Tahriib: The Journey into the Unknown
An Ethnography of mobility, insecurities and uncertainties among Somalis en route
PhD Dissertation 2017 | Anja Simonsen
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Anja Simonsen
Acknowledgements

Gratitude! This is what I feel towards all the people who have helped me through the process of conducting fieldwork, collecting data, analysing and writing this dissertation. Without every single one of you, I could not have done this. Thank you.

I will start by thanking all the young Somali women and men that I met during my time in Somaliland, Turkey and Greece and beyond that. Without you this dissertation would never have been. We have laughed and cried together, seen and done things we never thought we would experience, we have lost people along the way that we knew and cared about. It has been a tough and painful journey, but it has also been a rewarding one. I will forever be grateful for your warmth, hospitality and kindness. I am especially grateful towards Hoyo and Abo, their children and grandchildren. You opened both your home and your family to me while living in Somaliland, which I will never forget. Getting up early hours to eat before the sun would rise during ramadan, participating in family gatherings and everyday life avoiding loneliness made the world of difference to me and provided me with an insight to life in Somaliland throughout generations that I would never have been able to achieve living elsewhere. I also owe the biggest gratitude to Mohamed, Ahmed, Dahir, Jama, Abdikarim, Sahal, Zayid, Adifatah, Ali, Hodan and Abdulfatah who helped me setting up and conducting interviews, spending many hours discussing tahriib, analysing my data and reading through my chapters. Thank you. The ones of you who play a main role in the dissertation, I have chosen to thank you by using your pseudonyms to protect you and your individual life journey’s. Cabdirahman, Abdulahi, Nadifa, Ubax, Habaane, Jabriil, Taban, Aden, Faysal, Xalaane, Subeer, Riyaan, Wiilka Nololshayda, Yahye, Ladan, Idil and many more – you are the true experts [xog-ogaaal] and without you, this dissertation would not exist. Ali, my taxi driver and go to guy in Somaliland. Thank you for always being there.

Sahro and Abdiraxman, thank you for facilitating my stay within Somaliland. Yusra Osman and Abdirisak Ali Omar, I am forever grateful for your contributions to my analyses. Going through chapters, specific Somali sayings or words with you have helped me to develop my analysis.

To my supervisor Henrik Vigh. Your sharp theoretical and analytic eye has really pushed my analysis. You have been extremely generous with your time, which has benefited my analyses to a great length. I feel extremely grateful to have benefitted from your warm-hearted spirit and intellectual character. You have been a great support throughout the whole process and has made it all come together. Thank You! To the whole Invisible Lives group, that besides Henrik Vigh includes Hans Lucht and Line Richter – thank you for four explorative, insightful and challenging years. You are all great sources of inspiration for me professionally and privately. Line, I owe a special ‘thank you’ to you. We have laughed and cried together in our office or when out conducting fieldwork. You have been my lifeline always ready with comfort and advice. That will always stay with me. Tobias Hagman, my co-supervisor - benefiting from your extensive knowledge about Somalia and East Africa in general and your dedication towards reading my chapters has been of great value. Thank you! Perle Møhl, you deserve to know how grateful I am for your interest in my work, taking your time to read some of it and help me create a front page and a nice set-up. To the rest of the Biometric Border Worlds group with whom I’m going to work for the next two and a half years – Karen Fog Olwig and Kristina Grünenberg – thank you for your encouragement and interest in my work. My study group – Thomas Randrup Pedersen, My Madsen, Iben Karlsen, Marie Kolling and Adrienne Mannov – I owe you a big ‘thank you’ for all your inputs, fruitful discussions and constructive feedback! Ida Marie Vammen, thank you for great co-work the last four years with a variety of seminars and writing retreats. And a big
acknowledgement to the Migration and Social Mobility research group at Copenhagen University in which some of my ideas for chapters and papers have been discussed. To the rest of my colleagues, thank you all for being great supporters.

Visiting the African Studies Centre, University of Oxford for a period of two months turned out to be extremely valuable for me as it – with especially the valuable insights from Professor David Pratten and the hospitality of the director Professor Johnny Steinberg– helped me to frame my theoretical approach.

Last but not least, I could not have gone through this without the constant support of my family and friends who all have been cheering for me and supporting me. My grandparents, my mother and Jens, father and Lis, sisters Anja and Iben and their families, my brothers Daniel, Christopher, Alexander and Casper and families, Inge and Esben, Sara, Mary, Maiken, Merete, Majbritt, Marie, Kirstine, Claire, Kristine. Thank you all! And a big thank you to the once not mentioned here. You are all in my heart.

Soheil Fattahieh – my love – thank you for your endless support, encouragement and love.
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Introduction

Somali Proverb:
‘Ishaa ayaa macalin ku ah’
(The eyes are the teacher)

‘I’m so afraid’, Nadifa¹ says, as we leave the house she is currently occupying as an illegal migrant here in Greece. ‘Why?’ I reply. ‘Because I don’t know them’ she says, as she closes the door behind her on fourth floor. I tell her not to worry, I’m with her. We head towards the first floor to meet a young Somali man who has been violently attacked by the Greek police. I want to hear his story. Nadifa has agreed to translate for me if necessary. Nadifa knocks on the door and says that she will ask for the boy who is walking with difficulty, as we do not know his name. ‘Yes, good idea’, I reply. The door is opened. The young man we are looking for is standing in the hallway next to his walking frame. He turns around, and when he sees me, he says ‘Oh yes’. He and some other young Somali men welcome us in and guide us to their room. We pass by an elderly man who is walking around. He cannot talk and only makes sounds. The room we enter is the same size as the others I have visited here in Greece. It consists of a mattress to the left, another one at the end of the room, and then a bed to the right. Between the bed and the mattress to the left is a white plastic chair. They invite me to sit on it. I kindly tell them that I would prefer to sit on the mattress next to Nadifa. ‘Okay’, they reply. A young man sits on the mattress to the left, two boys sit opposite Nadifa and myself, while others come and go, taking it in turns to sit on the white plastic chair.

Having greeted us in the hallway, the boy with the walking frame, who, we find out, is called Gaani, is now nowhere to be found. The other young men tell us that we can interview them since the other young man went to Somali Istaag,² the street where Somalis hang out. During the interview one of the young men asks me if they can ask a question. I reply ‘Yes, of course’. ‘Is it only Greece that does not want people to come? It is not only Greece, right?’ I tell them that Greece is the country that actually enforces border controls, but that there is also great pressure from the rest of Europe to keep these borders closed. ‘Why it is that they don’t want people to cross? They don’t like migrants’, they ask me. These questions feed into what ends up being a long discussion of the European asylum system. After sitting in their house for what seems to me a long time, I tell them that I will not bother them any more today and make ready to get up. As I do this, to my surprise the young man with the walking frame comes back to the house entering the room and sitting on the chair:

‘I am here now [in Greece] for two years. Before I was in Malaysia. Then I stayed in Turkey for two weeks. I stayed in Athens for two months, and then I tried to leave. I

¹ Nadifa was a young Somali woman I had met in both Turkey and Greece and was herself illegal and wanting to migrate further into Europe. For an introduction to her and my other main interlocutors, see Chapter 1.
² In Somali, it translates into ‘the street where Somalis stand’.
tried the airport four times. The second time I went to the airport, they [the staff at the airport] asked me questions. They tell me that this is not my passport. The police catch me. They say “Where are you going? Italy?” They check me at a police station [in the airport]. [Afterwards] They took my arms [he puts his arms behind his back to illustrate] and kick me. They kick me in my stomach. They take me down on the floor and kick me in my back. He illustrates laying on the floor on his stomach. ‘After that, I don’t feel anything. I’m like a dead person, I’m numb [paralyzed]. Six people kick me. Six policemen in the airport … They threw me out at the bus station. In the morning I wake up in the rain [with raindrops dripping on his face]. I go home. After three weeks, I try again to go to the airport. That day I was feeling okay, but after that I went to the hospital. After three months I got sick. I went to the hospital for three months. I did not wake up, I just lay for the bed [in bed] … I was sick. I’m sick for one year. When I’m outside [of the house], I’m afraid of the police. The country and the people are good because I went to the hospital because I did not have any money. I don’t have fingers here and no paper [he did not get registered with fingerprints and documents in Greece]. They gave me the right to free treatment because of human rights. When I walk on the street with my walking frame, they [the police] ask me what happened. I tell them what happened, they laugh at me because they say that you are nothing, you are mafro. Mafro means black people in the Greek language’, he says. ‘When they ask where we are from and we say Somalia, they don’t know Somalia. They think [for a while] and then they say ‘you are from piracy’. They think all from Africa are Mafro. The Greek people here are nice people, but some are racists’. Asking him what his plan is now, he replies: ‘I’m just getting help for the hospital. I don’t have the police papers, so UN, they are asking for the police papers’. ‘Of course you would not go and file a complaint to the same police who beat you up. That’s not possible’, I reply.

The scene described above, in which Nadifa and I spent our afternoon in the company of young Somali men who were unregistered and thus illegal in Greece, but in the middle of migrating, illustrates the main objective of this dissertation. It shows how political securitization processes in Europe, such as the construction of border controls, affect young Somali migrants very concretely in the form of fences, guards and ID controls. It is these frictions – ‘the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference’ (Tsing: 2005: 4), to borrow Tsing’s phrase – that I wish to capture in this dissertation by exploring the wide spectrum of levels within the scale of securitization. Scales, Tsing (2012: 505-507) argues, speak to expansion, precision and an ability to scale up and down. The concept refers to so-called projects the cores of which do not change and are not transformed into something else when scaling up and down. The concept has been widely used in technology in which zooming in and out on objects, whether with a camera or a computer, illustrates the concept of scalability. It originates, however, from the world of business, in which the ability to scale up or expand a business project without transforming it has flourished (ibid: 508). Tsing criticizes this approach for a lack of focus on the
frictions that emerge, what in her later work she defines as ‘non-scalability’. She argues that ‘scalability is never complete. If the world is still diverse and dynamic, it is because scalability never fulfils its own promises’ (2012: 510). It is this incompleteness, the frictions, the non-scalabilities which this dissertation will focus on by exploring how securitization as a form of scale-making takes place in the everyday experiences of young Somali women and men en route. It is, therefore, the transformative nature of securitization that this dissertation seeks to explore. In other words, it is the way the project of securitization, which Tsing defines as ‘relatively coherent bundles of ideas and practices as realized in particular times and places’ (2000: 347), transforms itself in the encounter with young Somali women and men migrating illegally in the landscapes of the world.

In this way, securitization is managed through scales defined as global, national and local representations and processes (Bubandt 2005: 276-277). Bubandt argues that ‘security as a political way of dealing with the ontological issue of uncertainty produces these scales’ (ibid: 277). This definition takes its point of departure in the argument that scales are socially constructed and thus intertwined in a web of power relations. This, in addition, can be associated with the argument that the social construction of securitization is practiced differently at different levels, localities, historical contexts etc. Hence, each chapter of this dissertation is an attempt to explore the ‘large-scale global processes on lived life’ (Vigh 2008: 14). By making use of different scholars as I move through the chapters, the latter are all shaped by an inspiration from existential anthropology, building on philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt, and developed through more contemporary anthropologists, such as Michael Jackson. It is an approach that highlights the interconnectedness between the individual and her/his surroundings, the intersubjective, that allows me to describe how uncertainty is coped with as a result of the interconnectedness. As Jackson argues (2013: 6), ‘... neither the personal nor the political, the particular or the abstract, senses of “subjectivity” can be postulated as prior. They are mutually arising; each is the condition of the possibility of the other ...’.

This theoretical frame allows me to examine the way moral panic is generated about and around so-called illegal migrants who move, or rather the way this form of insecurity (a political concept in which what you fear is objectified – in this case what are feared are my interlocutors) generates uncertainties (angst, something non-objectified, an experience in which the uncertainties are unknown) among those who are being securitized. This resembles the theoretical framework of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who differentiated between fear as what is objectified towards something specific, and angst as the ever present existential condition within the human being. Angst arose from the biblical concept of original sin and is defined as the human precondition for recognizing one’s possibilities: ‘Angest er Frihedens Virkelighed som Mulighed for Muligheden’ (Kierkegaard 2004: 41). Thus, the way I conceptualize uncertainty as a form of existential condition that is socially understood and practiced as opening possibilities, but at the same time as frightening, is inspired by Kierkegaard’s definition of angst.

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3 ‘Angst is the reality of the freedom as possibility for the possibility’.
Each chapter zooms in and out, from macro to micro to macro again, between the various levels at which the scale-making of securitization take place. Gaani’s very brutal experience of ID control is one such example, in which the practice of border control stands face to face with its socially constructed product of various forms of movement. In other words, two levels meet: the macro-political construction of border control and the micro-perspective of people moving in a world of border control. As Tsing remarks (2005: 5), ‘how we run depends on what shoes we have to run in’. Hence, form, shape and material affect the way the people move. I seek to explore the shoes in which my interlocutors run in and how this is experienced by scaling up and down throughout the chapters of this dissertation.

Revisiting my meeting with these young men sheds light on the way movement\(^4\) (physically and existentially) in the 21\(^{st}\) century is politically apprehended and at the same time socially experienced by young Somali women and men who migrate without legal documents. The scene in which Gaani discusses the borrowed passport with airport staff captures two main aspects on which I hope to shed light throughout this dissertation. First, it shows how the geopolitical context defines the movement of non-nationals in general as a security threat to nation states (economically, identity-wise and in respect of the quality of life) (Karyotis and Patrikios 2010: 43). Greece, as a part of the EU, prohibits movement without legal documents. The prohibition of the movement of those such as my interlocutors, who did not travel with their own passports or with any passport at all, has been defined in terms of securitization, a discourse that arose in Greece in the 1990s (Karyotis and Patikios 2010: 46). Migration was defined as a security threat to Greece’s economic interests and to society in general, a position that led to the ‘Law of Aliens’ of 1991 (Law 1975/1991) (Karyotis and Patikios 2010: 46, Zigoura 2007: 16). Defining migration in terms of securitization has led to a focus on the control of the movement of non-Greeks within Greece (Ibid.). Gaani’s meeting with the political scale of securitization takes place at the airport, one of the most securitized places in the present-day world, where travellers are checked constantly by both people and technologies the sole purpose of which is to securitize the airport. This takes me to my second point. Gaani’s experience at the airport captures the way he, as a young Somali man in Greece without legal documents, attempts to play the nation state’s game by moving in tune with the necessity for national documents, but fails. We come to understand the way uncertainty as a context (Vigh 2006), when moving globally without documents, the wrong form of documents or someone else’s documents, is experienced on the micro-scale. We are introduced to Nadifa’s experience of uncertainty in having to move among other young Somali migrants whom she does not know, but who occupy the landscape in which she moves; or the young men’s uncertainty of why the EU is constantly attempting to prevent them from moving any further; and lastly the uncertainty of not knowing what is ahead when one enters an airport on borrowed documents, a movement which in this case was actualized in the form of a violent, physical attack.

The overall argument of this dissertation is that *tahriib* (illegal migration, the journey

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\(^4\) I will define the term ‘movement’ later within this chapter.
into the unknown), which I explore in detail in Chapters 3 and 5, originates in my interlocutors’ fathers’ and forefathers’ ways of moving, but also differs due to the world they move in. I argue that the current geopolitical context in which the mobility of people without documents is characterized as a security threat is transformed into the uncertainty my interlocutors feel through the form of movement that is \textit{tahriib}. I will move between these two levels of ‘insecurity’, namely as a geopolitical context and as ‘uncertainty’, viewing it as the social experience of young Somali women and men on the move. Throughout the dissertation, I will move analytically between the different levels within the scale-making of securitization by exploring themes such as the practice of moving, the sharing of information and the experience of losing time. By treating the social experiences of uncertainty as a context, I explore how the politics of insecurity on the macro-scale takes place among young Somali migrants and the landscapes in which they move. Put differently, I examine how the uncertainties of moving in landscapes of, for example, border control implemented by the EU is experienced by, for example, the young men sitting in that house in Greece with Nadifa and myself. I seek to answer their question of why Greece does not let migrants like themselves leave the country legally by moving analytically between the various approaches to migration within the European political landscape, followed by migrants themselves, the EU etc. To do this, I will start by outlining the categorization, the labels, that are applied on migrants politically, publicly and individually.

**Illegal Migrants? Interlocutors? The Scales of Terminology**

The labelling of ourselves as well as others is how we construct our social worlds and give meaning to them (Horst 2006: 12, Moncrieffe 2007: 1). At the same time, the social constructs of labels and categories are the means whereby various actors try to dominate the social place they are in in accordance with their world-view. Labelling in itself, therefore, withholds the concepts of power and politics (Moncrieffe 2007: 1). We as researchers are part of this constant social construction of the world we engage in, which again affects the way perceptions of the realities we study are understood and the actions taken towards them. As researchers, we have an obligation to critically assess the concepts we use and construct (Horst 2006: 12, Goldstein 2010), which I attempt to do in the following section.

**Illegal Migrants**

\textit{Tahriib is going from your country to another country illegally. That is tahriib. The European country are saying it's illegal because it's illegal.}

These were the words of one of the young men featured in the introduction to this chapter. He was replying to my question regarding what \textit{tahriib} was. I have chosen to refer to my
interlocutors’ way of moving as ‘illegal migration’ throughout the dissertation. This choice is twofold. First, it is based on the way my interlocutors themselves describe their way of moving in the world, as well as how they are defined by the political landscape in which they move, namely, as illegal. In other words, I seek to answer the question posed by Ruben Andersson, namely ‘what is it like to become illegal?’ (2014: 11) by exploring the embodiment of illegality. At the same time, however, illegality was defined differently by various people. In general, travelling on an airplane was not considered illegal (Ali 2016: 12-13) by my interlocutors, despite having what Reeves (2013) has called ‘clean fakes’, that is, the practice of buying other people’s legal passports or other forms of documents.

In addition, the young Somali man’s statement points to more than just a methodological consideration of what to call the people like those among whom I have conducted fieldwork in Somaliland, Turkey and Greece. His notion of his and the other young Somalis’ way of moving in the world, namely tahriib, as illegal sheds light on several important analytical insights. First, he argues how movement of this sort is defined as illegal at the European geopolitical level. FRONTEX (the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union) for one states in its 2015 Report on Annual Risk that they in 2014 have detected more than 280,000 migrants ‘crossing illegally the external borders’.

It is by crossing international borders that the terminology of illegality is implemented, both by my interlocutors and by the surrounding context of nation states. As Lucht argues (2012: 18), the term ‘illegal immigrant’ is ‘a legal and discursive category of exclusion’ which is followed by experiences of a global disconnect. Or, in the words of Andersson (2014: 8), ‘he is anonymous and out of place, homeless and bereft of clear national belonging; he alternates between untrustworthiness and innocence, the roles of villain and victim’. This is exemplified through statements such as the following made by the Italian Ambassador in Poland, who constructs an image of the illegal migrant as a security threat on all levels of society:

It [illegal migration] is a threat for the whole of the EU. 170,000 migrants arrived illegally on the shores of Sicily are a proof of that. Many of these people cannot or do not want to be identified – they are a potential security threat to the whole of Europe in terms of terrorist and criminal infiltration, besides the economic concerns. Last year’s Ebola virus outbreak in Africa also underlined the health risks carried by immigrants whose country or area of origin cannot be ascertained.6

(Alessandro de Pedys, Italian Ambassador to Poland)

The investments in border agencies such as FRONTEX and the conditions under which my interlocutors move as illegal have very real consequences, such as travelling on board inflatable

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boats, travelling on foot for many hours and being imprisoned. Secondly, the categorization of my interlocutors as illegal migrants is connected with how uncertainty is experienced by them (relationally, socially, practically). The word *tahriib* was constantly defined as containing two similarly important definitions, ‘illegal migration’ and ‘the journey into the unknown’. The journey into the unknown refers to the uncertainty of not knowing what is ahead when moving along the path of *tahriib*. This young man’s statement illustrates how the terminology of illegality works as an ascription on the macro-level through national borders which are governed by agents such as FRONTEX. What I then seek to shed light on through the micro-level as well is the experience of moving into the unknown surrounded by a political definition as an illegal. This is what I approach analytically talking about uncertainty, which develops into the various types of practices (relational, social, practical) explored throughout this dissertation.

**At the Root of the Semantic**

The terminology described in the section above speaks to a specific corner of the anthropological scientific field, namely that of mobility, scales and uncertainty. It frames the young Somali women and men as actors in a particular thematic field through abstract, depersonalized (not decontextualized) terms such as ‘illegal’ and ‘migrant’. Within the tradition of anthropology, more generalized, though still somewhat depersonalized terms have constantly been used to describe the people among whom we do research. The most common has been and to some extent still is ‘informant’. The label ‘informant’ has been criticized for having connotations of spying and for failing to represent the collaborative relationship which I and many others as anthropologists strive to achieve (Fluehr-Lobban 2008: 180). It is these concerns which, together with the power of labelling, prevent me from blindly continuing to label people using categories that fail to take into account the collaborative aspect of doing fieldwork. As the discipline of anthropology has argued, especially through the rise of critical anthropology, which takes its point of departure in the intersubjective experience (Fabian [1983] 2014), knowledge is not an object to be found, but rather something which arises between people through communication and mediation (Horst 2006). How, then, do I label the young Somali women and men in this dissertation to do them justice in the production of knowledge within the timescale in which they allowed me to be with them? Fluehr-Lobban (2008: 180) proposes to incorporate the terms ‘collaborator’ or ‘participant’ as part of a move towards a more collaborative anthropology. Though I strive for collaboration and have attempted to achieve exactly that, I am also critical of these terms. First, the notion of collaborator itself has very negative connotations, especially in eastern Europe where the word, along with ‘collaboration’ and ‘collaboratism’, have been used to describe those who worked together with or supported the Nazis during World War II (Armstrong 1968, Schiessl 2016). Secondly, the young Somali women and men I attempted to follow were moving in a field that was characterized by uncertainty. Some of them would disappear from one day to the next, and I

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7 See Chapter 3 for a historical genealogy of the term *tahriib*. 

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7 See Chapter 3 for a historical genealogy of the term *tahriib*. 

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would never see or hear of their whereabouts again. Others lost their lives in the Mediterranean. Hence, many young individuals had consented to talk to me or spend time with me, but they never got the chance to have the analysis of their data developed further, suggesting that to talk of collaborators or partners is to some extent to paint a rather romantic picture of what are harsh realities. In this way, this can not only be characterized as a semantic problem, it speaks to deeper discussions of unequal relations between the anthropologist and the people she/he conducts research with and among.

Instead I have chosen the label ‘interlocutor’, which originates in the sixteenth century, deriving from the Latin word ‘interlocut’ (interrupted, by speech) from ‘inter’ (between) and ‘loqui’ (speak). An interlocutor is, therefore, a person who participates in a conversation. It speaks to the point I stated above in which knowledge creation arises between people – in this case myself and the young Somali women and men I met during fieldwork – through communication (either verbally or physically).

In addition, I have chosen to refer to my interlocutors as Somalis in the ethnic and social-cultural senses of the term (Hansen 2006: 10). I have explained where my interlocutors originate from as they define it (Somaliland, Puntland, Djibuti and Somalia), but chosen not to conceptualize their origin politically through individual terms such as Somalilander or Puntlander, as their experiences en route in some ways dissolve these differences. Everyone has to travel the same way, which is based more on economic capacities and luck than on political conceptualizations, though clan affiliations may still play a role en route.

The Mobility of Migration Literature

As long as human beings have existed they have moved (Olwig and Nyberg Sørensen 2002: 9), but in different ways. Globally, people have moved as ‘explorers, colonizers, traders, tourists, refugees and labour migrants’ (Rytter and Olwig 2011: 9), to mention just a few. The ways we as human beings have moved throughout time has been described by different scholars at different periods of time using different terms and with social understandings attached to it. In this literature review, I wish A) to start by shedding light on migration studies and the way various approaches have been sought, used and critiqued; B) to focus on refugee studies, as since the late 1980s the label ‘refugee’ has been attached to a great deal of the people leaving Somalia; C) and finally, describe one of the newest approaches to people who migrate, what has been called ‘the mobility turn’. Being inspired by the latest approaches within the mobility turn, in this dissertation I define and make use of mobility as a concept suggesting diversity. This argument reflects a wish to explore the ways in which this diversity of mobility is practiced, namely such as hopes that move,9 the sharing of information10 and the experiences of losing and gaining time.11

8 https://ordbog.gyldendal.dk/#/pages/result/enda/interlocutor/expert.
9 See Chapter 4, where I focus on processes of hope.
10 See Chapter 6, where I examine the sharing of information among young Somalis in Somaliland, Turkey and Greece.
Migration has been a main topic in the social sciences for many years. Beginning with studies such as Ravenstein’s (1885) ‘law of migration’, which focused on migration as a series of steps in the direction of urban centers, the topic has varied and been developed ever since. In the 1960s, scholars such as Philip Mayer and Stuart Philpott brought something new to migration studies. Mayer (1961) proposed studying both urban and rural areas simultaneously when doing research among African migrants in urban centers. Philpott (1968) focused on the sending of remittances between families of migrants at home and migrant communities abroad. These were new ways of viewing migration that followed Max Gluckman’s creation of the Manchester school in 1949. Despite the justifiable criticism of Mayer’s and Philpott’s work as stereotypical and failing to consider the incorporation of the surrounding structures into their studies of migrants’ ability to act, they contributed a view of migration that is still used today, focusing on migrants themselves, on movement, processes, links, changes and simultaneous processes, and approaching spaces as social places. Thus, within the social sciences a change took place taking the position that ‘… a body of land entirely surrounded by water is no longer an island’ (Manners 1965). By stating this, the Malinowskian approach of going to an isolated island for two or so years and thus approaching the field site as somewhat isolated changed. The world was understood to be interconnected.

Along with this type of research came a call for the creation of a more generalized model of migration, one that not only explained how migration took place, but also why (Schapendonk 2011: 2). In 1966, E. S. Lee proposed to view migration through a bimodal, what today are known as push-and-pull theories. Lee (1966) argued that some migrants left due to so-called plus factors at the destination (pull-factors), whereas others left due to minus factors at the place they occupied. This approach views migration through an economic perspective which assumes that migrants will arrive at their proposed destinations. In other words, it portrays migration as ‘a static point-to-point movement’ (Ernste, Martens and Schapendonk 2012: 509) motivated by economic factors, and moving from A to B between ‘the sender and the host, the origin and the destination’ (Schapendonk 2011: 5).

Analysing young Somalis and the way they move in the world through this classical push-and-pull model featuring a proposed direction from A to B would neglect seeing migration as socially motivated, involving various ways of moving in the world that are far from linear, and not take into account the different contexts people originate from, within and between (Schapendonk 2011: 5). In other words, to understand migration, we need to explore ‘regional differences, historical processes, social ties … and imagined places and spaces’ (Vigh 2009: 93).

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11 See Chapter 7, where I shed light on the mobility of time through the pursuits of gaining time.
12 See Chapter 5, where I discuss the term ‘step by step’ migration.
13 Through his work and his foundation of the Manchester school, Max Gluckman introduced the ethnographic extended-case method, defined as situational analysis, which meant that anthropologists would now arrive at the general through the dynamic particularity of the case, this being the opposite of what had been done so far. Thus, the case study became the first step in ethnographic analysis.
14 See Chapter 4, where I explore the social motivations for migrating out of Somaliland.
15 See Chapter 5, that describes movement in all directions.
One of the ways in which scholars have sought to overcome the push-and-pull approach and depict these movements and ties across borders as simultaneously taking place is through the transnational approach (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1995, Portes 2001, Vertovec 2001, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). In general terms, transnationalism depicts the process of having ‘multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states’ (Vertovec 1999: 447). Transnational scholars have argued that we need to focus on social fields rather than geographical ones when studying migration. We should, according to this approach, explore the multiple relations, processes, identities, networks etc. that develop and take place simultaneously within social fields across various geographical borders when seeking to understand those who migrate.

Exploring the way young Somali women and men move by means of *tahriib* through a transnational perspective\(^{16}\) explains how they develop social spaces, identities and networks simultaneously across spaces after their arrival in their destination country (if one such ever exists). One way has been to examine the so-called diaspora that left their country of origin to live in another country.\(^{17}\) What it does not explain is what happens in the course of the migration route. What sorts of social places are created en route simultaneously with those left behind (Schapendonk 2011: 6)? Secondly, transnational scholars seem to leave out the not so transnational aspect of people moving in the world as illegal migrants (Ferguson 2003, Lucht 2012), what has been called ‘the global disconnect’ (Ferguson 2003: 136). Friedman (2002) discusses this through what he calls ‘the ambivalence of the global’ by outlining and discussing the switch within academia from ‘roots to routes’. Roots reflect the sedenterist approach involving notions of ‘boundness’, that is, one nation, one people. Routes reflect ‘the transnational approach’, in which the displaced is the producer of meaning, with the example of, among others, Malkki (1992, 1995). By breaking down the social construction of ‘globalization’ and ‘hybridism’ within anthropology, Friedman (2002) defines the two concepts as a top-down elite approaches and calls for ethnographic depth by accepting ‘just boundess’ as the real experience of many people.

In this dissertation, I will engage with Friedman’s discussion of ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ by composing a new combination of the two words: ‘routes with roots’. With this phrase, I wish to question whether one cannot define being bound as having a sense of belonging while at the same time being on the move. Can you not be both bound and moving?\(^{18}\) Through the young Somalis I met during fieldwork who were doing *tahriib*, I will explore how the connection between movement, knowledge and practice illuminates movement not necessarily as a displacement or as being ‘uprooted’, but as a natural part of being human. What is interesting is the way my

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\(^{16}\) The transnational approach has also been criticized for being too inconclusive of its use of ‘transnationalism’ (see Portes 2001, Olwig and Sørensen 2002).

\(^{17}\) Defined broadly as the dispersal of a people from its original homeland. Historically, the term “diaspora has been closely associated with the dispersal of the Jewish people.

\(^{18}\) See Ghassan Hage, who also argues against a general division of concepts into dichotomies such as roots and routes. Instead, Hage proposes, through the concept ‘secure base’ (2004: 115-116) to combine the two notions.
interlocutors defined their movement in what Friedman rightly defines as ‘the reality of cosmopolitanism’, namely the unequal ways in which one can move, and how the political structural setting surrounding them works with, on and against them.

The notion of the global disconnect sheds light on the divisions between people in the world. Some travel with a visa, others illegally. Those who belong to the illegal category are defined, in academia as well as among the general public and political context, as falling in between migration (studies) and refugee (studies). The first, not only within academia but for the general public as well, is referred to as voluntary and most often seen as due to economic reasons, while the latter is connected to forced mobility, most often for reasons of a political character (Horst 2006: 33). The term ‘migrant’, however, is an overarching term without any clear definition that is often used to cover various groups of people on the move.¹⁹ Some of my interlocutors are defined by this legal framework, namely those who are not seen as falling under the UNHCR definition of a refugee,²⁰ while others do so. Being defined as an illegal migrant or a refugee en route did not matter for my interlocutors: they travelled along the same routes using the same measures to survive. What did matter was what happens when they reach Europe. Whether you are defined as an economic migrant or seeking refugee status makes a tremendous difference in the way that my interlocutors’ futures progressed.²¹

In this dissertation, I use the word ‘migrant’ to define my interlocutors, as it does not specify why my interlocutors fled.²² Instead, I make use of it to show how people travel along the same routes, experience the same dangers and are all willing to risk their lives to make a new sustainable living for themselves in Europe, whether their country is at war or not. Finally, using terms such as ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ as fixed categories in which one attempts to fit people misses out on the real life-world experiences en route. How are we to classify the Somali woman who flees from a peaceful Somaliland, but who in Libya is captured, raped and tortured by Libyan mafias and whose only way to survive is to continue her journey on towards Europe? Or the man who flee from war-torn Syria to neighboring Turkey, where there is peace, but no means to create a sustainable life who chooses to travel to Europe?

Within anthropology, cultures have been associated with given groups of people. A similar link has been made between nations and peoples, thereby defining refugees as uprooted people in a state of betwixt and between (Malkki 1992, Malkki 1995). The so-called refugee’s relationship with society has been defined by Hannah Arendt (1951: 297) as ‘the abstract

¹⁹ http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/who‐counts‐migrant‐definitions‐and‐their‐consequences.
²⁰ ‘Someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’ (http://www.unrefugees.org/what‐is‐a‐refugee/).
²¹ As a refugee, you are protected under UNHCR’s 1951 Convention (see footnote 20). If you are not accepted as a refugee and your asylum claim is rejected, you will in most cases have to return to your country of origin unless it is a country to which Europe does not return people due to war.
²² https://www.iom.int/key‐migration‐terms. My definition shares traits with the IOM’s definition of a migrant.
nakedness of being human and nothing but human’. Scholars within refugee studies have focused on themes such as the creation of minorities and refugees (Shacknove 1985, Zolberg et al. 1989, Adelman 1999) and the consequences of this (Arendt 1951, Malkki 1995, Ó Neill 2008). Horst (2006: 201-202) argues, through Davis (1993), that those anthropologists who belong to refugee studies have focused mainly on crises of all sorts, whether man-made or natural disasters, research which more often than not is policy-oriented and not very theoretical.23

More recent literature, however, has turned its back on the sedentarist view of one people one nation by including the terms ‘mobility’ and ‘displacement’ in the research (Malkki 1992: 24-25, Jackson 1995: 1-4).24 Malkki (1992: 37-38) points out that more people are living in a ‘generalized condition of homelessness’, meaning that scholars are in need of a new ‘nomadology’, a new sociology of displacement. This approach has been called the mobility turn and focuses on movement itself, that is, on what Schapendonk (2011: 9) calls ‘nomadic metaphysics’, on the way that movement consists of ‘flows, fluids and deterritorialisations’.25 Work has been produced defining more recent times as ‘The Age of Migration’ (Castles and Miller 1993) and has called for a shift from ‘place to mobility and from “place of origin” to “place of destination” to the movements involved in sustaining a livelihood’ (Olwig and Nyberg Sørensen 2002: 2). This may present migration as a recent phenomenon, but as various scholars argue (see for an example Olwig and Nyberg Sørensen 2002, Vigh 2009), then the historical context becomes essential if one is to understand the movements that are taking place today as the product of a world in motion.

The most recent work within the mobility turn has put forward the argument that social processes occur beyond ‘the imaginary of “terrains” as fixed geographical containers’ (Schapendonk 2011: 10). Focusing on mobility within the literature, however, does not mean that mobility is transgressing everywhere and turning everything into movement. Rather, mobility has to be seen in the light of the production and distribution of power. The idea of the nomadism of people in a global world is followed by the idea of people who are involuntarily immobilized (Carling 2002, Urry 2003), vagabonds whose experience of place and time is unbearable (Bauman 1998). As Carling argues (2002: 5), people like the Somalis, who are traditionally from countries of emigration, are today experiencing conflicts of involuntarily immobility due to strict policies of movement. For the Somali people, migration and mobility have been defined as a part of being Somali (Kleist 2004: 2). The close historical relationship between mobility and the Somali people is essential to understand if one is to grasp the young Somalis I have followed for the past four years and their ways of moving in the world. As Aden Yusuf commented to Horst (2006: 8) on the topic of ‘transnational nomads’, ‘Somalis treat the US-Canadian border the same as the Ethiopian-Somali border. If it rains better today, we move there’. These conflicts of wanting to move but being confined to certain geopolitical spaces are what my dissertation is centred around, namely

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23 For examples of theoretical contributions, see Crisp 1999.
24 In addition, current researchers seek to combine ethnographic research of the life-worlds of refugees with larger theoretical questions on how to approach movement as a whole (see Horst 2006).
25 See Chapter 3, where I shed light on the nomadic approach within the social sciences.
the uncertainties that the young Somali women and men I met in Somaliland, Turkey and Greece try to deal with in various ways.

The overall argument is that mobility is diverse – we all travel in different ways (see Chapter 5), we associate different social understandings with different types of movement (see Chapter 3) and we move with different intentions (see Chapter 4). This is how I will approach mobility in this dissertation. Mobility will be treated as ‘an empirical fact’ embedded in ‘the politics of (im)mobility, the experiences attached to it’ and ‘its facilitations and relationality with other (im)mobilities’ (Schapendonk 2011: 12).

The Securitization of Movement in the Landscapes of the Social Sciences

The temporary reintroduction of border controls between Member States is an exceptional possibility explicitly foreseen in and regulated by the Schengen Borders Code, in case of a serious threat to public policy or internal security. The decision was triggered by the unexpected migratory flow which, in the assessment of the Swedish Government, constitutes a serious threat to internal order and public policy. The current situation in Sweden, prima facie, appears to be a situation covered by the rules26 (European Commission 2015).

Sweden is just one European country among many who, since the increase in people on the move, peaking at around sixty million displaced27 in 2015, has reinstated border controls within the otherwise border‐free Schengen zone.28 The movement of people without documents towards Europe and the US from countries such as Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan has been defined as a ‘case of a serious threat to public policy or internal security’, as stated above. Border control has been one way in which countries such as Sweden, Norway, Austria, Germany and Denmark have attempted to stop and control this influx of people entering the European Union. It is within this political landscape that my interlocutors attempt to move both practically and existentially.

Approaching this particular political landscape, which is as much in motion as the young Somali women and men I have been following, is essential. It is crucial to capture the way the movement of certain people as a threat, as representing insecurity for the EU, penetrates into the lives of young migrants on the move, historically as well as in the present. The theoretical body of literature on security can roughly be split into two different approaches. One, known as the Copenhagen school originating in political science, focuses on the way securitization actors (e.g. national or European politicians) socially construct a certain topic, such as migration, as an exceptional threat which needs to be securitized (Karyotis & Patrikios 2010: 43, Léonard 2011: 8). This, more often than not, takes it point of departure in top-down policies drawn up by those with

power within nation states. The other approach is grounded in studies that take their empirical point of departure in the exploration of securitization by focusing on the existential condition of the individual. This approach, with its roots in anthropology and development studies, operates on the micro-scale and often takes its empirical point of departure in focusing on the people among whom the practice of securitization is experienced.

I will start my exploration of the theoretical field of securitization with political science in an attempt to grasp the political landscape of securitization that forms and shapes my interlocutors’ ways of moving in the world in terms of positions, prospects and practices. Secondly, I will examine the anthropological body of literature, which, however, is somewhat scarce. My aim is to build a theoretical bridge between, on the one hand, the way the landscapes of policies are socially constructed, and on the other hand, the way these constructions intertwine, are negotiated with and shape the social realities of the young Somali women and men on the move who are described in this dissertation.

Securitization from Above

Interest in the concept of security arose in the 1980s, with a renewed focus after 9/11/2001 (Wæver 1995: 212-213, Karyotis & Patrikios 2010: 43). Prior to the 1980s, the concept of security had been defined as a thing in itself without a clear definition, according to Wæver.29 Secondly, the concept had hitherto been paired up with that of the nation state in order to view security from a military perspective excluding the security of the individual per se (Wæver 1995: 212-213). The Copenhagen School, headed by Ole Wæver (1995: 13), opposed this approach to security. Rather than viewing security as a thing in itself, they define it as a social construction. This suggests that our role as researchers is not to come up with a more accurate or precise definition of the concept of security. Instead, our focus must be to analyse the way in which something is framed as a security treat through the use of rhetoric, what Wæver defines as ‘a speech act’ (ibid.: 14). This is best done through discourse analysis in which the social construction of language illuminates the way the process of securitization takes place. In other words, ‘the word security is the act’ (Karyotis and Patrikios 2010: 44). This refers to shifting whatever topic is in focus, for example migration, from the normal political arena to a certain political space in which extra means are incorporated to tackle it, as illustrated by the rhetoric of the European Commission in the previous paragraph. The process of securitization thus focuses on a potential threat which must be stopped. Security, Wæver argues, ‘signifies a situation marked by the presence of a security problem and some adequate measure against it. In-security is the situation with a security problem but no measure against it’ (ibid.: 14).

Hence, according to the Copenhagen School, I should explore the geopolitical field of migration, which more often than not is portrayed as a security threat through a discourse

29 Ole Wæver is one of the best known researchers to have worked with the concept of securitization. He is part of the Copenhagen School, which was founded based on research on securitization.
analysis. This implies focusing on the so-called ‘securitization actors’, those who manage successfully to construct an ‘us and them’, a collective gathered group, against the threat of the outsiders (Karyotis & Patrikios 2010: 44). What an analysis like this would lack, however, is any understanding of the way these policies first of all do not necessarily manage to gather a collective ‘us against then’, as shown, for example, by the major public demonstrations in Europe both for and against the policies implemented on migration issues by governments. This also challenges Wæver’s definition of state actors as those who socially construct and define security threats (Buur et al. 2007: 13). Secondly, and more importantly for the argument of this dissertation, an approach starting from the rhetoric of the securitization actors, who more often than not are the political elite (Karyotis & Patrikios 2010: 44), leaves out those on whom these social constructions centre. My focus, in other words, is rather on how socially constructed, often top-down migration and asylum policies are experienced by those whose movements are socially constructed as a threat.

The emerging literature in security studies has attempted to move away from a focus on discourse in securitization processes. Instead, it points to the practice of securitization, that is, the way actors working with and among security implement and work with it (Bigo [2001] 2004, Bigo 2006, Bigo 2014, Leónard 2011). This approach stems from a criticism of the Copenhagen school and its lack of focus on the everyday practices of securitization among actors, whose specific context and experiences are essential if one is to grasp what these practices do and mean (Bigo 2014: 209-211). One example of this methodology is the research conducted by Bigo, who has done extensive work on securitization processes, focusing on topics such as border control by those who implement it, whether national border guards, border guards working in EU agencies and IT specialists working on the electronic databases of border control (2014). He shows how borders are perceived somewhat differently among the various actors just mentioned depending on their positions and local contexts. In other studies, he explores how the field of migration and security includes a ‘community of security professionals’ who compete in defining and socially creating a threat and thus the protection needed (Bigo [2001] 2004: 121). In order to understand the rhetorical connotations of those who move illegally without documents, Bigo argues, we need to explore the various actors in the field of security, their positions and power to define a threat. He explores this by shedding light on the way communism could no longer be used as a socially constructed threat. Instead, the new threat – migration – has been defined as a ‘globalisation of crime and insecurity’ (ibid.: 128), which involves portraying brokers, for example, as a threat which must be securitized. Attempts are made to do this by a diverse ‘community of security professionals’ such as the French Renseignements généraux, the German Bundeskriminalamant or

31 I choose to define those people who make a business out of transporting people illegally across borders as ‘brokers’. Brokers do not, unlike the connotations of the term ‘human smugglers’, define whether the activity in itself is morally right or wrong, but describes solely the normative aspect.
the Dutch police service, who all in one way or the other seek to justify their practices in the context of an era of migration (Bigo 2004: 128-129).

Exploring the practices of some of these actors worldwide within the intelligence services and police organizations, Bigo sheds light on the way these practices stem from, frame and form the rhetorical definition of illegal migrants. Hence, according to Bigo (2004, 2006, 2014), Leónard (2011) and others, the practices of various actors with different hierarchies, contexts and habituses are what socially create the way securitization processes take place. The data collected among young Somali women and men defined as illegal migrants could to some extent be explored by shedding light on security as a practice. Borders are constantly closed by security actors, only for new ones to be used by desperate migrants on the move. The security work of border control or camp facilitation is outsourced to new actors in the security community such as private companies, a practice which again shapes the way these places are run. The contexts through which my interlocutors move, which are constantly in motion due to the practices of the security communities, shape their practices, positions and prospects. What this newer approach lacks, however, is any exploration of how these practices intervene in the everyday lives of those who are socially constructed as the threat. How do the socially created discourses and the practices of these discourses shape, affect and transform the lives of young Somali women and men en route? How are processes of securitization experienced by Somali migrants on a day-to-day level, where a national discourse such as Sweden’s, described at the beginning of this section, is practiced through enforced border control? In my attempt to answer this question in this dissertation, I turn to the anthropologically oriented body of literature.

Security in Anthropological Terms

In 2010, Goldstein called for a ‘critical anthropology of security’, one that would acknowledge ‘the significance of security discourses and practices to the global and local contexts in which cultural anthropology operates’ (p. 487). It is scholars like Goldstein who have inspired me theoretically to approach the life-worlds of my interlocutors anthropologically in a way that would depict how the ‘security moment’, which has been traced back to 9/11 – and what, I argue, has seen a revival through the so-called migrant crisis – frames our interlocutors’ ways of being in the world. Throughout the history of the discipline until quite recently, anthropological work that is conceptualized as centred on security has been very scarce (Goldstein 2010: 488, Pedersen and Holbraad 2013: 3), despite exceptions such as Feldman 2003, 2005, Bubandt (2005), Buur et al. 2007, Gusterson and Besteman 2009, Goldstein 2010, and Pedersen and Holbraad 2013. That said, the anthropological discipline has explored issues that centre on the theme of security without conceptualizing it as such by, for example, examining the way people understand and cope with social and political uncertainties and difficulties. In addition, more specific topics has been examined, for example, how the movement of people has been turned into a business that seeks to securitize and manage it at different scales (Duffield 2007, Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sørensen
vigilantism (Pratten 2008, 2008, Buur 2008) and work on conflicts between nations and/or the way conflicts take place among people within these landscapes who are defined as insecurities (Vigh 2006). Some, such as Pedersen and Holbraad (2013: 5), trace this tendency back to the functionalist approach, arguing how Malinowski, through psychological notions of security, Radcliffe-Brown, by defining it as ‘a political strategy’ etc., have worked around notions of security. In this way, ‘security lies at the heart of the anthropological discipline as a whole’ (ibid.: 4). Furthermore, a range of recent work on security focusing on the way migrants are conceptualized as security threats, how policies are drawn up based on such assumptions and the experiences of those affected (Andersson 2014, Albahari 2015, Besteman 2016, Miller 2016) must be understood in the light of the discipline’s history and as a continuation of an anthropological enquiry rather than appropriation of a political scientific concept. Goldstein (2010: 492) criticizes the discipline for previously having defined security as what also stimulated my skepticism when outlining the Copenhagen school’s approach, namely as a stated-focused, top-down concept that lacks any inclusion of actors outside the framework of the state.

The question then becomes how to define security as a theoretical concept in an anthropological spirit that portrays the way it is practiced on different scales? My approach to security is inspired by the idea of security as a sense of achievement of something that seeks to eliminate the opposite, namely insecurity, such as the physical presence of illegal migrants or the lack of food within families in Somaliland, and as created, made use of and socially understood by people representing the state, as well as by ‘actors and groups outside of the state and its official institutions’ (Goldstein 2010: 492-493). In addition, I follow Bubandt (2005: 277) in his conceptualization of ‘vernacular security’, which he uses to compare the practices of security on different scales, referring to the global, the national and the local, as previously mentioned. Security can be compared, not as a universal thing out there to achieve, but in the various, local experiences and use made of it. The fight to make up what is and should be defined as security is a fight for power. As Buur et al. argue (2007: 12), ‘Security is about real questions of safety and violence, but it is also a way of representing particular problems in a manner that makes them exceptional and a question of survival’. Security, in other words, is about a physical condition as well as a political construction surrounded by struggles over its definition. Avoiding dichotomizing security as anthropological versus non-anthropological, my goal is to combine the way security as a constructed concept frames many scales with how it is made use of by various actors. I add an extra scale to the picture by arguing that the ways security is experienced physically and constructed socio-culturally and politically result in uncertainties in the form of an existential condition of hope, fear and angst, which I capture through how it is socially expressed and attempt managed.
Uncertainty: between Structure and Practice, the Collective and the Individual

18th July 2014. I call the police again. I am put through to a female police officer, who tells me that Ubax will be staying in prison for three months because she was arrested at the airport, where she was trying to leave without a paper, illegally, without travel documents and with a fake passport. She has no paper to stay in Greece, the female officer adds. She goes on to tell me that in Greece, the law says that they can keep them [referring to people without legal documents such as Ubax] for up to eighteen months. She goes on to explain that now they will try to locate the embassy and get a passport from the embassy to send them home. ‘If we can, we will deport them’, she says. ‘If after three months, we have not got the passport, we will free them’, she explains. I ask if they can hire a lawyer? She tells me that they can hire a lawyer. ‘Everyone has a right to hire a lawyer’, she says. Ubax calls me later this day from the jail. She has already been given the news. I repeat what the police officer said. She is crying.

My interlocutors’ lives were characterized by uncertainty. They never knew what the next hour would bring, let alone if or when they could move forward. Ubax had just received the news that the police wanted to deport her and, if not, imprison her for three months. She had been on her way out of Greece when she was caught by the police. The question then becomes how to approach uncertainty as a context (Vigh 2006) which saturates the life-worlds of our interlocutors? How do we explain the lived experience of uncertainty among people in vulnerable conditions?

In the anthropological field, attempts to depict lived human experiences have varied. What characterized some earlier work was a focus on the functions of structures in upholding social relations (Durkheim 1895, Radcliffe-Brown 1922). Hence, the experiences of change or uncertainty were left out of much early social science in the pursuit of theoretical certainty (Niehaus 2013: 651). Other anthropological work has focused on misfortune, crisis and conflict (Evans-Pritchard 1937, Turner 1957, Geertz 1973) by directing attention towards collective representations, symbols and rituals as ways of explaining the uncertainty embedded in human interaction. These early anthropological contributions have been criticized for not including deviations and the pragmatic agency of the individual, and thus the issue of how human beings cope when inhabiting life-worlds characterized by constant uncertainty.

More recent academic work has continued to centre around uncertainty, misfortune and risk (Whyte [1997] 2004, Beck 1999, 2000, Douglas [1985] 2010, [1992] 2003, Steffen et al. 2005, Niehaus 2013, Vigh 2008, 2011, Haram and Yamba 2009, Cooper and Pratten 2015, Hasselberg 2016). Taking the criticism of earlier scholars into consideration, some recent work has attempted to erase the gap between structure and the individual by calling for an anthropology of uncertainty that is based on a more pragmatic approach. One of the leading scholars to adopt this approach is Susan Whyte. Since the 1960s, Whyte has worked among Ugandans, focusing on how they experience and deal with uncertainty, such as being infected with HIV or experiencing sudden illnesses or deaths (Whyte 1990a, [1997] 2004, Whyte and Siu 2015). In her book Questing
Misfortune, Whyte ([1997] 2004: 2-3) analyses the story of Namugwere, a mother and a wife, who has fallen ill as a victim of sorcery by shedding light on three themes concerning this experience:

1) Inquire and uncertainty (why is this happening?).

2) Response to uncertainty (action and evaluation of consequences).

3) ‘1+2’s link to broader social and moral concerns that ‘shape and are shaped by them’.

What Whyte (2004: 226) seems to be suggesting is that we need to focus not on the content of uncertainty itself, but rather on how our interlocutors question and respond to the experiences of uncertainty in the light of the broader social and moral worlds in which they act. Whyte’s call for a pragmatic approach to understanding the human engagement with uncertainty is inspired by John Dewey (Whyte [1997] 2004, Whyte 2009, Whyte and Sui 2015), who argues that uncertainty is a fundamental aspect of human existence, not an existential fear, but something which makes the human being respond and act. As interpreted by Whyte ([1997] 2004: 19), then, ‘Uncertainty has to do with the outcomes of events and actions. It is not a vague existential angst, but an aspect of specific experience and practice’. Whyte, along with Dewey, applies the pragmatic approach as a source of criticism of the work of those anthropological scholars mentioned earlier, such as Geertz, which she ([1997] 2004: 20) classifies as representing ‘the spectator theory’: ‘Applied to ethnography, his [Dewey’s] pragmatic approach requires that we see people as actors trying to alleviate suffering [rather] than as spectators applying cultural, ritual, or religious truths’.

Analysing Ubax’s experience of being in a constantly uncertain situation from this pragmatic approach would mean first exploring her query about her chances of making it out of prison at that particular time. Secondly, her response to this uncertainty should be stressed, which in Ubax’s case was to get hold of a lawyer. Thirdly, I would shed light on the way her response to this uncertainty in taking a hazardous journey by using a route along which many people have lost their lives relates to the social and moral world she inhabits.

Though Whyte’s work and the whole pragmatic approach has been very influential within anthropology (Haram and Yamba 2009, Cooper and Pratten 2015), critics have argued that there is a need to link individualized human beings and their attempts to managed through uncertainty with the overall structural and economic composition of society (Steffen, Jenkins and Jessen and 2005: 10). Examples of such studies do exist. Hasselberg (2016), for one, sheds light on the persistence of the uncertainty surrounding the deportability of people residing in the UK. She explores the structural and political contexts of her interlocutors by studying coping strategies and endurance. It is this combination of the structural (securitization processes) and the individual (young Somalis such as Ubax’s practices on *tahrib*) that I seek to capture in this dissertation when depicting, analysing and discussing uncertainty.
This section has dealt with how the analytical term ‘uncertainty’ should be approached within anthropology. In the following, I seek to define uncertainty as a concept that is often used along with other concepts such as insecurity, risk, doubt etc. (Whyte and Siu 2015: 19). Hence, when we talk about uncertainty, what are we referring to? And what connotations are associated with it?

The Looping Effect of Uncertainty

The choice to frame this dissertation by means of the analytical term ‘uncertainty’ stems from the countless hours I spent with people like Ubax and Habaane, a young Somali man I met while conducting fieldwork in Turkey.32 When I asked Habaane to act as my research assistant during my time in Turkey, he declined, as he was constantly uncertain when he would be travelling further on towards Greece. Whenever we finished a meeting, we would agree on a date and time to see each other again, but always with the understanding that, if he did not show up, it was because he was attempting to leave Turkey. He had the same agreement with his wife on Skype. He did not know whether he would succeed in leaving or whether he would come back, if he would survive or lose his life along the way. Uncertainty thus becomes ‘a state of mind, and minding’, as Whyte argues (2015: 19), a reference to a lack of precise knowledge and an inability to foresee the results or consequences of future events. This is how I will use the term ‘uncertainty’. Uncertainty as a state of mind and minding is the result of a social condition, what Whyte ([1997] 2004, 2009, 2015) defines as ‘insecurity’. Insecurity, Whyte argues (2009: 214), ‘refers to a lack of protection from danger, weakness in the social arrangements that provide some kind of safety net when adversity strikes’. When venturing out on this journey, defined as tahriib, the journey into the unknown, it was not to obtain certainty about the outcome. Only God knew that, my interlocutors would explain. Rather, what Habaane, along with his fellow travelers, were trying to obtain was a form of security (Whyte 2009: 214, Whyte 2015: 19), security as a social condition in the form of a job, a good education, a provider etc. The search for security was constant and depended on other people, relations or events, what Whyte (2009: 214, 2015: 19) has called ‘contingency’. Habaane depended on relations throughout his entire journey, from when he left Somaliland, where he needed financial support, to the work of brokers throughout the journey to the asylum system when he arrived in Europe.33 Contingency is thus an existential condition intertwined with uncertainty and insecurity.

Often, the connotations of the word ‘uncertainty’ are negative. It has been used to describe what I have noted above, namely a lack of the knowledge and ability to foresee future events (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 2). More recent anthropological work, however, proposes to discuss uncertainty as a productive and positive mode of existence (Cooper and Pratten 2015). In their edited volume Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa, Cooper and Pratten (2015: 3) seek to

32 See Chapter 1, where I introduce Habaane.
33 Habaane made it to Europe, where he is currently seeking asylum.
show how ‘uncertainty about issues that matter (diagnosis, investments, plans) spur both imaginations and practices’. Following this approach, uncertainty becomes ‘a structure of feeling – the lived experience of a pervasive sense of vulnerability, anxiety, hope, and possibility mediated through material assemblages that underpin, saturate, and sustain everyday life’ (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 1). Hence, while acknowledging the vulnerability and anxiety that uncertainty produces, this approach illuminates the pragmatism, possibility and hope it also creates. Whyte ([1997] 2004: 24) captures this approach through the term ‘subjunctivity’. When exploring how and why the Nyole among whom Whyte studied try out various ideas (e.g. making use of various healers during sickness, while never certain whether they will heal them or not), she defines it as:

that mode of a verb which represents an attitude toward, or concern with the denoted action or state not as fact but as something either simply entertained in thought, contingent, possible … or emotionally viewed as a matter of doubt, desire, will, etc. (Whyte [1997] 2004: 24).

Hence, subjunctivity is ‘an attitude informing people’s responses to affliction’ (ibid.), an individual and social mode which speaks to pragmatism, possibility and hope’ (ibid.). Ubax and Habaane, like Whyte’s interlocutors, did try out various ideas or options. They had more than one attempt behind them to leave Turkey, and so they continued to try out various ideas with the hope that they would make it one day. Hence, uncertainty was to some extent a way of embracing uncertainty as ‘a mode of existence and social practice’ (Di Nunzio 2015: 155). Uncertainty as an existential condition was both what created the difficult situation they were in and at the same time what fostered their hope. It was like a vicious circle with no end. Hence, approaching my interlocutors’ journey into the unknown by using this approach will allow me to show how uncertainty and its many forms are experienced as both productive and counterproductive in the landscape of tahriib.

Chapter Outline

But a book is like a river, not in the simple sense of water flowing by, but because the intellectual context, like the reader, changes steadily (Bateson 1987: x).

Conducting fieldwork and creating this dissertation was, to make use of Bateson’s metaphor, like swimming in a river. Starting in an office in Copenhagen in February 2013, I am now ending it, almost four years later, in that same office, with a book of written text confined to its pages, but whose content keeps floating, as thoughts, political frameworks and physical movements prove challenging. In some ways it feels like swimming upstream as the world I have been trying to capture does not stop. Instead it ‘changes steadily’ (Bateson 1987: x), as do the intellectual minds of those who will read this dissertation.
Throughout the following chapters, I explore the way that young Somalis move by doing *tahriib*, a term that refers both to the geopolitical framework surrounding them, which defines them as insecurities and their movement as illegal, and the uncertainty they experience through an unknown landscape characterized by themes such as the construction of hope, the practice of moving, the sharing of information and attempts to gain time. It is, in other words, the frictions that take place between the very experience-near and the geopolitical context and vice versa that this dissertation explores. In this Introduction, I have conceptualized the themes in order to produce a theoretical landscape of illegal migration, a landscape that speaks to the migration literature, securitization studies and anthropological work on uncertainty. By combining these three academic directions, I argue that we obtain a more thorough view of the life-worlds of my interlocutors and the way they move in the world today. The rather phenomenological approach that frames the way I go about theorizing when conceptualizing *tahriib* is a call to the anthropological literature to depict the lives of our interlocutors as they are experienced – very near, ever present, bodily, and through intersubjectivities such as that described through my interlocutor’s translation of *tahriib* – as illegal (surroundings) and uncertain (existential).

In Chapter 1, I shift my focus from theory to methodology, though, as I argue, it is through our methods and thoughts that we gain valuable analytical insights. I present the field sites of my research by describing how I snowballed my way from field to field, person to person. My main interlocutors are presented here, as they play a key role throughout the dissertation. I start in Somaliland, move to Turkey and end up in Greece. I end this chapter by depicting the roles I played, the expectations that were created of me and the many ethical questions that working in a field like this raise. As this study is quite innovative in the way I have moved from sending, through transit towards a so-called receiving country, I have given this chapter the space I think it deserves. One of the main insights from it has been to describe how the longer people – whether young Somalis or myself, the anthropologist – stay en route, the more blurred become the boundaries of what and who is illegal (Reeves 2013).

Leaving behind the theoretical and methodological framework, Chapter 2 describes the historical, political and legal contexts that shape the way young Somalis en route are conceptualized and approached by the EU. The chapter focuses first, on Turkey’s previous and present relationships with East Africa, secondly the relationship between Turkey, Greece and the EU, and finally, the way the current legal framework is set up to control flows of movement by taking a thorough look at the Dublin Regulation. The argument is that my interlocutors experience enforced immobility within a geographical arrangement of borders and regulations, whereas the historical legacy of slaves depicts the reverse, namely enforced mobility. Comparing the past with the present shows how mobility has been and still is a means to gain power, but at the same time, it demonstrates how power shapes, but does not control, the movements of young Somali women and men en route.

From exploring the geopolitical and historical context, in Chapter 3 I turn to an account of the social understandings of movement within Somali society. By breaking down mobility into four ways of moving in the world in Somali society, I set out the argument that to
depict the way young Somalis understand and practice movement today, we need to see it as a result of and a correlation with past and current forms of movement. I explore the nomadic heritage as a family-oriented form of movement and *suudal* as a move conducted by an individual away from something. *Taber* [*tacabir*] is defined as (most often) being a move by a man to seek more prosperous sources of income or education, as is *tahriib*, the most present form of movement, though defined in the European political framework as illegal and by my interlocutors as uncertain. I show how mobility in all its forms always has been and still is a way to secure oneself and one’s social surroundings. Chapter 3 thus challenges the historical, political and legal framework illuminated in Chapter 2, as it demonstrates that mobility is diverse and fragmented in many separate, but also intertwined forms. In addition, the chapter shows how, in many societies, mobility can be contrasted with the conceptualization of movement as a security threat; in fact, it is quite the opposite.

The way my interlocutors socially understand and practice movement has to be seen in light of the context they grow up in and how being young is experienced. In Chapter 4, I examine the context of youth in Somaliland. I analyse the constraints felt about living in a rather gerontocratic society, a place where social responsibilities can at times seem overwhelmingly large in terms of the network of family and clan that acts as a safety network during upbringing and that now, as young people get older, expects them to contribute in return. The lack of educational qualifications, job opportunities and social visibility lead, I argue, to the feeling of moving in the wrong direction. The experiences of déclassement and a ‘cut of hope’ (Mains 2012: 4) lead my interlocutors to create hope outside the traditional institutions of opportunities. In this way, the hope of doing *tahriib* becomes a way to manage existential uncertainty. The argument is that, in order to socially become, young Somali women and men need to ‘walk the road of hope’, as one of them explained. Socially becoming depends on hard work and luck and is conceptualized through what I call social fantasies and social hope, the former referring to an open-ended fantasy, the latter to a more conceptualized and framed hope.

The next step in practicing hope is venturing out on *tahriib*. In Chapter 5, I break down this form of practice into the many layers it consists of. My main argument is that *tahriib*, like any form of movement, consists of steps taken in multiple directions, steps we need to break down in order to understand mobility in its fragmented and diverse forms. Taking seriously the very bodily experiences that my interlocutors’ life-worlds consist of through the themes of tactics, risk, illegality and death, I argue how, by scaling down and exploring walking itself in the form of *tahriib*, we can understand the embodied experiences of the geopolitical sites that surround them. In this way, I illustrate how it is people that make places by following the centre of their movements. By adopting a phenomenological approach, this chapter takes further this dissertation’s aim to start from a macro-perspective, breaking down and zooming in on the experienced uncertainties of mobility the further we move through it. Whereas Chapter 3 focused on four different social understandings and ways of moving within the Somali society, Chapter 5 zooms in even more on mobility by exploring one of these forms of moving – *tahriib* – by demonstrating its diversity.
Chapter 6 explores an even smaller fraction of the orientation and of attempts to manage uncertainty en route by focusing on the sharing of information. The chapter takes its point of departure in ‘in‐formation’, that is, information as a process, a creation and a sharing. I argue that the sharing of information in its making is a way to grasp the many forms of risk that are ever‐present when Somalis venture out on tahriib. By following young Somalis in Somaliland, the chapter focuses on the way in which knowledge components are collected and created into potentialities that set out the basis for action. The processes of information‐gathering take place in different ways, some by increasing the hope of making it to Europe alive, others for whom the fear of dying overtakes the hope of surviving. Shifting the focus to Somalis en route, the chapter shows how information in the form of rumours is used as a way to convey meaning to something that otherwise seems meaningless. It also illustrates the way this fraction of controlling uncertainty through the dissemination of information intensifies the further migrants move – the risks of imprisonment, violent attacks or even death increase. This chapter concludes that the sharing of information takes place in a social landscape of unequal relations that – in a general, geopolitical context – illustrate a struggle for power.

Chapter 7 continues at the micro‐level by zooming in on something that the sharing of information is meant to prevent, namely the risk of what young Somalis frame as ‘losing time’. By focusing on the connection between time, speed and direction, this chapter adds a point to what social science says about time, something which seems to be missing – a sense of direction. I argue throughout the chapter that my interlocutors try to change location in order to gain time. The chapter sheds light on this argument by making use of the term homo (a human being, the urge to mirror your movements in relation to your surroundings), combined with ‘velocity’ (the rate at which an object moves). The resulting term, ‘homo‐velocity’, depicts, through Habaane, Jabriil and others, how velocity becomes a way to measure time, how a low velocity is not necessarily equal to non‐movement and can be preferred instead of moving in the wrong direction, how the tempo by which you migrate affects your feelings of progress, and how it centres on God and luck.

Ending this dissertation, Chapter 8 sums up the contributions of this dissertation. By arguing how, throughout the chapters, I have zoomed in on the different layers of friction that moving in a world that defines young Somalis as illegal are experienced by my interlocutors as unknown uncertainties, I show how frictions within the scales of securitization processes continue as my interlocutors start to leave Greece and move further into Europe. This frames the main argument of this dissertation, as it portrays the way my interlocutors keep moving, just as their fathers and forefathers did, but in a different world.
Chapter 1. Field Sites, Acquaintances and Methodology

Before venturing out on fieldwork for this current project, I conducted ten months of fieldwork in the Somali Regional State as an intern for a Danish NGO working with and among Somali refugees. Conducting fieldwork in an NGO, but also in three refugee camps in the region, I acquired an understanding of why Somalis flee Somalia, their conditions in the neighbouring countries, the hopes for the future of young people born in the camps and the way states, NGOs and Somalis categorized as refugees interact legally and practically. The landscapes (geographically, socially and politically) which I, along with my interlocutors (though in very different ways and under other conditions), moved across, along and within for this current project were Somaliland (and for some of my interlocutors Somalia), Turkey and Greece. In all, I conducted eleven months of fieldwork divided between these three landscapes. Since returning to Denmark, I have kept in touch with my key interlocutors either by phone, through the internet or in person as they moved out of Greece and further into Europe.

While conducting fieldwork, I made use of research assistants to set up meetings, for endless discussions on the topic and a variety of other themes and to translate interviews conducted in Somali. I made use of research assistants throughout my fieldwork who were either wanting to do tahriib, were doing tahriib or were at the age and among people who did. This allowed me to obtain unique access to this community of young people doing tahriib. This was characterized by the uncertainty of never knowing who would be present the following day. My research assistants en route would do tahriib whenever the opportunity arose, which meant that I would often have to find new assistants to help me. This taught me something about the existential feeling of uncertainty, of not knowing which direction I would be going in, with whom I would be, or where.

Conducting fieldwork in precarious landscapes made the traditional methods of interviewing interlocutors with dictaphones difficult. Many were in very sensitive and peculiar situations that made them extremely nervous when conducting interviews that would be recorded. I therefore choose to do the majority of my interviews en route (not in Somaliland) without the use of a dictaphone, as it made my interlocutors extremely nervous and uncomfortable. I did make use of semi-structured interviews and participant observation spending my days on Somali istaag [the street where Somalis stand], in the houses my interlocutors were occupying, at restaurants etc.
Following Life in the Shadows

The constellation of the comparative project *Invisible Lives*, of which this dissertation is a part, has been an attempt to add a more holistic understanding of life as a young African who ventures out on hazardous and dangerous journeys because life at home is considered unbearable and equivalent to what many define as a social death. The majority of studies have either focused on why people depart or the processes that take place when they arrive through terms such as ‘immigration’ and ‘assimilation studies’, as discussed in the Introduction. Few studies have managed to focus on what people move away from, through and towards (Schipendonk 2011, Lucht 2012, De León 2015, Steinberg 2015, Geeldoon 2016). Following *Invisible Lives* – invisible in the sense of both the legal and political framework and the more social and relational aspects of the term – does not mean studying invisibility as legality versus illegality, security versus insecurity, certainty versus uncertainty. Rather, this research depicts the way these oppositions become mixed and are experienced interchangeably (Schipendonk 2011: 13) en route for Somali migrants.

Embarking on such fieldwork raises important questions regarding the methods to use when following life in the shadows. Given the different geographical locations upon which this project is founded, namely Somaliland, Turkey and Greece, and the many more that I ended up conducting fieldwork in as I kept in contact with many of my interlocutors, this project could resemble what George Marcus in 1995 called ‘multi-sited ethnography’. Marcus’s analytical framework was a reaction to previous anthropological ways of conducting fieldwork, namely by studying sites as isolated units, as our anthropological forefather, the British-Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski did, who conducted several years of fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands ([1922] 2002). By referring to multi-sited ethnography, Marcus was proposing to follow people, things, metaphors, information, conflicts etc. between different geographical sites. Critical voices such as Hage (2005: 467) and Hansen (2006: 41) have argued that following the thing is not a new phenomenon as such. Malinowski ([1922] 2002), though he conducted fieldwork by settling down in what appeared at that time to be an isolated site, followed the trading system of the Kula and could thus be said to have carried out what Marcus has defined as multi-sited ethnography. Despite this well-founded criticism, Marcus’s goal to understand the way that so-called world systems function in a world that does not consist of isolated places has contributed tremendously to the anthropological field by shedding light on how we as anthropologists could conduct fieldwork in a world that is connected and constantly in motion.

Shifting between places instead of staying in one or two locations, however, gives one less time to explore the way Somalis relate to their surroundings, whether geographical, political or social. Scholars such as Ghassan Hage have been very critical of the concept of a multi-sited ethnography. Hage, for example, draws attention to what he defines as geographical

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34 Four researchers (Henrik Vigh, Hans Lucht, Line Richter and myself) have been part of the ‘Invisible Lives’ project in following four different nationalities through four different sending, transit and receiving countries. See http://anthropology.ku.dk/research/research-projects/current-projects/invisible_lives/.
discontinuities. He argues how, as more and more fieldwork is carried out, it forces the anthropologist ‘to be either a thick ethnographer or no ethnographer at all. It was not ethnography, but the relation to the field itself, which was getting thicker’. In other words, Hage calls for a non-multi-sited ethnography, as the anthropologist will otherwise not be able to conduct thick ethnography. I disagree: the way I conducted fieldwork not only involved adopting a methodological approach to obtain as thick an ethnography as possible, but was a way to understand analytically the life-worlds of my interlocutors. The young Somali women and men I met en route more often than not had a very superficial knowledge of the geographical landscape in which they moved. Being forced to stay on the margins of society as invisible as possible, they rarely knew their way around. In Turkey I got lost several times with my female interlocutors, as they rarely moved far, I met a young Somali man who did not know the name of the neighbourhood he was living in, and the majority of my interlocutors in Greece knew less of the area than they had done in Turkey, as the risks of imprisonment or violent attacks that came from moving around were too high. Some stayed only weeks or months en route, which also limited their knowledge. Moving like they did taught me the embodied experiences of living in the shadows. This, I argue, does not produce a non-thick ethnography – quite the opposite. My relationship to the social field of my interlocutors became ‘thicker and stickier’ (Hage 2005: 465) the longer I was en route with them. At the same time, time do not always equal thickness when it comes to sociality. Going through my field notes, I realized that some of those who had taken up the most of my data and memory were not necessarily those I had spent the longest time with. Rather, the type of fieldwork I conducted with them depended on the experiences we had had together.

We may argue, then, that a multi-sited ethnography is ‘about shifting perspectives, and exploring positions that are somehow connected, related to a certain issue or problem’ (Hansen 2006: 41), rather than focusing solely on geographical sites. This gives this approach a bit more depth than Hage grants it. The question, however, becomes how to depict the way uncertainties are managed among young Somalis en route, who, as Hansen (2006: 48) rightly states, originate from a society in which belonging is a matter of clan membership and not just geography.

Scholars have attempted to depict such movements through concepts such as yo-yo fieldwork, which takes place over an extensive period of time with various other activities in between bouts of fieldwork (Wulff 2002). This is multi-local fieldwork as defined by Hannerz (2001: 11): ‘one field that in itself consists of a network of localities’, combined with a translocal focus on the flows of trajectories through places and not between them (Schapendonk 2011: 52). Schapendonk argues that following in this way becomes essential, as this sort of fieldwork is conceptualized as lacking a certain system or structure, in opposition to the structure of the Invisible Lives project. ‘Following’ was my key word when conducting fieldwork. The structure of the dissertation illuminates the way I have followed movement, people and the management of uncertainties as one field site. Instead of dividing the dissertation into sites in the geographical sense of the word, as other scholars have done successfully (Lucht 2012), I follow social
understandings, hope(s), movements, information and the time of young Somalis en route, who, through these sites, relate, react to and manage the various fields that were constructed around different forms of securitization processes. In this way, the site is a movement, but the movement is substantiated through the people who construct it.

Uncertain Fields

This dissertation takes its point of departure in an emic term – *tahriib* – which allows me to describe social processes among young Somali women and men. *Tahriib* describes a search for a sustainable life away from a context that in general is experienced as uncertain. By following the movement of those you will meet throughout this dissertation, a movement that is characterized as *tahriib* (the journey into the unknown and illegal migration), I explore the way securitization initiatives that close borders to those without legal documents turn into experiences of uncertainty.

I take my point of departure in three geographical spaces in which the social processes of surviving and becoming someone take place. Originally in this project, these three geopolitical spaces were divided into three parts: Somaliland as the country of origin, Turkey defined as a transit country, and Greece as the destination country. Departing on this journey myself, reality quickly hit me. There was never any clear sense of direction, as movement went in all directions. So-called transit countries sometimes ended up being the final destination, while destination countries were those my interlocutors passed through as quickly as they could. Nothing was ever certain, either for them or for me. Though I chose to travel to these three countries and in this way constructed a journey, I travelled along these paths as part of the network constructed from footsteps taken long before me, along with me and after me. I walked where they walked. The construction of the narratives of the young Somalis I met in these three spaces, which I will introduce in the following section and throughout the dissertation, is realized based on processes, flows and streams of people, social understandings, money etc., that happened relatively independently of my presence. They would take place whether I was present or not. In this way, my field sites became movements, but movements substantiated through those who linked it together.

The map below shows the flows of people migrating towards Europe, the intention being to provide an overview of the two main routes from Somaliland towards Europe. One runs from Somaliland through Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya and across the Mediterranean Sea. This route was too dangerous for me to follow, but I choose to illustrate sections of it in my dissertation, as it was a route that many of my interlocutors from Somaliland had made use of. The other route, which is the one I have chosen to depict, runs from Somaliland through Somalia, Iran, Turkey to Greece. The majority of my interlocutors chose to travel further into Europe, social, political and geographical journeys which I will not have the space to explore in this dissertation.
What the map does not show is the way that movement is never straightforward from A to B. Instead, my interlocutors experienced being sent back from various borders along the journey, where they could be stuck for long periods of time, some returning to Somaliland, while others tragically lost their lives along the way.

In the following, I will present the three spaces from which my interlocutors moved, starting with Somaliland, moving on to Turkey, and ending up in Greece. However, my

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35 Figure 1: Map of migration routes.
interlocutors seldom moved linearly.\textsuperscript{37} As I moved throughout my journey, I snowballed my own way forward, from person to person. The following is a demonstration of this. I will present my key interlocutors as I move my way through the landscapes, because my dissertation is centred on these particular individuals.

**Somaliland: Encounters with its History, current Status and People**

Somalia is mostly portrayed in the media as a country of war, hunger, piracy and terrorists. For the Western world, it has become symbolic of a failed state due to its historical and current condition. In many ways, it is portrayed as a security threat, with ongoing fighting between the government and so-called terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab.\textsuperscript{38} The majority of Somalis I met during fieldwork in Turkey and Greece who came from Somalia\textsuperscript{39} had fled due to the fighting between the government and Al Shabaab or the actions of one of these two opposing forces. Many Somalis, like other migrants from war-torn countries, are contextualized in this light when fleeing. They are more often than not viewed as potential security threats in Europe and the US, whose presence in a foreign territory create a double sense of fear. One example illustrating this form of the transgression of fear was when a Syrian passport was found near one of the men behind the seven violent attacks in various locations of Paris on 13\textsuperscript{th} November 2015, when many innocent people lost their lives.\textsuperscript{40} After these horrible attacks, Syrians were seen as security threats. In the American media and among US politicians, Syrians entering America were viewed with a sense of fear as posing potential security threats:

> In the U.S., pressure has been growing to stop accepting refugees from Syria after French authorities revealed that a Syrian passport was found close to the body of one of the eight terrorists killed during the attacks in Paris. Several dozen U.S. governors have refused to accept refugees in their states.\textsuperscript{41}

Hence, countries such as Somaliland, Somalia and Syria are globally positioned as security threats, and when people flee from such countries, a double effect of fear arises which affects the way measures are taken to securitize Europe and the US, measures which had very real effects on the way young Somalis’ futures unfolded.

The current state of Somalia must be viewed in a historical light. When the Scramble for Africa took place in 1884-1885, when the USA and thirteen European countries met in Berlin to

\textsuperscript{36} The historical and political contextualization is explored in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{37} See Chapter 5, where I describe the practice of moving as an illegal migrant towards Europe.

\textsuperscript{38} For an extended analysis of Al Shabaab and its uprising in Somalia, see *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012* by Stig Jarle Hansen.

\textsuperscript{39} Though I mainly focus on Somalis from Somaliland, as this is where I conducted my fieldwork, I still seek to incorporate the experiences of some of the young Somali women and men I met en route who originate from Somalia.

\textsuperscript{40} [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11995246/Paris-shooting-What-we-know-so-far.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11995246/Paris-shooting-What-we-know-so-far.html)

colonialize and divide the African continent between them.\footnote{http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/library/library_exhibitions/schoolresources/exploration/scramble_for_africa/. For more, see Thomas Pakenham’s book (2001), \textit{The Scramble For Africa}.} Somalia was no exception. In 1839, the British started showing an interest in the area due to its location in what was at the time known as the northwestern part of Somalia. Northwest Somalia (what today is known as Somaliland) is located close to Aden, which the British had occupied at the same time, as travelling through Aden was a shorter way to reach India. Somaliland was more or less the only supplier of meat in the region, and thus it became a strategically important location for the British to control (Lewis [1965] 2002: 40). Besides Britain, Somalia was occupied by three other colonial powers, namely France, Italy and Ethiopia. When the era of colonization ended in Somalia, it resulted in what my interlocutors describe as ‘Big Somalia’, referring to the reconstruction of Somalia’s five geographical territories: Djibuti, formerly colonized by the French, Somaliland, a former British colony,\footnote{They became independent on 26\textsuperscript{th} June 1960. This date, along with 18\textsuperscript{th} May 1991, the day Somaliland became independent form Somalia, are the two dates one must know when staying in Somaliland.} the Somali Regional State, which still belongs to Ethiopia, the Northern Frontier District, which is still a part of Kenya, and the remainder of Somalia, formerly occupied by the Italians.\footnote{For a more detailed description, see \textit{A Modern History of the Somalis} by I. M. Lewis ([1965] 2002).} From 1\textsuperscript{st} to 7\textsuperscript{th} July 1960, Adan Abdulle Isman acted as the provisional president of Somalia, before Jama Abdillahi Qalib was elected as the country’s leader (Lewis [1965] 2002: 164). In 1969, Mohamed Siyad Barré took over the leadership through a military coup, his rule lasting until 1991, when civil war broke out (Lewis: 2002). The civil war has so far caused around 770,000 Somali people to flee their country and in one way or the other displaced every Somali in the Horn of Africa (Hansen 2006: 20).

In 1991 Somaliland, formerly known as Northwest Somalia, declared its independence from the rest of Somalia. The Republic of Somaliland adopted its own constitution and political system and functions today as an independent state, though it is not internationally recognized (Hansen 2006: 9).\footnote{For literature on the rebuilding of Somaliland and the construction of the state, see example (Höhne 2006, Hagmann and Höhne 2008, Jhazbhay 2008).} The map below shows the geopolitical division between Somaliland and the rest of Somalia:
The Scramble for Africa, the many years of war and the various interests in Somalia (internally as well as externally) have all had a role to play in the problems and successes that Somalia and Somaliland experience today. Somalia is still a country at war, while Somaliland is experiencing relative peace, but that is all Somaliland has, my interlocutors often explain. The history of Somalia also shaped the way my research took place, as my ability to conduct fieldwork in Somalia was limited due to the instability and insecurity that characterize the country. Thus, Somaliland became my field of study.

46 Figure 2. Geopolitical division between Somaliland and Somalia.
In 2009, the estimated population of Somaliland was 3.85 million. It is frequently remarked that half the population is living outside of Somaliland (Hansen 2006: 21). Data on Somaliland are generally scarce, as statistics refer to the whole of Somalia because Somaliland is not internationally recognized, and due to the civil war Somalia has been too dangerous for researchers to enter. The data that are available indicate that Somalia as a whole suffers from a high poverty rate of 73 percent, according to the UNDP.

Between 25 to 40 percent of the urban population of Somaliland relies on remittances sent home by Somalis living in Europe and North America (Ahmed 2000, Hansen 2006). This system arose in the 1880s among Somalis (Kleist 2004: 3) and is today well-established through formal transfer companies. The strong economic connection between the Somalis living in Somaliland as recipients and those living abroad as remitters illustrates how the new global economy is creating an imbalance in the expectations it sets out and the realities it creates (Lucht 2012: 81-91). Ahmed, a Somali from Somaliland I met at an asylum centre in Denmark, explained to me how Somalis from Somaliland who were supported from abroad could build nice big houses. He wanted what he felt was a good life and decided to do tahriib. According to the Somaliland National Youth Organisation (SONYO) and Oxfam-Novib, unemployment among the young amounts to 75%.

Where Ahmed moved to Europe, I went to Somaliland. Movement was a buzzword in Somaliland, whether physical, social or economical. I myself became part of the waves of movements taking place, as I ended up in the family of Abo and Hoyo, who had opened their home to someone who was a complete stranger to them. Hoyo [mother] and Abo [father] had a son, Aar, in a European country in which my friend of Somali origin who, I had come to know in Denmark was living at the time. Through my friend’s connection with Aar, I was invited to spend three months with Hoyo and Abo’s family, to whom I owe the greatest gratitude. Spending my days in Somaliland, I got to meet amazing people who all in their own ways helped produce this dissertation. I will introduce you to those I met in Somaliland who have come to play a major role in this dissertation, but with the deepest respect and acknowledgment of every single person I met.

A few days after I landed in end May 2013 in Somaliland I met Abdullahi. He had been the research assistant of another PhD colleague who had been conducting research in Somaliland, and he had agreed to be my research assistant as well. Abdullahi had attended the same primary school as the elite of Somaliland had graduated from. The president, the leaders of the country and many of those working for the NGOs in the country had attended this school. He was well-connected, his English was fluent, and he came to play a big role in facilitating meetings and interviews. He was one of the lucky ones in that he obtained a job. When I met him for the first time, he told me how his two neighbours had just left on tahriib. His position as a young man growing up in Somaliland shed light on who chose to leave and who did not, as he and his close

48 See Chapter 3, where I introduce the family of Hoyo and Abo.
friends had chosen not to leave. It was through Abdullahi that I got to meet Taban, one of his family members. Taban, whose perspectives on life I will introduce in Chapters 4 and 6, was 24 years old at the time I met him in the summer of 2013. He had grown up in a family without a father and felt a responsibility to provide for his family. This made him decide to attempt to migrate to Saudi Arabia. When I met him, he had been more or less grounded by his family, who feared that he would attempt to migrate again.

Taban introduced me to Cabdirahman, who was the friend of Taban’s younger brother. When I asked Taban if he knew anyone who was thinking of migrating, this was who he thought of. Abdullahi set up a meeting with Cabdirahman, whose experiences as a young man in Somaliland I will describe throughout the dissertation. Cabdirahman came from a family of six brothers and two sisters. None of them had attended university except for Cabdirahman, due to a lack of means to finance it. The reason they could afford to send Cabdirahman to university was because he had persuaded family members residing in the USA and Canada to pay for him. The family survived by buying khat and meat which they then sold at the market. The two youngest family members attended secondary school and primary and intermediate education in 2013. Cabdirahman and his family often struggled to make ends meet. Cabdirahman was 22 years old at the time I met him in May 2013. We developed a strong friendship, as he introduced me to life as a young man in Somaliland. He told what views young people had about leaving on *tahriib*:

*I will tolerate the problems on the way, if they face me. The people who have it easily here will not try to go. If all the problems faced me, I will tolerate it. If I die, I have already died, if I have smaller problems I will talk with my relatives and manage it well. In general, the country has an economic problem so the country will be in problem of starvation. If the economy is good, it will be good. In Somalia, the war has destroyed everything.*

Not only did Cabdirahman paint a picture of why young people like himself were willing to risk their lives en route, they were already dead, an argument which has framed this dissertation.\(^{49}\) He also directed my attention to the fact that what he did and what I was attempting to do were not that different in the summer of 2013. The longer I stayed in Somaliland, I grasped how people who had left, but had been unsuccessful in reaching their destination, would have valuable information for young men like Cabdirahman:

*Before, I have interviewed some of my colleagues who went earlier, like you are interviewing me. The route in detail, Somalia to Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, the coastal area between Libya and Italia. I’m taking this way by car. This is the easiest path to migrate. If you go to Kenya, Uganda, it will be a long distance to cover. By interviewing who have already done that, I’m preparing. The picture I have in mind, the distance from here to Libya is far, so difficult to face, so if you go, you have to*

\(^{49}\) See Chapter 4, where I examine the context my interlocutors grow up in and why young people like Cabdirahman want to leave Somaliland.
tolerate problems you might face. Firstly, when you try to cover the distance between Ethiopia and Sudan, the soldiers will try to catch you and bring you back. Ethiopians will jail you until your family pays money. They will tell Somali soldiers to keep you in your country. The Sudanese soldiers will keep you and send you on as well ... Australia, New Zealand and Canada are the countries I have in mind. These places are more attractive, and you can get a job as Somali and I have a lot of Somali colleagues there.

Through his inquiries with other young Somalis Cabdirahman had obtained detailed information about which route to take if he wanted to save time, what obstacles to expect during the journey, and what the possibilities were if he were to arrive in Australia, New Zealand or Canada. Listening to Cadirahman’s detailed information on a route he had never taken part in, it struck me how flows of information, socially created between young people like Cadirahman and the rest of society, were an aspect of dealing with the uncertainties of an unknown future. Through the flows of information, through interviews with each other, through the news, through new laws, and through tales and stories of other Somalis, Cadirahman in many ways did what I too set out to do, namely to gather information for a journey and everything it entailed without as yet having physically departed. Cabdirahman himself was my interlocutor, as Taban was Cadirahman’s interlocutor. James P. Spradley (1980: 3) writes, in his book on classic participant observation, how fieldwork for an ethnographer includes ‘the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people’. Cabdirahman learned from Taban by interviewing him. He gained valuable information on what one had to tolerate, what one could encounter and how one should act if embarking on tahriib, which for Cabdirahman was different and unknown. At the same time, it was through Cabdirahman that I obtained valuable information on the practices, prospects and situations that tahriib entailed. In fact, Cabdirahman and I came to work side by side, as he agreed to be my research assistant during my stay in Somaliland. We both tried to act on the uncertainties we had regarding tahriib by collecting information. At the same time, we differed greatly in our motives, our access and our sharing of this kind of information. Hence, instead of viewing knowledge as something anthropologists search for in local contexts, as has been the classic approach within anthropology, knowledge turned out to be mobile and constantly flowing.50

Cabdirahman had two friends from school, Aadan and Feysal. They too dreamed of doing tahriib and had two failed attempts behind them when I met them (see Chapters 5 and 6). I knew Aadan and Feysal’s older brothers through Abshiro, one of Hoyo and Abo’s daughters. It was Aadan and Feysal’s older brothers who introduced me to Aadan and Feysal. The two young men both attended university, and their brothers had good jobs working for prominent NGOs. Their brother’s houses, where I conducted most of the interviews and meetings, were beautiful,

50 See Chapter 6, where I explore the sharing of information among my interlocutors, family members, brokers etc. as a way to endure uncertainty.
indicating a life in which they could more or less make ends meet. Spending time with Aadan and Feysal taught me about the hopes and dreams young Somali men set out for themselves, how they sought to fulfil them and the experiences this may include. Feysal never gave up the dream of migrating, and in 2016 he succeeded, ending up in Europe by doing *tahrib*. Cabdirahman, on the other hand, decided not to migrate after collecting information with me. We both learned more than we had expected when setting out on this search for information together.

The practices surrounding Somalis migrating are varied. The routes depend on the amount of money their families have and the people with whom they get into contact. One thing, however, is common for the majority of them: they leave as and/or become illegal migrants. Many see no other way than using brokers when migrating due to the restrictions on movement towards and within Europe (Koser 2000: 92). This was also how my interlocutors reached Turkey.

**Turkey: the Securitization of a Transit Country**

When I ventured out to do fieldwork in Turkey among young undocumented Somali women and men, it was as part of a comparative project in which we had framed our studies around a country of origin, a transit country and a country of destination. In my part of the project, Turkey was defined as a transit country, that is, a country through which my interlocutors would pass.

When I arrived in Turkey at the end of December 2013, I started to question the term ‘transit migration’. What did it mean to be in transit? And within what conceptual framework was this concept created? Some of my interlocutors never made it out of Turkey alive, but tragically lost their lives on inflatable boats sailing towards Greece.51 Others managed to leave Turkey, but only after various periods of time spent waiting, in different ways and with different costs. Finally, some were there as students, others as refugees, and some as laborers. In other words, they had very heterogeneous backgrounds, profiles and categorizations attached to them, which the term ‘transit migration’ did not seem to capture (Bredeloup 2012: 463).

Transit migration is not a new phenomenon, though it is often described as such by the authorities, the media and academia (Bredeloup 2012: 463). In fact, it re-surfaced as a highly political concept in the 1990s (Düvell 2012: 416, Schapendonk 2012: 577) as a way to describe how those who originate geographically far away from Europe transit through other countries that border Europe until they reach it (Düvell 2012: 416, Schapendonk 2012: 578). The word ‘transit’ stems from Latin, where it refers to ‘the idea of a passage ... transit situation of travellers who are not allowed to pass police or customs control while stopping during a longer journey, by plane or by boat’ (Bredeloup 2012: 458). However, no clear definition of the term exists today, despite the fact that various international and political organizations have attempted to suggest what they consider the idea of transit migration covers. The UN, in the early days of the resurrection of

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51 See Chapters 5 and 6, where I describe the uncertainty of death lurking by taking my point of departure in the boat accident in which two of my interlocutors lost their lives.
transit migration, defined it as ‘migration in one country with the intention of seeking the possibility there to emigrate to another country as the country of final destination’ (Düvell 2012: 417). The Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva states that ‘transit migrants are defined as aliens who stay in the country for some period of time while seeking to migrate permanently to another country’ (Düvell 2012: 417). Similar definitions have emerged both within the political scene and in academia.

At first glance, as Collyer and de Haas argue (2012: 476), the term does appear innovative, as 1) it leaves behind dichotomies such as ‘immigration-emigration, permanent-temporary migration, voluntary-forced migration’; 2) it focuses on ‘a process rather than a static situation’; and 3) it ‘both integrate location-direction and time-space criteria’ when defining movement. In this way, it seems to attract our attention to what takes place during migration, and not only the situations before and after (Schapendonk 2012). Taking a more thorough look at the term, however, it seems to suggest what it was meant to leave behind, namely a rather static conceptualization of space, in this case a space migrants merely move through (Collyer and de Haas 2012: 476) from their country of origin towards their country of destination.

This is problematic for several reasons. First, it represents a very Eurocentric point of view, assuming that every person who migrates is heading towards Europe. As argued at the beginning of this section, this is not the case for Turkey, nor for many other countries defined as transit countries, a point also made by Bredeloup (2012), Collyer and de Haas (2012), İçduygu and Yükseker (2012), Schapendonk (2012) etc. Not only is there a variety of people staying in transit countries, their directions often change en route (Bredeloup 2012: 463). Secondly, transit migration is more often than not linked with irregular and illegal activities (Collyer and de Haas 2012: 471) by humanitarian and political organizations such as the International Office of Migration, the International Labour Office, the European Council, etc. (Bredeloup 2012: 458, Düvell 2012: 417-19). In this way, as Düvell argues (2012: 417), ‘transit migration became a discursive frame and a code for “illegal migration”’. In this respect, the term has been highly politicized and is used not only in rhetorical debates concerning migration, as illustrated above, but also to justify the increased budgeting of border controls and the tightening of immigration rules, what in Chapter 2 I define as involuntary immobility. FRONTEX, for example, had its budget increased ‘from 19 million euros in 2006 to 70 million euros in 2008’ (Collyer, Düvell and de Haas 2012: 408) and concentrates mostly on the southern borders of Europe (Collyer, Düvell and de Haas 2012: 409), making it very relevant to shed light on within this dissertation. This testifies to the illegalization of temporary movement (Bredeloup 2012: 459), which the European Union is trying to prevent by installing as many obstacles as possible to prevent transit migrants from entering its territory. In other words, countries defined as transit countries were and still are looked upon as a threat to Europe (Düvell 2012: 417, İçduygu and Yükseker 2012: 451), which has led to the installment of so-called securitization processes mentioned above, such as border controls, the tightening up of visa requirements, etc.

This politicized debate that pitches transit countries as potential threats is very relevant in the case of Turkey, where my interlocutors spent time before attempting to move
further into Europe, some with success, others not. This term was, as Düvell argues (2012: 418), more or less a plea to countries such as Turkey to keep migrants from entering Europe. In 1995, Turkey was defined as a transit country by organisations such as the IOM (Düvell 2012: 417), along with the majority of the EU’s neighbors who are geographically placed close to its borders (including Greece). Despite the fact that people have migrated through Turkey towards Europe from the early 1980s, it was not until the reinvention of transit migration in the 1990s by the political class in Europe that it became a compelling issue for discussion for Turkey as well (İçduygu and Yükseker 2012: 452).

Depicting the way my interlocutors attempted to move through a country as a point of departure in which conceptualization as a transit country is as much a discourse as it is a scientific concept’ (see Düvell 2006, 2012: 454) is not an easy task. In this dissertation, I seek to follow Schapendonk (2012: 579), who defines it as follows: ‘Transit migration, then, refers to a phase of experienced immobility in a process of movement in a specific migratory direction. It is about migrants’ aspirations of moving in a context of involuntary immobility’. An analytical framework such as this can help to capture the way the majority of my interlocutors were immobile while being in Turkey, but hoped to move forward, socially as well as geographically. In other words, Turkey was expected to be a stop on the way by the majority of my interlocutors, like Andersson’s (2014) interlocutors’ experiences of temporality in Ceuta, a stop they hoped would not be long, as this would extend their experience of being socially dead, as Cabdirahman had described his situation in Somaliland. They were defined as countries they would just pass through and marked as a place which they would want to spend as little time as possible in. This was not based on any bad perceptions of the Turks, who the majority of my interlocutors had the greatest respect for. The Turks were often defined as my interlocutors’ Muslim brothers, stories of helpful Turkish police officers on the borders were widely shared with me, and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was greatly respected. Some of my male interlocutors, for example, shared pictures online of President Erdoğan at the time of the coup attempt against him in July 2016. The pictures were signs of sympathy with the president, who has invested millions of dollars of development aid in Somalia.

Instead, the reason for their wishing to travel further on towards Europe was the absence of opportunities to make a sustainable living for themselves and their families. However, what they hoped for and their real experiences of being an illegal migrant en route often clashed. Some passed through Turkey relatively quickly, others were stuck there for years, and some never left. While occupying themselves in Turkey, my interlocutors spent their time in what was known as ‘Somali Istaag’ [the street where Somalis stand]. Sitting one day at the beginning of my fieldwork in a restaurant located on this street, three Somali men enter, the first customers of the day except for us. They tell us that they are living in the area. In fact, around two hundred people are living in this neighbourhood in different houses. In their house live 24 people, eight in each of

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52 See Chapter 2, where I discuss relations between Turkey and the EU in detail.
53 See Chapter 2, where I explore relations between Greece and the EU in detail.
54 See Chapter 2, where I explore the historical and political relations between Somalia and Turkey.
the three rooms. The men and women live separately, they explain. They say it is very crowded, but they have a system. Some go early to bed and get up early, others go late to bed and then sleep late. In this way there is more space, they explain.

I did not live in the houses of my interlocutors on Somali Street, as I considered it unethical to occupy the space of someone in need who was on tahriib. Also, the people who were behind the business of tahriib were most often also those in charge of the houses, in which my interlocutors bought a space on a mattress for USD 100, making access somewhat more difficult. Instead, I would visit my interlocutors in their houses, hang out on Somali Istaag or nearby, or invite them to the apartment I had rented during fieldwork. Turkey was in many ways a free space for them to walk around in. We could go to tourist sights together without the fear of having to show documents. Visiting the mosque on one occasion with a group of my female interlocutors, a Turkish couple wanted to have their pictures taken with the Somali women, asking me, the non-Muslim, non-colourful anthropologist, to step aside. In other words, their visibility as black Muslims did not always play against them, even though they were moving around undocumented.

My main entry point into the community of young Somali women and men from Somaliland who were in the middle of tahriib in Turkey was through Xalaane. He was an old classmate of a young Somali man I met in Denmark in 2013. Xalaane was one of the talented and lucky young Somalis who had obtained a scholarship from Turkey to take a bachelor’s degree. When I met him, he was a hardworking student in Turkey. He met up with me a few days after I entered Turkey and came to act as my research assistant throughout my time in Turkey. Thus, Xalaane was not one of the young people who wanted to do tahriib, but had instead found other ways to obtain a new life. Though he was not an illegal migrant, he had many friends and acquaintances who were, which made him a very valuable research assistant and friend. It was through Xalaane that I got to meet a group of young Somali women whose stories have made possible an understanding of how tahriib is experienced as a young woman en route. Xalaane introduced me to Ubax, who introduced me to Nadifa, who lived in the same house in Turkey before moving further on towards Europe.

Ubax was in her early twenties and came from a family of five sisters and brothers and a mother. Her father had passed away. Ubax had finished high school, but never went to university for lack of the funding to cover the expenses. Ubax had been thinking of leaving on tahriib since 2008, but did not leave until 2013, she having persuaded her brother to pay for the journey. Ubax was determined to leave, and her brother did not want her to risk taking the route through Sudan and Libya, which is considered extremely dangerous, especially for women. Ubax did not, unlike many others, have family abroad who could help finance the journey. Instead, she had to wait for her family in Somaliland to collect enough money and often departed later en route than the other women she had travelled with. Despite the fact that the majority of my interlocutors wanted to pass through Turkey, many ended up spending a considerable amount of time there. The same was true for Ubax, who created a form of everyday life in the streets of Turkey, however rough it sometimes was.
It was through Ubax that I got to meet Nadifa, a young woman in her early twenties who ended up working for me as a research assistant in Turkey and Greece, as she was fluent in English. We also developed a close friendship. Nadifa came from a family of three sisters and two brothers. The two brothers lived in Europe and one sister lived in Mogadishu, where she was married with two children. Her family originated from Somaliland, but her mother was living in Ethiopia, where Nadifa had studied. Besides living in Ethiopia, Nadifa had lived for eight months with her sister in Mogadishu. ‘I was afraid to leave the house’, Nadifa explained, as we got to know each other better, due to the fact that Al Shabab treated anyone working for the government as an enemy. Nadifa’s sister’s husband worked for the government. ‘They are like AIDS – Deadly [referring to Al Shabab]’, she once said. Besides this, the explosions that were taking place on a regular basis scared her. She would wave her arms to illustrate explosions and explain how people were cut at various places on their bodies. She imitated having a knife placed on her neck and her wrists. I once showed her the book I was reading by Mary Harper (2012), that had a picture of a child playing machine gun with a stick. She took the picture and showed it to us [Ubax and I] with the words: ‘this is so true, the children are doing like this, they don’t know anything else. My sister’s children are doing like this all day long because there is no school for them, they don’t know anything else’.

Asking Nadifa one day who the people leaving on tahriib were, she answered:

*Everybody is believing something. Maybe that person wants to marry, maybe one has problems. Somaliland is the same as Somalia [Somaliland is still according to the international community a part of Somalia] because it’s still not recognized. Most teenagers are jobless. The Mogadishu teenagers are Al Shabab fighters. Some of them are sick. We are all believing something. We are believing the way of tahriib. Some believe it is easy leaving so maybe that is why they are leaving.*

Nadifa was waiting for money from her brother to pay for her onward journey towards Greece. On a day like every other, Ubax and Nadifa were out doing some shopping. Nadifa had bought some soap, and Ubax was getting her abaaya⁵⁵ fixed at a tailor’s close by. Nadifa went back to the house they were occupying. Ubax and I go to a tailor’s shop. After our visit at the tailor’, we head towards the building where all the Somalis are living, a building I have passed many times, but never entered. We walk up four floors and stand outside a door with lots of shoes outside, more sandals than winter boots, despite the cold temperatures in Turkey. Ubax knocks the door for a while. Nobody opens. I’m getting worried that news of my presence may have spread in an unfortunate way, but after a while Nadifa opens the door. We enter. I take off my shoes and place them outside. We enter a small living room, passing a kitchen on the left and a bathroom on the right. The living room is empty when I enter. The walls are painted pink. I’m sitting on a red couch, and the floor is covered with a red coloured carpet. Sitting on the couch, the first thing that meets

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⁵⁵ The Arabic term for a certain form of long-sleeved dress for women.
my eyes is a big black flat-screen TV. It is turned off. On the right is a commode with a vase with fake roses and the Somaliland flag, three of them. Ubx and I sit down. I open the package of stuffed pancakes, and we start eating. She says ‘mmm macaan’ [sweet]. While I’m sitting there, several girls of different ages pass by. I greet them with a ‘Salaam Caleiukum’. The TV is turned on for the prayer from Saudi Arabia. Another woman enters wearing a big, black hijab and gets overly excited to see me. She kisses me and hugs me, and I’m thinking whether I have met her before. She asks me for help to write a letter about the bad situation in Mogadishu. I tell her that I’m not from the government, but that I can help her write a letter if she wishes. She says okay. We agree to write it the coming Friday. I will let Riyaan introduce herself by means of her letter:


It was through these women that I came to understand how everyday life as a young woman defined as an illegal migrant was like. We would spend our days on the streets surrounding their house or my apartment, or on occasion leave the area for a change of scenery. Finally, it was through these women that I got to meet Habaane, a young Somali from Somaliland in his early twenties. He was married and a father of one. He had attended university in Somaliland. Habaane assisted me one afternoon, as I had lost my way, and that became a start of a friendship. We would spend whatever time he could afford in Turkey. In 2015, I visited Habaane’s wife and son in Somaliland, who lived with Habaane’s mother, aunt and other family members. Habaane had left Somaliland in July 2013, which had cost him USD 6000. This money was paid by his sister, who had moved to Europe. The rest, which he estimated was around USD 7000, would be collected from the rest of the family and clan members. Habaane taught me a lot about the existence of a human life surrounded by uncertainty.

The final two people who I would like to introduce are Subeer and Wiilka Nololshayda. Both differ from the majority of my interlocutors, as they originate from a country that has experienced civil war since 1991, namely Somalia. The context they grew up in was in some ways very different from that of those who left from Somaliland. The reason why I have

56 ‘My name is Riyaan, I am 37 years old, I come from Mogadishu in Somalia where I have six children and a husband. There were many problems in Mogadishu. I cannot work for the government. When I lived there my brother was living in my house. My brother worked for a public radio station. He was threatened by Al Shabaab and had to flee. He now lives in Europe. After my brother fled, Al Shabab has been in my house and threatened us. They asked where my brother is. I’m therefore afraid and can no longer live in Somalia. I am begging you for your help so that me and my family should no longer be afraid. My friend Anja Simonsen has helped me to write this letter’.
chosen to include their stories in this dissertation is because it resonates with a point I made previously. People start off from different backgrounds, sometimes as so-called refugees, at other points defined as migrants, but when entering on tahriib these distinctions did not matter. They were all people moving towards new lives, and they all travelled along hazardous routes risking their lives. Their stories and experiences have added an extra level to the embodied experiences of tahriib.

I first encountered Subeer, a Somali in his late thirties, on 16th January 2014 on my way out of a restaurant at Somali Staag. As I passed by him, he greeted me, and we started a conversation, which has continued ever since. Subeer immediately told me about himself and how he had not seen his mother, sisters and brothers for many years. He tells me that he was injured during the war. He was shot three times and had a stomach operation. He points towards his stomach with his hand, moving it from top to bottom as to show where he was operated on. I ask him why he was shot when he was in Somalia? He explains that somebody shot his father to death, so he went to seek revenge, but ‘then they shot me first’, he says. Subeer’s mother is still living in Somalia with his sister and two younger brothers, but his mother is old now. Subeer left Mogadishu in 2006 and went to Somaliland, where he was working in a sweet shop earning USD 300 a month. He never had a chance to go to school. He says he does not know how to read and write English, but he taught himself to speak the language. He says that when he was in Somalia, he was working as a shopkeeper for the American Embassy. He tells me that he has been in Turkey since October 2013. He is hoping to leave, do tahriib. ‘You know’, he asks, referring to whether I understand what tahriib means? ‘I know’, I reply. I ask him where he was before he came here? He was in Nairobi, Kenya, with his wife and five children, three girls and two boys. He explains that life there is very difficult. He says he is a chef and has a certificate. He tells me that in Nairobi it is difficult to find work, and the problem is that even if you find work, the costs of living in Nairobi are too high. He says that here, he is trying to find work and send home whatever little he has: ‘Hearing the little baby screaming, and you don’t have anything’. He puts a worried face on. I say that I’m sorry, it must be difficult. He says that he registered with UNHCR in Kenya, who approved him for resettlement four years ago. ‘Every time I go there and nothing, it is fucking hard’, he says. ‘Then I just give up and I come here’, he says. ‘When I come here, I was really’ (he lifts his hands with fists implying that he was ready) but now, I think so much. Sometimes I go crazy, then I even try to play some video games to not think’. I ask him ‘what are the possibilities of finding work here?’ He says that no one speaks English here, ‘So everywhere I ask, they say “Do you speak Turkish?” I say no, then they reject. I even went to MacDonalds over there’, he says, pointing across the road as we stand by the bus stop. He also asked a man who owned one of the restaurants in the area whether he could stand on the street to encourage customers, but he also rejected the idea because of the language issue. He says ‘Dude, I come here to learn the fucking language? No’. He tells me that his wife told him that if in two months everything is not settled, then he has to come back. She told me, ‘We live together, we die together’. Tears are welling up in his eyes, which cannot hold the water in. He says it is the sun and moves to another chair. He says ‘I’m sorry’. I tell him not to be sorry. I tell him that if he is here tomorrow, we can drink a cup of
tea together. He says ‘Okay, I’m always here, there is nothing else to do’. Subeer not only became one of my main interlocutors and a close friend, he also worked for me as my research assistant, spending endless of hours in and around Somali Istaag together.

It was through Subeer that I got to meet Wiilka Nololshayda, with whom I became very close friends and met up with further along his journey into Europe. He was a young man in his mid-twenties who had fled from Somalia. The first time we met was by the sea, where Subeer and I would come to meet, do interviews and go for a walk. As I started my first interview with him, I asked for his name. He replied that I could call him ‘Wiilka Nololshayda’ which in English translates as ‘the boy of life’. Wiilka Nololshayda was in search of a new life and saw the way to achieve that as tahriib. He had fled Somalia, a country tormented by conflicts and battles between Al Shabab and the government: ‘I ran away because of trouble. My clan was in power, but Al Shabab wanted me to fight’. Wiilka Nololshayda’s family is divided into two, one supporting the new government, the other Al Shabab, he explains. Hence, Wiilka Nololshayda’s clan has great power in Somalia in both the government and Al Shabab, something which, however, could not help him, as Al Shabab want to recruit forcibly. ‘I don’t want to kill anyone or die. I want to be educated. I’m a happy man and a social man’. ‘The young generation trusts you because you are a funny man’, Al Shabab was saying. ‘Therefore, the younger generation is taking your order and we will pay you USD 200 per day’. Wiilka Nololshayda went to his father (his mother died when he was young). His father said ‘If you refuse, they might try to kill you, run away … go to Europe, instead of dying here, go to Turkey – live or die’. Some of Wiilka Nololshayda’s friends have been killed or badly injured because they refused to work for Al Shabab, and he saw no other option than to flee. Reflecting upon this, he explains:

The important thing is to go to Europe to start a new living, me and my family. I have a daughter and a son [his wife was pregnant with another child at the time of this interview, 25th January 2014].57 even me too, I want to give them high school, I want a peaceful place, a good life, I don’t want to be a rich man, I just want a good and special life, I ran from Africa without any food. Maybe my clan has power in Africa, but the aim is to be killed or kill. If you want to be a rich man, you will have to kill or you will be killed. I’m hoping to get a good life and now I’m searching for the new life. The one who is feeling hungry in Somalia will take a gun and kill a person, but if you have a good life, you will never want to die.

Wiilka Nololshayda made it to Greece, as did Subeer, Ubax, Nadifa, Riyaan and Habaane.

57 His wife, who was located in Somalia but moving around due to threats from Al Shabab, gave birth to their third child while Wiilka Nololshayda and I occupied ourselves in Greece. He has still not seen his child to this day, as his case is being processed in Europe.
... some migrants can durably settle in a country labelled earlier as a transit country, whereas others may be in transit in places viewed by some as a country of destination or a place of origin (Bredeloup 2012: 463).

I set out to understand how life in Greece (framed in my project as a so-called destination country), seen as a representation of Europe, would be experienced for my interlocutors. Greece, however, was not Europe according to my interlocutors. Instead, being very visible in the streets as black, Muslim Africans drew the unwanted attention of the authorities and right-wing vigilante groups opposed to the presence of young illegal immigrants. This meant that my interlocutors attempted to move out of Greece as fast as they could, but it also meant that they would move in a very limited space very close to the houses they slept in at night, as the police were ever-present while occupying themselves in Greece. They soon became experts in reading the space they moved in, though nothing was ever predictable, and you could therefore never guard yourself against arrest, attacks or the like. It made me aware that there is more to a place than mere transit. Though they did not want to stay in Greece, some ended up staying there for years. Greece, therefore, became a place in which everyday life of relations, friendships and love took place. This is how Greece will be presented in the following section; as a peek into everyday life as a young, Somali doing tahriib in Greece.

Besides spending endless hours around and on Somali Staag, my field consisted of the houses in which Riyaan, Nadifa, Ubax and all the other young Somali women and men on tahriib occupied themselves. I caught up with them in Greece after both they and I had left Turkey, some before me, others afterwards. They had located themselves in what they referred to as guri [house], which all were scattered around Somali Istaag [the streets where Somalis are standing]. The area was populated with migrants from all over the world, as well as Greeks from the lower end of the economic scale. Drugs, prostitution and guns were part of everyday life here.

Every Somali was allocated to whatever house had a free place, a mixture of men and women, clans and ages. The majority paid a hundred Euros a month for a mattress to sleep on and food, sixty Euros for the rent and ten Euros for food each week. Visiting three of my interlocutors for the first time in their house, all of them from Somaliland, I said: ‘Oh is this the Somaliland house?’ They laughed, after which Nadifa said, ‘Here, everyone is living together, Somalilanders, Somalis, all are the same’. Only Somalis lived in the houses, which were somewhat old and during the summer very warm. The owners were Greek, but the ‘mothers of the houses’, as my interlocutors would call them, were most often Somali women who had been in Greece for many years and had either settled there or were still awaiting for a chance to leave. They collected the monthly rent, paid the bills for electricity and water, and in some houses bought the food as well. Some of my interlocutors would move houses if they were not satisfied in their current house. If you had money you could change house, they explained.