoven can signify a new start for him and help him move forward in life. This resident anticipates that he will need to be close to a health facility that can offer him the care he requires – and will require in the future. Planning on moving to Eindhoven is his way of making sure that he will receive the correct care and being close to his family.

### 6.3.2 Aspiring to own a house or company

Many residents expressed their aspirations of owning a house or company. Especially the aspiration to have a private home turned out to be apparent under the undocumented residents. A possible reason can be found in that the majority of the people that participated in this research were living together in SNOV's main men's shelter. Resident D explained why: *"I am not here to share this house [the SNOV main shelter for men], I want my own house, I want to work here and pay taxes"* (a7:47). This resident clearly stated what he considers to be-part-of somewhere; he wants his own house, while he works and pays taxes. This being-part-of is an important aspect of place making (Lems, 2016). The ideas this resident expressed, reflect his wishes of building a future here. Having his own house and being able to work here and pay taxes is what this resident aspires in the future. These are all ways through which eventually, he will experience being-part-of.

Resident C provided another insight: *"I would rather live in a mad-house than here. There, you know that people are mad; here, it is always a surprise"* (d1:5). The residents that were most firm in their wish of having their own home, were living at this main men's shelter. Even though they were mostly in line with the statement by resident D, there are tensions between the residents that are partly the reason behind the emphasising of this wish. Having one's own place would figure as a way to cope with these tensions that the residents experience.

Resident B, who also lives in the main men's shelter did not have the same negative impression as resident C. He argued: *"I live good and I live with nice people. We are in the same situation and this is good. We fight sometimes, but we are still friends. 'That's life', right? For me, it is an amazing time living with these guys. I have been in Europe for ten years and I have always been with foreigners"* (a4:53-54). Resident B's opinion about living together with multiple men is rather positive. Even if this contradicts the statement by resident C, resident D has also expressed his wish for an own house. A suitable conclusion could be that the situation of multiple men living together in the same house is bearable, but to some extent; an own house is preferred. For now, in the socially immediate when owning a private home is not an option to undocumented residents, the residents cope with their social environment and the tensions in this environment are dealt with through sometimes secluding oneself in one of the bedrooms

(d1:58). Even as many undocumented residents aspire to own a private house in the distant future, the socially imagined, they maintain flexible when coping with the instability in the socially immediate – such as tensions – by finding a private room.

Resident B stated that he wants to open up several companies here in the Netherlands and be able to hire people. This resident has a well-defined view of what he wants to achieve. He sees his future is in the Netherlands and anticipates steps he has to take in order to realise this. He argued: *“I want to start a small gym and I want to keep working out during corona. When I brought fitness things in my home, I asked everyone if they wanted to sport. Then everyone told me: ‘you are crazy, come lay down on the couch’. But then somebody came up and said: ‘sorry, I cannot speak Dutch or English well, but can I sport with you?’ So, I said: ‘yes of course’. Then two days later, people saw us sporting together and they suddenly wanted to come. They called me stupid before for asking them, but who is stupid now?”* (a4:58-59).

This resident is planning on owning a small gym in the distant future and is trying to start this on a small scale. He made sure he had the right equipment and people that want to work out. Even though several others were not motivated to participate in his idea, he managed to enthuse at least one person. From that, more people wanted to join. This example represents resident B’s actions and interpretations that have enabled him to act in the socially immediate, in the here and now, while keeping in mind the possible trajectories could emerge in the future and keeping an open view regarding the socially imagined (Vigh, 2009). He showed agency; he kept an open view and took the opportunity to work towards his dream on a smaller scale already.

### 6.3.3 Aspiring to help others and oneself through re-educating or renewing skills

As mentioned before, various residents expressed the aspiration to help others. Resident K specified this to people that are in the same position as he was, undocumented and sleeping on the streets, and want to help them through doing volunteer work. Resident K explained: *“at first I was very tired, but now I am cheerful again. I want to help because now I am at ease. Previously it was hard, I had to keep thinking about where I was going to sleep that night. But now things are calm and I am happy. (...) I want help people who are sleeping in the streets and don’t have food”* (a9:3; a9:11).

Resident K and several other residents have mentioned that now that they have time and a peaceful state of mind, they also want to help people who are undocumented and sleeping in the streets. Resident K stated that he wants to help others by doing volunteer work (d1:57). As he barely speaks Dutch, he is studying this in order to be able to do this work. Thus, by learning

Dutch, he is anticipating what he would need in the distant future when he is doing volunteer work to help others that are in the same position as he once was.

Other residents talked about wanting to help people in their future job. They do not want to help people by employing them, as residents B and D, but they want a job in which they can help them. These are the two residents that went to university before coming to the Netherlands. Both residents would have to renew skills in order to get a job with which they can help people. Resident J studied to become a lawyer but wants to become a psychologist. She argued: *“actually, both jobs are about helping other people. But, as a lawyer, you are always working on problems. (...) If two people are fighting, you help them get a divorce. As a psychologist, it is more about feelings. If two people are fighting, you can sit with them and help them stay together”* (a2:16; a2:18). Resident G studied humanities and literature but wants to become a nurse: *“the degree I have is not of much use in the Netherlands; it is only about our own [Iranian] culture. I want to become a nurse (...) because I like to take care of people. I am very social and enjoy having contact with other people”* (a5:36; a5:42).

Residents J and G want to work as something else than what they studied for in order to help others. Resident G argued that his previous diploma is not of much use in the Netherlands and wants to study something that can help people by taking care of them. Resident J argued that she wishes to keep people together instead of breaking them up. Both residents acknowledge that they do not have the proper education to help others in the way they want. Therefore, they aspire to re-educate themselves. At the moment, it is not possible for them to follow higher education in the Netherlands, but both are preparing for this through reading relevant books and searching information about how and when they could study this (d1:36; a5:43). Through re-educating themselves and gathering information, these residents explore the different options of helping others. They do not wait around to get an official status and be able to apply to a higher education institute but actively take steps to prepare for this; they act as social navigators.

The SNOV board has made money available in order to give the undocumented residents a chance to renew skills. It is intended to give undocumented residents a helping hand regarding their future. Several residents used or will use this chance. Resident G got to follow courses in jewellery making and carpentry at the hobby centre in Nijmegen: *“back at home [in Congo] I have this machine that I can use after I finish my courses here. Then I can make jewellery there. We have too much gold in my country, I can do it easily. If I go back, I can open a shop to employ people. I can make money and help those in need”* (a7:43). By saying this, he stated that he is using the time he is in Nijmegen in a way that it can help him when he



returns to his country of origin. Through his process of place making, by doing, making and building things (Lems, 2016), this resident also enables himself to anticipate the possible ‘routes’ and paths that could develop in the future (Vigh, 2009).

Resident D explained these plans of his return further: *“if you people here give me a chance, we can do good together. Then, my future will be bright. Then I will save money to help people. I can borrow money from the Dutch government and go help people. I will work 100 percent. 40 percent will be in the Netherlands and 60 back in my country. Because people are not able to do anything there. Life is very expensive; it is not good”* (a7:46-50). Resident D provides an example of the way in which SNOV contributes to working towards a future and spending one’s time as an undocumented resident productively. Apart from adding to the resident’s productiveness and planning for their own future, they contribute to society by doing so. Namely, since resident D is using this opportunity to make a solid plan for himself, he is anticipating the possibility of returning to his country of origin and making a contribution to this country himself.

Another resident aspires to renew skills for a different reason. Resident A mentioned that he foresees that he cannot keep on working as a handy-man his whole life as this would physically be too intensive and could possibly cause severe problems at a later age (a1:93). He is therefore looking for others jobs he could work. One option is to become a security guard: *“working in the evening is good for me. Sometimes I work during the day, then I can work from 18:00 until 21:00 or something as a security guard. Being a security guard is safer than being a handy-man, especially if you only work two or three, or maximal six hours per day. I have to study for one and a half years to do this. I cannot do that without papers, but I really want this”* (a1:92-93).

At first sight, the statement by resident A seems contradictory; on the one hand he argues that he wants to become a security guard in order to stop working as a handy-man, while on the other hand, he envisions a situation in which he can combine the two professions. I believe this contradiction is actually a sign of agency. It shows that resident A keeps his options open; while deploying his renewed skills, he also keeps working as a handy-man in case his idea of becoming a security guard might not succeed. He tries something new but within safe parameters; if one does not succeed, he at least has something to fall back on. It is his way of navigating his position in an unstable – work – environment. This represents the complexity of his actions and interpretations, that enable him to act in the here and now and give insight in the possible ‘routes’ and trajectories that could emerge in the future (Vigh, 2009).

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided insights on what Vigh's (2009) motion within a motion looks like in the case of the undocumented residents of SNOV. Undocumented residents experience limitations and turn these into opportunities in different ways. Undocumented residents find themselves in situations which are out of their control (Lems, 2016), and they have to find a way to cope with this. In this chapter I have analysed the hardships undocumented residents experience from being in an unstable environment and how they navigate their positions within these environments. Additionally, I have looked into what these limitations tell us about the aspirations undocumented residents have. I have analysed how these residents navigate their aspirations and provided insights on the differences regarding the near and distant future.

The motion of an ever-changing environment can be seen with for example the outbreak of the coronavirus that brought forward uncertainties and insecurity. Undocumented residents experienced limitations that were caused by the corona outbreak, such as the missing of loved ones or not being able to go to church. By finding creative solutions, the residents were able to – at least partially – overcome these limitations. In a period of time that comes with uncertainties, the residents have proven to be flexible and find a way to cope with the situation they find themselves in. Creative solutions were found to adjust to the situation. Furthermore, not owning a bank account is a limitation, felt by some residents. Through, for example, deploying contacts this limitation can be overcome. The undocumented residents created opportunities out of limitations and barriers that occurred to act in a challenging and unstable environment.

Some barriers that were apparent to the residents and steps they take to cope with these provided insights in the residents' aspirations. Namely, inadequate knowledge of the Dutch language and not having an ID card or residence permit. In the case of not fully understanding Dutch, contacts were deployed in order to get informed. Not having an ID card is, to various residents, intertwined with having stress and the fear of being forced to leave plays a significant role in several residents' state of mind. Their formal citizenship which is a part of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006), is not being met by the IND. They are scared to get deported, not only because they fear to return to their country of origin, but also because they envision a future in Nijmegen.

Even though the majority of undocumented residents argued that they do not have an idea on what they want to do in the future, they all expressed that they have aspirations. A possible explanation can be found in Vigh's (2009) description of the word *dubriagem*. It can be argued that the residents anticipate their distant future and not the near future while talking

about their aspirations. The residents have dreams for the distant future which they consider to not become reality soon. While taking steps to navigate their position in the near future, they keep a flexible character and maintain open to adjust their aspirations and dreams.

Through processes of place making (Lems, 2016), the residents anticipate which steps they need to take in order to prepare for routes and trajectories that might occur in the future. For example, a resident aspires to own a small gym but is not in the position to do this in the near future and therefore adjusts this aspiration and starts small-scale in the SNOV house he lives in. In the near future, residents adjust their aspirations or make use of strategies to anticipate what they need in the distant future. Another example is that residents renew skills or re-educate themselves in the near future in order to be able to help others or themselves in the distant future. Even though all undocumented residents experience limitations in some way, they all have aspirations too and many find ways to navigate these in the unstable environment they find themselves in: this is the motion within a motion.

## 7. Conclusion

*As I write this conclusion, I think about how my time at SNOV started and how my research here concluded. I remember being nervous when entering the main men's shelter for the first time in the early morning of November 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 and now feeling completely at home when I walk through the door; looking forward to have a chat with whoever is present and give resident D a Dutch class.*

*As I have researched social navigation, how this concept is applied in the case of the lives of undocumented residents of the SNOV shelter and how experience of place influences this, it is characteristic that I consider my own experiences here as a form of social navigation as well. I had a clear idea of what I wanted to research and how I wanted to do this. However, when the period that I had defined for data-collection commenced, the outbreak of the coronavirus threatened to de-stabilise the environment in which I would conduct my research. I had to find a way to adapt to the situation in order to be able to continue.*

*Because of the corona crisis, my duties to ensure that all residents are leaving the main men's shelter by 10:00 in the morning were no longer needed. Instead, I was paired up with resident D for Dutch classes and started teaching him twice a week. Even though all residents except one were housed in the SNOV shelter from the beginning of my research to the end, the social environment has changed considerably. After the initial uncertainty concerning the corona crisis and the following insecurities, a more relaxed atmosphere has taken hold in the house. Residents are now allowed to stay indoors during the day but can also take up activities again.*

*Throughout this research I was often finding a way to cope with being a researcher and volunteer simultaneously. I started to develop friendships with several residents and things that affected them, affected me as well. I have learned a lot from talking to them; about social navigation and how they experience place, but also about their varying worldviews and opinions on certain matters.*

*Next to learning things as a researcher through gathering information, I have also learned a lot as a person. My time at SNOV has given me the opportunity to not only analyse my findings, but also myself and the way I handle things. Furthermore, the end of my research does not signify the end of my time at SNOV. I will continue to do volunteer work even after having finished my research.*

## 7.1 Undocumented residents' social navigation

In this ethnographical research, I studied the social navigation and its relation to experience of place of undocumented people, living at the SNOV shelter in Nijmegen. I tried to find an answer to the following research question:

“In what way can undocumented residents socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen?”

Three sub-questions emerged in order to answer this research question. The first one sought to understand the way undocumented residents experience place, by looking at the concepts of place making, place attachment, belonging and displacement. This was analysed in chapter 5. The second one was concerned with the ways in which undocumented residents navigate their limitations and regard these as opportunities, and the third sub question focused on how the undocumented residents navigate their futures. The second and third sub-questions were answered in chapter 6.

In order to answer the research question, I will answer the sub-questions in the following section. Firstly, I will elaborate on undocumented residents' processes of place making, displacement, place attachment and belonging. Secondly, I will focus on the ways these residents navigated their limitations and aspirations, and finally, conclude with an answer to the research question. Subsequently, in the remaining sections, I will reflect on this research, and make recommendations and a suggestion for future research.

### 7.1.1 Experiencing place

The first sub-question is “In what way do undocumented residents experience place?”. In chapter 5, I have shown that there are multiple ways through which the undocumented residents make a place their own. Upon arrival to the Netherlands or Nijmegen, residents often felt displaced as they were not grounded in their new surroundings. By doing, making and building things, these residents created their own place (Lems, 2016). Four main contributors to the place making processes of undocumented residents can be distinguished: gaining contacts and work, religion, and adapting a certain mindset. These led to the residents' attachment to Nijmegen and experiencing a sense of belonging and being-part-of, even when most residents referred to themselves as illegal.

As I have shown in chapter 5, many residents have become grounded in a social and professional environment because they deployed contacts. Gaining contacts and finding work

was a way of navigating their position and place in an uncertain environment formed by feelings of displacement, and also caused the residents to get attached to Nijmegen. Contacts and work play a significant part in the everyday lives of undocumented residents and cause the residents to experience an emotional and affective attachment to the place these contacts are in. Being in touch with these people and having a job makes the residents feel at home.

In this chapter I have also shown that the sense of belonging weighed more heavily than the politics of belonging. The construction of the residents' sense of belonging is visible when looking through the lens that Yuval-Davis (2006) offered by combining three analytical levels. The residents as undocumented people from different backgrounds and ages have emotionally attached to Nijmegen. In some cases, the neighbours confirm residents in their sense of belonging by accepting them as neighbours and part of the society.

Only the politics of belonging diverges. According to the Dutch government, people who do not hold a Dutch residence permit, do not belong here. As the undocumented residents do not own such a document, they are officially excluded from the politics of belonging. In some cases, the SNOV card contributed to a feeling of belonging and being-part-of, but not in all. The residents to whom this card had no added value in this sense, did not show any lesser sense of belonging however.

The undocumented residents anticipated which steps they needed to take in order to achieve this attachment and sense of belonging even though they do not meet the criteria for the politics of belonging. Experiencing a sense of belonging can be regarded as a result of the residents' social navigation. They adapted to their situation and environment and found ways to get to the grounded position they are in at the moment. This position helps them with realising their dreams for the future, when they also meet criteria for the politics of belonging.

#### 7.1.2 Creating opportunities out of limitations and navigating aspirations

I have chosen to integrate social navigation as a concept to analyse the agency of undocumented residents in Nijmegen because it recognises the fluidity and flexible character of the residents' ability to navigate changes in their environment and work towards a future. To take this unstable environment into account, I have formulated the second sub-question: "In what way do undocumented residents navigate the limitations they experience?". To take the ability to work towards the future into account, I formulated the third and last sub-question: "In what way do undocumented residents navigate their aspirations?".

In chapter 6 I have analysed multiple limitations and the ways in which undocumented residents acted as social navigators to overcome these. The outbreak of the coronavirus was one

of these limitations, as well as not being able to have a bank account, an insufficient level of Dutch and not owning official documents such as a residence permit or ID card. The barriers caused by the corona crisis and not being able to own a bank account were overcome by finding creative solutions as the result of adapting a flexible character. The distance which residents felt to their contacts and religion as a result of the corona crisis was partially bridged through the usage of applications such as WhatsApp and ZOOM, and the residents who struggled with not owning a bank account deployed their contacts in order to find information or buy things.

The struggle of having an insufficient level of Dutch and not owning official documents, were not only destabilising the environments that undocumented residents had to navigate, but also provide information on their aspirations and imagined futures. Most undocumented residents could not imagine their near future as they do not own an ID card or residence permit. However, by looking at the residents' aspirations, I found that nearly all of them had a clear image of what their distant future would look like and most of them placed this future in Nijmegen. They have become attached to Nijmegen and as a result, want to keep on living here in the future. Moreover, the wish to have a sufficient level of Dutch is one of the signifiers that undocumented residents anticipate their future to be in the Netherlands.

In chapter 6, I also showed the undocumented residents' aspirations. These involved living in Nijmegen, owning a house or a company and helping other people. The residents use different strategies in order to get forward in life. Most residents are studying the Dutch language as a way of socially navigating their position regarding the future. They anticipate that if they have sufficient knowledge of Dutch, they can get more Dutch contacts or study here. The residents described that this is an important step to take in order to be able to live in Nijmegen in the distant future. Furthermore, by doing undeclared work, the residents have found a way to navigate their position in a landscape that tries to prevent them from working and sustain themselves. They anticipate that this is needed if they want a house or company in the future and if they want to help others.

### 7.1.3 Undocumented residents as social navigators

With this thesis, I hope to contribute to the understanding of how undocumented residents in Nijmegen socially navigate their position and place in Nijmegen and move forward in life. I found that all these residents are social navigators in their own ways. The near and distant future are interpreted and navigated in differing ways by undocumented residents. These navigations are significantly influenced by the residents' experiences of place. Through the processes of place making, the undocumented residents experience being-part-of in Nijmegen. By gaining

contacts and getting work, they anticipate what they need now and in the near future, in order to be able to live in Nijmegen in a distant future. Because the residents are attached and made Nijmegen their home, the fear to get deported is more pressing. However, even while having this fear and having to deal with an unstable, ever-changing environment, the residents maintain a certain flexibility and openness to anticipate the steps they have to take in order to continue building this future for themselves.

All undocumented residents of SNOV have differing ways of showing flexibility and working towards their future. Coping with struggles caused by for example the outbreak of the coronavirus are ways in which the residents navigate their position in the near future (at one point, corona will not be a problem anymore). Studying for a sufficient knowledge of Dutch is a way in which the residents navigate their position in the distant future and most of them plan to live in the Netherlands in this future.

Thus, with this research, I have shown that even though undocumented residents endure various hardships, they found ways to cope with these. Many limitations that they experienced were approached as opportunities. The residents did so by anticipating their future and taking the steps that are needed in order to get there. While many cannot plan for the near future as they believe they first need an ID card or residence permit, they are already planning for their distant future in Nijmegen as a documented resident. Moreover, I have shown that through processes of place making, such as creating the foundations of a social and professional life and learning Dutch, these undocumented residents experience a sense of belonging and place attachment to Nijmegen. With this research, I have established that the undocumented residents have socially navigated their place and position mainly through working, creating a network of contacts and learning how to speak Dutch; the residents anticipate what is necessary in order to be able to live in Nijmegen when they do have documents, and this has also led to their becoming grounded and attached here. Undocumented residents are social navigators as they have proven to be flexible and creative in finding solutions to challenging circumstances.

## 7.2 Reflection

This research could have been improved in several ways. In general, I was only present in the main men's shelter for participant observations, and I could have attended the women's shelter and private houses more often. I did not do this however, as I wanted to invest effort in becoming familiar with the residents in this accommodation and have more in-depth conversations than merely asking how they are doing, rather than getting to know as many people as quickly as possible. This research could have been improved through being active at



multiple locations and defining in what way the undocumented residents living together influenced each other's experience of place and social navigation.

Secondly, I tried to involve participatory appraisal techniques in this research by asking the residents to take pictures of their work or activities they participated in. I expected that this was an easy way of exploring the field and seeing the social settings that undocumented residents are placed in, especially when I could not visit them personally in the first weeks after the outbreak of the coronavirus. However, this turned out to not be the case as only one resident did in fact participate in this idea. Several other residents found the use of electronic devices not valuable and not user-friendly. Before proposing to use such techniques, I should have inquired with the residents about their ability to partake in this. That way, I could have considered another idea to still explore the field.

Thirdly, I noticed that because I got to know the residents well, I sometimes did not dare to ask certain questions, concerned that I might cross an undefined boundary or do them harm. It can be argued that this is a limitation of my research but also an advantage to my relationship with the residents as there was never any friction between us.

Fourthly, I have applied an intersectional approach (Ahmadi, 2018) and chose to focus on concepts that were described by authors that have researched these concepts in an intersectional approach as well. However, I was not able to adapt this intersectionality when describing a person and placing them in a certain position without revealing their identity. As guaranteeing the undocumented residents' anonymity is important, I found it difficult to not connect all residents to specific identifiers while still maintaining an intersectional approach to analyse my findings.

Fifthly, I was often asked by the undocumented residents what my opinion was regarding corona and their situation as undocumented people, and how I envisioned the future. While in my interviews I expected them to know the answers to these questions, I found these questions difficult to answer myself. In hindsight, this might have contributed to maintaining an objective position but knowing the answers to these questions might also have created the opportunity to recognise the difference between my point of view and the undocumented residents' point of view.

### 7.3 Recommendations

I recommend that organisations that are concerned with housing undocumented residents should realise what exactly they can contribute to the everyday lives of these people. As it turns out, network and work play a significant role in becoming grounded. Additionally, courses in

which undocumented residents can renew skills or learn something new can be useful for a distant future in which they have an official status. Starting programmes or adjusting them to meet the needs of these residents and helping them spend their time productively, is a useful way of helping them build towards a future.

Furthermore, I recommend that the “Zorgen voor Morgen” programme starts focusing on the undocumented residents’ procedures as well. This could be an investment in the residents’ near future. Most of them argued that they cannot plan for this as they are undocumented and this is not likely to change soon. With the help of others, this process might be accelerated. In this case, the programme would be investing in both the near and distant future of undocumented residents.

#### 7.4 Future research

The bed, bath, bread debate is far from over. In 2019, the Dutch government started a pilot programme of a three-year period in which five municipalities in the Netherlands – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Eindhoven and Groningen – replace their bed, bath, bread facilities with *National Aliens Facilities* (LVVs) (WODC, 2020). Replacing the BBBs with LVVs would have various consequences for undocumented people such as the residents of SNOV. They would be forced to choose between restarting their procedure, which they may not want to do as this can have an unsuccessful result, or lead to deportation.<sup>2</sup> The *raison d’être* of this pilot stems from the government’s view of BBBs as counter-productive to an effective return policy; these facilities would make the undocumented residents less willing to return to their country of origin (WODC, 2020).

I would recommend further research on the possible influence of LVVs on the undocumented residents’ experience of place. Additionally, this research could focus on whether or not the residents face further limitations from this newfound form of shelter. That way, the influence of different forms of shelters on the lives and social navigation of undocumented residents can be understood.

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<sup>2</sup> General coordinator of SNOV, personal communication, July 22, 2020

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