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Undocumented Migrants and their Everyday Lives

The Case of Finland

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Undocumented Migrants and their Everyday Lives

The Case of Finland

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ISSN 2364-4087

ISSN 2364-4095 (electronic)

IMISCOE Research Series

ISBN 978-3-030-68413-6

ISBN 978-3-030-68414-3 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68414-3>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

We have been touched by the situations of the various undocumented migrants we have met over the years. We have come to know friendly, courageous, and optimistic people who, despite the challenges and hardships they face in their everyday lives, have a positive outlook on the future. We have also met many desperate people and felt helpless to alleviate their distress. We hope that our study will perhaps contribute to improving their situations and those of other undocumented migrants, now and in the years ahead. We were deeply moved by their life stories, despite our methodological choices necessitating us keeping a certain distance from them. Ultimately, researchers and undocumented migrants are all human beings with similar desires: to live good lives with their families and friends; work productively for the good of themselves, their neighbours, and their societies; and enjoy the small pleasures of life; however, we feel that, as researchers, our lives are privileged.

We particularly wish to express our thanks to the many people who supported this research. Firstly, we are immensely grateful to all the undocumented migrants who shared information with us about their everyday lives by answering our survey, allowing us to observe them, and revealing their hopes and concerns. In addition, experts and workers in both government and non-government organisations (NGOs) – particularly, the Helsinki Deaconess Institute, the Finnish Red Cross, and Global Clinic – helped us by sharing their experiences and making us aware of issues we were unfamiliar with. In addition, Global Clinic, Sininauhasäätiö, and Kaikkien Naisten Talo, among others, gave us insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented migrants in Finland. Secondly, we particularly wish to thank the people who provided us with direct access to undocumented migrants in Finland and informed them about our research. Thirdly, we would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers whose useful and insightful comments and suggestions greatly helped in improving the quality and clarity of the book. Finally, we acknowledge the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland. This research was

made possible by the financial support of the research consortium of Urbanisation, Mobilities and Immigration (URMI; grant number 303 617), which opened up new worlds to us. Furthermore, we acknowledge the help of various translators and research assistants who assisted with the processing and analysing of the survey data.

Turku, Finland
December 2020

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Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1 Purpose and Outline of the Book

Undocumented Migrants and their Everyday Lives: The Case of Finland outlines the situations of undocumented migrants in the late 2010s and the beginning of the 2020s. The main empirical context of the book is Finland and we focused on the everyday lives of people who never had, or had lost, the legal right to reside in the country. The themes connect to a broad geographical scope, ranging from individual and local challenges, opportunities, and practices in communities and municipalities, to national, political, and societal issues regarding undocumented migrants in the EU and globally. We conducted completely new research about undocumented migrants' everyday lives and circumstances, especially with regard to the post-2015 situation and during the COVID-19 pandemic, obtaining results that reached beyond Finland and the EU.

We chose to study asylum-related migrants in particular (for the concept, see Jauhiainen et al. 2019: 19–26). Some had experienced fear, persecution, and danger in their countries of origin, whereas others had economic reasons for leaving their home countries. Due to their inability to use legal labour migration channels to reach the EU, many attempted to seek asylum, albeit unsuccessfully. The majority of these people moved in and out the asylum process, making it hard to distinguish when, exactly, their situations were legal/illegal. Ultimately, they failed to gain admission through the official legal process and were supposed to leave the country (in this case, Finland); however, they did not leave and became undocumented migrants. We specifically focused on rejected asylum seekers, but also studied undocumented migrants who came to Finland without going through the asylum process.

Over the past few years, tightening legislation has made the lives of undocumented migrants increasingly difficult in Finland, as well as in many other EU member states and elsewhere. Nevertheless, many of them find Finland safe and secure—a country in which they can try to rebuild their lives, find jobs, and sustain their families. Ultimately, they have no desire to leave (see Sect. 4.7), despite

politicians and administrators wishing them to do so. Demands such as ‘deport them all’ or ‘please—leave!’ have been unsuccessful, and legislation aiming to make the arrival of migrants more difficult may, in fact, increase the number of undocumented migrants. Migrants will continue to arrive, supported by both legal and illegal networks.

When engaging with public authorities in Finland, we were surprised by how little attention the key stakeholders paid to irregular migration, and how seldom those who dealt with undocumented migrants considered either their everyday lives or the impact they might have on Finnish society. Such perplexities encouraged us to study these topics and delve into the everyday lives of undocumented migrants in Finland, to identify the practices and survival strategies that support their in-between (legal/illegal) lives, and highlight the importance of their agency in actively creating spaces for themselves.

With only a few thousand undocumented migrants in the country, why would their presence in Finland be of interest in understanding irregular migration and undocumented migrants more broadly? On the one hand, we believed it was important to update both the scholarly breadth and depth of recent theories and concepts regarding irregular migration and undocumented migrants; on the other hand, we wished to recognise, examine, and learn from the everyday lives and related practices of undocumented migrants, in their specific contexts, before drawing—and in order to draw more general conclusions. Indeed, comparisons and generalisations can be made for any country, but we maintain that each context is paramount, and we therefore decided to remain true to it. Irregular migration is ontologically ‘in-becoming’, and the studied people lived in-between lives; hence, we wanted to avoid generalising concepts and theories, and deconstruct rigid categorisations and classifications, while describing the specificity of the Finnish context. This does not mean that the results for Finland cannot be extended to other EU countries. Indeed, as discussed in the conclusions of the book, there were similarities between countries, especially with regard to Eastern Europe, which, like Finland, has only a small number of undocumented migrants, who experience more restrictions and hardships than in other Western countries (Dzenovska 2016; Schlueter et al. 2013).

1.1.1 Research Questions

To underpin this book, we asked the following four research questions: who are the undocumented migrants in Finland; what aspirations do they have, especially in relation to their journeys to Finland and within the country, and their migration aspirations, including returns to their countries of origin; what are their everyday lives like; what key concerns do they have (with a particular focus on their agency and the creation of semiregular spaces) regarding housing, employment, health, family, and friends. In investigating migrants’ everyday lives in Finland, we paid particular attention to the internet and social media, leading to the following further

research questions: how do digital divides develop during migrants' journeys from their countries of origin to their destination countries; how do undocumented migrants use the internet and social media, and what impact do these contemporary tools have on them. Our study provided a rare opportunity to conduct research about undocumented migrants and their everyday lives using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.

The answer to the first research question (who the undocumented migrants in Finland are) came from two sources: the first official, and the second, the undocumented migrants themselves. National legislation and policies officially define undocumented migrants (see Sect. 3.2); however, the concepts of refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, and similar are becoming increasingly blurred, to the extent that it is hard for authorities, scholars, and the migrants themselves to grasp the changing situations (Crawley and Skleparis 2018). In Finland (as well as in Sweden; see Andersson et al. 2018), the majority of undocumented migrants are former asylum seekers who failed to gain admission through the legal process and, therefore, did not receive permission to stay in the country. Those who experienced persecution in their home countries did not leave Finland because, despite everything, they considered Finland to be safe. Those who came to Finland for economic reasons chose to stay in the hope of ultimately finding work and stability.

The second research question concerned undocumented migrants' aspirations (which formed patterns of wishes) in Finland. We elected to study their journeys to Finland, their migration within Finland, and their potential plans to migrate further, including return migration. Traditional migration theories see migration as a straightforward movement from the initial location to the final destination, resulting from push and pull factors, but such perspectives need to be revised (van Hear et al. 2018). The asylum-related migration to the EU in 2015 and the resulting situations, both in the EU and the neighbouring regions, showed that multiple modes of migration existed. Often, the pushing factors in the countries of origin were more influential than the pulling factors of a specific destination country (Wong and Kosnac 2017). In fact, Crawley (2010) suggested that conflicts are a stronger determinant of irregular migration than economic hardships. In addition, challenging demographic and environmental issues in the country of origin were influential (EASO 2016). Scholars have talked about mixed migration from the perspective of a continuum of varied voluntary and involuntary elements that, together, lead to migration (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; van Hear 2014).

Furthermore, the single-origin–single-destination model of international migration, including irregular migration, has proved to be inadequate. Instead, various terms have been proposed, such as multinational migration, to illustrate how international migrants across more than one overseas destination spend significant time in each country (Paul and Yeoh 2020). Undocumented migrants in Finland may therefore be part of broader mobility patterns. For an asylum seeker, Finland could be only one of many possible destinations, or he/she might have ended up in the country by chance (see Sect. 4.7). The travel trajectories and geographical distribution of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants are complex, non-linear, and influenced by various internal and external factors, including migrants' own

aspirations, the migration and asylum policies of countries along their journeys, and the opportunities and constraints of different contexts (Barthel and Neumayer 2015; Brekke and Brochmann 2015; Czaika and Hobolt 2016). Many current undocumented migrants have been in Finland for several years (initially arriving as asylum seekers and later becoming undocumented migrants), so the country is no longer an abstract space for them, but consists of many concrete places that are either 'scary' or can guarantee protection and survival. In general, the word 'migrant' refers to a person who cannot stay permanently in one location; instead, he/she has to move from place to place, constantly seeking solutions for accommodation, work, and concealment (see Chap. 4). We analysed how they met (or did not meet) their aspirations, and how they found roundabout ways to create their own spaces for survival. During the usually long and complicated asylum process (see Sect. 3.3), a person can return voluntarily to the country of origin, and be institutionally and financially assisted to return to that country; however, the majority do not return, even after becoming undocumented migrants. The material to answer this second research question came from the surveys and ethnographic observations involving these migrants (see Sects. 2.3 and 2.4).

The third research question addressed what everyday life is like for undocumented migrants in Finland, and specifically for those undocumented migrants who are rejected asylum seekers. To answer this question, particular attention was paid to broader theoretical concepts, such as undocumented migrants' agency, as well as their capacity to create semi-regular spaces for themselves, despite the hardships. These concepts were tailored to the specificity of the Finnish context, but they corresponded well with the vast international literature on the topic. The studied aspects (see Chaps. 4 and 5) included accommodation (i.e. where undocumented migrants live or stay overnight); employment (i.e. who is employed and in what kinds of jobs, as well as the key issues pertaining to legal and illegal jobs); social networks (i.e. having family and friends in Finland and abroad and communicating with them); and health (i.e. what migrants do when they face health problems and how local authorities provide them with healthcare). The material to answer this research question was drawn from surveys and ethnographic observations involving undocumented migrants, and from interviews with local authorities, experts, and workers dealing with undocumented migrants (see Sects. 2.3 and 2.4). As previously mentioned, the underlying theoretical concept was undocumented migrants' agency, and how they create new in-between spaces and categories (regular/irregular, legal/illegal) through their everyday experiences, practices, and survival strategies.

The fourth research question focused on a particular aspect of undocumented migrants' everyday lives (thus supplementing the third research question), specifically concerning which undocumented migrants in Finland used the internet and social media and how they used it. This was extremely important, since the internet and social media have become an essential part of migrants' everyday lives. We focused first on digital divides (i.e. access to the internet and social media, the ability and resources to use them, and their effects on undocumented migrants) and how these digital divides developed between leaving their countries of origin and finally in arriving Finland. The internet and social media play a vital role for asylum seekers

and undocumented migrants in different stages of their asylum-related journeys and processes (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Leurs and Ponzanesi 2018; Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a, b). We also considered the role of misinformation and rumours on the internet and in social media. The material to answer this question came from the survey and ethnographic observations involving undocumented migrants in Finland (see Sects. 2.3 and 2.4).

1.1.2 Outline of the Chapters

In Chap. 2, we present our data and raise the issue of methodology in studying undocumented migrants. This is a particularly important topic, since many migrants live marginalised lives and are threatened by authorities and enforcement policies. We begin by describing the data, which consisted of responses by undocumented migrants to a lengthy (92-question) semi-structured survey conducted between October 2018 and January 2019 in various parts of Finland; ethnographic notes (around 70,000 words) taken between April 2018 and January 2019 regarding undocumented migrants' everyday lives (primarily, but not only, in the capital—Helsinki); and two short but comprehensive surveys (10–12 questions) conducted among local authorities in Finland in 2017 and 2018, concerning the services provided to undocumented migrants. To obtain supportive material, we conducted 20 thematic interviews with experts and workers who dealt with undocumented migrants and, furthermore, visited various NGOs and public authorities to talk with their representatives. In addition, in the autumn of 2020, we contacted experts to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented migrants in Finland. For the analysis of the survey material, we used descriptive statistics and cross tables, and we analysed the ethnographic notes and interviews through content analysis. We triangulated the data and combined several qualitative and quantitative materials and methods (Flick 2018).

We next present a detailed overview of why and how we conducted the surveys and ethnographic observations, discussing our challenges and shortcomings and how we could (or could not) overcome them, thus enhancing the transparency of the research process. We also discuss at length the ethical foundations of our research and its reporting; for example, we strictly followed the national ethical guidelines for conducting research and the EU data protection regulations (European Commission 2018; TENK 2018). We deeply respected the confidentiality and security of the undocumented migrants we studied, so we do not reveal any specific places where undocumented migrants met, worked, or stayed; nor do we use any photographs, since they could be used as tools to identify migrants and their locations. We always asked for consent to conduct the research, but did not require the migrants to sign consent forms, because they would have been suspicious or afraid of giving consent in such a formal way. We also highlighted their right to withdraw from the research at any time, as well as to refuse to talk about issues they did not want to discuss or to leave survey questions unanswered. We carefully

managed anonymity and confidentiality, and respected the migrants' feelings and beliefs on every occasion.

In Chap. 3, we describe how people become undocumented migrants in Finland and the challenges of using clear-cut, dualistic categories (categorical fetishism; Crawley and Skleparis 2018) and applying them to undocumented migrants' lives. Our main emphasis is on explaining who has the right to reside in Finland and who does not. The Finnish legislation does not include the notion of an 'undocumented migrant' or 'paperless person': nevertheless, this expression (literally, in Finnish, *paperittomat*) is commonly used in Finland to classify a person who does not have the legal right to reside in Finland. Actually, many national authorities prefer to call these people 'illegal immigrants' (Poliisihallitus 2017; Savino 2016; Sisäministeriö 2016), rigidly applying the above-mentioned dual categorisation and binary logic; for example, a person can enter Finland legally, but remain there illegally after his/her visa has expired or when he/she otherwise should have applied for a residence permit. A person can also enter the country without valid permission (i.e. without a visa when such is required), or with counterfeit documents, and remain in the country. In Chap. 3, we therefore explain the asylum process from the viewpoint of both the authorities and undocumented migrants. The asylum processes slowed significantly after the arrival of many asylum seekers in Finland in 2015, and it took several years for many asylum seekers to receive a final decision. In 2019, some people who came to Finland in 2015 were still going through the asylum process. Many of them lodged court appeals after their initial rejections, and some also made new subsequent asylum applications with or without substantial modifications to the initial request. While the steps in the asylum process are logical and clear for the migration officials and the courts, many asylum seekers do not understand this complex process and are therefore unable to follow the steps or provide the required evidence to gain asylum (Gill 2016), thus becoming undocumented migrants.

In Chap. 4, we explore the everyday lives of undocumented migrants in Finland, their agency, and their active creation of spaces between legality and illegality, and regularity and irregularity. As we mentioned, there are many kinds of undocumented migrants, with differing demographics, levels of education, and countries of origin. In some respects, their everyday lives are similar, but in others, quite different. Obviously, the common structural factor is that they do not have the authorities' permission to live, reside, and work in Finland; therefore, many find it challenging to meet the basic necessities of life, such as finding a place to sleep or obtaining work to earn the money for accommodation, food, and clothing. We focused on their social networks, considering the family and friends of undocumented migrants in Finland and outside the country. We also studied their aspirations in terms of their journeys to and within Finland, and why some considered leaving Finland and returning to their countries of origin, while others did not.

In Chap. 5, we focus on a particular and sometimes crucial aspect of undocumented migrants' lives: their health and access to healthcare. As evidenced by earlier studies, tightening immigration policies reduce undocumented migrants' access to health services, thus increasing health challenges and adversely affecting mental

health outcomes (Martinez et al. 2015). All undocumented migrants have experienced challenging situations in their lives, and most have very tragic memories of specific traumas preceding their asylum-related migration to Finland. Some undocumented migrants have illnesses that require constant care or frequent medical intervention, but for various reasons, not all of them visit medical practitioners; for example, many do not know where to go, are too afraid to visit a doctor in a public healthcare centre, or do not have enough money for private healthcare. The Constitution of Finland guarantees the right to urgent healthcare for everyone, and this provision is the task of local authorities. Based on our survey of Finnish municipalities, we studied their viewpoints regarding healthcare provision for undocumented migrants. Furthermore, we paid attention to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented migrants in Finland and, in particular, their access to healthcare during the pandemic. The law is the same for everyone (including undocumented migrants) in Finland, but the local healthcare micropractices (Bendixsen 2018) and public services differ greatly in respect of undocumented migrants.

In Chap. 6, we discuss undocumented migrants' use of the internet and social media. In Finland, practically everyone has a mobile phone, internet use is extremely common, and free wi-fi is available in many urban places. Mobile phones, the internet, and social media have become fundamental elements facilitating asylum-related journeys (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a, b) and this relates to asylum seekers' everyday lives: some of them become undocumented migrants afterwards, so their experiences are relevant in the context of this book. Before starting their asylum-related journeys, not all migrants had access to the internet, social media, and mobile phones; however, ultimately, almost everyone must become familiar with these tools, and the digital divides for asylum seekers generally shrank during their journeys. We explored how undocumented migrants used the internet and social media, which of them did not use these tools, and the effects of their use or non-use on the migrants' lives. In addition, we paid attention to the effect of rumours and fake news and information, on the internet and in social media, on undocumented migrants' decisions and actions.

In Chap. 7, we present our conclusions and reflections on our study. We highlight the key theoretical and empirical findings about undocumented migrants in Finland and, more broadly, our contributions to the academic discussion concerning irregular migration and undocumented migrants. We also suggest key topics that should be addressed further in the research and make some recommendations for policymakers and for the undocumented migrants themselves.

When a person has been an undocumented migrant and survived, he/she frequently wants to forget that period. Recollection is never pleasant, although it may have been a life-changing period, for better or worse. In Western societies, very few undocumented migrants rise to positions that give them the opportunity or motivation to read about other undocumented migrants; therefore, undocumented migrants will probably never read this book, in Finland or elsewhere, but if any of them read it, we will be delighted.

The following section presents a short overview of the literature concerning irregular migration. In particular, the section addresses the topics and the relevant

literature that informed the content of the subsequent chapters. Running through the analysis, and connecting the various dimensions of the lives of undocumented migrants, the following topics were prominent: estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in Europe; the challenges that the various definitions of ‘undocumented migrant’ pose; the unofficial in-between spaces that undocumented migrants occupy, defying every attempt at categorisation; the undocumented migrants’ agency and how they fight to survive; their liminal status and how policies contribute to this liminal status; and the creation of semi-regular spaces, and the ‘performances of citizenship’, they construct in order to be recognised and accepted in the host country. Following the literature overview, Sect. 1.3 discusses the specific context and case of Finland and underpins the analysis of the following chapters.

1.2 Overview of the Literature

Any one of us may know an undocumented migrant; however, the majority of people are unaware of this possibility, despite the millions of undocumented migrants who live in Europe and in the rest of the world (Düvell 2011). They often live in the same cities, towns, or villages as ourselves, but we know little about them. Undocumented migrants are poorly, if ever, addressed by national organisations and statistics (Horison 2019) and remain under-researched (Triandafyllidou 2016).

Even when we see undocumented migrants, we rarely recognise them. The migrant might be someone we saw this morning while rushing to the railway station: that young man with a black leather jacket and blue jeans speaking on his mobile phone at the entrance. She might be the young woman with two children, strolling in the park during our daily jog. They might be the middle-aged dishwasher we glimpsed while we paid for dinner in a local restaurant; or the noisy youngsters we never really looked at while hurrying to the mall; or the grey-haired man sitting on the park bench, mumbling something with his eyes half closed. Any or all of them could be undocumented migrants or simply regular residents of our cities and countries.

It is hard to understand how undocumented migrants live if we have never been an undocumented migrant, do not know any undocumented migrants, and/or have not conducted any research about them. Nevertheless, people concerned about contemporary societal challenges read newspaper articles about undocumented migrants and see media broadcasts about their lives, while public authorities dealing with undocumented migrants gain some familiarity with basic aspects of their lives, such as access to shelter, healthcare, and legal assistance. An undocumented migrant without the right to remain in a country (see European Council 2003) has very few rights and must face continual challenges in order to reside in his/her current location. This fact is well known by workers in enforcement agencies with a duty to expel undocumented migrants, politicians who make relevant laws and policies, and activists or compassionate individuals who help undocumented migrants in various ways. Usually they focus on one or two crucial issues in the lives of

undocumented migrants and do their best to ensure that these people can live safely. Activists, policymakers, and members of enforcement agencies, however, rarely have the time and opportunities to fully consider the lives of undocumented migrants, especially the diversity of undocumented migrants and how such diversity is continuously changing and evolving. Moreover, they never have contact with a full range of undocumented migrants. This is what prompted the authorship of this book: the desire to provide them with information about the diversity and challenges of undocumented migrants' lives, founded on research- and evidence-based results and theoretical conceptualisation.

No one knows exactly how many undocumented migrants live in Europe. Moreover, 'reliable statistics on stocks or flows of irregular migrants, the well-being of migrants in irregular situations, or the extent to which they have access to services such as health and education, are generally not available' (IOM 2020). Still, they have become an important social phenomenon, which cannot be ignored and requires revised policies and interventions at the EU, national, and local levels. The Pew Research Center estimated that, in 2017, 'at least 3.9 million unauthorised immigrants – and possibly as many as 4.8 million – lived in Europe' (2019: 4). Removing asylum seekers from these numbers, since they are not strictly unauthorised migrants, there would still be 3–4 million undocumented migrants: around 0.6%–0.8% of the total EU population (see also the *Clandestino* figures; *Clandestino* 2009a, b, 2019; Düvell 2011). Despite efforts to establish an effective counting methodology, the accuracy of these numbers can be contested, and it is evident that the recent growth in the number of such migrants was due to the sudden increase of asylum seekers who arrived in Europe in 2015, when 1.3 million asylum requests were received in the EU (IOM 2020). As a result of this increase of incoming migrants and the fear that their arrivals might continue, asylum policies quickly became a political issue and many EU countries tightened their asylum and immigration policies (Brekke and Staver 2018; Czaika and Hobolt 2016), including Finland (De Haas et al. 2016; Prime Minister's Office of Finland 2015; Saarikkomäki et al. 2018; Wahlbeck 2019). Since 1999, the EU has been working to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and improve the current legislative framework; however, as the post-2015 situation shows, EU asylum policies have in many respects failed. Not all member states adhere to the commonly agreed principles, and not all are willing to share the burden of ongoing asylum requests; therefore, in 2020, the European Commission (EC) proposed a new Pact on Migration and Asylum as a comprehensive European approach to migration, aimed at improving and accelerating procedures throughout the asylum and migration system and ensuring the fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity (European Commission 2020). Its approval and implementation depends on the will of all member states, which is difficult to achieve. However, many organizations fear that this pact would make the asylum seekers' access to the EU even more difficult and their forced return easier and faster.

The access of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to the EU (Finland included) was restricted after 2015, resulting in declining numbers of asylum seekers. In 2018, 638,000 asylum applications (of which 581,000 were first-time

applications) were presented in the EU: about half (50%) of the 2015 number (Eurostat 2019). In Finland, the number of asylum applications in 2018 was around 4500 (14% of that in 2015; Migri 2020). In 2017–2018, almost one million people (866,400) gained asylum in the EU (Eurostat 2019) and, in Finland, more than 8000 decisions (about 1% of the number in the EU) resulted in the applicants receiving asylum or subsidiary protection status. Nevertheless, in 2018, of the initial decisions on asylum applications, 63% in the EU and 57% in Finland, did not lead to asylum or subsidiary protection (Eurostat 2019; Migri 2020). Many rejected asylum seekers did not leave and, consequently, millions of undocumented migrants now live in the EU member states in illegal or semi-legal conditions. The large European countries (Germany, the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, and France) host the majority of undocumented migrants, and many of them come from non-EU countries, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Russia, Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, and Eritrea (Pew Research Center 2019, 15)—troubled countries in which the everyday is overshadowed by various political, social, and economic struggles and conflicts.

Irregular migration is a contemporary phenomenon and it is not likely to go away or to be stopped (Düvell 2012), since countries do not have the resources to apprehend all undocumented migrants and expel them from their territories (Ambrosini 2017; Van Meeteren 2014). The issue of undocumented migrants is particularly tangible as Europe moves into the 2020s. In the EU, it is difficult for many countries to respect the commonly agreed international treaties on migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees (see Czaika and Hobolt 2016; Lavenex 2018; Scipioni 2018; Trauner 2016); hence, such countries have chosen to securitise their borders, making decisions about who can enter and reside within their territories, who should be banned or expelled, and/or whether people can request asylum. The right to stay becomes a shifting political threshold that can be changed expediently; for example, an asylum seeker or undocumented migrant may be expelled if he/she commits a crime, and how severe a crime must be to justify removal may be a political decision. Such a threshold can also be extended to non-native people who have gained the country's citizenship through naturalisation. As a result of committing a crime, their citizenship can also be withdrawn, leading to expulsion.

In some countries, entering or residing without permission is an administrative offence, and in others a criminal offence, but rarely does such an offence mean that the person will be imprisoned (Smith and LeVoy 2017; Triandafyllidou 2016). The EU changed its migration and asylum policies in response to the so-called refugee 'crisis' in 2015. In particular, in 2015, the EU launched the European Agenda on Migration in order to better manage issues such as irregular migration, smuggling, people trafficking, and other problems relating to border control (Czaika and Hobolt 2016). The EU also aimed to facilitate return migration. In various European countries, immigration policies, and especially the asylum process, require from migrants a clear-cut, rational, linear, and coherent account of the reasons why they moved to the country, and how they plan to conduct their lives there (Geiger and Pécout 2013). As Gill (2016) maintained, the inability to provide such clear, organised, and classifiable reasons could result in the rejection of the asylum requests, and consequently, migrants' irregular status. The legal requirements of

the asylum process often clash with the life situations of those migrants (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Feldman 2011), which often include dramatic events, non-linear decisions, incoherent actions, and unresolved psychological traumas (Andersson et al. 2018; Bustamante et al. 2018; Carswell et al. 2011; Silove et al. 1997; Tedeschi 2021a). Overall, in the EU, interventions such as increasingly tight border controls, or the imposition of visa requirements in the latter 2010s, may have increased the number of undocumented migrants, since people flee from one country to another to seek safety and a better life—in the case of this book, in Finland.

These immigrants might have had ‘documents’, even if they are called undocumented – however, they often hide them to avoid deportation (i.e. removal), for example. Asylum seekers might also find themselves with irregular status: ‘People who enter a country without documents and then file an asylum application have an uncertain legal status until their application is processed’ (Triandafyllidou 2016: 5). As mentioned previously, they can become undocumented thereafter, if they do not fulfil the criteria for international protection and/or they do not manage to obtain a residence permit for the host country.

Even an EU citizen can reside in another European country and be irregular in some way: for instance, if the person does not register his/her presence in the country within 90 days, as is the case in some European countries, including Finland. Nevertheless, he/she cannot be expelled for this reason alone. Irregular migration is considered to be unlawful (e.g. unauthorised entry, or entry by deceit or without permission, etc.) and, if detected, it usually triggers a removal order. Many terms are associated with state- and non-state-led policies and practices that try to define these migrants. For undocumented migrants, terms such as irregular migrant, paperless person, *sans-papiers*, or unauthorised migrant, may be used to describe them (Anderson and Ruhs 2010), but usually mean someone who resides in a country without the legal right and proper permission to do so and whose exact location and activities are not usually known to, and registered by, the authorities (Douglas et al. 2019; McBrien 2017; PICUM 2017). Anderson and Ruhs (2010) claimed that academics often call such people ‘irregular’ or ‘unauthorised’ so as to avoid identifying with particular political positions. States, however, tend to call them ‘illegal’, which connects their non-regular status with border policies and the protection of the security of nations. Conversely, some members of the civil society, including NGOs, prefer to call them ‘undocumented’, ‘paperless’, or ‘*sans-papiers*’, indicating their sympathy for these people (Bendixsen 2017) and stressing their vulnerable position as potential victims of human trafficking and exploitation, as well as their deprivation of basic rights (such as access to public services, or to the official job and housing markets). Scholars have increasingly emphasised the need to consider undocumented migration more ‘as a phenomenon to be studied rather than as a problem to be solved’ (De Genova 2002; see also Anderson and Ruhs 2010). In this sense, going in the direction of opening up to the rich nuances and complexities of this phenomenon, Düvell (2008: 487) points out how publications often offer only a simple dichotomy implying that an immigrant is either legal or illegal, but the reality is much more complex. In general, there are three aspects that determine an

immigrant's status: entry, residence and employment. Each aspect can be regular or irregular and various combinations are possible.

As it is apparent from the above, the definition of undocumented migrant is far from clear and definite criteria are hard to find. This is because, as McAuliffe and Koser (2017: 344) explain, 'irregularity is not a fixed experience – regular migrants may become irregular, irregular migrants may be regularised'. Therefore, being irregular and undocumented is an ontologically 'in-becoming' status (MRCI 2007) and, in this sense, any attempt to define it is likely to fail. The authors also asserted that the phenomenon is, *per se*, multifaceted. People move for different reasons, using different means of transportation, and choosing paths that are rarely predictable. This further adds to the complexity of the phenomenon, and the lack of data does not help in disentangling such a conundrum; therefore, when studying the phenomenon, the context is of the utmost importance (McAuliffe and Koser 2017). On the contrary, general, fixed, and one-fits-all categories, as well as universal concepts and theories, are likely to fail when applied to irregular migration and undocumented migrants. In this, and other, migration contexts, 'terminological distinctions are often vague and limited in usefulness' (Taylor 2017: 3). More specifically, within the binary logics of regular/irregular or legal/illegal, which are commonly applied to these people by nation-states, there are numerous permutations that can barely account for the real lives of undocumented migrants. In fact, irregular migration is produced by law-based immigration systems, which determine status (legal/illegal) according to a person's movements and residency (Dauvergne 2008). For Könönen (2020), without immigration regulations, there would be no legal or irregular migration; only human mobility. Anderson and Ruhs tried to move away from the dichotomies by using a third term—the notion of compliance:

Compliant migrants are legally resident and working in full compliance with the conditions of their immigration status. Non-compliant migrants are those without the rights to reside in the host country. Semi-compliance indicates a situation where a migrant is legally resident, but working in violation of some or all of the conditions (Anderson and Ruhs 2006: 2).

Whatever term is used to define this population, it is certain that their lives remains in fact in a fluctuating state of 'in-between categories' (Sarausad 2019), which allows for the creation of semi-legal (Kubal 2013) and semi-regular spaces, and practices of agency and citizenship, which seriously challenge the politics of borders and the above-mentioned binary logics. The latter tend 'to reduce the complexity of human life into a stripped down plan, the pursuit and realisation of which subsequently results in the sidelining of the everyday stuff of life itself' (Gill 2016: 141). The lived spaces (Lefebvre 1991) of migrants, which are composed of non-linear events, actions, dreams, and decisions that support survival, can be set against such abstract conceptualisations of space. In a more or less explicit fashion, all the above-mentioned works examined irregular migration, not as a static phenomenon, but rather as an evolving process of becoming, involving multiple varying and often contradictory dimensions. The latter are materialised (and can be observed) in migrants' everyday relationships and survival micropractices: their survival strategies, labour, semi/illegal activities, social networks, precarious living

conditions, practices of agency, and similar (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). All these dimensions, applied to the Finnish context, will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Furthermore, scholars have been investigating the phenomenon of irregular migration in its multiple facets, such as (immigration) policies on undocumented migrants (Czaika and Hobolt 2016; Triandafyllidou and Dimintriadi 2014; Van der Leun 2006), the controversial issues surrounding their citizenship (Nordling et al. 2017), their agency (Hellgren 2014; Mainwaring 2016; Schweitzer 2017), and their capacity to fight back despite the hardships they encounter, to mention but a few. Empirical research has scrutinised the living conditions of undocumented migrants to shed light on elements such as vulnerability (Schweitzer 2017), exploitation (Bloch et al. 2009), the use of social media (Dekker and Engbersen 2014), traumatic experiences (Bustamante et al. 2018; Priebe et al. 2016), sometimes-limited social relationships (Sigona 2012), precarious mental and physical conditions (Muntaner et al. 2010), and practices of agency (Sigona 2012; Triandafyllidou 2017). The livelihoods of undocumented migrants have also been thoroughly considered in numerous ethnographic studies (e.g. Fontanari 2017; Khosravi 2010a, 2010b; Picozza 2017). These scholarly works have shown that the everyday livelihoods of these individuals are heavily affected by structural frameworks, welfare and migration regimes (Ambrosini 2013), and the formality/informality of labour markets (Hellgren 2014), as well as the institutional/political structures in different national contexts (Koopmans et al. 2005). This may give rise to the growth of semi/illegal activities in order to survive (Ambrosini 2018), mostly linked to the extensive social networks and informal relationships that undocumented migrants rely on when trying to settle in a country (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021).

While migrants' spaces and practices have often been reported and analysed in the international literature, in relation to underlying general concepts such as agency, citizenship, and liminality, which resonate with these practices, every European country and, within it, every urban context is different, and this must be carefully considered when applying those concepts to, and/or setting up and evaluating classifications and taxonomies of, the irregular migration phenomenon (Tedeschi 2021c). With our research, we aimed to set up theoretical conceptualisations (paying particular attention to migrants' ontological condition of living in-between categories, their agency, their ability to create semi-legal spaces, and their survival), but fine-tuned and modified according to the actual context of Finland, and specifically focusing on rejected asylum seekers. We aimed to capture various dimensions of the everyday practices of undocumented migrants, and how they survive through hardships and find new ways to make ends meet in the host countries (Finland, in this case). Such attention to the context also showed that formulating effective policies and implementing them universally at the international, national, and local levels, can be extremely difficult. Nevertheless, 'cities and local communities are important sites wherein actual migration management is practically taking place on a day to day basis' (Triandafyllidou and Ricard-Guay 2019: 123).

The majority of undocumented migrants live in an in-between condition of liminality, unable to either arrive or stay and, in a few cases, even leave (Tsoni 2016): 'Liminal legality is neither an undocumented status nor a documented one but

may instead have the characteristics of both' (Ambrosini 2018: 5–6). There are, for instance, situations in which the migrants cannot be deported (i.e. removed to their former home countries), despite their presence being unrecognised as legal in the destination country. In the majority of cases, the condition of liminality involves the always-present possibility of being deported—which Gibney (2008) rightly referred to as a deportation turnaround in democratic states (see also Anderson et al. 2011)—and hence the constant precariousness of everyday life for undocumented migrants (De Genova 2002; Moffette 2018). Undocumented migrants are forced to live invisible in-between lives (Menjívar 2006) and build a society parallel, and unknown, to the official one: 'Implementation of laws under the current immigration regime makes immigrants occupying liminal legal statuses vulnerable to blocked social mobility, persistent fear of deportation, and instability, confusion, and self-blame' (Abrego and Lakhani 2015: 266). This makes them 'wear masks' (i.e. assume different identities in order to survive): they may be 'becoming animals, becoming women, becoming amphibious, becoming imperceptible' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2008: 224). These very liminal situations are the consequence of a series of political constructs and interventions that have emerged only recently, since people have been mobile throughout history: 'The basic juridical apparatus necessary to classify systematically international mobility in terms of a legal/illegal distinction is less than a century old' (Cvajner and Sciortino 2010: 390). Indeed, irregularity per se 'should primarily be seen as deliberately produced by certain state authorities and laws, rather than being the consequence of individual migrants' actions in neglect or violation of immigration restrictions' (Schweitzer 2017: 318):

The false belief in the existence of a fair and equitable immigration system is then used to further the production of 'illegality' by juxtaposing the good migrant who 'fairly' applied for immigration authorisation with the undocumented migrant who 'cheated' or is attempting to 'cheat' the system by jumping the proverbial immigration queue (Villegas 2010: 151).

Moreover, the condition of "illegality" is produced, not only by institutions like the police and the immigration authorities, but also by officials in education, health, and housing and by private employers or landlords, who all verify migration documents (Khosravi 2010a: 96). Liminal situations are therefore created ad hoc by control micropractices at the local level (Bendixsen 2018), or even at EU borders (in Greece, to cite but one), where people are kept with undecided status for long periods of time, with the idea of guaranteeing the flexible governance of migration. In this way, however, what is created is in reality 'a new form of governance that further disentangles territory from rights' (Papoutsi et al. 2019: 2200); thus, irregular migration, per se, turns out to be a political construct and its 'governance . . . is not simply about managing in a restrictive way population movements, but it is constitutive of the very phenomenon of irregular migration' (Triandafyllidou and Ricard-Guay 2019: 115). Political constructs and the obsession for dual categorisations and binary logics (regular/irregular, legal/illegal, etc.) in migration policies are what Crawley and Skleparis (2018) called 'categorical fetishism', which leads to practical consequences in terms of the sociopolitical, working, health, and living conditions (Moffette 2018) of undocumented migrants.

Undocumented migrants' political rights are very limited, so they cannot vote in the place or country where they reside. Despite the fact that there are millions of them in Europe, and hundreds of thousands in several EU member states, many restrictions prevent them from organising themselves as a group to demand political rights (Varsanyi 2006). Some have access to work and are employed, but rarely in work that aligns with their background education and experience. Instead, they have to work long hours and are often paid substantially less than natives, if they are paid at all (Sigona 2012). For such jobs, they do not necessarily pay taxes, but they may be obliged to pay a commission to the person who organises the job and ensures that such work (legal, in principle) is not revealed because there are irregularities in its conduct. The employment conditions and situations of undocumented migrants in countries outside Europe and North America are often even worse (for example, Afghans in Iran; see Jauhiainen and Eyvazlu 2018). Undocumented migrants rarely have work-related health insurance or other general access to healthcare. Health services might be offered to them, at least in cases of emergency, if they know about and dare to use them (Bloch 2014; World Health Organisation 2017). Some need to change their place of residence every night, which forces them to be constantly mobile. Others hide in one place and do not go outside at all. Some move around, but try to remain unnoticed while doing so. Sigona (2012: 56–57) mentioned how 'undocumented migrants soon learn to be cautious, to navigate through the city without being visible, "to be streetwise"'. Still, many of them try to be just 'ordinary people' with simple wishes: to live safe, meaningful lives with family and work. Undocumented migrants must live in the system, yet remain outside of it at the same time: again, they live undefined in-between lives. Their lives are determined by short-term practices (Bendixsen 2018; De Certeau 1984) that might eventually become long-term experiences guaranteeing their survival in countries that are rejecting them. They need to sleep, eat, work, and possibly enjoy some leisure time, but only in the shadow of the system—the system we call a welfare society, neoliberal society, or any kind of society. This is what being undocumented means—being visible in principle, but invisible in practice:

In/visibility is a condition that is sometimes imposed on migrants and minorities, for example, in the media or in everyday interactions with persons belonging to the majority; in other instances, it is something that the individuals or the groups strive for' (Leinonen and Toivanen 2014: 164).

On the other hand, recognition of undocumented migrants' rights through ad hoc policies might lead to unwelcome visibility, intensifying mechanisms of repression (Tervonen et al. 2018), or far-right violent reactions.

Despite all this, the unofficial, in-between lived spaces that they occupy in their everyday survival practices and strategies make them individuals with proper agency, as the vast literature on the topic has already demonstrated. Undocumented migrants have their own agency, despite their activities being constrained by many external factors:

Irregular migrants are able, albeit with much more existential difficulties, to generate income through work, find places to sleep, fall in love (and sometimes reproduce and raise children),

establish personal relationships, buy household appliances and even represent themselves in the public space (Cvajner and Sciortino 2010: 398).

While scrutinising immigration policies, their binary logics, their fixed classifications and taxonomies, and their effects in the everyday lives of these migrants remain a compelling topic, the focus should be less on the former and more on the latter (Schweitzer 2017): ‘Policies and intermediaries thus become hurdles to overcome, costs to assess, or opportunities to seize, while the focus remains on the human agent rather than on the policy and its effectiveness’ (Triandafyllidou 2017: 3). In this sense, Mainwaring (2016) noted how obscuring migrants’ agency actually serves the politics of borders and the alleged security of nation-states: indeed, active migrants might be classified as villains, or as a threat to security, whereas depicting them as passive victims, without agency, reinforces control. We are again facing a binary logic (active/passive), which fails to describe the actual agency of these people. Going beyond the binary logics and rigid classifications, Mainwaring showed how ‘at the micro level, they [the migrants] negotiate their mobility and contest migration controls, sometimes circumventing or even subverting them; in the aggregate, these flows of people are politically powerful’ (2016: 19). Migrants are thus powerful enough to create spaces for themselves between legality and illegality. Indeed, ‘many of their everyday (inter)actions, claims and decisions – from making friends to accessing public services – are premised on, as well as reflect, their being (at least partially) recognised not only as *de facto* members of society but often also as subjects of politics’ (Schweitzer 2017: 320). Similarly, Hellgren called this the social membership of undocumented migrants, ‘which refers to actual participation in society, for example integration into the local neighbourhood and labour market, regardless of legal status’ (2014: 1177). Indeed, lately, some ‘irregular migrants as political actors have also gained a greater presence in the public sphere’ (Sager 2018: 175). Rather than focusing on the policies that construct these migrants as passive political subjects, this gives a voice to them, their willingness to fight back, their construction of interstitial spaces, and their hidden, but nonetheless real, agency and capacity to act.

By emphasising the creation of semi-legal spaces, and the actual agency of undocumented migrants, rather than the policies affecting them (as if they were passive actors), it is possible to highlight how they creatively perform ‘experiments of citizenship’ whereby, through their practices, they find ways to survive in host countries (Ambrosini 2016; Datta et al. 2007) and to ‘escape the pervasive politics of representation, rights and visibility’ (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2008: 224). McNevin noted how, in France, the undocumented migrants’ ‘demonstrations, occupations . . . have been marked by a distinct cultural presence that includes foreign-language placards, music, dress, and performance’ (2011: 107). Other scholars have talked about informal citizenship, whereby the involvement of undocumented migrants in various official activities and institutions—again, their creation of semi-regular spaces—and/or their contribution to an underground economy make them *de facto* citizens (Chauvin and Garcés-Masareñas 2014; Sassen 2002). These in-between spaces can also be created ‘through acts of solidarity between citizens

and undocumented migrants as they act together to resist control of migration' (Nordling et al. 2017: 3). It has also been recognised how many times undocumented migrants actively fight their current conditions to try to achieve better ones and to actively construct their subjecthood (Grønseth 2013; Strange et al. 2017). All these struggles, as Nordling et al. (2017) recognised, might be actual enactments of citizenship, regardless of the binary logics and classifications confining them to the restricted realms of illegality and irregularity.

As previously mentioned, context remains of paramount importance for understanding the phenomenon of irregular migration. Most research on undocumented migrants has been conducted in countries with certain commonalities. Firstly, the number of undocumented migrants is absolutely and/or relatively high in some European countries, such as Germany and the UK. The United States (US) has also long been a country in which many studies about undocumented migrants have been conducted. In recent years, the political debates concerning the border between the US and Mexico, unauthorised migration to the US, and the rights of undocumented Mexican people in the US, have become very significant social and political topics, and have attracted the attention of scholars (see Cornelius 2008; Gonzales et al. 2019; Massey et al. 2016; McThomas 2016; Slack et al. 2016). Issues concerning undocumented migrants have, however, become strongly evident elsewhere in the world, in Latin America, Asia, Africa, as well as in some less-developed countries. While irregular migration and undocumented migrants in less-developed countries are important topics, they are not discussed in this book. The growing presence of migrants, and the political debates and social movements concerning them, are shaping the social borders between regular and irregular migrants, as well as between migrants and the wider society, thus changing the self-representation of undocumented migrants and their connections to citizenship and membership for example in the US society (see Batzke 2018).

Recently, the topic of undocumented migrants has become more visible in northern Europe as well. Scholars have particularly addressed the healthcare issues of undocumented migrants in, for example, Sweden (see Andersson et al. 2018; Nordling et al. 2017; Wahlström Smith 2018) and Norway (see Bendixsen 2019; Myhrvold and Småstuen 2019; Onarheim et al. 2018). Paradoxically, undocumented migrants appear to experience greater hardship in advanced welfare states, such as Scandinavian countries, which apply strict immigration controls (Bendixsen 2018; Faist 1993), and have strongly regulated labour markets, than in Southern Europe, which by contrast has a higher degree of institutional informality (Arango and Jachimowicz 2005). Düvell (2011) demonstrated that, when a country applies strict immigration rules, the number of undocumented migrants in that country increases. This was the case in Finland. Indeed, in 2016 there was a legal turnaround, with immigration regulations becoming stricter than in the past (Aer 2016). Because of these changes in the law, it has become harder for asylum seekers to gain asylum in Finland (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021), which has increased the number of undocumented migrants. The possibilities to extend the temporary residence permit became also more difficult. Furthermore, the punitive application of immigration law to

foreign offenders plays a significant role in the production of deportable and undocumented migrants (Könönen 2020).

1.3 The Context of Finland

Regarding undocumented migrants, Finland has many similarities with other Western European countries from the administrative and legal perspectives. As a member of the EU since 1995, the national legislative framework and policies in Finland connect to EU-level directives, regulations, and policies. Officially abolishing border controls for mobility within the Schengen Area has facilitated mobility to and from Finland within the EU member states, including the mobility of undocumented migrants. The absolute number and relative proportion of undocumented migrants in Finland are small and, therefore, the national and local authorities' experiences with them are rather limited. Finland thus differs substantially from many Western European countries. As emphasised in this book, each country has a specific context evolving over time. Sometimes, similar laws and policies regarding undocumented migrants are executed differently with different results; therefore, when examining the control and governance of irregular migration and the everyday lives of undocumented migrants in Finland, contextual particularities must be considered. The following paragraphs present key contextual factors to illustrate the circumstances of undocumented migrants in Finland, and these settings and topics are elaborated in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

The first contextual factor derives from the geography of Finland. It is, territorially, a rather large European country (338,000 square kilometres; i.e. 10% larger than Italy and 40% larger than the UK), but it has only 5.5 million inhabitants (i.e. only 9% of the number in Italy and 8% of that in the UK); therefore, the average population density in most parts of Finland is very low, at 1–10 people per square kilometre, especially in central, eastern, and northern Finland. Scattered villages in these areas usually have only hundreds of inhabitants, and the few towns have populations of tens of thousands. Finland is also a very northern country, meaning that winters are cold and long: the northernmost parts are covered by snow for half the year and, even in the southernmost regions, the average daily low temperatures fall below freezing point for 4 months annually. These basic geographical aspects of Finland differ substantially from many Southern and Western European countries, framing everyday life opportunities for undocumented migrants in Finland; for example, everyone (including undocumented migrants) needs to live in a heated building.

The second (crucial) contextual factor is the demography of Finland. The composition of Finland's population has generally been, and has been perceived as, very homogenous until recently. The indigenous Sami population (less than 0.2% of the national population) and the Roma minority (Finnish Kale; less than 0.2% of the national population) in Finland both speak the Finnish language. Other long-term minorities in Finland, such as Tatars and Jews, are very few. Furthermore, in 1990,

Table 1.1 People with foreign backgrounds in Finland, 1990–2018

	1990	2000	2010	2018
Total born abroad	32,800	99,000	202,400	335,400
Total born in Finland	4800	14,300	34,600	67,200
Overall total	37,600	113,200	237,100	402,600
Born abroad—Foreign mother tongue	20,700	85,200	189,700	323,700
Born in Finland—Foreign mother tongue	1200	8900	25,800	54,400
Total	21,900	94,100	205,500	378,100

Source: Statistics Finland (2019)

across the whole country, there were less than 40,000 people with foreign backgrounds (people with one parent or both parents born abroad), totalling 0.8% of the population, and only half of them had a mother tongue other than Finnish.

Later, the size of the foreign-background population in Finland grew rapidly, to 113,000 people (2.2%) in 2000, 237,000 people (4.4%) in 2010, and 403,000 people (7.3%) in 2018—more than a tenfold increase in three decades (Table 1.1). This recent rapid growth of the foreign-background population has also encouraged certain right-wing political parties and their supporters to be openly hostile toward refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants. In addition, the country's short experience of people with slightly different outlooks, according to Keskinen and co-workers (2018), has contributed to the current situation, in which those belonging to ethnic minorities in Finland are subject to surveillance by several agencies, resulting in unwanted police stop and ethnic profiling in their everyday environments. Such scrutiny affects the everyday lives, mobility, and locations of undocumented migrants in Finland.

In addition, the geographic distribution of the foreign-background population is very uneven in Finland. In the northern, eastern, and central parts of Finland, the foreign background residents in rural municipalities account for only 1–2% of their populations. In many municipalities, there are often only tens of such individuals, if not fewer. Consequently, in practice, it is very unlikely that an undocumented migrant, or any foreigner or a Finn from outside of these communities, would remain unnoticed there. In Finland, therefore, an undocumented migrant can find easier hiding places and a bigger reference group in the capital and in some larger southern Finnish towns, where there are more people with non-Finnish backgrounds. Internationally, the only major urban area in Finland is the capital, Helsinki, and its surroundings, with roughly 1.5 million inhabitants, of which about half live in Helsinki itself. There, the average proportion of the foreign-background population is about 15% (around 250,000 people in total; i.e. more than half of all foreign-background people in Finland). In particular, almost four out of five (78%) all Somalis, more than half (54%) of all Iraqis, and almost half (45%) of all Afghans in Finland live in the capital (Tilastokeskus 2020). These are also the nationalities contributing to the largest numbers of undocumented migrants in Finland. Outside the capital, there are six large towns with 100,000–250,000 inhabitants, each having 10,000–30,000 inhabitants with foreign backgrounds. In some neighbourhoods of

the capital and the largest towns, 30–40% of the population has a foreign background; however, the local ethnic diversity is large. More than 100 nationalities live in Helsinki and other large towns, making each ethnic group rather small (Heino and Jauhiainen 2020).

The third contextual factor is the small number of undocumented migrants. This is not surprising, because Finland is a remote northern country with a small population and few foreign-born people. Nevertheless, there have always been ‘mobile’ people of foreign or unknown backgrounds in the country over the last 100 years of independence, and for decades they comprised only a few hundred people, excluding the war years. As discussed in Sects. 3.3 and 5.3 in more detail, about 14% of Finnish municipalities have recently noted undocumented migrants living in their territories—mostly in and around the large towns. Many smaller municipalities have less than 10 undocumented migrants; only in a few large towns are there hundreds and, in Helsinki, perhaps more than 1000 (see Jauhiainen et al. 2018, 2019).

The arrival of undocumented migrants in Finland was facilitated by the rather easy access from Sweden and Norway, simply by crossing the land border. For decades, the citizens of Nordic countries have had visa-free access to Finland, with no official formalities. The southern neighbour Estonia (which has no land border, but instead a sea passage of 80 km between the two countries) has belonged to the EU since 2004, and currently both Sweden and Estonia inhabit the Schengen Area; however, the eastern border (the longest national external border of the EU) with Russia, and previously the Soviet Union, has always been strongly secured and guarded, in practice preventing irregular migration to Finland.

Compared with many Western European countries, the absolute number of the visa overstaying population in Finland is small and its share of undocumented migrants is rather low (Könönen 2020), as is also the case in Sweden (Andersson et al. 2018). In the past 10 years, there have been more cases of overstaying EU citizens in Finland. These have been mainly Roma from Bulgaria and Romania (unable to register their stays due to insufficient funds to remain in Finland), or some Estonians staying longer in Finland for family or employment reasons (but not bothering or wishing to register their stays in Finland) (Könönen 2020). EU citizens (even the visa overstaying ones) usually have the means to become legal residents in Finland; thus, they do not belong to the category of undocumented migrants. According to the Ministry of the Interior and the health authorities, in the early 2010s, the number of undocumented migrants in Finland was estimated to be around 3000–3500 people (Keskimäki et al. 2014; Sisäministeriö 2012; see also Asa 2011). In western neighbouring Sweden, there were ten times as many, whereas in Estonia there were very few, (perhaps less than a tenth of the number in Finland). Such differences derived partly from the differences in the migration, asylum, and naturalisation policies of the respective countries during the past decades: compared with Finland, Sweden has been much more open (although becoming stricter following the 2015 immigration; see Krzyżanowski 2018) and Estonia has been much less open to foreign arrivals.

During the past two decades, around 3000–5000 people annually have requested asylum in Finland. In 2015, however, an eightfold growth occurred, compared to the

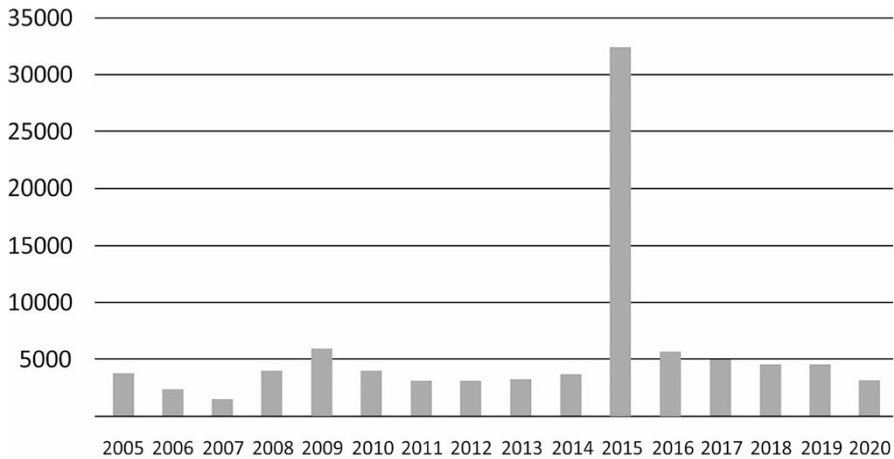


Fig. 1.1 Asylum applications in Finland, 2005–2020 (Source: Migri (2020))

year before (Fig. 1.1). EU countries received 1.3 million asylum applications and, of those, 32,477 were in Finland (about 2.5% of all applications in the EU). Of this latter number, over 20,000 were presented by Iraqi nationals, and this number in Finland was, after Germany, the second largest in the EU (Jauhiainen 2017). The sudden arrival of such a large number of people was a surprise to the Finnish authorities, so the asylum system became backlogged and the asylum process slowed. In 2020, the number of asylum applications in Finland became much lower than in the previous years, mainly due to the COVID-19-related lockdowns creating major challenges for asylum seekers (see Sect. 3.4).

As discussed in the following, and in detail in Sects. 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, many asylum applications were rejected in 2016 and 2017, but not all rejected asylum seekers wanted to leave Finland. Many appealed to the Administrative and even Supreme Administrative Courts and/or submitted subsequent asylum applications based on different or more precise grounds, thus prolonging their legitimate stay in Finland. Regardless of petitions, thousands of asylum seekers were rejected from 2016 onwards; an entry ban was announced for them, but many did not leave Finland. They—mainly youngish Iraqi men—became undocumented migrants, sometimes called the ‘new paperless’ (*uuspaperittomat* in Finnish) in the media. In addition, in 2015–2018, about 7400 people ‘disappeared’ from the asylum process: they left the process unfinished and the authorities did not know whether they had left Finland (Yle.fi 2019). A particularity of Iraqi former asylum seekers was that their removal to Iraq became difficult, because many did not have the valid personal identification documents required for international travel and the Iraqi authorities were, in any case, reluctant to receive them (see Sect. 3.3). To a lesser extent, similar challenges were faced by some rejected Afghan asylum seekers; therefore, the number of undocumented migrants inevitably started to increase. In early 2019, we estimated that around 4000–4500 undocumented migrants were living in

Finland. This included 3000–3500 rejected asylum seekers, of whom up to two out of three were Iraqi nationals, mostly men (for details of the estimation and composition of undocumented migrants, see Sects. 3.4 and 4.2). Some other estimates deemed the number of undocumented migrants to be between 3000 and 10,000 (Diakonissalaitos 2019), but the higher number included visa overstayers and similar as well as asylum seekers disappeared from the asylum system.

Ultimately, no one—not the government, the ministries, the Finnish Migration Service Migri, the police, local authorities, NGOs, or scholars—knew precisely how many undocumented migrants were living in Finland, who they were, what they did and would like to do, or how to solve the challenges of undocumented migrants in the country in ways that would satisfy the migrants themselves, local communities, and the broader society. The people who had no right to stay and reside in Finland (mainly rejected asylum seekers, but also those who came to Finland without permission) became the main empirical source for this book (see Sects. 2.3 and 2.4). The lives of undocumented migrants in Finland are not unique, but have commonalities with the experiences of undocumented migrants living in other countries (see also Tedeschi 2021a), as well as differences, as discussed throughout this book. Furthermore, the analysis showed how difficult it is to provide a ‘universal’ definition of an undocumented migrant (McAuliffe and Koser 2017), and the extent to which the differences between the various ‘types’ of migrants become blurred in real life.

The fourth contextual factor is the political and social reaction to the growing number of undocumented migrants. As mentioned, the law in Finland does not explicitly use the term ‘undocumented migrant’. Instead, it defines, in a reverse way, who has the right to stay and reside in Finland (those with a fixed-term or permanent residence permit or those with Finnish citizenship; see Sect. 3.2). Those who do not have the legal right to remain in Finland are indeed undocumented migrants (i.e. people residing illegally in Finland).

Undocumented migrants became a topic frequently discussed in the national and local media in Finland after 2015. There is a specific social configuration (Elias 1981) in Finland in terms of irregular migration. Many undocumented migrants are rejected asylum seekers who have had extensive contact with the state and local authorities and many organisations that provide help to asylum seekers. This has created challenges for the media, authorities, and the general public in distinguishing the terminology for, and practices of, refugees from those relating to asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. The media, and especially social media, are laden with anecdotal information and comments regarding this group of people and their lives in Finland. Numerous articles and news reports have been published since 2015 about undocumented migrants in the two most widely distributed newspapers: the daily *Helsingin Sanomat* and the evening paper *Ilta-Sanomat*, although sometimes confusing them in the articles with refugees, asylum seekers, or other immigrants. Through this mediatisation, the issue became politicised. Many political parties have attempted to gain more voters by asking for stricter policies against irregular migration to Finland. In the summer of 2019, True Finns, the country’s most anti-immigrant political party (which especially opposes undocumented migrants)

became the most popular in the polls among the electorate in Finland (Tamminen 2019). In Finland, as elsewhere in contemporary Europe, very few political parties have actively tried to support undocumented migrants in becoming full members of society. Instead, in the spring of 2016, the national government pushed for stricter asylum and immigration policies, including more restrictions and requirements for arriving migrants. Such a political move was excused as harmonising the Finnish national asylum and immigration policies with the EU ones. As indicated, at the same time, such policies were being tightened in many other EU member states (Brekke and Staver 2018; Czaika and Hobolt 2016; De Haas et al. 2016; Prime Minister's Office of Finland 2015; Saarikkomäki et al. 2018; Wahlbeck 2019). One immediate concrete result in Finland was that the asylum acceptance rate for Iraqi men (the largest group of asylum seekers) decreased substantially from 2015 (84%) to 2016 (24%). To justify such a sudden change, Migri, the national authority responsible for asylum application decisions, claimed that applications' grounds and profiles of Iraqi men differed greatly between 2015 and 2016; however, a later independent analysis showed that no major differences existed in the Iraqi applicants' backgrounds and asylum application arguments between 2015 and 2016—Migri simply interpreted evidence given by asylum seekers differently (Saarikkomäki et al. 2018). Later, Migri was revealed to have had many difficulties processing asylum applications, especially in 2015–2017, which led to inconsistencies in its asylum decisions (see Sect. 3.3).

Furthermore, in 2016, the national authorities (an inter-ministerial working group) established national guidelines for public authorities on dealing with undocumented migrants. It was expressed very clearly that the presence of these migrants in Finland was illegal. They had no right to reside or work in Finland, but certain (minimum) services needed to be provided for them (Sisäministeriö 2016; see Sect. 5.1 for details). The authorities also suggested using the term 'illegal immigrant' (in Finnish, *laiton maahanmuuttaja*). The possibilities for undocumented migrants to be informally employed in Finland became much harder than for many of those living in larger Western European countries (see Sect. 4.4). Finland has a rather small foreign-background population; hence, the labour participation rate of immigrants and refugees (especially those from sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, and Iraq) in Finland is substantially smaller than that of Finns (see City of Helsinki 2019), indicating structural challenges for their integration into the labour market, and the labour force in many typical sectors (such as construction) in which undocumented migrants are employed in Western European countries has, in Finland, provided only limited informal employment opportunities for undocumented migrants.

As discussed, undocumented migrants (especially rejected asylum seekers remaining in Finland) have been rather few in Finland; hence, over the years, they have not raised local or national concerns, with the possible exception of some national security-related authorities and more right-wing political parties and their supporters. By the mid-2010s, therefore, no uniform practices had developed in Finland regarding how to deal with them in important sectors such as healthcare, social welfare, and education. Nevertheless, as in many Western European countries,

according to the legal framework, emergency healthcare was made available for all undocumented migrants, undocumented migrants had the right to request social benefit support if they needed it, and undocumented migrants' children had access to free primary education (see Sects. 4.5, 5.1 and 5.2). Due to public service deficits, NGOs and private individuals started to offer support to undocumented migrants in their everyday lives, in this way helping them to create semi-legal spaces of survival and counter state migration control (Nordling et al. 2017). Several NGOs thus currently help undocumented migrants with health, accommodation, and legal issues, and this practice is tolerated by the authorities, including the police. There is even, sometimes, competition over who can help these migrants and in what ways, even though this help does not, and cannot, cover all aspects of their lives.

Regarding the governance of undocumented migrants and the implementation of national legislation and policies, it is important to note that local authorities in Finland possess substantial autonomy. National authorities cannot dictate the organisation of key services such as healthcare and education, the practical provision of which is the duty of local authorities. There is room for manoeuvre at local levels, resulting in local differences in service provision for undocumented migrants (see Sect. 3.3 and Chap. 5). While the minimum services are defined by the law, local authorities may provide additional services. In fact, the City Council of Helsinki decided, in 2017, to extend the provision of healthcare services to adult undocumented migrants. Helsinki and a few other large towns had already decided that underage and pregnant undocumented migrants would have a similar right to healthcare as registered inhabitants of these localities. Nevertheless, there were, and continue to be, differences between the principles and practices of law. As discussed in Sects. 4.5, 5.2 and 5.3, not all undocumented migrants can use these services and not all local authorities know how to provide them.

The fifth contextual factor is that undocumented migrants have not been studied extensively in Finland. Prior to this study, no comprehensive research was conducted on undocumented migrants and their everyday lives in Finland. Very few researchers have addressed undocumented migrants, and usually only within a narrow scope (Keskimäki et al. 2014; Kynsilehto and Puumala 2017; Könönen 2018a, 2018b, 2020; Leppäkorpi 2011; Ollus et al. 2013; Tervonen and Enache 2017; Tervonen et al. 2018; Thomsen and Jørgensen 2012). Recognising such a research gap, scholars started to publish scientific articles about the topic (e.g. Gadd and Lehtikunnas 2019; Jauhiainen 2017; Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019; Jauhiainen et al. 2018; Heino and Jauhiainen 2020; Tedeschi 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Undocumented migrants are not yet recognised as a major social issue in Finland and it is difficult to obtain related research funding and gain recognition that research about the topic is needed to underpin sustainable evidence-based policies.

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Chapter 2

Conducting Research About Undocumented Migrants



2.1 Introduction

Conducting research about undocumented migrants is invariably challenging. Very rarely is accurate information and comprehensive statistical data on their demographic, economic, and social situations available. Even their total numbers and locations in towns, regions, or countries are unlikely to be known for certain. In addition, the methodological approaches and methods used to study undocumented migrants require profound reflection (Düvell et al. 2010).

Public authorities tend to gather specific, but sparse, information on undocumented migrants. They might be covered to a certain extent in national censuses, but such information quickly becomes obsolete. Undocumented migrants are part of an irregular migration phenomenon that very seldom follows linear development stages. Some countries, such as Germany, collect longitudinal systematic survey data on refugees and asylum seekers, which may contain information that can be extended to undocumented migrants (Brücker et al. 2019). Even in Germany, however, the number of undocumented migrants is low compared with asylum seekers or refugees; hence, gathering survey data among such small populations of asylum-related migrants means that relatively few respond to the surveys. Even national census estimations can be inaccurate (see, for example, Fazel-Zarandi et al. (2018) and Capps et al. (2018) regarding the number of undocumented migrants in the US, and the Pew Research Center (2019) for the situation in Europe).

In 2019, the US-based Pew Research Center utilised four methods (residual, demographic, regularisation, and proportional ratio) to estimate the unauthorised immigrant population in Europe. Among unauthorised migrants, they included—rather controversially— asylum seekers, who (at least temporally) had a legal right to reside in the EU (although some countries, such as Hungary and Greece, have recently limited the general right to request asylum). Removing the number of asylum seekers from estimated populations, one can utilise these methods to estimate the number of undocumented migrants in the EU in situations where there is no

reliable information about their number (see also Clandestino 2009a, b, 2019; Düvell 2011).

In all countries, police and other enforcement authorities usually have more accurate data on undocumented migrants, but it is rarely openly available for research purposes. Activists and NGOs are in touch with undocumented migrants, and they might have good local estimates of the numbers in the areas in which they operate; however, they are often reluctant to provide information, even for researchers. Their reasons vary from safeguarding undocumented migrants to personal gatekeeping interests. Journalists usually provide snapshot newspaper articles based on very few interviews with undocumented migrants and/or experts studying them; hence, they rarely have any means to estimate the number of undocumented migrants. In most countries, scholars conduct research about undocumented migrants, but they usually focus on narrow topics, do not study entire populations, and seldom make their data publicly available. In addition, even when they have good estimates of the undocumented populations, it can take years for their empirical research results to be published in peer-reviewed journals.

Stakeholders have different positions and viewpoints regarding undocumented migrants. Researchers therefore have to rely (or not rely) on incomplete secondary data and try to roughly estimate (from various sources, reports, and articles) their numbers, backgrounds, and situations—or conduct empirical field research themselves. This is the situation in Finland, except that, so far, very little research has been conducted about undocumented migrants, and the national and local public authorities possess very little information about them.

In this chapter, we discuss the methodological challenges of conducting research about undocumented migrants, especially in situations in which only limited previous data is available and undocumented migrants are particularly cautious about attempts to study them. As future guidance for other researchers and students, this chapter explains in detail how we conducted our own study about undocumented migrants in Finland. To underpin our methodological choices, we applied other scholars' research in the field (see, for instance, Düvell et al. 2010; van Liempt and Bilger 2012; Wayne 1982), but we faced many challenges, made compromises during the research, and had to deal with incomplete or untraceable data. In the end, we obtained both quantitative survey data and qualitative ethnographic data on undocumented migrants in a situation in which no comprehensive data or general information was available. We also gathered additional viewpoints from local authorities and various experts and workers who were dealing with undocumented migrants.

In the following section, we present our quantitative and qualitative empirical data, which were mostly collected from the field. The rationale behind our choice of methods was similar to that of Van Meeteren, who declared in her book about irregular migration in Belgium and the Netherlands: 'Since I aim to study irregular migrants as active agents, I need methods that enable me to study the practices and actions of irregular migrants' (Van Meeteren 2014: 45). We also mention the key secondary sources and explain the data analysis methods. In Sects. 2.3 and 2.4, we present the results we obtained, pointing out where we succeeded and where we

failed. In Sect. 2.3, we explain in detail why and how we collected the quantitative survey data from undocumented migrants, and the advantages and constraints of developing paper and online surveys. In Sect. 2.4, we describe our ethnographic fieldwork and how the data were collected over a 10-month period. In Sect. 2.5, we discuss research ethics, which is particularly important when conducting research about undocumented migrants. We also discuss the opportunities and challenges of sharing research results with the research participants and cooperating with public authorities, NGOs, and the media (see also Chap. 7). Finally, in Sect. 2.6, we summarise and conclude the chapter and return to the book's specific topics.

2.2 Research Data and Methods

It is never easy to conduct research about undocumented migrants. Most of them simply want to live ordinary lives, but that is impossible because of the various legal, economic, and social constraints they experience (see Chaps. 3, 4, 5 and 6). Most of them are thus obliged to live in the grey zone between legal, semi-legal or illegal activities. For these reasons, many of them have doubts about exposing themselves to a researcher, since such exposure might attract unwanted attention to an individual, or to collective undocumented migrants, making their situations worse.

When conducting research about a target population that is not easily reachable and, in fact, remains mostly hidden, researchers need to develop a good strategy with clear objectives and a flexible implementation plan. As discussed in Chap. 1, our task was to discover who the undocumented migrants are in Finland, what key issues they face in their everyday lives, their migration patterns and aspirations, and how the internet and social media relate to their wishes and practices. We maintained this comprehensive objective throughout the research but, at times, needed to redefine the research focus, make compromises with the data, and reflect more than usual on the data collection and analysis (see Sects. 2.3 and 2.4), to ensure the reliability and validity of the acquired data, as well as the analysis and interpretation thereafter. In addition, constant attention to research ethics was imperative at all times (see Sect. 2.5).

To obtain different perspectives on the everyday lives of undocumented migrants, we decided to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. In research about undocumented migrants, it is advisable to use either large amounts of quantitative data and related statistical methods, or small amounts of qualitative data and interpretative methods. We chose to utilise various methods to obtain both broad, extensive data and deep, intensive data on undocumented migrants (Düvell 2012). The combination of different methods lessened the risk of biased data. Despite quantitative and qualitative methods usually being seen as different, or even opposing, approaches, we decided to combine them interactively through triangulation. Triangulation is a common approach to gain different perspectives on the data and methods by combining multiple theories, methods, and empirical materials (Flick 2018). Düvell et al. (2010: 22) stated that 'all applied methods and data presented

ought to be doubled-checked and triangulated in order to ensure their accuracy and unbiased nature'. We utilised triangulation (by employing various data, theories, methods, and researchers) to simultaneously obtain a detailed and balanced perspective on undocumented migrants and, through such cross-checking, enhance the reliability and validity of our data—in particular because there were no previous broad studies about undocumented migrants in Finland.

Our main empirical data came from one survey of undocumented migrants in Finland; two surveys of local authorities in Finland regarding undocumented migrants; and participant ethnographic observation of undocumented migrants in various spaces (public and/or 'protected' spaces, such as day centres run by NGOs) in Finland. To collect supportive empirical material, we conducted interviews with experts and workers dealing with undocumented migrants, such as NGO volunteers, police officers, social workers, community workers, civil servants, and medical practitioners. Some interviews—with social and community workers, NGO volunteers, and civil servants—were carried out in places that undocumented migrants frequented; therefore, they were fully included in the ethnographic notes, because they formed a relational network that undocumented migrants were connected to and relied upon. These observations and interviews were not recorded, because recording might have impaired the flow of the conversation, and the topics under discussion were very sensitive; therefore, we made notes later about the key points highlighted during the interviews. In addition, we had various informal meetings and talks with authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders dealing with undocumented migrants, and we used many kinds of legal and policy materials and research articles about undocumented migrants. In the following, we explain in detail our main data and the methods we used.

Undocumented migrants answered a semi-structured survey (92 questions) conducted between October 2018 and January 2019. After cleaning the received data, the final analysis included answers from 100 undocumented migrants (this exact number was a coincidence; see Sect. 2.3). The final SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) database contained 100 rows (one row per respondent) and 301 columns (usually one column per question, but more for open-ended questions). The structural questions were directly coded and entered into the database. The open-ended survey questions were categorised in the NVivo program using earlier studies as a reference, and then entered into the database. The main analysis methods applied to the survey data were descriptive and nonparametric statistical methods; for example, proportions (percentages) of respondents in different categories; cross tables, including background variables; and statistically significant correlations between the researched factors. Due to the relatively small number of respondents, it was not always possible to apply advanced statistical methods.

We took field notes based on participant ethnographic observation of undocumented migrants in April 2018–January 2019 (usually 1 or 2 days per week for 10 months). We met and observed over 100 undocumented migrants in various circumstances, about 20 of whom we met and talked with regularly over several months (see Sect. 2.4). We did not make notes while meeting and observing them; the observation notes were written down after each day's fieldwork. The final

analysis included notes totalling about 70,000 words, and we applied thematic content analysis to analyse them. The coding of the data was an inductive process, with no theory applied to the data; instead, the collected data drove the theoretical analysis. Keywords and full sentences regarding housing, work, healthcare, the asylum process, residence permits, family, friends, social networks, and aspirations for the future were coded with different colours to assist with the subsequent identifications of the main topics, which were later included in the survey. These topics underpinned both the analysis and the results (see Chaps. 4, 5 and 6).

Finnish municipalities (local authorities) answered two short (10- and 12-question) semi-structured surveys concerning undocumented migrants in Finland and the services provided to them. The first survey was conducted by telephone in December 2017, and all 311 municipalities in Finland responded (100% response rate to all questions). For the second survey in December 2018, municipalities with undocumented migrants in 2017 were selected (based on the answers they gave in 2017), together with a few other large municipalities, totalling 42 Finnish municipalities (100% response rate to all questions). The telephone survey was surprisingly effective, although we had to make hundreds of phone calls. The resulting SPSS database for the first survey had 311 rows (one row per municipality) and 18 columns (usually one column per question, but several in the case of open-ended questions) and, for the second survey, 42 rows (one row per municipality) and 16 columns (usually one column per question, but several in the case of open-ended questions). For these data, descriptive and nonparametric statistical methods were used; for example, proportions (percentages) of respondents (i.e. municipalities) in different categories, cross tables showing the background variables (such as the size of the municipality and whether the municipality had undocumented migrants or not), and statistically significant correlations between the researched factors.

We collected and contextualised the above-mentioned data and supplemented it with supporting material. We conducted semi-structured interviews in April 2018–January 2019 with 20 experts and workers dealing with undocumented migrants in Finland. The interviewer made notes after each interview, and these were used to gain a better understanding of the legislative, administrative, and practical perspectives on the situations of Finland’s undocumented migrants. Another round of interviews was conducted in October 2020 with experts, NGOs, and authorities that had contact with undocumented migrants, which focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented migrants in Finland and, especially, their access to healthcare. These interviews were conducted by telephone or on Zoom, due to the health security measures necessitated by the pandemic. We also collected material from secondary sources. Important sources were international and national laws and regulations—in particular, the legislative framework for asylums, refusal of entry, and deportation. Additionally, we compared international, national, and local policies on undocumented migrants. We referred to academic literature concerning national, European, and international migration; research ethics; and qualitative and quantitative methods. We also read news items in newspapers and magazines, and followed several social media channels about undocumented migrants and the

current societal response to the phenomenon. These provided useful contextual and background information for our study.

2.3 Survey of Undocumented Migrants

As mentioned in Chap. 1, no comprehensive data pertains to undocumented migrants in Finland. Over the years, their number was estimated to be in the hundreds and, from the early 2010s onwards, a few thousand (Keskimäki et al. 2014). In particular, after many asylum seekers were rejected by the asylum process that started after they arrived in the autumn of 2015, their number started to increase. In 2017, we asked several key experts from public authorities (including various ministries and the health authorities), police, NGOs, and scholars for their estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in Finland. Some specialists refused to give an estimate, but the rest gave estimates between the lowest and highest numbers. Finally, after comparing these different estimates, we deduced that there were 2000–4000 undocumented migrants (excluding EU citizen visa overstayers) in Finland in the latter part of 2017 (Gadd 2017). This number resonated well with the expert and public authority estimates given a few years earlier (i.e. 3000–3500 people; see Sisäministeriö 2012; Keskimäki et al. 2014). During 2017–2018, however, thousands of new asylum applications were rejected and the courts started to reject the appeals of asylum seekers more frequently; hence, based on our own research and consultations with public authorities and experts, we formed an estimate of 3500–4000 undocumented migrants in Finland at the end of 2018 (Jauhiainen et al. 2019; for the details of this estimation, see Sects. 3.4 and 4.2). It was thus evident that, along with ethnographic observation and expert interviews, we would need more comprehensive and structured data to describe the situation of these thousands of undocumented migrants. Our goal was to obtain replies from 100–200 undocumented migrants in Finland, which would be around 3–6% of the estimated number of undocumented migrants in the country. Authorities and scholars did not possess such data, so we had to design a method to acquire the data. In principle, there were two options: over a hundred face-to-face interviews or a written survey.

We initially considered face-to-face interviews, because they would have allowed us to better control the data acquisition and quality of data, as well as influence the sample by selecting undocumented migrants according to their demographic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds. Below, we explain the challenges we would have faced if we had opted for the interviews, and the reasons why, finally, we chose to conduct a survey.

Our research topics were broad, so interviewing a hundred or hundreds of undocumented migrants about their backgrounds, everyday lives, journeys to and within Finland, migration aspirations, social media use, and a number of other topics would have required a great deal of time and effort. One such interview could easily have taken more than an hour, even using a structured interview schedule.

Language was also an issue because, for the vast majority of interviews, we would have needed an interpreter and, for our research, fluent mutual understanding between us and the undocumented migrants was vital. Although some undocumented migrants are at least moderately proficient in Finnish or English (see Sect. 4.2), for many questions they would have needed to use their native tongue (for example, Arabic, Sorani Kurdish, or Farsi/Dari, which we were largely unfamiliar with). Furthermore, these migrants came from many different countries and spoke many different languages and dialects. We would therefore have needed several interpreters. In addition, focusing only on one language group at time would have meant, in practice, potentially missing a unique opportunity to talk to an undocumented migrant who spoke a language other than the one we were prepared for. Only if the research project involved 5–10 interviewers and interpreters in different languages, on the move for several weeks, would it have been possible to interview a large number of undocumented migrants.

However, using an interpreter during an interview also poses potential challenges. The phenomenon of a large number of undocumented migrants is novel in Finland and has been under-researched, and undocumented migrants do not generally trust researchers. The interviewed undocumented migrants might not have trusted an interpreter even if they eventually came to trust us (the researchers). Moreover, such an interview (with one researcher and an interpreter) could have resembled situations that many undocumented migrants faced with the authorities; for example, during the asylum process. In such situations, an immigration officer asks about the migrant's background, journey, and so on, and an interpreter facilitates the conversation (see Sect. 3.3). Scholars could easily resemble bureaucrats and/or the authorities when asking questions about the migrants' lives, but giving them little in return—apart from explanations (depending on the research method) to help the undocumented migrants better understand their complex situations and their available options.

There were also cultural barriers regarding gender and age; for example, it is sometimes inappropriate for a male researcher to interview a female undocumented migrant, especially if the female is alone during the interview. When this female is accompanied by a male family member or a trusted person, his presence often influences the interview. Similarly, even if a researcher intends to conduct a one-to-one interview with an undocumented migrant, it can end up with a large group answering, commenting, or even arguing about the 'right' answers.

It was also not possible to outsource the interviews to native-speaker research assistants. This was often done in countries in which undocumented migrants have been researched for a long period of time (see, for example, Collins 2018 and Düvell et al. 2010), and there are advantages (language, trust, cultural understanding, etc.) to a semi-structural interview being conducted by a member of the same ethnic group, rather than a representative of the titular nation or another Western scholar. A problem in such cases, however, is that the principal investigator cannot obtain the additional valuable information that one usually obtains when conducting a direct face-to-face interview.

Practical and ethical issues also influenced our decision about whether or not to use interviews. Many undocumented migrants are in hiding and extremely difficult to recognise (see Chap. 1). It is challenging to reach an interested undocumented migrant and, when one is found, it is then difficult to find a suitable place in which to conduct an interview. Many undocumented migrants have no fixed abode or cannot expose safe places to other people (such as researchers). Conducting a long interview outdoors in cold weather (in winter in Finland, in particular) would have been impossible, and using the day centres where undocumented migrants gathered would have caused disturbance and anxiety for some of them.

Furthermore, when an undocumented migrant spends a long time with a Western/Finnish person (especially if that person takes notes during the meeting), it can seem suspicious to other undocumented migrants (who do not necessarily know what information is sought and for what purposes). Such an interview might therefore negatively influence the social networks of the interviewee. A face-to-face interview might also attract the attention of ordinary passers-by and thus lead involuntarily to identification of the interviewee as an undocumented migrant. Researchers could unwittingly lead authorities and enforcement units to undocumented migrants. In addition, if three or four friends wished to take part in such an interview (which often happens when a close group forms), it would mean long waiting times for others, or the individual interview could turn into a group interview that would influence the answers of the single interviewee. The number of foreign-background people in Finland is quite small and earlier research has shown that people belonging to ethnic minorities are under surveillance by several agencies in many kinds of urban spaces. Unwanted police stops and experiences of ethnic profiling are part of their lives, both personally and through stories they hear about other minority people's encounters (Keskinen et al. 2018).

2.3.1 Conducting the Survey

Based on the circumstances discussed previously, we chose to design a written survey to target undocumented migrants; however, conducting a written survey among them was no easier than conducting face-to-face interviews. As their stay in the country is considered illegal, undocumented migrants do not have an official address (at least in Finland), so a postal survey is not feasible. Furthermore, they would have been suspicious of official-looking letters. It is potentially very challenging to get an undocumented migrant to write about him-/herself on a form sent by people he/she does not know. An undocumented migrant needs to consider what risks and benefits could emerge from responding to such a survey. In addition, undocumented migrants are usually dispersed across many parts of the country, so they are difficult to reach. In many cases, undocumented migrants also speak many different languages; thus, if the aim is to reach all of them, substantial effort would be needed in terms of translation and knowing which languages to use in the survey.

The survey items were designed to address our research interests. In formulating the questions, along with research conducted by other scholars (Chiuri et al. 2004; Font and Méndez 2013; National Research Council 2013; Sigona 2012), we took into account the former surveys we had conducted in Finland among asylum seekers (Jauhiainen 2017), as well as in various other countries among asylum seekers and undocumented migrants along their asylum-related journeys towards and within the EU (Jauhiainen 2017a, b, 2018; Jauhiainen and Eyvazlu 2018; Jauhiainen and Vorobeva 2018; Jauhiainen et al. 2019). The precise questions were drafted by a research team. The draft version of the questionnaire was tested with a few undocumented migrants before the survey form was finalised.

As mentioned, some (but not all) undocumented migrants in Finland speak English or Finnish (see also Sect. 4.7); therefore, the questionnaire was translated into all the major languages used by them in Finland—Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, Finnish, Kurdish Sorani, and Somali. According to our estimates, these languages are spoken by over 90% of undocumented migrants in Finland. The translations were carried out by native speakers who had already been engaged with the themes of the survey; thus, they understood the terminology. When necessary, translations were also double-checked by another translator.

At the beginning of the survey, its purpose and the underpinning ethical principles were briefly explained, so that all respondents were aware of why and how this research was conducted. No reply to any specific question was compulsory, so the respondents could omit any questions they did not want to answer or which made them uncomfortable. Confidentiality was emphasised. All replies were anonymous, so it was not possible to trace the respondents from the completed questionnaires, and this was explained on the survey form; therefore, the respondents were likely to answer the questions honestly.

It is impossible to reach a large number of undocumented migrants face to face in one place at the same time, at least in Finland. We therefore decided to provide two options for the survey. One option was a traditional paper questionnaire. After completing it, the respondent could send it to our university using an attached anonymous prepaid envelope, or leave it in a specific secure place to which a specific person was instructed to take the questionnaires, thus maintaining confidentiality. We would later collect the completed questionnaires from these places. The other option was an anonymous online survey, completed using a computer, tablet, or mobile phone. The online answers were transmitted to a database as soon as the respondent started to answer the survey, but no information about the sending device was traceable. Unfortunately, the program we used (Webropol) does not support Farsi, so the Farsi questionnaire was only available on paper.

Another challenge in conducting a survey is that researchers cannot be sure who answers the survey (i.e. whether he/she is an undocumented migrant or not; see the following sections). Distributing the paper survey randomly to many places, or advertising the online survey on various social media sites, could have attracted all kinds of migrants, including regular migrants and asylum seekers. In addition, the survey could be disturbed by people (including internet trolls) who were opposed to undocumented migrants and could give fake answers, pretending to be

undocumented migrants (although this would require consistent answers from such respondents).

The survey consisted of 92 questions, of which 55 were multiple choice (yes/no, I agree, I don't know, and I disagree); 28 were semi-open-ended (e.g. asking about age, country of origin, or current employment); and 9 were open-ended (e.g. asking what they liked most or least about Finland). After the introduction, the survey asked simple questions about the respondent's background, such as his/her gender, age, education level, country of origin, and so on. That was followed by a section in which the respondent was asked about his/her journeys to and within Finland, then about his/her everyday life (accommodation, work, family, social networks), use of the internet and social media, the asylum process in Finland, and future migration aspirations. Finally, open-ended questions asked about respondents' experiences in Finland and any other issues they would like to mention.

As previously stated, the research team conducted a survey between October 2018 and January 2019. It took more time than expected, so the time span became rather long. Regarding the online survey, the link was sent out in November 2018 to the immigration services of all municipalities in Finland. It was also sent to the email addresses of Global Clinic (in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Lahti, Joensuu, and Oulu), an organization providing healthcare for undocumented migrants; Red Cross Finland; the Helsinki Deaconess Institute; the Evangelic Lutheran Church of Finland, and several other relevant NGOs and private citizens we knew were dealing with undocumented migrants. The link was also published on selected social media channels, in particular Twitter and Facebook (with postings in the languages spoken by the undocumented migrants). Some of the public authority and NGO receivers of the link informed undocumented migrants about the survey, but many did not, for various reasons.

The paper survey was distributed in the national capital, Helsinki (which is the main location of undocumented migrants in Finland), and its surrounding area, including the large cities of Espoo and Vantaa, which also host many undocumented migrants, as well as in Turku and its surrounding area (in which there are some undocumented migrants, though to a lesser extent). Some questionnaires were directly distributed, day and night, by the researchers in key places where undocumented migrants gathered (the places cannot be named here for security and ethical reasons). Questionnaires were distributed appropriately at the discretion of the selected NGOs, civil servants, and community and social workers.

The manual distribution of the survey also posed problems. Aside from requiring a good deal of time from researchers in the field to distribute it, obtaining replies was not easy. Those undocumented migrants with whom contact had already been made during the ongoing ethnographic research were, in general, more willing to participate in the survey, but even for them, some questions were unclear and other questions made them suspicious. If they expressed such concerns, we explained the questions and suggested that they ignore questions that made them feel uneasy. On many occasions, intermediaries whom most of the undocumented migrants knew also helped with the explanations. Some respondents very actively expressed their wish to complete the survey, and it turned out to be an empowering (see Iosifides

2003; Ross 2017) and liberating experience for many undocumented migrants. They were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and even express their anger and frustration. We witnessed similar feelings among undocumented migrants in other countries when survey sheets were delivered face to face (see Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a), particularly among those undocumented migrants (and asylum seekers) who had not previously been approached by scholars.

Challenges also related to the face-to-face survey delivery for undocumented migrants who did not know the researchers well. Some migrants were suspicious about the survey topics and whether, for instance, we were collecting their personal data to report it to the police. We explained to them, with extra care, the research purpose, the anonymity of the survey, and that they were completely free to decide whether or not reply to the questions. If their reaction remained negative or they seemed unwilling to answer a question, we did not insist, and no one was forced to answer the survey. In conclusion, all replies to the survey were freely and spontaneously given, without any extra effort or exercise of power from our side. This substantially increased the validity of the data received.

As explained in the following, most of the undocumented migrants whom we could easily reach in public spaces or day centres in Finland were young male adults from Iraq. We had substantially fewer possibilities, for example, to deliver the survey directly to female undocumented migrants. Due to ethical principles, we could not request or demand that the people we met reveal the places where we could meet undocumented female migrants and/or provide better access to them. This could have put both the information giver and the new person in either danger or an inconvenient situation. Often, these women live hiding in shelters, or anyway in places that need to remain hidden, so the appearance of a researcher there could have caused feelings of insecurity among them due to the place being exposed to others (i.e. to us).

2.3.2 Responses to the Survey

In total, we received 262 replies to the survey targeting undocumented migrants. Of the replies, 75 (29%) came from the paper survey and 187 (71%) from the online survey; however, we could not use all the replies to study undocumented migrants. There were a few particularities in the responses to the survey, especially regarding the online survey, and we describe these in the following paragraphs.

Our first task was to check how completely the respondents answered the questions. As mentioned, the survey was rather long (92 questions) and it took about 20–40 min to complete, depending on the literacy skills of the respondents. As discussed previously, the respondents could leave any question unanswered if they wished. Furthermore, there were some questions that respondents could not answer (for example, if they were unemployed, they were asked to skip the questions regarding their current job). In addition, there were open-ended questions the

respondents could answer if they wanted to specify certain issues, but this was not always needed or relevant.

Most of the paper surveys were filled out almost completely. If a person started to fill it out, but then decided to abandon it, he/she would probably not return the survey. Ultimately, we received 75 replies to the paper survey from undocumented migrants. Of these, we had to exclude 13 (17%) from the final analysis, because the respondents had provided too few answers (to be included, the respondent had to answer at least 64 of the 92 questions). Of all the paper survey respondents, 62 (83%) completed it sufficiently.

The situation with the received replies to the online survey was different. Most replies were not complete, and part of the reason was technical: if a person started to answer the questionnaire (i.e. he/she opened it), the program (Webropol) registered this as a reply, even if the respondent abandoned the questionnaire after the first question. Ultimately, we received 187 replies to the online survey from undocumented migrants. Of these, 84 (45%) had answered only some demographic background questions or fewer than 64 questions; therefore, we had to reject 84 (45%) of the online replies, because the surveys were incomplete. Of all the online respondents, 103 (55%) completed the survey sufficiently and submitted it.

We thus received replies from 165 people (63% of all respondents) who filled out the questionnaire almost completely; however, we were then faced with the challenging task of determining whether the respondent was an undocumented migrant. As mentioned in Chap. 1 and discussed more profoundly in Chap. 3, there is no legal definition of an undocumented migrant in Finland. An undocumented migrant is generally a person who has no legal right to reside in the country; however, people can become undocumented migrants in various ways, and shift back and forth between legal and illegal statuses. In the case of asylum seekers, a person can be rejected by the asylum process (thus moving from the category of an asylum seeker with the right to stay in the country to the category of an undocumented migrant who does not have this right). The same person can, immediately or later, submit another asylum application, and thus his/her status changes from undocumented migrant to asylum seeker again (with the renewed right to stay in the country). Furthermore, during the asylum process, a person can lose the right to reside in Finland. The first negative asylum decision can be appealed against in court. Only if the appeal is sent on time (within 21 days of the negative asylum decision) can the person remain in Finland; otherwise, he/she must leave the country. Consequently, two people with exactly the same administrative status (e.g. an asylum appeal lodged with a court) can have completely different rights with regard to remaining in Finland (one has the right and another does not). There are also people whose asylum applications have been rejected, but who cannot be expelled from Finland, because their country of origin will not receive them or the authorities cannot provide them with the required travel and identification documents. Furthermore, a person (a 'common' migrant, but not necessarily an asylum seeker) can have a visa to enter Finland and forget to apply for its extension or a residence permit after legitimately spending time in Finland; thus, his/her living in Finland becomes irregular or illegal. Even the legal status of a

European citizen who forgets to register his/her presence with the local authorities within 90 days can be seen as irregular (see Chap. 3).

Due to the above-mentioned complex circumstances, many people with foreign backgrounds in Finland do not know, or even understand, whether they are undocumented migrants or not, or whether they are legitimately registered in the country. In addition, many former and current asylum seekers subjectively consider themselves to be refugees, despite their legal status. Usually, by that, these people mean that they had to leave their home and country of origin due to external reasons. Such reasons are sometimes in accordance with the United Nations' definition of a refugee (such as escaping war or persecution; see Chap. 3 and United Nations 1951). At other times, this subjective feeling of being a refugee refers to the departure from one's country of origin due to economic hardship, thus not meeting the international criteria of a refugee. In addition, for many, already having applied for asylum means defining oneself as a refugee, and this subjective definition is correct regardless of the authorities' decisions: in general, both asylum seekers and 'failed asylum seekers define themselves, their identities and actions in their own terms' (Puumala 2012: 27).

An additional complexity derived from the term 'undocumented migrant'. Even if we excluded from the definition the EU citizens who, for various reasons, had not registered their presence with the local authorities, many of those who do not have the legal right to stay in Finland, but who remain in Finland—colloquially defined as 'undocumented' or 'paperless' migrants—have previously been documented in various ways: they have personal identification documents and possess many official papers and other documents. For many of them, it is difficult to understand how, in such a situation, they can be defined as 'undocumented' or 'paperless'. Furthermore, to ask in a survey whether a person is an 'illegal immigrant' (which is what they are usually called by the migration authorities and the police; see Poliisihallitus 2017; Sisäministeriö 2016) would be offensive for many respondents, because none of them consider themselves to be illegal; instead, they are individuals with genuine rights to migrate (Peers 2015; Savino 2016).

Such an insoluble conceptual issue was also evident in the responses to our surveys. We did not expect to receive universally accurate answers if we directly asked the respondent whether he/she was an asylum seeker or undocumented migrant. As discussed previously, not all respondents know their status and are aware of what such a status means. In fact, by subjectively claiming to be a 'refugee', one claims to have permission to stay in the country and, potentially, to be assisted in staying. Instead, we used the survey to ask a series of questions, which we then cross-checked for consistency: whether the respondent had applied for asylum in Finland (yes/no/I don't know); whether he/she had received a positive or negative decision (yes/no/I don't know); whether, in the case of a negative decision, he/she had appealed or was going to appeal against it in court (yes/no/I don't know); and how many negative decisions he/she had received. Elsewhere in the questionnaire, we also asked whether the respondent had stayed in an asylum seeker reception centre in Finland and when (if) the financial support and services for his/her asylum were terminated, as well as the reasons that he/she came to Finland (to work, to

search for asylum, to meet friends, etc.). We also asked whether the person had applied for a residence permit and whether he/she had received a positive or negative answer.

These questions potentially enabled us to cross-check and deduce whether the respondent had the legal right to stay in Finland or not. This was also a tool to exclude from the analysis those respondents who were not, in fact, undocumented migrants, even if they might have thought so or claimed to have the right to stay in Finland (for example, like some of the asylum seekers for whom that was no longer true). As a result, we excluded respondents who replied that they had a residence permit or asylum (and which, according to other answers, seemed to be the case); those who replied that they had only received one negative decision from Migri and that they were waiting for a decision on an Administrative Court appeal (since they probably had the right to remain in Finland, because they knew about the deadline to submit the appeal to enable them to remain in Finland); and those who declared that they were asylum seekers and still received the reception centres' services. We also cross-checked whether their responses were logical (i.e. they did not by mistake, or through wishful thinking, mention that they had asylum or a residence permit in Finland, but that they were still going through the process). Sometimes undocumented migrants responded that they had asylum or a residence permit in the hope that such an answer would actually confer that status.

Through such careful cross-checking, we came to the conclusion that, of 165 respondents who answered the survey more or less completely, 100 (61%) could be defined as undocumented migrants. Of those 65 respondents whom we excluded, 7 (11%) were still going through the asylum process (usually between court decisions, or appealing to a court, or presenting a subsequent asylum application) or asking for both asylum and a residence permit at the same time; 46 (71%) had received residence permits with or without asylum (thus they were no longer undocumented migrants); and the status of 12 (18%) respondents was uncertain.

Ultimately, we obtained a sample of 100 undocumented migrants, of whom 45% responded on paper and 55% online (Table 2.1); in general, of the younger (less than 30 years old) undocumented migrants, many more responded online (64%) than on paper (36%). Of the respondents with higher education levels (who had studied at a university or received a university degree), many more (64%) answered online than on paper (36%). Of the older respondents (50 years and older), many more answered on paper (75%) than online (25%). Regarding the respondents' ethnic backgrounds or gender, no major differences were found between those who answered on paper

Table 2.1 Distribution of respondents who answered the paper and online surveys

	Paper survey	Online survey	Total
Undocumented	45 (17.2%)	55 (21.0%)	100 (38.2%)
Non-undocumented	17 (6.5%)	46 (17.6%)	63 (24.0%)
Unclear	1 (0.4%)	4 (1.5%)	5 (1.9%)
Too many missing values	12 (4.6%)	80 (30.5%)	92 (35.1%)
Total	75 (28.6%)	187 (71.4%)	262 (100.0%)

and online, but the sample was too small to inspect that aspect in detail; however, we surmised that conducting a survey for undocumented migrants online would attract younger adults with higher education levels in large numbers compared to the entire undocumented migrant sample. This resonated well with earlier findings showing that young adult asylum-related migrants proportionally use the internet and social media more often than older asylum-related migrants (Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a, b; see also Chap. 6); by contrast, younger undocumented migrants are more reluctant to answer on paper. For a survey regarding undocumented migrants, we thus chose to use paper and online questionnaires simultaneously.

The next issue we considered was whether the final sample was representative of the total population of undocumented migrants in Finland. Again, this was a difficult task, because there is no precise statistical information about undocumented migrants and their numbers, and no earlier comprehensive studies about them as a population. To determine the representativeness of our final sample, we therefore had to estimate the composition of undocumented migrants, such as their numbers and demographic and ethnic backgrounds. For this, we used our interviews with the experts and workers dealing with undocumented migrants and our 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork among undocumented migrants, which enabled us to meet many undocumented migrants personally.

As we discussed in Chap. 1, there has been no reliable or systematic counting of undocumented migrants in Finland. Among the many kinds of undocumented migrants, however, the common factor is that they do not have a legal right to reside in Finland. In Finland, the majority of undocumented migrants are former asylum seekers, but there are also (fewer) people who came to Finland without legal permission or who came to the country with no intention of being involved in the asylum process. In addition, there are students and employees whose residence permits have expired, employees or tourists who never applied for a visa or residence permit, and spouses who have not applied for residence permits or whose right to stay in Finland has expired due to family status changes (such as divorce; see Sect. 3.3 for details). In addition, as mentioned, EU citizens who fail to register their presence with the local authorities within 90 days belong to yet another category and are normally not referred to as undocumented migrants.

Our study focused on undocumented migrants who were former asylum seekers and those who never applied for asylum, but came to Finland for reasons similar to those of the asylum seekers (i.e. fleeing their country of origin due to personal, political, or economic insecurity). An important mean to estimate their number and composition was to analyse the backgrounds of asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, expelled asylum seekers, voluntarily returned asylum seekers, and those who ‘disappeared’ from the asylum process (e.g. the authorities did not know whether they had left Finland), as well as of those undocumented migrants who were tracked by the border guards or detained by the police. Further intensive field research and observations, as well as talks with undocumented migrants and related experts, provided additional background information for estimation.

Our estimate was that, at the beginning of 2019, there were about 4500 undocumented migrants in Finland (3500–4500 people, depending on who was counted;

e.g. whether overstaying EU citizens in Finland were included in the number, such as Roma from Bulgaria and Romania or Estonians staying longer in Finland for family or employment reasons). The total composition of undocumented migrants in Finland is discussed in detail in Sect. 3.2. As mentioned, earlier analyses indicated that, compared with many Western European countries, the number and proportion of the visa overstaying population in Finland is small (Könönen 2020).

The gender, age, and ethnic composition of asylum-related undocumented migrants required the collection of such details from asylum applications, rejected applications, court decisions, voluntary repatriations, and forced deportations of these migrants; information from long-term mediators and activists dealing with undocumented migrants in Finland; and careful personal field observations and talks with the undocumented migrants themselves. Based on these efforts, we estimated that, in Finland in 2018, there were around 3000–4000 asylum-related undocumented migrants (i.e. asylum seekers who had received final rejections and those who came irregularly to Finland due to asylum-related reasons, but never entered the asylum process). Of those, about 80–90% were male and about 10–20% female. Regarding their age profiles, about 12% were less than 18 years old and a few (less than 2%) were at least 60 years old, so about 86% were 18–59 years old. An overwhelmingly large group were 20–35-year-old non-deportable Iraqis. Of the survey respondents, 91% were male and 9% were female; 14% were less than 18 years old, 85% were 18–59 years old, and 1% was at least 60 years old. There seemed to be a slight underrepresentation of female and elderly respondents in the survey sample. As our long-term field research indicated, elderly undocumented migrants spend less time in public spaces, fewer of them use the internet (making it impossible for them to answer online), and some are illiterate; however, there are generally very few elderly undocumented migrants.

It is possible to estimate the ethnic composition of undocumented migrants in Finland, although it requires careful scrutiny of asylum process documentation and information about entries into Finland without the authorities' consent. It is important to analyse the detailed backgrounds of asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, expelled asylum seekers, and similar. In 2015–2020, asylum seekers came from 131 countries (Migri 2018: 3). Based on this general data from Migri, our estimate was that, in 2015–2017, people from approximately 125 countries received negative decisions on their asylum applications. In total, Migri made 63,700 decisions on asylum applications in Finland and granted asylum or residence permits to about 21,200 (33%) of the applicants (Jauhiainen et al. 2018: 31; Migri 2021); however, there is no comprehensive information on whether these people who received negative decisions left Finland or whether those who left Finland (either voluntarily or through deportation) ever returned illegally to Finland. During our study, we found examples of undocumented migrants in Finland who had earlier been removed from Finland. Some had also voluntarily left Finland after receiving a negative asylum decision but, nevertheless, returned to Finland.

It is not possible, however, to derive the number of undocumented migrants directly from the number of negative asylum decisions. Firstly, there are no available statistics regarding how many individual asylum seekers there are or have been in

Finland. Migri counts only asylum applications, but not the actual number of asylum seekers. One application (and decision) applies to at least one person, but there can also be group applications; for example, a family applying for asylum on the same application. In addition, one person can make—as our study also illustrated—several asylum applications. Migri does not provide detailed statistics about those who make one or more subsequent applications. In the EU and in Eurostat, an asylum applicant refers to a person who has submitted an application for international protection, or has been included in such an application as a family member, during the reference period, and the first applicant refers to the person who lodged an application for asylum for the first time in a given member state during the reference period (Eurostat 2019). Secondly, in Finland, the courts only count the number of appeals and decisions, but not the number of people whom the court decisions apply to.

Our rough estimate was that, of the undocumented migrants (in this case, former asylum seekers and those who came to Finland or remained in Finland without the legal right to do so, under similar circumstances, but did not apply for asylum) about 60–67% were Iraqi nationals, 8–15% were from the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia—mostly Morocco), 5–10% were Afghan nationals, 3–8% were from Syria, 2–5% were Somali nationals, and the remaining 6–22% (probably 10–15%) were other nationals, including many from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Among other types of irregular migrants (who were not the focus of our study and not counted in the numbers given previously), the majority were people from Asia and Europe (including Roma and other economically poor people from Romania and Bulgaria).

Of our respondents, 60% (60 respondents) were from Iraq, 11% from Morocco, 4% from Afghanistan, 4% Syria, 2% each from Iran, Niger, Somalia, and Kurdistan [disputed], respectively, and 1% each from Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Gambia, and Turkey. 6% did not specify their countries of origin. Of our survey responses, 51% (51 responses) were in Arabic, 33% in English, 7% in Finnish, 3% in Kurdish Sorani, 2% in Dari, 2% in Somali, and 1% in Farsi (however, Farsi was available only for the paper survey). The respondents rather closely represented the overall ethnic composition of undocumented migrants in Finland (in this case, former asylum seekers and those who came to Finland for similar reasons, but did not apply for asylum). The majority of undocumented migrants in Finland are Iraqi men: in our survey, 60% of all respondents.

2.3.3 Survey of Local Authorities Regarding Undocumented Migrants

We conducted two semi-structured surveys among local authorities in Finland. The objective was to obtain their views on undocumented migrants, and especially on the services and other assistance provided for them in municipalities. We also aimed to obtain information about the presence and number of undocumented migrants across

Finland. National legislation and policies create the framework for services and activities to support undocumented migrants in Finland, but local authorities are the key stakeholders in operationalising them. Both surveys were short (10 short questions in the first survey; 12 short questions in the second survey) and conducted by telephone. Our research assistants helped in the collection and analysis of the material, but one of the authors (Professor Jussi S. Jauhiainen) also collected and analysed the material from both surveys.

The first telephone survey was conducted in December 2017. Because the issue of undocumented migrants was starting to appear in the public media in Finland, but there was no country-wide information about the phenomenon, we decided to gather information from all the municipalities. The survey content was neutral, and there were no consequences for the respondents or the municipalities if they claimed no undocumented migrants or made no services available for them. Furthermore, we explained that we would not mention any respondent's or municipality's name in the research report (see Jauhiainen et al. 2018).

In the survey, we asked whether there were any undocumented migrants in the municipality and, if yes, how many, whether anyone was helping them (including the activities of local authorities), and in what ways. Furthermore, we asked whether the local authorities experienced any challenges regarding undocumented migrants (if they had any) in the municipality. Finally, we asked who should be in charge of deciding whether and what services should be provided to undocumented migrants. At the end of the survey, we gave the respondents the opportunity to freely express their opinions on the topic.

Depending on the municipality, the questions took 5–30 min to answer. If there were no undocumented migrants in a municipality and the respondent was not particularly concerned about the issue, it took only a few minutes, but if the respondent had views on the issue, the call was longer (up to half an hour for municipalities with undocumented migrants). In cities and large towns, the respondents were usually the people responsible for immigration-related issues. In smaller towns and rural municipalities, the respondents were the mayors. To our slight surprise, every municipality responded. For the collection of this empirical material, most of the time was spent trying to reach busy municipal administrators by telephone. In addition to the writers of the related research report (see Jauhiainen et al. 2018), three research assistants helped with the calls and analysis. Finally, we received answers from all 311 municipalities in Finland (100% response rate and all municipalities answered all questions). Many municipalities wished to express their opinions and, ultimately, the few who were less willing to participate agreed to answer when they knew that almost all other municipalities had answered.

The second telephone survey was conducted in December 2018. The earlier telephone survey had indicated that, in the vast majority (around 85%) of Finnish municipalities, the local authorities or other stakeholders had no evidence of undocumented migrants; therefore, in 2018, we limited our survey to the municipalities that mentioned in 2017 that they had undocumented migrants. We also included a few additional municipalities, due to their size (over 30,000 inhabitants) or location

close (30–40 km) to a large town with relatively many undocumented migrants (see Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019).

Again, we asked if there were any undocumented migrants in the municipality and, if yes, how many there were and whether their number had increased or declined during 2018. As in the earlier survey, we asked who was helping them (including the activities of local authorities) and how. We also asked if the local authorities faced any challenges regarding undocumented migrants in the municipality. At the end of the survey, we gave the respondents the opportunity to freely express their opinions on the topic.

Depending on the municipality, the questions took 10–30 min to answer. If the number of undocumented migrants in the municipality was small and nothing in particular had happened, it took around 10 min to answer the questions, but in municipalities with relatively large numbers of undocumented migrants, the calls took up to half an hour if the respondents wanted to talk about the details. As in the earlier survey, in cities and large towns, the respondents were usually the people responsible for immigration-related issues; in smaller towns and rural municipalities, the respondents were again the mayors. Finally, we received answers from 42 municipalities (everyone we called responded; i.e. the response rate was again 100% and all the municipalities answered all the questions). Most municipalities viewed responding as a duty that served the public interest.

2.4 Ethnographic Participant Observation Among Undocumented Migrants

Ethnographic participant observation is a method for obtaining deeper understanding of an observed group. It is also an open-ended method in which the researcher-observer can collect much more information than he/she anticipated (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Creswell 2007). Ethnographic participant observation was a very relevant method for learning about the everyday lives of undocumented migrants. It required a long-term presence in the field to create trust and confidence among the observed people and to be able to recognise the dynamics and changes in their lives. The longer presence also increased the possibility of seeing more and diverse undocumented migrants.

The ethnographic participant observation started in April 2018 and ended in January 2019. For almost 10 months, once or twice per week, we (two researchers, one of which was Dr. Miriam Tedeschi) spent days and nights in private and public urban contexts where undocumented migrants gathered, worked, lived, and passed their free time. Being out there during the spring, summer, autumn, and winter, in different weather conditions and at different hours of the day and night, also gave us a better sense of undocumented migrants' lived experiences in public spaces.

Most encounters took place in Helsinki. There, we frequently visited places in which we knew undocumented migrants congregated and other places in which we

were informed they would be present. Less frequently, we visited new places, trying to locate new undocumented migrants; however, due to confidentiality and research ethics, we cannot give any information about these places (see Sect. 2.5).

Because we did not live in Helsinki, we had to travel by car for more than an hour to the observation sites, and the fieldwork therefore took considerably more time. In addition, we could not be there for many days in a row, but usually spent at least one full day in the field each week. Despite the difficulties, this created a useful routine, and the frequency of our presence in the field did not disturb the observed undocumented migrants. Such frequency allowed them to become familiar with us and anticipate when we would be in the field. A positive side of the necessity to return each day was that it allowed us to reflect on what we felt and had or had not seen during the day (or night).

Since our method was ethnographic participant observation (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994), we were directly present in the field and tried to mingle in the contexts we observed; however, for ethical and security reasons, we did not intervene in the lives of the undocumented migrants we observed. They knew they could talk to us and were free to decide whether to open up to us or not. In addition, during the data collection, we remained strictly in a researcher position, and avoided intervening in their lives; for example, we did not give them advice about how to reach their goals in Finland or whether these goals were realistic, but we always shared information, if requested—if it was safe to do so and would not endanger them. We let them take the initiative: if they wanted to talk, we listened, and if they wanted to remain silent, we also remained silent. Such a respectful approach meant that during hundreds of hours of field observation, we observed and heard numerous perspectives and considerations. We never took field notes when speaking with them in the field. This was a conscious methodical choice, but also created a necessity to remember the talks we had with the migrants. We memorised our discussions and their answers and wrote these down after ending the day's work in the field. The notes were written in English. Sometimes this meant that in transcribing their comments and answers, we corrected the grammar of the conversations (i.e. our notes were not necessarily verbatim but, nevertheless, were as close as possible to the original discussion). We continuously reflected on what we saw and heard and how we thought about it.

As we stated regarding the research ethics (see Sect. 2.5), observing the actions (or non-actions) of undocumented migrants and respecting their silence was an important part of the data collection process. In this way, we were able to build trust with them, because they could see and feel that we were not rushing or importuning them. We always respected both their silence and their willingness to talk and express their feelings, moods, and beliefs, without judging or trying to change or redirect them. After a few months, we were able to talk more freely with them, thanks to the trust built from the beginning of the fieldwork (Cefai and Amiraux 2002). We were able to conduct longitudinal fieldwork, which enabled us to identify the misinterpretations or misunderstandings we had at the beginning of the field research. Accordingly, we corrected and removed biased or incorrect data from the research. Nevertheless, we always remembered that our presence as

researchers constituted an ontological power imbalance between us and them, influencing the data (Düvell et al. 2010).

We regularly met and spoke with around 70 undocumented migrants. This was roughly 5–10% of the undocumented migrants in Helsinki. A deep relationship of trust was slowly created with around 20 of them over the months. They had all received two or more negative decisions on their asylum applications (or residence permit applications, since some of them, after failing the asylum process, tried to legalise their stay via other routes, such as work or family ties) and they therefore had no legal right to reside in Finland. Almost all of them had an active fear of deportation (i.e. forced removal); thus, they had to take this into account all the time in public and private spaces. Earlier studies, for example in the UK, have revealed that many undocumented migrants prefer to avoid legalising their status, because they fear deportation (Schweitzer 2017; Waite and Lewis 2017).

Most (90%) of our observed people were 25–55-year-old men with an Iraqi background and they represented the majority of undocumented migrants in Finland (see Sect. 3.2). The majority were around 30 years old and arrived in Finland in 2015 as asylum seekers. Some spoke reasonably fluent English or Finnish, but others did not. In the latter case, the gatekeepers who facilitated our access to them and their places at the beginning of the field research, and whom they trusted, helped with the translations. After building the necessary trust, we were able to communicate using online translators or were assisted by the respondents' English- and/or Finnish-speaking peers.

The ethnographic notes, which constituted an important part of the qualitative data, were written down after each day spent with the research participants. As a general rule, we never wrote notes in front of them, because this might have created suspicion about what we were doing and whether we might be undercover police officers or similar. As previously stated, these notes recorded our conversations with the participants; simple observations of their movements, feelings, and gestures; the places they frequented; and sometimes even comments about the weather or about newspapers or magazine articles. When it was relevant, our notes also included our self-observations. Self-observation by the researcher (Venkatesh 2013) throughout the field research guarantees that his/her views are never taken for granted, but are always questioned and re-evaluated. This also helped us to abide by ethical research principles. If we ever felt that we asked a question that made an undocumented migrant uncomfortable, this was described and reflected upon in the notes. Such questions were carefully avoided in subsequent visits or reformulated in such a way that they would not make anyone else uneasy.

2.5 Research Ethics

In studying undocumented migrants, we needed to pay particular attention to research ethics (see Atkinson et al. 2007; Atkinson 2009; Cassell 1980; Mark and Hay 2006; Miller et al. 2012; Smith 2014; TENK 2018). The safety and security of

these people was imperative for us. Many of them had fled from their countries of origin, suffered during their journeys to Finland, lived in marginalised positions in their current locations, and were at risk of being removed against their will. Revealing undocumented migrants' activities, where they congregated, and with whom they stayed in touch, could have exposed all of them to danger; therefore, only a portion of the vast knowledge we acquired during the fieldwork can be shared and made public.

In general, this research followed the guidelines established by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2018), which align with international standards and EU data protection regulations (see European Commission 2018). These provide general rules for how to conduct research; however, the anonymity and confidentiality of undocumented migrants needed to be very carefully managed. In fact, we did not want to risk scapegoating or 'denunciation by subjects' peer group or wider society and enforcement actions' (Düvell et al. 2010: 230); hence, we were particularly cautious in the data collection, analysis, and publication. Finally, given the particular sensitivity of the matter, we wanted to avoid this research being construed or read as a new form of monitoring or surveillance of vulnerable groups of people (De Genova 2002) that could endanger their practices and their already precarious everyday lives.

Nevertheless, we maintained that, to support effective and evidence-based public policymaking concerning undocumented migrants, rigorous research-based knowledge about them needs to be shared with policymakers. Objective, research-based knowledge about them and, more broadly, about the phenomenon could considerably reduce the risk of wrong, false, and inaccurate information influencing the general public and policymakers. This was particularly significant in view of irregular migration and undocumented migrants becoming politicised in the 2010s, especially by right-wing parties in Europe, including Finland. National and local authorities and policymakers, as well as NGOs and the general public, should be better informed about undocumented migrants, and this is particularly relevant in Finland, where only scarce information and knowledge about their situations is available.

The basic tenets of the research ethics underlying this study were security; privacy; respect; and sensitivity towards the feelings, beliefs, moods, ideas, actions, and practices of undocumented migrants. These principles led and directed the whole lifecycle of the data collection, analysis, and publication. These migrants are a vulnerable group, and extra care needs to be taken when conducting research about them. This led to several specific choices during the research, as follows.

We did not take photographs of undocumented migrants or the sites where they met, and we did not use any photographic or video material about them or their sites. We did not record any conversations with them, although we memorised most of them. All personal data was removed from the ethnographic notes and survey data, so that no one could be identified from them, even if this data was later checked by an external person, such as someone from an enforcement unit. The meeting places and personal details of the undocumented migrants—the details that could expose their identities—have not been, and will not be, revealed for privacy and security

reasons. In many cases, the nationalities of the people making the comments written in our notes were not specified. This was done to avoid attributing specific views to particular ethnic groups, which could lead to their stigmatisation or incite xenophobic or violent behaviours towards them. Consent was always requested from them, although they did not have to sign consent forms. In addition, they were informed about the research and its purpose, which were always explicitly and thoroughly explained. The participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time. In the reporting, we used fake initials of names (if we used initials at all) to refer to the people we talked to. This also followed the norms introduced by the EU data protection laws (see European Commission 2018).

Sensitivity towards the feelings, beliefs, moods, ideas, actions, and practices of these individuals was not only fundamental so as not to endanger them, but also pivotal in creating trust-based relationships. There is always an ontological power difference between researchers and the researched, especially in fieldwork studies where marginalised and otherwise vulnerable people are approached by researchers (Düvell et al. 2010). The research results could therefore be biased for a number of reasons; for example, an undocumented migrant might have felt ‘forced’ to reply to the questions posed by us, since he/she might have thought that, by replying to the questions in a specific way, he/she could gain asylum or a residence permit. Undocumented migrants might have tried to reply in a way that would ‘please’ us, because they could have been afraid of us or thought that we were undercover police officers.

These delicate issues could not be completely eliminated from the fieldwork, but we, as researchers consciously carrying out the fieldwork, soon became aware of the challenges and tried to avoid them to the greatest extent possible. In this research, these potential shortcomings were tackled via a ‘slow’ approach to the fieldwork; for example, research mediators or gatekeepers (NGOs or specific people trusted by the undocumented migrants we intended to study) were first asked to negotiate access to the undocumented migrants. This access took time, as we ourselves needed to demonstrate that we could be trusted and that no information leakage would occur. In general, even when gatekeepers were not involved in the negotiation, the dialogue with undocumented migrants was never forced. We would have stayed for days without talking to anyone, if that was necessary, so as not to scare a person or make him/her feel pressured. It also happened that, sometimes, an undocumented migrant actively initiated a conversation with us, but if he/she did not wish to talk to us, we always respected this silence.

In this research, we did not volunteer in the places we went, even though we sometimes helped with minor tasks at times, if required. We took the view that our method of study was participant observation. The majority of the undocumented migrants we saw were very vulnerable and afraid of forced removal, and suspicious over Western and unknown people hanging around them; hence, in conducting our participant observation, we were very cautious at all times, because these people were not used to researchers being interested in them. We always made it very clear that we were not community or social workers, but that we were conducting research. This point is important to mention here, because these people often

explicitly asked for help. They sometimes thought that we could help them to obtain asylum or residence permits. Because this would have created a power imbalance, we had to be very clear as to what our role was and that we could not, unfortunately, help them with their asylum or residence permit applications. Obviously, we possessed knowledge about the asylum processes and the most common reasons for approval or rejection of the asylum applications; however, during the field research, our role was not to assist undocumented migrants in their attempts to remain in Finland. This was a clear methodological choice, with the aim of collecting the least biased data possible. In ethical research, the clarity and transparency of everyone's roles, purposes, actions, and words are of the utmost importance, so as not to damage vulnerable groups or create ethically inappropriate power imbalances (European Commission 2019).

This did not mean that our research could not indirectly help undocumented migrants to survive in Finland or reach their goal of remaining in Finland with permission. Conducting accurate and trustful research, and actively providing objective information for policymakers, meant that the research-based results could be used to support evidence-based policies; however, mentioning nothing about undocumented migrants' daily activities (such as working in the grey market) would leave the topic open to speculation that could very easily be used against them. Overall, we took the standpoint that our research results should not directly harm undocumented migrants (e.g. by including information that could lead to more efficient surveillance and block or hinder their efficient survival practices in Finland).

2.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have discussed our research material about undocumented migrants in Finland and how we collected it, carefully following ethical principles. Our strategy was to gather, in our field research, quantitative material through surveys among undocumented migrants and local authorities, as well as qualitative material through ethnographic participant observation. We supplemented this data with supportive material, such as interviews with experts and workers dealing with undocumented migrants, and by referring to related research literature, policies and legislation, and articles in the media. We utilised triangulation to combine the survey and ethnographic observation data with other materials. Nevertheless, we could not study all undocumented migrants, which required reflection on the reliability and validity of the data that is always necessary in field studies. It was very important to consider ethical rules throughout the research process, as is always the case when conducting research about undocumented migrants.

As evidenced in this chapter, the study of undocumented migrants required us to pay particular attention to what kind of material was collected and how. Very rarely is accurate and updated data about them available, so researchers need to conduct field research as we did with our case in Finland. We have explained in detail the motivations for our data gathering and the shortcomings and challenges we

encountered while conducting both the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Furthermore, we explained how we tried to overcome these challenges and shortcomings, in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the data. Despite all the potential risks undocumented migrants might have felt they faced by completing the survey, we obtained replies (both on paper and the online survey) from people whom we had never met. Some undocumented migrants wanted their opinions and wishes to be heard, and the empirical results are presented in Chaps. 4, 5 and 6.

The ethical guidelines for observing undocumented migrants from a researcher position also meant that we depended on what they wanted to share with us and where they wanted us to meet them. This inevitably created a certain bias in the ethnographic data, because we met those who were willing to be seen. As in all populations, undocumented migrants comprise many different kinds of people: men, women, children, adults, the elderly, illiterate people, and those with university degrees (see Chap. 4). The ones we had contact with had had many different experiences in Finland: some were working, living, and moving around without any particular concerns in downtown areas, whereas others remained hidden and changed their residences frequently. Our ethical approach meant that we could not push undocumented migrants to show us their residences in order to obtain better access to families and women who stayed much more hidden than many of the young males we usually saw and met during our field research. In addition, if they did not want to tell us about their families, or allow us to meet female undocumented migrants, we could not insist; therefore, our ethnographic data revealed little about undocumented migrant women.

To balance such bias in the ethnographic data regarding the diversity of the ethnographic observations, we conducted a survey among undocumented migrants. In addition, by using a strictly anonymous and confidential survey, we could ask more systematically about their backgrounds, their journeys to Finland, their presence in the country, and their activities and aspirations. The ethical guidelines and principles also created challenges in this respect; for example, we had to leave many interesting questions out of the survey because of the potential harm they could cause to some undocumented migrants. We could ask for more detail in the survey than in our ethnographic observations, in which we listened more and asked less. Nevertheless, we could not insist they answer all questions. Instead, we emphasised that they were free to not answer any question they did not want to answer.

In conclusion, we argue that it is fruitful to gather both broad quantitative survey data, intensive qualitative ethnographic observation data, and supportive material on undocumented migrants simultaneously and utilise mixed-method triangulation to explore the richness of such data. High-quality, reliable, and valid data are prerequisites for obtaining accurate results and disseminating them to a wider audience.

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Chapter 3

Becoming Undocumented: Legislation and Asylum Processes in Finland



3.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of irregular migration is very complex in Finland, as in many other European countries (Ambrosini 2018; Düvell 2006, 2011; Thomsen and Jørgensen 2012). Definitions and practices regarding migrants, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants are blurred, and clear-cut categories do not account for what the real lives of these people involve (Crawley and Skleparis 2018). The term ‘undocumented migrant’ (and the other terms that are used to more or less correctly identify this ‘category’) identifies a process of becoming undocumented—which leads to changing rules, regulations, and exceptions—rather than a static, easily definable phenomenon. Migrants often move between different ‘immigration categories’ during their migration processes (Goldring and Landolt 2013). It is possible to change status from undocumented to documented, and from an irregular migrant with almost no rights and responsibilities to a migrant with a residence permit and extensive rights, in a given country. *Being* an undocumented migrant is always simultaneously about *becoming* an undocumented migrant.

Five issues can be highlighted here. Firstly, stricter asylum and residence policies cannot completely prevent the arrival of migrants in the EU; thus, the number of undocumented migrants is likely to keep increasing (International Organisation for Migration 2018; Czaika and Hobolt 2016). Secondly, despite international law giving countries the right to make decisions about the presence of non-citizens in their territories, no country has as yet been able to eliminate undocumented migrants (Triandafyllidou and Vogel 2010); therefore, they live among legally resident inhabitants, building liminal spaces of semi-legality and semi-regularity and, in some cases, even performing ‘experiments of citizenship’. Hellgren claimed a social membership for undocumented migrants, ‘which refers to actual participation in society, for example integration into the local neighbourhood and labour market, regardless of legal status’ (2014: 1177). Thirdly, when the possibilities of earning a legal income are constrained, undocumented migrants turn to semi-legal or illegal

means of earning money; the informal grey economy then expands, and local and national tax revenues are consequently lost (Lewis et al. 2015; Orrenius and Zavodny 2016). Fourthly, when social and health services are not readily available, undocumented migrants utilise unauthorised medical services or do not use them at all. Untreated illnesses can lead to unpredictable events, especially if people with serious, untreated psychological traumas are left to deal with them alone (Andersson et al. 2018; Bustamante et al. 2018). Finally, the exclusion of undocumented migrants leads to increasing harmful segregation in the EU member states and to a spreading influence of rumours—particularly in social media (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Leurs and Ponzanesi 2018)—on their actions and decisions.

Legal definitions are the key focus in this chapter, because becoming and being undocumented depends mostly on the law. States usually apply binary logics of regular/irregular or legal/illegal when they try to frame migrants in their territories; however, in the everyday lives of undocumented migrants, there are no such clear-cut, dichotomous distinctions. Instead, they live in-between categories (Sarasud 2019). Furthermore, undocumented migrants have very different legal positions in different countries, even within the EU (see Triandafyllidou 2016). In some countries their stay is tolerated, they are allowed to work, and they have access to many public services; in others, they are denied the right to work and barely have access to healthcare. Such liminal legality has characteristics of both documented and undocumented statuses (Ambrosini 2018: 5–6), whereby the border between the two cannot always be clearly identified. Finland is among the countries in which undocumented migrants have few rights (see Sect. 3.2).

In Sect. 3.2, we discuss the key legislation and legal perspectives pertaining to undocumented migrants in Finland. Since Finland is a member of the EU, much of this discussion is relevant in an EU context for indicating how undocumented migrants are produced by legal systems. As we discussed in the introduction to this book, the majority of undocumented migrants (in Europe and beyond) live in an in-between condition of liminality, whereby they can neither arrive nor stay—and, in a few cases, cannot even leave (Tsoni 2016): ‘Liminal legality is neither an undocumented status nor a documented one but may instead have the characteristics of both’ (Ambrosini 2018: 5–6). The definition of undocumented migrant remains blurred, in both the international literature and migration policies (unless it is said that he/she is an outright illegal immigrant; that is, a person who does not have the right to reside in the country). In Finland, a person either has or does not have the right to reside. In this section, we will discern who belongs in which category and the situations in and between categories. In Sect. 3.3, we explain the complex asylum process in Finland and how failing this process is the path to becoming an undocumented migrant (Gill 2016), if a person does not leave the country. We look at the process from both sides: from the viewpoint of the authorities who decide whether to grant asylum, and that of undocumented migrants who request asylum. As we show, the same person can move back and forth between the statuses of documented and undocumented migrant. In some cases, the authorities have to tolerate the presence of undocumented migrants in Finland (for the situation of ‘tolerated’ irregular migrants in Germany, see Jauhiainen et al. 2019), because they cannot legally return

them to their countries of origin. In Sect. 3.4, we provide a short overview of the status of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, locally and nationally, in Finland during the 2010s. Finally, in Sect. 3.5, we present the conclusions of the chapter.

3.2 Defining Undocumented Migrants in Finland: The Legal Perspective

Various terms are used to describe people whose presence in a country is somehow legally dubious (Anderson and Ruhs 2010); that is, whether they have met all the required legal criteria to enter and reside in a given country. Determining the legal status of a migrant is far from easy, as noted over 10 years ago by one of the topic's leading scholars, Franck Düvell (2008: 489): 'The extent to which a clandestine immigrant needs to conceal him or herself varies from country to country and depends on each one's legislation and enforcement practices'.

We will now consider the specific case of Finland, taking into consideration that every county has its own rules defining the different types of migrants whose stays are considered to be irregular/illegal. Such a detailed approach is useful for comparing the case of Finland with other countries. In the case of Finland, since the law does not explicitly define who is an undocumented migrant, the issue has to be looked at from the reverse viewpoint; namely, who has the right to reside in Finland. Finland's Ministry of the Interior (2018b) asserted: 'Finnish legislation stipulates that everyone should have a clear status in society and no one should reside in the country illegally'. The right to reside in the country can be permanent or temporary, and many kinds of people have permanent or fixed-term rights to stay in Finland, as discussed below.

Citizens of Finland have the permanent right to reside in Finland and this permanent right in Finland to enter, stay and leave is reserved for citizens. Residence in Finland means that one is legally allowed to stay in Finland and has legally valid residence in one of Finnish municipalities, which is not the case for undocumented migrants.

A person can become a Finnish citizen by birth (i.e. one's mother is a Finnish citizen; one's father is a Finnish citizen married to a foreign national, or the Finnish father's paternity has been established; or in specific cases, one may also be born the child of a Finnish female couple, or born in Finland without any other citizenship). In cases of births outside Finland involving unmarried Finnish fathers or children of Finnish female couples, Finnish citizenship is gained by declaration. Other cases of Finnish citizenship by declaration are, for example, former Finnish citizens; people 18–22 years old who have lived in Finland for 6 to 10 years (with specific conditions, including not having been sentenced to imprisonment); adopted children between 12 and 17 years of age; or citizens of Nordic countries who have been permanent residents in Finland for at least 5 years. A person can also gain Finnish citizenship by

naturalisation through an administrative process. This requires an application and the fulfilment of several criteria (including being 18 years of age, a resident permanently domiciled in Finland for the past 5 years, not having committed any major punishable act, not having any public debt, able to provide a reliable account of livelihood, and satisfactory oral and written skills in the Finnish or Swedish language; Migri 2019g). People can simultaneously hold other citizenships than that of Finland.

People other than Finnish citizens can also enter Finland legally and obtain legal residence in the country. A person can be a citizen of a country for which no visa is required to travel to Finland; people with this status can remain in Finland for the duration of the visa-free residence period, which is usually up to 90 days. Another case is to have a Schengen residence permit granted by another country that allows the person to reside in Finland, usually for a short period of time. Yet another case is to come from a country whose citizens need a visa to enter Finland and have such a valid visa for a determined period of time (Migri 2019g).

If a person stays in Finland for more than 90 days and arrives in Finland from outside the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, or Switzerland, he/she must apply for a residence permit. If specific conditions are fulfilled, the residence permit is issued. The first permit is always for a fixed term, but can become a continuous residence permit, and finally a permanent residence permit after staying for several years in Finland and fulfilling specific criteria. If a person is a citizen of an EU member state, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, or Switzerland, that person does not need a residence permit for Finland, but must register his/her residence in Finland; therefore, without a residence permit, or through failing to register the residence, a person enters a state of irregularity after remaining in Finland for more than 3 months. With a fixed or continuous residence permit, a person can enter a state of irregularity by continuing to stay in Finland after the validity of such a residence permit has expired. The reason may be that the permit was not renewed, because the person no longer met the criteria or that the person did not apply for it. There are people in Finland who remain in the country for several years after their residence permission has expired. These people need to live in a particular way, having no contact with the authorities, or to possess fake personal identification documents. When a person has obtained a permanent resident permit, he/she cannot become an undocumented migrant in Finland as long as the permit is valid; that is, until further notice from the authorities.

There are thus many ways to become a legal resident of Finland and, also, many ways to become a person who does not have the right to reside in Finland. For example, the stay in Finland of a citizen of an EU member state can become irregular. In principle, EU citizens are exempt from entry and immigration regulations, but they need to demonstrate economic self-sufficiency, follow public security regulations, and register their residency if staying for more than 90 days. As Könönen (2020) pointed out, however, the inability to support oneself economically or the likelihood of becoming an unreasonable burden on the state can result in a removal order (Maslowski 2015), as can failure to comply with public policy, public security, or public health requirements (Queiroz 2018: 49–50), leading to cancellation of the residence permit. In principle, the mobility of EU member-state citizens is

free within the Schengen area, so they do not have to register their entrance to Finland and the police cannot randomly check their documents or their right to stay in Finland. Police can check the identity of a person and his/her right to remain in Finland only in specific cases mentioned in the Aliens Act. It is thus rather easy for an EU member-state citizen to remain in Finland, even if his/her right to remain has expired. This applies to many kinds of people, such as former students, employed EU nationals, tourists, or any types of visitors. This also explains why there are a considerable number of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens, especially ones with ethnic Roma backgrounds, as well as some Estonians without proper work permits, among the migrants who are in some way irregular in Finland. If detained for a criminal offence, they can be returned to their home countries, from where they can return to Finland rather easily within the Schengen area despite the ban on entry (see Könönen 2020). This creates circular irregular migration between their country of citizenship and Finland.

People of most nationalities need a visa to enter Finland, potentially constituting the largest category of people who become undocumented migrants. In principle, three kinds of people enter Finland. Firstly, there are people who enter Finland legally with visas. The authorities issue an individual visa for a limited time (from days to weeks, and sometimes for months) and for a specific purpose (tourism, work purposes, or visiting family members); however, some remain in Finland after the visa has expired and/or lost its validity. A portion of these people have forgotten to renew their visas or residence permits, while others have simply not bothered to do so.

Secondly, there are people who enter Finland legally by requesting asylum. As discussed, they form the largest group of undocumented migrants. Most asylum seekers fail in their attempts to obtain asylum and/or residence permits in Finland. Some become undocumented migrants during the asylum process (e.g. by failing to attend an asylum interview or appeal within a specific time, in which case they should leave the country and await the court's decision outside Finland; see Sect. 3.3). The majority, however, become undocumented migrants after receiving final negative decisions on their applications. If they do not leave the country within 30 days of the first negative decision from Migri and do not appeal against such a decision, they become undocumented migrants (see Sects. 2.4, 3.3, and 4.2). Likewise, if they interrupt the asylum process and do not leave Finland, they become undocumented migrants.

Thirdly, there are people who enter Finland illegally without visas (if such are required) or during a period when their entry into Finland is banned. A growing number and diversity of people travel within the Schengen area from one country to another without the proper right to do so. Some fail the asylum process in one EU member state and move to another EU member state (in this case, Finland). Knowing that another asylum application would probably be rejected, they do not bother to reapply, but instead live as undocumented migrants in the country. Some people (usually former asylum seekers or refugees) have obtained permanent residence in a specific EU member state, but for some reason do not want to live there. Instead, they move to another EU member state, such as Finland, perhaps because they have better

social networks in Finland, prefer the living standards there, or experience pushing factors in their country of residence. If they do not meet the criteria for permanent residence in Finland, they are likely to hide and remain anonymous to the authorities. There are also people who never start the asylum process, but travel without permission to Finland and remain there as undocumented migrants. Their reasons are often similar to those of many failed asylum seekers, and they often have additional economic motivations (see Chap. 4). The number of such people is increasing in Finland. In principle, people without the right to remain in Finland should be removed from the country; however, the police are often forbidden to randomly ask and verify whether a certain person has the right to remain in Finland. Even when they find people whose right to remain in Finland has ceased (such as former asylum seekers) or who did not have it in the first place, the police do not necessarily take any action. According to Koivula (2020), the police in Helsinki (and in other areas) may not even fine these people, knowing from experience that it will have no consequences (i.e. the people will not pay the fines and the fines will not make them leave Finland). Such people might be informed that they must leave Finland and that there are assisted voluntary mechanisms to help them do so, but the police can do little more.

3.3 The Asylum Process

The asylum process in Finland, as elsewhere in the EU, from requesting asylum (international protection) to the national authorities' final decision (i.e. whether the person will be protected), is a complex process. Internationally agreed-upon principles exist regarding the human rights and definitions of a refugee. The well-known definition of 'refugee' in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol emphasises fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (United Nations 1951).

In addition, many EU policies regarding asylum processes have been harmonised (see for instance the Asylum Procedures Directive), but they became difficult to be universally and uniformly implemented in the EU after 2015 (Niemann and Zaun 2018): 'The implementation of the Asylum Procedures Directive is thus not only a top-down process, but is also shaped by domestic asylum policies and the officials' local working environments' (Schittenhelm 2019: 231). Indeed, 'because of their diversity, and because they are subject to different arenas of political bargaining, migration policies are bound to display internal incoherencies "by design", depending on the specific migrant categories and policy areas at stake' (De Haas et al. 2016: 3); therefore, national differences exist between asylum processes and the consequences of failing such processes (i.e. whether a person then becomes an undocumented migrant and with what rights (if any) in the EU member states. In this section, we present the main legal asylum procedures in Finland. For details of the asylum process, see Migri 2019b).

Upon presentation of an asylum application in Finland, the validity of the asylum applicant's claims is inspected in due course and, as a result, the application is either approved, granting the person international protection, or rejected, denying the person such protection (Migration and Home Affairs 2019). Usually, after applying, the person (who has thus become an asylum seeker) is directed to a reception centre to await the decision.

If the asylum application is approved, the person receives international protection, thus becoming a refugee with many rights, including that of permanent residence in Finland. The person can also obtain a residence permit on other grounds, such as subsidiary protection, family, or work. A final rejection means that the person is not protected and has no right to reside in Finland on the grounds of international protection. If this person does not receive a residence permit on other grounds (as explained below), he/she must leave Finland within 30 days of the decision, otherwise his/her presence in Finland is illegal and he/she becomes an undocumented migrant. The person can be then detained and forcibly removed from the country; however, the movements and everyday lives of such migrants, although to some extent involving a rigid legal/illegal dichotomy, often end up challenging the clear-cut validity of such a dichotomy (Schweitzer 2017) through the actual reality that these people live (Black 2003; Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Gonzales 2016; Menjívar 2006).

3.3.1 The Asylum Process from the Viewpoint of the Authorities

To apply for asylum in Finland, a person must be within Finnish territory. Finland has long land borders with Sweden and Norway and, in many places, people can enter Finland without encountering any border formalities, border control authorities, or police. In principle, a person who wishes to apply for asylum needs to declare their intention immediately, at the border, to a border control official or the police, or to the police at the nearest police station, otherwise he/she does not have the right to enter the country and entering Finland is illegal. Not all asylum-related migrants request asylum immediately, but may do so later, within a few days of their entry. In such cases, they have entered and remained in Finland illegally and have already become undocumented migrants (i.e. people with no legal right to reside in Finland). In fact, according to the national authorities (such as the police), people who (for convenience, or through distraction or procrastination) do not immediately request asylum, but do so later, are counted as undocumented migrants who have exposed themselves voluntarily to the authorities. In the legal and administrative sense, people with a legitimate reason to enter Finland, who request asylum immediately, are not undocumented migrants, but those who enter illegally and apply for asylum later are undocumented migrants, with no right to enter and reside in Finland.

This administrative difference regarding asylum applications, which follows rigid legal/dual categorisations and taxonomies (legal/illegal), poses a challenge for ascertaining the exact number of undocumented migrants in Finland. The police register how many times they encounter people who are living in Finland illegally. This happened around 2000 to 3000 times annually, with the exception of 2015, when it became common (2933 in 2014, 14,286 in 2015, and 2314 in 2016; see Jokinen 2017). The large increase in 2015 was due to arrival of a high number of asylum seekers, of whom many (perhaps as much as a third) applied for asylum at the ‘wrong’ time and place (i.e. not immediately at the border, but later).

Immediately after a person requests asylum from the police or a border control official, these authorities register the individual’s personal data and record biometric identifiers (photograph and fingerprints) and signature (Migri 2019b). Thereafter, the asylum seeker is moved to a transit centre for a short period while the authorities determine whether the asylum process is Finland’s responsibility (Migri 2018a: 5). The person’s fingerprints are entered into the EU asylum fingerprint database, Eurodac. This database was created in 2003 to support the implementation of the so-called Dublin Regulation (Regulation No. 604/20133) and assist in determining an EU member state’s responsibility for examining an asylum application made in the EU.

If Finland has the responsibility for processing the asylum application, the applicant is sent to a reception centre (Ministry of the Interior 2011). The national migration service, Migri, is responsible for handling the asylum application (with application meaning a process, since no official form has to be filed). The asylum seeker is also informed about his/her rights and responsibilities during the asylum process (Migri 2018a: 5). In particular cases, when the authorities cannot identify the asylum seeker, or his/her travel route is unclear at the time of application, the potentially irregular entry can lead to the detention of the applicant until such information is made available to the authorities (Könönen 2020).

Following the large number of asylum seekers in 2015, over 200 temporary reception centres were established across Finland. An asylum seeker cannot select a reception centre: the authorities decide where he/she is sent. For very vulnerable asylum seekers, specific centres and services are available. Having a reception centre in a municipality generates employment and various services there, so many centres are located in remote places (Jauhiainen 2017). Running such centres also became a profitable enterprise for some private or NGO stakeholders because, in 2015–2016, the national authorities had to rapidly establish contracts with service providers. After 2017, the number of reception centres gradually decreased.

An asylum seeker does not have to pay for food or accommodation in a reception centre. The asylum seeker can also opt for private accommodation outside the reception centre if he/she organises it personally and pays the accommodation costs. All asylum seekers, including those who do not live in reception centres, have the right to access the services of such centres. They also have the right to work after 3 months in Finland with a valid travel document that entitles them to cross the border, or 6 months in Finland without one (Migri 2019h).

After the initial registration and reception centre designation, Migri first evaluates the grounds for asylum via a desk procedure. During the desk procedure, Migri considers whether an application needs to be processed or dismissed. The immediate cases of dismissal can be, for instance: Migri considers the asylum seeker's country of origin safe; the asylum seeker is a 'Dublin case' (i.e. he/she has been registered as an asylum seeker in another EU member state, Norway, Switzerland, or Liechtenstein, where his/her asylum application should be processed); or it is a subsequent asylum application that does not present any new grounds for seeking asylum (Migri 2019k). If the application is dismissed, and if certain circumstances apply, the asylum seeker must leave Finland and can be removed from the country within 8 days by the police or the border guards responsible for enforcing the refusal of entry.

In so-called 'Dublin cases', Migri issues the refusal of entry order to the asylum seeker, but it cannot issue a direct removal order. In fact, the transfer of the asylum seeker to the appropriate EU member state requires an agreement between the authorities of Finland and the respective member state. In all such cases, the removal from Finland is not allowed. Könönen (2020) indicated that, in Finland, most detention orders for asylum applicants were issued for forced removal and, in particular, related to the enforcement of the Dublin Regulation (in 2016, mainly for Iraqi, Somali, and Afghan citizens). In addition, several North African nationals have applied for asylum multiple times in EU member states before arriving in Finland. Such 'Dublin mobility' is sometimes related to social or family ties and reapplications provide temporary access to welfare services; however, many of these people have been detained in Finland. The detention of asylum applicants can be ordered if they disappear from the reception centres (although, with notice, the applicants have the right to live outside the centres) or if they try to leave Finland during the asylum process or go underground to avoid the police after notification of the negative decision (Könönen 2020). Following the increase of the number of undocumented migrants in Finland, their removal became more difficult, and detention as a mechanism to precipitate their removal became less effective (Koivula 2020).

If the asylum application is not rejected in the desk procedure phase, the asylum seeker waits for an invitation to attend an asylum interview with a Migri official. This usually takes several months, and sometimes more than a year, between the asylum request and the interview. The asylum interview invitation states the language into which the interview will be translated, as well as the exact location and time of the interview, which cannot be changed. A new regulation that came into force in the summer of 2018 states that Migri needs to make asylum application decisions, in principle, within 6 months; however, there are exceptions to this rule (Migri 2018a: 7).

Meanwhile, each asylum seeker receives a monthly allowance, the amount of which (usually around 315 EUR) depends on what kind of assistance (shelter, or food and shelter) is provided to the asylum seeker. It is also expected (although not compulsory) that asylum seekers will participate in activities provided by the reception centre, such as language courses. The law indicates, however, that

integration-supporting services should start only when an asylum seeker receives a positive answer (Finnish Red Cross 2019); therefore, during the asylum process, the asylum seekers are in legal limbo (a liminal space; O'Reilly 2018)—inside Finland, but not entirely in Finland. The national government formed in 2019 plans to determine whether integration services should be made available during the asylum process (Government of Finland 2019). In reception centres, the asylum seekers are provided with general information about the asylum process and the option to have a legal counsel; however, it is not the duty of the reception centre to provide or organise asylum seekers' legal aid. The organisation of legal aid is, in principle, the duty of Migri. Migri has claimed that many new reception centres opened in 2015–2016 were not able to provide asylum seekers with adequate information about the asylum process (Migri 2018a: 7). If an asylum seeker commits a crime, the crime investigation is kept separate from the processing of the asylum application; however, the asylum application process will be accelerated. If he/she is convicted of a crime, he/she may serve a sentence in Finland.

In an asylum interview, Migri asks the identity of the interviewee, his/her travel route to Finland, and all the reasons why he/she is applying for asylum in Finland. The information received in the asylum interview (including possible supporting documents) determines Migri's decision on the person's application for asylum (Migri 2019k). The asylum seeker has the right to the presence of a legal counsel at the asylum interview. The interviewer decides at the beginning of the interview whether any other support person may participate, and counsel decides whether it is necessary for him/her to participate. If, however, the asylum seeker wants to be accompanied by the legal counsel during the interview, without good reason, he/she may be required to pay the expenses him-/herself. The legal counsel is paid to attend the interview only if there are justified reasons (i.e. the asylum seeker is in clear distress, is in apparent need of help, or is an unaccompanied minor). During an asylum interview with a Migri official, an asylum seeker does not automatically have any legal representation unless he/she is less than 18 years old and unaccompanied; however, basic legal support is provided throughout this first phase of the asylum process, from the asylum seeker's application to the Migri decision phase (Migri 2019c). Finland has been criticised for not providing sufficient legal aid for asylum seekers during the initial asylum process (Lepola 2018). Following the formation of the new Government of Finland in 2019, the possibility of improving legal assistance for asylum seekers during the asylum process is being inspected (Government of Finland 2019).

To support asylum interviews, interpreters are hired by Migri and the conversations are recorded and transcribed. The interview can be accessed thereafter, for instance, to determine possible mistakes or misunderstandings in the translation. In many cases, the simultaneous translation has been organised at a distance and the quality of transmission has been poor (Migri 2018a: 14); as Puumala et al. (2018) highlighted: 'At the end of each interview, the interpreter back-translates the transcript to the claimant who can make additions or corrections to it. By signing the transcript, the claimant accepts that it is an accurate documentation of their narration'. One drawback, repeatedly highlighted by our research participants (former

asylum seekers) was that the asylum interview was such a stressful experience that the interviewees were afraid to report the mistakes they found in the transcripts; for example, some of them said that they were afraid of failing the interview if they reported mistakes, since this might have displeased the officials (these could be cases of epistemic violence; see Gadd and Lehtikunnas 2019). This process is, in general, rather similar in many EU member states. It may be difficult to determine in hindsight whether any major mistakes were made in the translation, especially if the interviewee approved its validity and accuracy by signing it; however, Migri made random quality checks on written translations of asylum interviews and discovered inconsistencies in the quality or accuracy of the translations, even to the extent that they could affect the final asylum decisions (Migri 2018a: 21–22).

After inspecting an applicant's asylum request, including the interview, Migri makes the decision on his/her asylum request. The grounds to grant asylum vary, but in principle follow the reasons mentioned in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations 1951). Migri (2019j) states:

You may get asylum in Finland if you have a well-founded fear of being persecuted in your home country or your country of permanent residence because of your origin, religion, nationality, membership in a certain social group, or political opinions. Another requirement is that you cannot rely on the protection of the authorities of your home country or country of permanent residence because of the persecution you fear.

If Migri issues a negative decision on an asylum application, the asylum seeker has the right to appeal to the Administrative Court within 21 days of the decision (Migri 2019a, d). All those who do not appeal, but who remain in the country beyond 30 days from the date of decision, are then considered to be people who do not have the legal right to stay in Finland—thus, in the national administrative texts, they are referred to as illegal immigrants (in Finnish, *laiton maahanmuuttaja* or *laittomasti maassa oleva*). More precisely, they are not, in fact, illegal people, but people whose immigration is illegal.

There have been claims that Migri's decisions do not always strictly follow the legal procedures or that, due to lack of legal counsel in the process, asylum seekers cannot express themselves appropriately, which may lead to rejection of their applications (Gadd and Lehtikunnas 2019; Lepola 2018; Migri 2018a). The problems in the Finnish asylum process have been criticised by many NGOs, including Amnesty International. In fact, Administrative Court decisions regarding appeals by asylum seekers against Migri's decisions have overturned many of Migri's decisions, suggesting that Migri should change them. In 2015, 19% of the Administrative Court decisions on asylum seekers' appeals led to Migri's initial decisions being changed or the cases being returned to Migri for review and probable change. By 2017, this number had risen to 36% (Lepola 2018: 8). The approval rate (asylum, subsidiary protection, or residence due to humanitarian reasons) following court decisions in Finland was the highest in the EU in 2018 (i.e. 68% in Finland and 38% in the EU; Eurostat 2019). This is not mentioned as a criticism of Migri, but to highlight that many asylum decisions for first-level applications were not entirely

convincing. Asylum policies and decisions are part of broader political processes in Finland, as in every country (Gibney 2004).

In fact, in 2019, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) gave its judgment concerning Finland in the case of the return of an asylum seeker to Iraq. The person had sought international protection in Finland against returning him to Iraq in 2015; however, Migri rejected his application for asylum. The Administrative Court dismissed the appeal, and the Supreme Administrative Court did not grant leave for the asylum seeker to appeal. Later, it was said that the applicant was killed in Iraq. The ECHR held that Article 2 (right to life) and Article 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights had been violated when processing his asylum application in Finland (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2019). This was the first time that Finland ever received such a decision from the ECHR. Such a decision meant that the actual removal to Iraq, with a ban on entry for Iraqis who had failed their asylum processes, was temporarily suspended at the end of 2019; however, in 2020, the Finnish police suspected that the asylum seeker's family staged his death after his return to Iraq to obtain financial compensation from Finland (Yle.fi 2020).

Migri includes an assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme within the framework of the Reception Act. An asylum seeker who applies for voluntary return (during the asylum process, including within 30 days of receiving a negative decision on his/her application) is an exception: he/she will not be removed from Finland even if his/her allowed period of stay has expired (Migri 2018d), but can stay in Finland until return arrangements have been completed. Voluntary return is proposed as a viable option for asylum seekers upon their arrival in Finland and during their stays in reception centres: 'Assistance with voluntary return may cover the costs of the return trip and financial assistance, in order to enable the returning immigrant to start a new life in the home country' (Ministry of the Interior, Finland 2019). The return is assisted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Finnish authorities. The IOM assists voluntary returnees with pre-departure counselling, travel arrangements, and post-arrival reintegration assistance, among other services.

The payments for voluntary asylum seeker returnees increased in 2019, according to their countries of origin. In 2017, the amount of cash payments increased up to 1500 EUR, and in 2019, payments for goods up to 5000 EUR (Yle.fi 2019a). The final amount is paid to the returnee when he/she arrives in the country of origin. Despite the Finnish authorities' frequent support for voluntary return, it has not so far become popular: 'In 2017, the number of people who returned voluntarily amounted to 1,422. The number was significantly lower than the previous year [2016] when 2,113 people returned voluntarily' (Ministry of the Interior, Finland 2018a: 89). In 2018, the number of voluntary returnees fell to 646 people. In 2016–2018, roughly 3.8 million EUR was granted to 4181 voluntary returnees; on average, the amount was 1437 EUR per person in 2018. In addition, the travel costs for these people were reimbursed, amounting to 1.5 million EUR between September 2016 and August 2018 (i.e. more than 500 EUR per person). From Migri's perspective, assisting return is economically the most efficient solution. Only 40 days in a reception centre

costs the same as the average money spent on voluntary return assistance (including the return travel) and the maximum support for voluntary return would equal 100 days in such a centre. Some asylum seekers spend from months to years in reception centres. About three out of four voluntary returnees come from Iraq (Yle.fi 2019b).

An asylum seeker who stays in Finland and, after appealing to the Administrative Court, receives a decision from the Administrative Court that does not change Migri's initial rejection decision (the so-called second negative decision), can appeal again to the Supreme Administrative Court (Migri 2019f), unless his/her decision does not grant leave to appeal. He/she has 14 days to appeal after receiving the decision from the Administrative Court; however:

If you have appealed the decision [from Migri], you are allowed to wait for the Administrative Court's decision in Finland. If you apply to the Supreme Administrative Court for leave to appeal, this will not prevent the enforcement of the negative decision unless the Supreme Administrative Court expressly orders that it may not be enforced. (Migri 2019d)

A person can therefore, potentially, apply to the Supreme Administrative Court and be removed from Finland unless this court orders differently. In general, refusal of entry decisions (i.e. decisions to remove a person from Finland before he/she has received a residence permit) may be issued in the following cases: (a) after the first negative decision from Migri, if an appeal to the Administrative Court is not presented within 21 days, and the person does not leave Finland or does not apply for voluntary return within 30 days; (b) if the individual can be sent to another country that is responsible for examining the asylum application according to the Dublin Regulation (Migri 2019e); or (c) immediately after the second negative decision from the Administrative Court, if a 'stop deportation' is not promptly issued.

Indeed, when a second appeal is presented to the Supreme Administrative Court and the court does not order differently, the court's decision must be awaited outside Finland; thus, the individual can be removed from Finland at any time. For this, Migri makes the refusal of entry decision (and the decision becomes automatically final when the deadlines for presenting appeals or leaving the country expire). The decision is then enforced by the police unless a request to stop enforcement is submitted to the Administrative Court within 7 days. Once a final refusal of entry decision is given (if the Supreme Administrative Court does not change Migri's and the Administrative Court's decisions; i.e. the so-called third negative decision), the person is considered to be in Finland illegally if no period for voluntary departure has been granted or the obligation to return has not been complied with. Following the EU return directive (article 11:1), for EU citizens and for third-country nationals with legal residence in another EU member state, the entry ban is issued nationally, and for others it covers the whole Schengen area.

To avoid their removal from the country, some asylum seekers start a subsequent asylum application after the first one fails, either directly following Migri's first negative decision or the courts' second or third negative decision. As explained previously, if the subsequent application does not contain new grounds for asylum, it

is rejected immediately at the desk procedure stage; therefore, subsequent applications require substantial and significant novel grounds. According to Migri (2018b), ‘the new grounds that are given are most often that the applicant has converted to Christianity while in Finland or that the applicant belongs to a sexual or gender minority’. Some asylum seekers attempt to make their stay legal by claiming to have changed their religion (Migri 2017), sexual preference, or gender, or asserting that they did not express it clearly enough during the first application procedure. Especially in Islamic countries, but not only there, changing religion from Islam to Christianity or being gay can lead to serious consequences, including death. Such a person (in this case, an asylum seeker in Finland) would be persecuted upon returning to his/her country of origin, which would create an obstacle for Finnish authorities removing him/her from Finland; therefore, some asylum seekers who do not leave Finland opt for this solution. Some have been awarded asylum on these grounds, but others, who have not been able to demonstrate the truthfulness of their claims, have not been granted asylum, as Migri (2017) stated:

If an applicant tells us that they are seeking asylum due to having converted to Christianity and being persecuted in their home country, they are asked for more details. We do not automatically grant asylum or a residence permit to applicants who have been baptised [in Finland], for example.

Overall, to survive, undocumented migrants may adopt a variety of ‘masks’, or multiple identities, in response to the demands of a hostile receiving environment (Mac an Ghaill et al. 2000; Schweitzer 2017). These masks are materialisations of their need to survive: they are actual strategies that allow them to cope with their stressful and precarious living conditions. If undocumented migrants change religion (for instance, if they become Christian, as some do in Finland), whether their claim is genuine or not, many need to put on a mask and hide this from their peers or family (who might not accept the change of religion). On the other hand, if they need to be accepted in the Christian community, they might need to partially or totally hide or deny the culture from which they come.

Some asylum seekers have made fake statements about their change in religion or sexual preference just for the purpose of trying to stay in Finland; however, cases also exist in which these changes have been genuine. Discerning the truthfulness of the intent is very difficult; however, this is what Migri is asked to evaluate in each case (see also Fassin 2013) and the Administrative Court and the Supreme Administrative Court have found some (but few) Migri decisions on these issues to be incorrect (Migri 2018a: 50–54).

An asylum seeker who has claimed to be Christian or gay (but has not been convincing enough to obtain asylum in Finland), and is actually removed to a country in which the conversion of religion or sexuality is a serious legal or social offence, may face very serious or even fatal consequences, and his/her family might also. Few studies have yet been published about the destiny of those undocumented migrants (or asylum seekers) who have been removed from Finland; however, reports have appeared in the media claiming that some of them have died in conflicts, for example, in Iraq or Afghanistan (Yle.fi 2018). Overall, results for the asylum

process showed that, from 2015–2017, only a minority of asylum seekers received asylum or residence permits in Finland.

Furthermore, geopolitical complexities in the 2010s, in areas from which the majority of asylum seekers come, have also increased difficulties for authorities in justifying their negative decisions; for example, the situations have often worsened in the areas which the asylum seekers left and this (the so-called ‘sur place’ principle, on account of events which took place after the asylum seeker left his/her country of origin), and other cumulative reasons, must be taken into account in asylum decisions. In principle, such decisions should favour the asylum seekers (for the benefit principle in cases of doubt, see Migri 2018a: 61–65).

3.3.2 The Asylum Process from the Viewpoint of Undocumented Migrants

Viewpoints on the asylum process differ substantially between authorities and asylum seekers; therefore, in the following section, we briefly discuss the viewpoints of undocumented migrants who failed the asylum process (those to whom asylum or a residence permits were not granted in Finland).

In our survey of undocumented migrants, five out of six (85%) had initiated the asylum process in Finland (i.e. they had asked for asylum). One out of nine (11%) came to Finland without seeking asylum. They did not request it mainly because they suspected that it would be a useless process that would restrict them for a long time and, ultimately, would probably lead to rejection and becoming an undocumented migrant. Some of them visited extended family and friends in Finland, and others had found sufficiently good jobs in Finland to earn enough money to survive. Obviously, such employment was not regular, because the people were in Finland without legal permission. The remaining few (4%) entered and resided in Finland for other reasons.

Becoming and being an undocumented migrant is a processual, non-linear social phenomenon, consisting of various events and changes, as McAuliffe and Koser (2017: 344) noted: ‘Irregularity is not a fixed experience—regular migrants may become irregular, irregular migrants may be regularised’. What role does the asylum process play in this path towards, and experience of, becoming undocumented? One of the most relevant elements seems to be the general lack of knowledge and/or understanding of the asylum process itself, which is one of the elements that can lead to becoming undocumented. As presented in the previous section (in a simplified manner), the procedure seems logical and straightforward—despite the many technicalities and bureaucratic steps—with clear deadlines and consequences; however, this is not what most asylum seekers perceive, especially those who become undocumented migrants. They do not consider the bureaucratic procedures (Könönen 2018): they are too busy finding new survival strategies and/or new ways of concealing their ‘irregular status’ (Tedeschi 2021b). The lack of clarity

and the misunderstandings during the asylum process, resulting in asylum seekers' inability to handle it and/or flawed final decisions, are widespread in Europe and have been broadly covered by the international academic literature (Gill 2016; Kälin 1986; Schuster 2018).

First of all, the majority of undocumented migrants are not fully aware of what 'asylum' means. This was one clear finding from our ethnographic fieldwork. Their main purpose was, and is, to be safe and legalise their stay in Finland. To do that, they might apply for asylum, since this is the first possibility presented to them upon arrival in Finland if they come from countries considered to be (possibly) unsafe. Later, especially when their asylum applications are rejected, if they do not completely abandon the idea of legalising their stay, they may try to obtain a residence permit by other means; for example, through work, study, or family ties (e.g. getting married during the asylum process, often to a Finn, and having children with him/her) in Finland. Not being entitled to work in the first place, they may eventually be lured into the grey market and paid a very low wage (see also Sigona 2012). Employers often promise to be able to legalise their stay through a low-paid job, but they remain undocumented, even if they are actually trying to work and become 'legal' through routes other than asylum.

For former asylum seekers (and thus for the current undocumented migrants of this study), 'residence permit' and 'asylum' were interchangeable words, as was apparent when talking with them. Their purpose, in most cases, was to be safe in Finland, and they did not distinguish between the different bureaucratic procedures. For them, words such as 'appeal', 'Administrative Court', 'Supreme Administrative Court', 'negative decision', and 'refusal of entry' were only technical terms. The former asylum seekers focused on finding ways to stay and avoid removal. We met many who did not know what to reply when we asked about their asylum process; one undocumented migrant replied: 'If I have appealed to a court? I don't know. I know that I don't receive services from the reception centre anymore; that I know'. As discussed in Chap. 2, asylum-related migrants often subjectively consider themselves to be refugees, although not all are official refugees from a legal perspective and according to the UN definition (see United Nations 1951).

Many of the survey respondents were not entirely aware whether they were still asylum seekers. They had submitted their asylum applications and received negative decisions from Migri, but they were not sure whether they had appealed against them in the Administrative Court, whether they had received second negative decisions from the Administrative Court, or whether they were trying to appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court (see Sect. 3.3.1). Some respondents had started a subsequent asylum application, but were not sure which stage it had reached. Overall, 27% of the responding undocumented migrants said that they had received one negative decision on an asylum or residence permit application, 25% two negative decisions, 22% three negative decisions, and 21% four or more negative decisions. Undocumented migrants seemed not to know which stage their asylum processes had reached; they could remember how many negative decisions they had received, but not exactly from where. In addition, two out of three respondents (67%) said that they had applied for residence permits (i.e. tried to remain in Finland through another

process than asylum). No respondents had succeeded in their applications for asylum or a residence permit, so they were all undocumented migrants.

The general lack of clarity on the steps of the various bureaucratic asylum processes might negatively affect a migrant, resulting in him/her unwittingly making wrong choices and, thus, failing the asylum process and becoming undocumented. Additionally, the procedure requires that a person be able to make rational choices and understand the legal nuances, but this is often not the case, since many undocumented migrants have had traumatic experiences and are not capable of rationally acquiring and processing the amount of information required for the asylum process. They may or may not be aware of their precarious mental state, may lack the ability to ask for further clarification when needed, or may consider it an undignified act. In addition, scholars have noted how the inability to provide clear, organised, and classifiable reasons can lead to the rejection of an asylum request (Gill 2016). The migrants' lives and journeys often consist of dramatic events, non-linear decisions, incoherent actions, and unresolved psychological traumas (Bustamante et al. 2018; Carswell et al. 2011; Silove et al. 1997; Tedeschi 2021a); therefore, the legal requirements of clarity and consistency in the asylum process often clash with the reality of those migrants' lives (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Feldman 2011).

The biggest obstacle for asylum seekers in the asylum process is passing the so-called asylum interview (see the following comment by an undocumented migrant). The international academic literature has highlighted the fact that asylum interviews are very stressful for the interviewees (Schock et al. 2015). It is the most important opportunity for them to show that they are persecuted in their country of origin and that they need international protection. One of the undocumented migrants commented:

During the Migri interview, I could not express myself. I felt like I could not reach out to them: that I could not explain myself, that I could not make myself understood. Now I have had this second negative decision, after only five days, because they don't believe that my sister, who is here with me, is my sister. They don't believe the documents I provided. I told them that they could do a DNA test to prove that my sister is my sister, but they don't want to. They say it is too expensive. The lawyer told me that he has now officially terminated his services. My sister has just made an appeal, but there is nothing left for me. I can be deported at any time. It is true, I didn't suffer any physical violence back in my home country, but my father was killed right in front of me, so I am terrified. I don't want to go back there.

During an asylum interview, an asylum seeker is required to tell his/her own story. The coherence and consistency of the story and the precise documentation of facts are elements that weigh considerably in Migri's final decision; however, in many cases, asylum seekers are not able to tell a coherent story—especially those who have had traumatic experiences and cannot recall all of the necessary details. In fact, detailed inspections of Migri's decisions (analysing the accuracy of translations, first-level decisions, and arguments for the decisions) identified cases in which the courts overruled Migri's rigid and narrow requirements regarding the comprehensive accuracy of the asylum seeker's narration of his/her journey to Finland and reasons for requesting asylum (see Migri 2018a). An incoherent or

flawed story, even one containing evidence of persecution, can lead to a negative decision (Bögner et al. 2010; Schuster 2018; Shaw and Witkin 2004; Wilson-Shaw et al. 2012); thus, traumatic experiences can result in a person's status becoming illegal if he/she remains hidden in the country after the final negative asylum decision and the refusal of entry order are issued. Much more is involved in the bureaucratic procedures than the simple legal steps required to apply for asylum, apply for a residence permit, or legalise one's stay in the country. Cultural, physical, mental, and geographical barriers heavily influence the outcomes of bureaucratic procedures and determine the final result—such as obtaining a residence permit and the legal right to stay in Finland or becoming undocumented with no legal right to stay in the country. We are now going to present three cases drawn from the ethnographic fieldwork.

The first case concerns a family and it is emblematic of the asylum-seeking process. Originally, the family came from a country outside the EU (not named here for privacy and security reasons) and managed to obtain a residence permit for an EU member state. Initially, their reasons for leaving that EU member state and coming to Finland were unclear, but our chats indicated that the family feared something there. After months of conducting our field observations, their reasons for migrating to Finland seemed to be economic; however, their real motivation never emerged. When they arrived in Finland 10 years ago, they applied for asylum, even though they should not have done so when coming from another EU member state. They applied many times and failed. In the meantime, the husband managed to find a permanent job and applied for a residence permit in Finland, based on his work; however, because of their many failed asylum applications and the fact that they already had a residence permit in another EU member state, the husband did not receive a residence permit and was no longer allowed to work. They were told that they must go back to the EU member state from which they came. The husband did not seem to understand anything about this or a word of what his lawyer was telling him. He said that he only wanted to raise his children in Finland, find a job, and support his family. He did not understand 'why they were doing all this to me'. He repeatedly refused to accept the reality of being 'illegal' in Finland. For him, this formal decision did not mean anything, as his point was to stay in Finland and be allowed to live a normal life. The status of being illegal goes beyond clear-cut legal categories, comprising many in-between categories, everyday life circumstances, misunderstandings, and different mental states. Moreover, it is challenging to precisely trace and identify at what point in time a person finally becomes irregular in the country, particularly if he/she goes in and out of the asylum process many times, as happened to the above-mentioned family.

Another case concerned a young adult around 30 years old who had received a second negative decision on his asylum application from Migri. When his first negative decision arrived, he was not allowed to appeal, which is why he started a second asylum process from scratch; however, in the second decision, Migri concluded that he was abusing the system. According to Migri, he first 'disappeared' in Finland (apparently he did not go to the police to register his presence in the country, as he was requested to do) and in the subsequent interview, when asked 'With whom

have you been in touch?’, he could not answer, because he did not remember exactly whom he was in touch with in the city where he lived or the day centre he was frequenting. We knew him for a long time and became aware that, probably because of his traumatic past, he had trouble remembering things (in fact, many asylum seekers have challenges with memory after traumatic events; see Graham et al. 2014; Herlihy and Turner 2018; Herlihy et al. 2012); therefore, he could not properly reply to the migration officials’ questions. Additionally, during the second interview, he mentioned a very short call he had with his mother, in which she said that he must not come back, because someone came looking for him at his home to take him away and kill him. The call was apparently short because his mother was very scared (she probably did not want to be traced), so he had no other details. He was very scared of being killed and, as a consequence, became anxious and stressed and could not sleep properly at night (he often fell asleep while talking with us). Nevertheless, the asylum process requires clear details, precise information, consistent stories (Van Liempt and Bilger 2018), and sound documents. The short call with his mother was not enough to demonstrate the real threat of persecution in his country of origin; therefore, he fell out of the asylum process again and became an undocumented migrant. His main fears were police and deportation (i.e. removal from Finland): he could no longer focus on the details of his asylum application. Ignoring everything else, he kept repeating that he did not want to go back to his country of origin. This example shows that a person who is under stress, or who does not fully understand what is required in the asylum process, might unwittingly make wrong decisions (such as failing to register with the police or not remembering details when requested), which will influence Migri’s decision regarding his/her asylum.

The last case which we present clearly highlights the drawbacks of the legal/illegal dichotomy. The person in question was a former asylum seeker who failed his asylum process, thus becoming an undocumented migrant. He said that there were problems in the translation and transcription of the asylum interview at Migri, as is common for many. He did not have the official documents required for international travel, and his country of origin’s embassy in Finland would not issue travel documents or a passport for him; hence the police and border control authorities could not enforce refusal of entry and he could not be removed from Finland to his country of origin. This situation is common for people, especially those from Iraq, who are denied asylum in Finland (thus their entry into Finland is retroactively refused despite them already being in the country) and do not have a residence permit in Finland, but cannot be removed. The majority of them do not want to (and cannot) return voluntarily to their country of origin, so they remain in Finland, but with no access to health services (apart from emergency services) or formal entitlement to work. The blurred legal/illegal distinction is obvious here: the person is in Finland illegally, yet the authorities paradoxically know that he is in Finland and allow him/her to stay there. The last time we talked with him, he had managed to find work, albeit in the grey market. He said that, previously, his days all seemed the same, because he was not allowed to do anything: he was stuck in an unclear and unstable illegal/legal situation, in-between categories. The change cheered him up: even though it was an irregular, unregistered job, it gave him back his dignity. He

said: ‘I don’t like to be like a beggar, but somehow my legal situation is forcing me to be one. This is why I am happy to work now!’ The work made him feel better and also, to a certain extent, useful (see also Fleay and Hartley 2016).

3.4 The Status of Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in Finland

In Sects. 3.2 and 3.3, we explained how several asylum seekers became undocumented migrants in Finland. In early 2019, about 10,000 asylum seekers and about 4000–4500 undocumented migrants were known to be in Finland, where, as in many other countries in the EU, one trajectory to becoming an undocumented migrant was through the asylum process. In the autumn of 2019, of around 10,000 asylum seekers, about 1500 were waiting to receive their first asylum decisions from the authorities, more than 1000 were awaiting the authorities’ decisions on their subsequent asylum applications, and 3600–4000 were waiting for court decisions. The court had ordered Migri to re-process the asylum decisions of 2200–3000 asylum seekers; roughly 600 had obtained a residence permit, but had not yet registered with any municipality (which is compulsory); and 200 former asylum seekers were awaiting their removal from Finland (Kosonen 2019). As these numbers and Sects. 3.2 and 3.3 indicate, the asylum process is complex and consists of various stages.

A particularity among undocumented migrants in Finland is the large number of male Iraqi asylum seekers. According to Migri, in 2015–2018, adult Iraqi men made about 30,000 (precisely 29,577) asylum applications; furthermore, 7266 male Iraqi children (unaccompanied minors and those with families) asked for asylum. Of Iraqi male applicants (including children), 3096 (8.4%) received asylum, and 954 (2.6%) were granted secondary protection. Of their applications, 1836 (5.0%) were not inspected (due to the Dublin Regulation or due to obvious grounds resulting in the non-processing of the application). Of the Iraqi male applicants, 10,648 (28.9%) received negative asylum decisions. These numbers, however, also include people who made second applications on modified grounds. Of the applicants, 20,309 left the asylum process before completing it, disappeared from the authorities, or were still going through the process in 2019.

Another rough estimate is that, of 20,000 Iraqi male individuals who applied for asylum in Finland in 2015–2018, about 3500 (18%) obtained asylum, 800 (4%) received residence permits through secondary protection, 2000 (10%) obtained residence permits by other means, and 13,700 (69%) did not receive residence permits, with or without asylum, subsidiary protection, for humanitarian reasons, or on other grounds. There is no information on how many of the Iraqi male asylum seekers left Finland during the process or after receiving the final negative decisions on their applications. The Finnish authorities estimate that about 5300 Iraqi men (27% of asylum applicants) did not follow through with the asylum process

(included in the previous number who did not obtain residence permits); for example, they did not register at a reception centre, did not receive the allowance for asylum seekers, or did not attend an asylum interview. This group disappeared from the authorities during the asylum process before receiving the final decisions on their applications. This does not mean that all of them left Finland, but many did. Of the male asylum seekers from Iraq, some have utilised the voluntary return mechanism and hundreds have been forcibly removed by the Finnish authorities; therefore, it is evident that Iraqi men constitute the largest group of undocumented migrants in Finland.

A peculiarity of asylum applications emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, 4550 asylum applications were presented in Finland, of which 56% were new applications and 44% were subsequent asylum applications that former asylum seekers had made after receiving a negative final decision from Migri or an administrative court on an earlier application. To present subsequent applications, these people either had to reside in Finland or leave Finland shortly after receiving the decisions. On average, in 2019, 379 asylum applications were presented monthly, of which 211 were new and 168 subsequent applications; however, the situation changed dramatically in 2020 due to measures to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic. From April to September 2020 (a 6-month period), on average, 245 asylum applications were presented monthly, of which 87 (36%) were new and 158 (64%) were subsequent applications (Migri 2020); thus, the decreases of applications in the first 6 months of the pandemic were 59% for new applications, 6% for subsequent applications, and 35% for all applications. Restrictions on international travel caused a rapid and substantial reduction of new asylum seekers; however, the pandemic had very little impact on the number of subsequent applications. Of the new applications, 53% were presented by adults alone, 20% by minors accompanied by family, and 27% by unaccompanied minors (Migri 2020). Overall, in the autumn of 2020, there were asylum seekers from 70 countries in Finland (plus stateless people and those of unclear origin), of which the largest group (34%) came from Iraq, followed by groups from Somalia (17%), Afghanistan (14%), the Russian Federation (5%), Turkey (4%), Iran (3%), and Syria (2%). The majority were 18–34-year-old men (Migri 2020).

When the asylum process is completed, former asylum seekers lose their right to reside in reception centres, the monthly allowance (315 EUR, or 92 EUR if food is provided) they receive to survive, and access to extended health services (not only emergency health services, but any health services they need according to the reception centres), and many other services. As mentioned, undocumented migrants have a constitutional right to emergency health services, although many experience challenges in accessing it (see Sect. 5.3). In addition, the social welfare system should give them some support if they are in need and can prove that they live in Finland. Proving that is difficult, however, because they seldom have a formally registered address in a municipality and, if they provide one, the police and enforcement authorities could trace them. In addition, completing the application forms for social benefits is very difficult, even if a person is proficient in Finnish, Swedish, or

English. Nevertheless, these and some other basic services are, in principle, available.

Eventually, many undocumented migrants go into hiding to avoid being apprehended by the police or other authorities and continue to live outside the formal social systems. With tightening policies, undocumented migrants are then pushed deeper into the margins, increasing their risk of experiencing serious problems, including human trafficking, the grey economy, social exclusion, and insecurity (Faist 2018). This is not only a concern in Finland, but has been widely analysed in the international academic literature in relation to undocumented migrants' inclusion/exclusion (Ambrosini 2013), marginalisation from society (Engbersen and Broeders 2009), vulnerability (Düvell et al. 2010), exploitation (Salt and Stein 1997), and utilisation of unofficial networks (Ambrosini 2017), to cite but a few topics.

In Finland, the numbers of asylum seekers in 2018 and 2019 were much lower than the pre-2015 numbers (Migri 2018c; see also Fig. 1.1 in Sect. 1.3). This reduction was caused by asylum seekers' restricted access to the EU, increased constraints on asylum-related migrants' movements within the EU (i.e. they are effectively registered in the first country of their arrival in the EU, which is rarely Finland), and Finland's stricter asylum policies. Finland no longer grants the aliens' passports to asylum seekers that would facilitate the acquisition of valid passports for their citizenships, which are prerequisites for obtaining permanent residence in Finland. Furthermore, asylum seekers must withdraw their asylum applications if they apply for residence permits for study, work, or family reasons. The Finnish authorities may then suspect that these people used the asylum application only to gain legal entry into Finland, but did not actually have asylum grounds, because their intention was to study or work in Finland. In addition, while waiting for such residence permits, they are not allowed to work in Finland. As mentioned previously, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lockdowns and substantial reductions in travel, including that of asylum-related migrants to the EU (see Jauhiainen 2020). In Finland, as in many other EU member states, the number of new asylum applications declined substantially, commensurate with the development of the pandemic in 2020 (Migri 2020).

At the same time, the number of undocumented migrants increased in Finland, especially those people who applied for asylum in Finland in 2015. The final decisions on asylum in Finland are usually made 1 to 3 years after a person requests asylum. The large absolute number of asylum applications in 2015 led to a growing number of people being granted asylum and residence permits, but also a substantially higher number of rejected asylum applications. The majority of asylum applications did not result in the applicants being granted the right to remain in Finland.

Migri grants very few first-time applicants refugee status. In 2015–2018, Migri made approximately 51,500 asylum application decisions. Of these, approximately 31% (about 16,100) were positive—that is, the applicants were granted residence permits for Finland on the grounds of international protection (refugees; about two-thirds of the cases) or for other, usually humanitarian, reasons (about

one-third of cases). Approximately 12% (about 6000) of the decisions related to so-called Dublin Regulation cases (in which the people had applied for, or received, asylum in another EU member state), so the Finnish authorities did not inspect these applications, according to EU rules. Approximately 16% (about 7400–8000) of the decisions were based on incomplete asylum processes: they were unfinished because the applicants did not follow the process correctly (for example, did not appear for their Migri interviews), left the country, or withdrew their applications. Of the decisions, approximately 42% (about 21,700) were negative, meaning that Migri decided that the applicant would not be given a residence permit in Finland for asylum or humanitarian reasons. From 2015–2018, of the negative decisions on asylum applications by Migri leading to refusal of entry into Finland, 59% pertained to applications made by Iraqi nationals, 17% Afghani nationals, 6% Somali nationals, and 18% other nationals (Migri 2019i). In general, approximately 70% of the applicants were not given the right to reside in Finland; however, of the EU appellate court decisions in 2018, Finland had relatively the largest number (68%) of decisions that led to asylum, subsidiary protection, or residence permits granted for humanitarian reasons (Eurostat 2019). Migri agreed that it was not prepared to handle the huge volume of asylum applications after 2015 (Migri 2018a), which resulted in cases in which court decisions differed from Migri's initial decisions.

Locally, undocumented migrants' situations are also very complex. In 2017, 38 Finnish municipalities (12% of all municipalities in the country), and in 2018, 42 Finnish municipalities (14%), mentioned that they had undocumented migrants (Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019; Jauhiainen et al. 2018); however, undocumented migrants in Finland are largely an urban phenomenon. In general, the larger a municipality's population is, the more probable it is that undocumented migrants live there. Of the cities and towns in Finland with more than 100,000 inhabitants, 78% were known to harbour undocumented migrants; by contrast, they were found in only 5% of rural municipalities and in 4% of municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants. There was thus a clear correlation between the size of municipalities' populations and the presence of undocumented migrants in those municipalities ($p = 0.000$). Similarly, the more urban the character of the municipality (from the categories fully 'urban', 'mostly urban', 'some urban', and 'rural'), the more likely there were to be undocumented migrants ($p = 0.000$). Discounting population size, whether the majority of the population in a municipality spoke Finnish or Swedish (since there are municipalities in Finland where Swedish is the language of the majority population) made no difference regarding the presence of undocumented migrants; however, there was a clear correlation between the existence of an asylum seeker reception centre and the existence of undocumented migrants in these municipalities ($p = 0.000$). Many reception centres are also located in larger municipalities, and most undocumented migrants lived in Finland's largest cities (Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019; Jauhiainen et al. 2018). With the exception of Helsinki, which has 700,000 inhabitants, the remaining cities in Finland are rather small: five cities have around 200,000–350,000 inhabitants and, in total, nine cities have more than 100,000 inhabitants. In 2017, 86% of municipalities had no evidence of undocumented migrants, according to the local authorities or NGOs dealing with

undocumented migrants there. Obviously, it was possible that there might be undocumented migrants in some of the 267 municipalities that claimed not to have any; however, most of these municipalities are very small, remote, and located in the eastern and northern parts of Finland, where the presence of any foreign nationals would definitely be noted. Some municipalities clearly mentioned that undocumented migrants were not present, and never would be, in their municipalities.

Complexity at the local level also relates to the provision of services, which vary from one municipality to another. As mentioned, the Constitution guarantees emergency healthcare services for anyone in Finland, undocumented migrants included (for a broader discussion about healthcare, see Chap. 5). These services are heavily subsidised by the public sector, but some costs are borne by users. If a client cannot afford the provided service, the local authority is responsible for paying for it. Some (often small) municipalities do not want to allocate money from their limited budgets for undocumented migrants, so they are reluctant to provide such services and encourage the migration of undocumented people to larger cities. In reality, the services (both healthcare and others, such as accommodation) vary substantially between neighbouring municipalities. In addition, earlier studies indicated differences both between countries and within countries (e.g. between municipalities) in how undocumented migrants are dealt with (Woodward et al. 2014).

Local authorities can voluntarily extend their service provision to undocumented migrants, but in principle, local authorities have to cover the associated costs. In November 2017, because of the increase of undocumented migrants in Helsinki, the city's politically elected local council made the decision—after a heated debate and voting—to provide necessary healthcare to undocumented migrants in addition to emergency healthcare (Jauhiainen et al. 2018). Later, a few other municipalities in Finland adopted this approach and gave undocumented migrants similar rights to such extended services. Some local municipalities, NGOs, and other actors also provided services other than healthcare. Helsinki later implemented a stricter policy, asking undocumented migrants to prove that they lived in Helsinki or were registered there previously as asylum seekers (see Chap. 5).

In Finland, although certain local NGOs consider undocumented migrants to have full 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1968), the central government and immigration laws categorise them as illegal, with no rights to the city, and for this reason feel bound to expel them as soon as they are denied asylum. Simultaneously, the language the media uses to describe undocumented migrants' deeds exposes them to a negative social and legal super-visibility (Brighenti 2010), whereby everything they do 'becomes gigantic to the point that it paralyses' (Brighenti 2007: 330) any action they might perform, at the same time triggering fear and suspicion among citizens; thus, undocumented migrants can easily become synonymous with crime, danger, sickness, suspicion, fear, threats to security, and so on.

Undocumented migrants react in various ways to their precarious, unstable situations. Some have become proactive people in such a positive way that local residents eventually fight for their right to reside (this has happened in a few small villages and in at least one medium-sized town in Finland; Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Some are able to negotiate relationships with people they trust from their

community, NGOs, and even the police, in that, if they do not create any trouble, they are informally allowed to stay. Hospitals can provide urgent healthcare for undocumented migrants without asking for further information, thus accepting their anonymity. However, the COVID-19 pandemic created an additional challenge for undocumented migrants wishing to remain anonymous, but needing to contact health authorities due to possible COVID-19 symptoms. Some local municipalities also provide basic assistance to guarantee undocumented migrants' livelihoods (for instance, shelter from cold weather) and provide access to schools, since all children are by law entitled to receive basic compulsory education. Other undocumented migrants (actually, the majority of them) are too scared to use these services and therefore choose to remain hidden. In fact, of the undocumented migrants responding to our survey, the majority (60%) felt stuck in their current life situations, 24% did not know how to answer this question, and only one out of six (16%) disagreed about feeling stuck. While staying outside official administrative systems offers protection from deportation (Battistella 2017), it also opens up the already-mentioned high risks of exploitation, marginalisation, and even serious health and security issues.

3.5 Conclusions

Becoming and being an undocumented migrant is a complex process in Finland. One person can have a temporary legal right to reside in Finland, but lose this right and consequently become an undocumented migrant. Another person might never have the right to reside in Finland. If a person does not have the right to enter Finland at all, then the legal procedure is to expel him/her, either by denying the right to enter or the police removing him/her from Finland. If a person has an expired residence permit, then the legal procedure is to expel him/her by deportation. Migri makes the decisions about people's right to reside in Finland, but its decisions can be appealed against in the Administrative Court and the Supreme Administrative Court, whose decisions Migri must abide by. Ultimately, the police are the enforcement authority responsible for expelling people with no right to reside in Finland.

There are many ways to become an undocumented migrant in Finland. Since 2015, the most typical way has been to ask for asylum, then be rejected, but to continue to remain in the country despite an order to leave Finland. The legal asylum application procedure is logical, but in practice, very complex; many asylum seekers do not understand the process or what is and could be relevant to their claims for asylum. Facing the fear of potentially being deported, some asylum seekers have converted, or claimed to have converted, from Islam to Christianity or have claimed homosexuality to give their asylum applications further grounds. In some cases the claim is not made just out of fear of deportation, but it is actually genuine, and Migri has then the difficult task to judge the truthfulness of these claims.

As for how the asylum process is experienced by former asylum seekers, now undocumented migrants, we showed that asylum seekers did not fully understand the

asylum process. Some asylum seekers' traumatic pasts negatively influenced their asylum interviews, which required consistent, coherent, and flawless narration, and often full documentation of their personal stories. Misunderstanding of the asylum procedures led some asylum seekers to make wrong choices, which then influenced the final asylum decisions; thus, they became undocumented migrants despite their genuine need to be protected. The dichotomy of illegal/legal migrant no longer applies to the real lives of these people, who live in the grey zone of being undocumented. In Finland, some asylum seekers were not granted asylum, yet, their expulsion could not be enforced because they lacked the necessary travel documents or their countries of origin refused to take them back.

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Chapter 4

Undocumented Migrants' Everyday Lives in Finland



4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we delve into undocumented migrants' everyday lives in Finland, which (unsurprisingly) share many similarities with the lives of undocumented migrants in other European countries (see, for instance, the ground-breaking work by Bloch et al. (2009) and their account of the lives of young undocumented migrants in Britain; or Bendixsen (2018a, b) for Norway; De Genova (2002) for the US; Khosravi (2010) for Sweden; and Menin (2017) for Italy, to cite only a few). As for anyone else, their lives consist of a variety of needs: finding and retaining a place to live; seeking employment and money for living expenses; and keeping in contact with families and friends, often through social media. Undocumented migrants need to constantly come up with new survival strategies (Tervonen et al. 2018). The lives of these migrants fluctuate between the monotony of living in the limbo between legality and illegality (from which the 'feeling of being stuck' in their current situation emerges, as the survey showed) and unpredictable changes of condition. This unpredictability (Hörschelmann 2011) is brought about by the continuous challenges they have to face, as well as by sudden changes linked with their undecided legal status when they try to settle in a place.

The participant observations we conducted, as well as the results of the survey, corresponded well with findings for many other European countries, which have been widely described in the academic international literature: the lives of undocumented migrants are challenging. As Collins (2018) highlighted, migration is not about rationality and clear and linear decisions (see Tedeschi 2021a). Thorough ethnographic studies have highlighted, in particular, the non-linearity of undocumented migrants' lives, such as the dramatic story of being and becoming an undocumented migrant across borders told by Khosravi (2010). In their everyday lives, undocumented migrants relentlessly create semi-legal spaces by using specific, creative, always-new tactics (see De Certeau 1984)—survival strategies that enable them to make ends meet: 'Tactics produce space by constant manoeuvring,

transforming spaces into chances or opportunities' (Bendixsen 2018a: 168). In this way, they clearly show their 'agency in contesting, undermining or overcoming the legal restrictions, administrative barriers and everyday risks they face as a result of their status' (Schweitzer 2017: 318). In these roundabout ways, they go on to actively construct their subjecthood (Grønseth 2013; Strange et al. 2017).

Overall, whether for finding accommodation, or a temporary job, or just to provide a listening ear and comfort, relatives and friends often constitute a safety net for undocumented migrants, who experience precariousness, uncertainty, and rejection on a daily basis. At the same time, their ability to create everyday spaces for themselves in-between legality and illegality means that many undocumented migrants' 'everyday (inter)actions, claims and decisions—from making friends to accessing public services—are premised on, as well as reflect, their being (at least partially) recognised not only as *de facto* members of society but often also as subjects of politics' (Schweitzer 2017: 320). Undocumented migrants (at least some of them) are thus able to participate in society and, to a certain extent, integrate into local neighbourhoods and labour markets (Hellgren 2014: 1177). While this is the case in other European countries, it is less the case in Finland, especially for the main group we refer to in this book—rejected asylum seekers. Their active participation in society is very limited, and the fear of deportation, or of being apprehended by the police, worsens their situation. Still, we will show how they nevertheless manage to be active and find roundabout ways to survive—especially in the capital, Helsinki, where it is possible for them to be 'invisible'.

In this chapter, we focus mainly on undocumented migrants' everyday necessities, such as accommodation, employment, communication with family and friends, and their ultimate migration aspirations. We discuss their activities on the border between legality and illegality, some of which semi-legal activities, such as employment in specific places and certain jobs, are crucial for their survival. For reasons of confidentiality and ethics, we cannot reveal details about them. In general, the lives of undocumented migrants involve dramatic events, sudden decisions, and unresolved psychological traumas (Bustamante et al. 2018; Carswell et al. 2011; Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Feldman 2011; Silove et al. 1997). These aspects of the lives of undocumented migrants in Finland are not unique, but are common to undocumented migrants living in other countries. In addition, these experiences resemble the ones lived by other individuals going through trauma, loss, violence, and illness.

In Sect. 4.2, we discuss the general demographic and educational backgrounds of undocumented migrants in Finland, mostly relying on our survey data and ethnographic observations. In Sect. 4.3, we illustrate how undocumented migrants find more or less secure accommodation. This is followed by Sect. 4.4, in which we show how some undocumented migrants manage to find jobs, despite not legally being entitled to work. In Sect. 4.5, we illustrate what their everyday social lives are like, including their relationships with their families and friends. In Sect. 4.6, we write about their future aspirations, which many try to maintain and nurture despite the hardships they experience on a daily basis. In Sect. 4.7, our theme is migration—to Finland, within Finland, and potential on-migration from Finland, including return

migration. In Sect. 4.8, we focus on the aid they receive: who they turn to when they need something in their everyday lives. In Sect. 4.9, we present our conclusions about the everyday lives of undocumented migrants in Finland.

4.2 Demographic and Educational Backgrounds

The demographic and educational backgrounds of undocumented migrants in Finland, as well as their countries of origin, vary. As discussed at length in Sect. 3.2, the authorities in Finland do not have detailed information about undocumented migrants in Finland, and they are not able to provide accurate estimates about their numbers, demographics, or other factors.

Based on our survey, ethnographic research, and other background information, we estimated the number of undocumented migrants who remained in Finland after failing the asylum process. We also included those asylum-related migrants who came to Finland for similar reasons, but never started the asylum process. The main focus of our study was particularly on rejected asylum seekers. This necessarily excluded from our sample many other kinds of irregular situations, such as former non-EU students and employees whose residence permits had expired, tourists whose visas had expired, or visitors from other EU countries who had remained in Finland for more than 3 months without registering their residence. Rejected asylum seekers constitute the majority of undocumented migrants in Finland (see also Könönen 2020). As discussed in Sect. 2.3.2 at length, our estimate of the number of undocumented migrants in early 2019 was 4000–4500, of which 3000–4000 were rejected asylum seekers.

The potential to become an undocumented migrant in Finland is particularly high among the nationalities of asylum seekers who come to Finland in large numbers, especially when their applications do not lead to asylum or residence permits. In 2015–2018, of the 48,000 asylum applications in Finland, 52% were from Iraq, 14% from Afghanistan, 6% from Somalia, 5% from Syria, and 25% from people from other countries, totalling over 100 nations (Migri 2019a). The proportion of decisions granting asylum, subsidiary protection, or protection granted for humanitarian reasons in 2015–2018 differed substantially for the citizens of these countries (although there was a time lag between applications and decisions). Of the rate of positive decisions in 2015–2018 varied from 25% from Iraq to 49% from Afghanistan, 48% from Somalia, and 85% from Syria.

As discussed in Sect. 2.3.2, our estimates of the countries of origin of undocumented migrants in Finland indicated that 62–70% came from Iraq (by far the largest group of asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers who came to Finland in 2015); 8–15% from the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, including proportionally more irregular migrants who entered Finland without starting the asylum process); 5–10% from Afghanistan (usually the second or third most common origin of asylum seekers); 5–10% from Somalia (usually the second or third most common origin of asylum seekers); 3–8% from Syria; and 5–15% from the

Table 4.1 Characteristics of undocumented migrant respondents (%)

	<17 years	18–29 years	30–49 years	50–59 years	60+ years	N
Men	16	42	39	2	1	91
Women	0	44	44	11	0	9
Total	14	42	40	3	1	100

remaining countries (many from Sub-Saharan Africa). In general, about 50% were 18–39-year-old men from Iraq, who constituted the largest group of asylum seekers entering Finland in 2015 and also of rejected asylum seekers in 2015–2018.

Having said this, we present the demographic and educational backgrounds of the people we studied, more precisely, based on our survey. Nine out of ten respondents (91%) were male and one out of ten (9%) were female. Furthermore, one out of seven (14%) were less than 18 years old (usually 17 years old), over two out of five (42%) were 18–29 years old, two out of five (40%) were 30–49 years old, and a few (1%) were 50–59 years old or (3%) 60 years or older (Table 4.1). The high number of men among the respondents was explained by the arrival in Finland of over 20,000 Iraqi men who requested asylum in 2015. This group, with a specific ethnic and gender background, comprised about 65% of all asylum seekers who came to Finland in that year (Jauhiainen 2017; Migri 2016). The majority of them did not receive asylum or residence permits in Finland and, as explained in Sect. 3.3, the Finnish authorities have often been unable to remove them from Finland. Regarding the largest group of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in Finland, and also of our respondents, the majority (54%) were Iraqi men (61% of all male respondents), as already mentioned in Sect. 2.3.2. Of these, 90% arrived in 2015 (or earlier), and hence belonged to the large group of male Iraqi former asylum seekers. In fact, of Iraqi male respondents, almost all (at least 93%) applied for asylum in Finland (5% did not know about it; 2% had not applied for it). This difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.002$) compared to other undocumented migrant male respondents.

The education levels of the respondents varied. The group was rather polarised: one-third (34%) had as their highest education level uncompleted or completed elementary school (up to 6 years), another third (33%) had finished the ninth grade (14%) or finished high school with 12 years of education (19%), while the remaining third (34%) had at least entered university. One out of five undocumented migrants (20%) had completed a university degree. Our respondents represented many kinds of people with very diverse educational backgrounds; there thus seemed to be substantial numbers of migrants at the both ends of the educational spectrum. Compared with the same-aged populations of Finland, the proportion of low education holders was more than double and the proportion of those with the highest education levels was slightly lower. Among the largest group (the Iraqi men), 20% had uncompleted or completed elementary school, 29% had finished the ninth grade, 20% had finished high school, and 31% had at least entered a university. They were closer to the average level of education in Finland, though still slightly below it (Statistics Finland 2020).

Three out of four respondents (76%) had lived for most of their lives in a town or a city, and one out of four (24%) had lived in the countryside or a village. Most of our undocumented migrant respondents were young or middle-aged male adults from towns and cities outside Europe. An urban background was typical for the majority of undocumented migrants, partly explainable by the rapid urbanisation that has taken place in many sending countries, as well as their demographic and economic burdens (i.e. challenges in finding employment in the cities of sending countries).

4.3 Housing and Everyday Life

The first point relating to undocumented migrants' housing is that, 'when access to formal housing is limited, informal and personal networks need to be utilised. Those who lack these networks or are excluded from them may face difficulty in finding a place to live' (Diatlova and Näre 2018: 155). This is true for Finland, as well as for other EU countries. As Bloch recognised: 'Work and housing represent two of the main and intersecting sites where illegality is produced and the effects are acutely felt' (Bloch 2014: 1513). We may add that the resourceful, 'creative', and unexpected ways in which these people managed to find places to stay is once again a clear sign of the importance of their agency and their capacity to build semi-legal spaces for themselves. In most cases, the undocumented migrants we met had found 'their own' places, such as a rented room or apartment shared with peers; a room in a relative's, friend's, or acquaintance's residence; and, in a few cases, a place on their own. They had found accommodation through their networks and contacts, advertisements in online social media channels, or word-of-mouth. The ones who did not have such networks, or were still building them, were more likely to sleep in emergency shelters while awaiting better accommodation.

When we asked where the respondents usually slept, one out of five (19%) mentioned sleeping in an apartment they rented themselves, more than one out of three (36%) at a friend's place, a few (6%) in an emergency shelter, and one out of six (17%) in another place, such as with family members, at a church, or in a camp. Of the respondents, 10% mentioned that they did not have a regular place to sleep and 12% did not answer this question. Our survey of the municipalities in Finland showed that, of the municipalities that reported having undocumented migrants, 70% provided some kind of accommodation services for them, either through the local authorities or NGOs (Jauhiainen et al. 2018). Those undocumented migrants without a permanent place to live were in the most difficult situations—even though, as we will show, staying with friends and family can also have its challenges (Bloch 2014). An undocumented migrant who had not found a place for himself said the following about his experience in an emergency shelter:

In the emergency shelter, there are many people, and there is always noise. Moreover, I need to pay attention to my belongings; they need to be very close to me. I cannot trust people

there. I sleep probably three or four hours, but it might be less if I get anxious because of my current condition.

Emergency shelters usually have fixed opening and closing times: for example, the opening time can be at around 9 p.m., and the closing time around 6 a.m. This means that the user can stay there between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., but has to stay elsewhere outside those hours. Since emergency shelters have limited places, people who want to sleep there might have to arrive well before the opening time and queue to gain a place. Not having a fixed place to sleep has very practical consequences; for example, as one undocumented migrant highlighted, the need to carry all one's belongings at all times. We noticed that they normally used rucksacks, in which they placed the essentials for the night. Emergency shelters are provided in Helsinki and other large towns in Finland and, sometimes, located within normal housing districts. Often the municipalities cover the costs of these shelters from their budgets, but such spending of local public revenues has attracted criticism, especially from the anti-immigrant political parties (Welling 2018).

In the morning, when they needed to leave the shelters, some undocumented migrants simply waited for a few hours somewhere until the day centres opened. These day centres, often run by NGOs or churches, are places where they can spend a few hours during the day and professionals (community workers or NGO volunteers) are available to give them help and advice. They can also provide food and clothing, as well as other facilities such as washing machines and showers. Sometimes they provide other services, such as language training or legal advice. Unfortunately, these day centres normally open at 10 a.m., if not later; therefore, undocumented migrants who have nowhere else to stay in the early morning need to find alternative places to wait in the meantime. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many day centres had to reduce or even close their facilities temporarily, or limit the number of visitors substantially (Koivisto 2020). Furthermore, many usually open public sites, such as libraries, remained entirely closed or greatly reduced their opening hours; thus, undocumented migrants could not use these sites, which they often frequented before the pandemic. Such restrictions hit female undocumented migrants especially seriously in Finland. In general, there are rather few of them in Finland and their staying in places with unknown males is often disapproved of. Some NGOs provide services exclusively for female undocumented migrants, but these services were locked down for some periods in 2020.

The winter in Finland could be very challenging for the undocumented migrants, because it very cold (often with freezing temperatures below zero degrees Celsius) and dark outside, and few places are open early in the morning. In such circumstances, they normally tried to go to the few cafeterias that were already open at that time. Some used the subway stations, although the CCTV cameras there made them feel insecure. One undocumented migrant said that he especially liked to go to libraries, because he could stay warm and read there; however, these are not open in the early morning. He always ended up walking. He liked open spaces, such as parks, riversides, or the seaside, because he found them relaxing; for a short time, he

could forget his stressful condition by walking or doing some other physical activity (such as running):

I prefer to be alone. I don't want to hear anything from anyone; I am desperate. The only thing that might help me is some sport, running probably. I used to play football back in my country, but here I can't. When I cannot sleep, I just walk. Moving my body makes me feel better. It gives me energy and strength, and in this way I don't overthink. My nervous system is very tense.

In general, however, our research showed that undocumented migrants who remained longer in Finland tended to visit NGOs and day centres less frequently as time went by. They visited these sites and organisations more often in the beginning, when they had to build their own connections. Later, if they managed to establish their own support networks, they no longer relied on the centres. Similarly, the emergency shelters were available as a temporary housing solution for the young adults who came to Finland alone, but only a few used them. While using the emergency shelters, they tried to find better solutions and find a proper place of residence as soon as possible. Better solutions could include a room or flat to share, even in turns, with peers they came to know in Finland. Sometimes such a place was rented on the grey market. Others, who had friends and relatives in Finland, tended to find temporary accommodation with them; however, this option was not without drawbacks. Our findings were similar to those of Waite and Lewis (2017: 970), who reported: 'Whether the sharing of accommodation is relatively fleeting or longer term, many individuals in our study mentioned being cautious of intruding on their hosts' privacy through overstaying their welcome and abusing their generosity'. Similarly, Bloch (2014: 1516) noted:

While the data suggests that refused asylum seekers living as undocumented migrants certainly access and use the social capital derived from micro co-ethnic networks of individuals and organisations, it is also clear that these relations can be complex and can be variable.

Indeed, there were cases in our research in which the relatives refused to accommodate undocumented migrants, because they were afraid of losing their own residence permits:

After all the negative decisions and the termination of the reception centre services, I went to my uncle and asked him if I could at least stay there, with him, but he said, 'No, no way; you are illegal now. You need to go to Helsinki and find a place for yourself!' My uncle was afraid that the police would come to his home; that he might then lose his residence permit because he was giving shelter to someone, like me, who is here illegally. This is why I ended up in Helsinki.

Even if the hosts were not afraid of being caught by the police, it might be that the undocumented migrants themselves did not feel like staying in the same place for too long, for fear of being spotted by neighbours and denounced to the police. Such people often changed accommodation, sleeping in different houses with different friends (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021).

The nights were troubled for the undocumented migrants—and not only for the ones who slept in emergency shelters. The majority of undocumented migrants we

met could not sleep well (see also Heikkurinen 2019). They became very anxious and stressed, had unpleasant flashbacks from their countries of origin, or were afraid of being caught by the police and later removed. Bloch paralleled our research findings: 'Panic attacks, recurrent nightmares and the inability to sleep because of possible Border Agency visits were mentioned and some were almost immobilised by these anxieties' (2014: 1520). As a consequence, the quality of their sleep was very poor, wherever they were. One undocumented migrant said: 'Every time I fall asleep, I get something like a heavy pressure on my chest, and I then wake up and am so scared'. The few who stayed in emergency shelters had early fixed wake-up times and had to leave the places very early, no matter how badly they had passed the night. For others who had different accommodation, after a sleepless night, it was sometimes easier to sleep in the morning and wake up later in the day or afternoon. This is the reason why, during our field observations, it was more common to meet people in the afternoon or very late in the morning.

Some undocumented migrants also learned to stay awake late into the night and sleep until the afternoon during the long months in the reception centres when they were asylum seekers. There was not much to do, so it became very common for many to stay awake during the nights there and sleep through the mornings (Honkasalo et al. 2017). If an undocumented migrant has no regular duties in the morning or day, then his/her timetable can become very different from that of ordinary citizens who wake up early in the morning, spend the day working, rest in the evening, and go to sleep at night.

The situation for undocumented migrant families with children was slightly different and, despite the hardships, their situations were usually more stable. We cannot generalise or provide a complete account of the living conditions of undocumented families; however, the few families we met had been given one room (per family) with a shared bathroom and kitchen. The rooms were in one of the day centres, where undocumented migrants met, and which we also visited during our fieldwork. The families, but also men coming from other places (emergency shelters or private accommodation) and staying there during the day, all cared in a very special way about that particular place. Some of them said, 'This is my home, my place, and I want it to be beautiful and clean'. This clearly indicated their strong need to have a place to 'own' and to take care of; for instance, one day we found them painting the walls. This was done with extra care:

You know, this white colour on the walls improves the mood, and gives light to the place. It makes the place look brighter, it is more beautiful! I do not like the place to be empty . . . but not full either . . . something in the middle, not many people . . . but it is nice to have people around, who talk, not loudly, and warm the atmosphere.

This was the opinion of an undocumented migrant who used to visit the day centre every day and who was very active there. In general, the common shared areas (kitchen, bathroom, and conservatory) were always tidy, since the guests very neatly cleaned up after themselves. Cooking was also done in an organised and shared way, so as to give space to everyone—especially to mothers who cooked for their children and needed their own fixed times and spaces. This was one of those rare occasions

when we were able to observe the everyday lives of undocumented migrant women in their temporary homes on a daily basis. They went out less than the men, so they usually stayed either in their rooms with the children or in the common shared areas, especially when they needed to cook for the whole family. For two of them, it was acceptable to cook when men were around; however, a third woman whom we observed was not allowed to remain in a room with other men for religious and cultural reasons. She had different cooking times than the others and generally stayed in her room. When she knew that there were no men around, she would show up in the common area and start cooking for her husband and child. She rarely went out (except to the mosque to pray), and was always accompanied by her husband and child.

In general, the families we observed tried to live normal lives as far as possible (although mostly inside the house) and treated that place as their own home, so as to provide a sense of stability for themselves and their children. In reality, however, their living conditions were only apparently stable and, despite the efforts of the parents, this could not prevent negative consequences for the children's wellbeing: 'Sporadic and unstable housing situations primarily affect children, whose social connections and networks are locally formed' (Khosravi 2010: 104–105). Indeed, the parents, like the majority of undocumented migrants without families, had very high levels of stress and anxiety. They were sometimes too tired (from the sleepless nights, for instance) to provide their children with the psychological stability and sense of home they needed. This was also reported in the academic international literature, which highlighted that various elements, including poor and precarious housing conditions, had a negative influence on individuals and increased their stress levels (Bustamante et al. 2018). This is especially true for children.

4.4 Employment

In Finland, undocumented migrants are not entitled to work; however, in general, 'undocumented migrants have no access to statutory welfare support and so work is the only way of obtaining money when alternative informal support structures are not available' (Bloch 2014: 1513–1514). As discussed in Sect. 1.3, undocumented migrants have a legal right to social benefit support in Finland, but it is difficult to access it due to the complex bureaucracy of the process.

Of the undocumented migrants who responded to the survey, one out of four (26%) had been employed in Finland and, at the time of the survey (between October 2018 and January 2019), one out of four (24%) were employed. Of the employed, almost two out of five (38%) had a more or less permanent job, one out of four (24%) had a part-time job, and almost two out of five (38%) worked randomly. A few of the respondents (5%) had been employed in Finland for over a year. Such numbers corresponded with the general situation in Finland, in which participation in the labour force is lower among the foreign background population. In Helsinki, where a large number of undocumented migrants live, the unemployment rate among the

20–64 years old Iraqis (with residence permits) in 2017 was 53%; among Somalis of the same age, it was 45%; and among Afghans, 41%; whereas among Finns it was less than 10% (City of Helsinki 2019).

The issue of employed undocumented migrants has generated political discussion in Finland. During the election campaign in the spring of 2019, Mr. Antti Rinne, the leader of the Social Democratic Party (and from the summer until the end of 2019, the prime minister of Finland), suggested that undocumented migrants (paperless migrants, as he defined them) should work in Finland in specific jobs for local authorities (although without fixed work contracts). Later in 2019, in a Government of Finland (2019) programme it was mentioned that the possibility of providing work-based resident permits for undocumented migrants would be investigated; however, by the autumn of 2020, no such investigation had been initiated.

Previous work experience in the country of origin increased the likelihood of a person being employed later, as an asylum seeker or undocumented migrant, along the asylum-related journey or in the destination country (see, for example, Jauhiainen 2017; Jauhiainen and Vorobeva 2018). Those respondents who were employed in their country of origin were more likely to be employed as undocumented migrants in Finland ($p = 0.003$). Almost three out of four respondents (71%) worked in their country of origin and, of those, almost two out of five (38%) were employed in Finland. Of those respondents who had worked in their country of origin, four out of five (79%) asserted that it was more important to move within Finland to secure a job than to live with people of the same ethnic origin ($p = 0.000$).

In general, studies found that, among asylum seekers and refugees, men were both absolutely and relatively more often employed than women (Brücker et al. 2019). Such a situation was very evident among specific ethnic refugee groups, such as Afghans, prior to their arrival in Finland (Jauhiainen and Eyvazlu 2020), but also true in Finland, at least for the undocumented migrants we were studying (mainly rejected asylum seekers). According to our survey data, employment was more common for men, with roughly one out of three respondents (31%) working. Employed Iraqi male respondents were slightly less likely to be employed. Of those, one out of four (25%) were working in autumn 2018, and one out of three (31%) had worked in Iraq. None of the female respondents (0%; from four countries) worked; however, our data on women was too limited to draw broader conclusions about female employment, although employment among undocumented migrant women was clearly very rare. Language skills also mattered: if the respondents were proficient in Finnish, they were almost twice as likely (40%) to be employed than those who knew little or no Finnish (24%).

In the international context, undocumented migrants are employed in many sectors—cleaning, food service, car cleaning, barbering, mechanical work, and construction (Brücker et al. 2019; Cohen 2006; Pajnik 2016). Our employed respondents had a variety of jobs, usually in positions that did not require special training or skills. Of the employed respondents, 33% were employed in a company, 3% were self-employed, 3% had mixed employment, and 60% had other types of employment. These different jobs included restaurant worker, volunteer, and teacher, for example. There were some differences regarding people's backgrounds: those who

had not completed secondary education, who had gained work experience in their countries of origin, and who had family in Finland were more often self-employed than other respondents.

Undocumented migrants were employed in various enterprises run by Finnish people and people with non-Finnish backgrounds. In some cases, undocumented migrants found jobs in businesses run by people who initially came from the same country as themselves, but who were now regular migrants in Finland. This phenomenon was noted in earlier research: 'Irregular migrant workers tend to concentrate in low-paid employment, which they access through intermediaries, often from the same country of origin or ethnic group' (Sigona 2012: 56); 'They were working in low paid precarious jobs either in co-ethnic businesses or the domestic sphere, where documents were not required or requested' (Bloch 2014: 1513).

Many of the undocumented migrants' jobs were regular, legal jobs: everyday jobs in which the native population and other immigrants are employed. In their current jobs, 62% had Finnish co-workers and 64% had co-workers of their own nationalities; however, the ways in which the enterprises operated (regarding wages, insurance, taxation, and similar) were to some extent illegal or on the border between legality and illegality. The media (see, for example, Manner and Teittinen 2017; Mäntymaa et al. 2017) revealed that, in Finland (as elsewhere), some private employers exploit the legal systems so that they can hire asylum seekers as trainees, whom they do not have to pay a salary. Such exploitation can become more serious when people lose the status of asylum seeker and become undocumented migrants: 'Some employers use power over their non-authorized workers to pay lower wages and extract longer hours' (Bloch 2014: 1514). Regardless of the informality of their jobs, over two out of three (70%) of our responding employed undocumented migrants had written work contracts, and half (52%) received their salaries via a bank account. One out of four employed peoples (24%) received their salaries in cash, and another one out of four (24%) claimed that they were not paid for their work.

Likic-Brboric et al. (2013: 678) mentioned that undocumented migrants' jobs can be:

such illegal economic activities as being involved in the illegal production and distribution of goods and services that are by law defined as illicit. Informal economic enterprises deal with licit (i.e. legal) goods and services, while the way of operating the business in which such goods and services are provided is to a varying extent illicit.

Pajnik (2016: 161) discussed employed undocumented migrants as follows:

'Helots', the category that includes irregular migrants and asylum seekers, suffer the most, and even more so when their work is unskilled and tied to specific projects. Compared to the groups of citizens that include nationals as well as regular and established migrants, recognised asylum applicants and special entrants, helots as the lower 'subgroup' of citizens are the worst off. The guarantee of their labour and wider human rights is a practical impossibility for them.

For the sake of confidentiality and security, we do not reveal details about the specific sites and sectors of such 'non-legal' employment in Finland; however, it is

not difficult to find them if one is interested in knowing where the undocumented migrants work and which jobs they have. The Finnish media discussed their employment and identified jobs such as restaurant worker or cleaner, mostly in the capital (Yle.fi 2017). Undocumented migrants tend to work for a rather small group of employers in Finland, and the total number of employed undocumented migrants is perhaps slightly more than 1000 people in total; nevertheless, they are involved in business activities that generate millions of euros per month.

Thus, undocumented migrants happen to be involved in employment activities that to some extent circumvent the law. As the academic international literature highlighted, undocumented migrants also risk being lured into more unlawful activities (see, for instance, Chan 2018). This may start in their countries of origin or the transit countries, where they are often lured into smuggling or human trafficking (the research has clearly shown the involvement of migrants in the smuggling process. See, for instance, Van Liempt and Doornik 2006). If they want to leave their home countries in the first place, and reach Europe, 'those who have little choice but to engage the services of smugglers/traffickers, as a result of restrictive immigration and asylum policies, are subject to further exclusion from Europe by the measures put in place to prevent smuggling/trafficking' (Grewcock 2003: 115). This becomes a vicious circle: undocumented migrants illegally engage smugglers to reach Europe, but once they have reached it, they are further excluded from legitimacy, because they have used those smugglers' services. This does not necessarily mean that they are 'criminals' themselves; on the contrary, they can be seen as 'good illegals', whereby "illegality" does not function 'as an absolute marker of illegitimacy, but rather as a handicap within a continuum of probationary citizenship' (Chauvin and Garcés-Masareñas 2012: 241). Indeed, as a study of registered crimes conducted in Norway by Mohn and Ellingsen (2016) showed, the percentages of undocumented migrants engaging in illegal activities nationally were rather low. They argued that asylum seekers and irregular migrants, as a group, are overrepresented in media reporting about crimes, often for political reasons. Bendixsen (2020) also showed that the Norwegian government sends these people back to their countries of origin to prevent them from committing crimes, in this way linking the return of these migrants with a clear policy of crime prevention. In Finland, involvement in semi-legal or illegal activities is a necessity for some undocumented migrants' survival in harsh conditions: 'Refused asylum seekers were aware of the risks of working and the ways in which they needed to work pushed them into additional modes of illegality, beyond immigration status just to survive' (Bloch 2014: 1514). The situation is similar to the one that Engbersen and co-workers highlighted in the Netherlands: the 'exclusion of illegal immigrants from public services and the formal labour market' (2007: 391), pushing these migrants towards alternative ways of making ends meet. According to our field research, even though there was a risk of being involved in illegal activities, many of the undocumented migrants avoided them, especially those for whom violating the law went against their natures and moral values, as these research participants highlighted:

I don't want to become a bad guy. I am a good guy, have never harmed anyone, or done anything bad . . . so I don't understand why the government is persecuting me here. However, I understand that it is very easy to become a criminal in these conditions, where you cannot work and you are basically not allowed to exist. It is easy to start: maybe you steal a mobile phone, then you go on and on in this direction until you become an actual criminal and there is no way back anymore.

When the first negative decision arrived, my physical and psychological situation started worsening. After the second negative decision, they started telling me that I should leave, that I am not allowed to stay in the country anymore, but I didn't want to, so I kept applying against the negative decisions, even if I was under pressure. Now I have given up. There is nothing else that I can do, and I don't want to break the law and become a criminal, but I don't want to remain here and do nothing either: I want to be active and to work!

It is so sad to see so many of my peers use drugs and alcohol. I don't want to become like them. I am a religious person; however, when you have nothing left, every possibility is denied to you and you are desperate, it is easier to get involved in those things.

These quotations from undocumented migrants (Tedeschi 2021a) show that commonly widespread rumours in society, such as that being an undocumented migrant always means he/she conducts illegal activities, in reality hide complex and varied situations: some individuals are lured into them, but others are not and thus explicitly show the powerfulness of their agency, despite the hardships, and their capacity to fight back. Many try to find 'legal' jobs with semi-legal or illegal payments. Despite their current conditions, some do not work if the work is not legal.

To find a job in the grey market, an undocumented migrant may use his/her own networks (word-of-mouth or online social media channels) and/or rely upon various unofficial intermediaries between job seekers and job providers. Such social relationships are important, as Ambrosini (2017: 1813) noted:

Because unauthorised immigrants are officially excluded from formal labour markets, housing markets and most welfare provisions, they can settle if they find other sources of work, income, housing, and social protection. In this regard, a crucial role is played by various intermediaries.

Many undocumented migrants want to work, and they have different motivations for doing so. Obviously, many desperately need money, because they have fallen outside the institutional 'safety nets' in Finland by remaining illegally in the country. The majority of our studied undocumented migrants were very happy when they managed to find jobs, to support themselves and, in some cases, their families (either in Finland or in their countries of origin). In addition, four out of five (79%) of the employed respondents mentioned that their current work helped them to integrate into Finland, 13% did not know, and 8% believed that their current work did not help them integrate into Finland. For many, being employed was a means to become better acquainted with Finnish society—despite the employment not being properly legal.

Money is an important motivation for working. The salaries undocumented migrants received varied greatly, depending on the working hours and types of jobs. The median salary the respondents mentioned was 10 EUR per hour for a full-time job and 7 EUR per hour for part-time or random work. Multiplying the hourly salary according to the standard working hours in Finland (8 h per workday

and 22 workdays per month) would result in 1760 EUR per month for full-time employees and 1232 EUR per month for part-time employees—or 58% and 41% of the median monthly salary in Finland (3018 EUR per month), respectively; however, they rarely worked such fixed hours. Earlier research found that the salaries of undocumented migrants were often well below the official minimum wage and that their work involved long work hours (Bloch 2014; Sigona 2012). In fact, the Finnish media revealed that some undocumented migrants in Finland are paid as little as 2 EUR per hour (Manner and Teittinen 2017; Mäntymaa et al. 2017), corresponding to a monthly salary of 352–660 EUR, or 12–22% of the median monthly salary in Finland. Most of the full-time-employed undocumented migrants we studied received salaries that were typical for low-paid jobs in Finland. Nevertheless, some respondents (24%) hardly earned any salary, but needed to work to pay for living expenses, such as food or accommodation, or they worked because it gave them something to do during the day. The best things that the respondents mentioned about their employment were the pleasure of being able to work, the social relationships they formed through work, the psychological comfort resulting from work, and the feeling of being useful to others. The worst things about their employment were the insecurity of their employment, the injustice they felt in the workplace, and the mental and psychological burden they experienced at work.

As explained previously, having paid employment was never the only motivation for an undocumented migrant to work. For many, employment was a way to gain focus in their lives. We observed that not being entitled to work often worsened their psychological condition. Working and being able to support themselves or their families could give undocumented migrants temporary relief from stress, help them to build social relationships, and also provide them with a measure of dignity. In general, doing nothing all day undermined their wellbeing and health. Moreover, since the majority of them had had traumatic experiences, ‘the days that pass with nothing happening’ (as one undocumented migrant said) might easily lead to flashbacks of distressing past events or sleepless nights:

I don't like to be like a beggar. I miss my country, even if I would like to learn the language and settle down here: with study, work, or marriage. As for the work, I am ready to do anything. I feel that I am wasting my time here, just waiting for something to happen, but I feel safe here; you don't see people assaulted here. However, I am a little bit afraid of the police and of deportation. I feel sad. Nothing can make me happy, and I miss my country, even if I cannot go back there. I feel bad because I don't want to be a beggar, but the situation is such that I am [a beggar]. I don't know what to do. I would feel much better if I could get asylum. I could do things. Now I cannot do anything, because I don't have the residence [permit]. I studied before, but when I received the negative decision, I couldn't study anymore. I was kicked out of the reception centre two months ago. I am attending a Finnish course. I come here [to the day centre] every day, and I go to sleep at the emergency shelter. I only sleep four hours per night. I have nightmares and keep overthinking. I am a religious person, so I believe that He will decide when the time is right for me to get the things that I need.

The majority of undocumented migrants would do more or less anything to get rid of their feelings of fear (coming from the past and uncertainty about the future), uselessness, and loneliness, and to not be considered ‘beggars’. Apart from the

unemployment itself, this feeling of being considered ‘beggars’ negatively influenced many of the undocumented migrants we met: ‘I don’t need Finland’s money. I am a strong man and can work and earn my own money!’ It also influenced their access to the basic services offered to them by the municipalities or NGOs, as a social worker from a small municipality in Southern Finland explained:

There is an issue with humiliation: for some of these people, it is actually humiliating to ask for public services, or to ask for coupons . . . to get food! Social workers try to explain to them that it is their right . . . and that Finnish people also have to go and get money for food when they are unemployed, but it must be a cultural thing; they don’t understand this . . . They also don’t understand that it is not the municipality’s ‘personal choice’ to give them food or not . . . it is how the actual system works, and the human rights laws are respected! They don’t want to appear to be beggars; it is an undignified thing, in their opinion, so they might prefer to seek help from their community. Better this, for them, than ‘begging’ for food. In addition, since this is a small town, they feel ‘too visible’ . . . in the sense that everyone might see that they are going to that certain place to get money for food. Maybe in a bigger city they would be more invisible, and in that sense, they might feel this ‘humiliation’ of being unemployed less.

Being proudly independent and not having to rely on anyone were therefore very important for many undocumented migrants and their wellbeing. In another study (Wettergren 2015: 241), an interviewee revealed: ‘Happiness will be like when I get that paper, when I get time with myself as well [and] when I do whatever I want without relying on anyone else, so that’s my ideal. I hope it will come one day’.

A third main reason to work, besides money and the possibility of doing something productive, was to try to obtain a residence permit by being employed. Employment in Finland is one reason for a visa or a residence permit to be granted; however, so far, it has not been possible for a person who is illegally in Finland to obtain a residence permit by being (illegally) employed. People can take jobs during the asylum process, and instead of receiving asylum, can apply for a residence permit for work purposes. Khosravi (2010: 103) reported in an earlier study that:

My informants never missed the chance to show their pride in working hard. They frequently mentioned their desire to be able to work in the formal labour market and pay taxes. They generally believed that hard work would increase their chances of eventual legalisation.

In Finland, obtaining a residence permit for work purposes is not easy since, by law, specific requirements exist in terms of the length of the contract, income, number of working hours, and the possibility of supporting one’s family. Migri (2019b) stated:

If you apply for a residence permit in order to work in Finland, you must get an appropriate salary for your work. This salary must be enough to support you for the entire time your residence permit is valid.

As stated previously, the jobs of undocumented migrants are normally underpaid: hence, they are not paid highly enough to support one person, let alone a family. Moreover, if the national migration service, Migri, finds that the migrant is working to some extent illegally (even if the job is *per se* legal), this can compromise future asylum applications or residence permit requests, as the person can be then accused of exploiting the system. Nevertheless, exploitative situations occur when migrants

want to legalise their stay and therefore start working. Employers may exploit the situation by making them work longer hours for low wages (Khosravi 2010), with the false promise that they can obtain a residence permit thereby. All this happens despite the fact that, according to Ambrosini (2013: 13):

The governments of receiving countries have stepped up efforts to eliminate ambiguities and grey areas in regulation; to make the sites where irregular immigrants find refuge, resources, and services more transparent and controllable; and to impose more severe sanctions on those who provide irregular immigrants with hospitality and support. But these efforts have resulted in the greater immersion of immigrants in more hidden and less controllable areas, in more irregular work, and in a stronger commitment to becoming unidentifiable, sometimes even with entry into networks more closely intertwined with illegal organisations and behaviours.

4.5 Family and Friends

As Putnam stated:

'Social capital' refers to features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital (1995: 67).

In this sense, undocumented migrants are like anybody else: they have their own networks, which they trust and can rely on (creating bonding social capital, and reinforcing identity, ethnicity, and homogeneity; Putnam 2000). Some have a family, many have sisters and brothers, and some have children and many other relatives and close friends as well. This constitutes their social support:

A resource that is usually created in the strong social ties between family members, close friends, and members of ethnic groups. These strong ties are a major source of emotional and material support, allowing individuals who can mobilise it to "get by" and "cope" (van Meeteren et al. 2009: 885).

Using Granovetter's words, they are undocumented migrants' strong ties (1973); however, being undocumented means that they cannot communicate easily with their family and friends, who often live in other places. Almost all of the respondents (92%) mentioned that they had family or friends in their country of origin. Of those, one out of six (16%) kept in touch with them daily, almost one out of four (23%) weekly, one out of ten (10%) monthly, and one out of three (32%) less frequently. One in five respondents (20%) no longer had contact with their family and/or friends in their country of origin. During the COVID-19 pandemic, having or not having these contacts with family and friends assumed greater importance. Those who had no contact were often extremely anxious about not knowing the COVID-19 situation in their former home countries for their family and friends. Likewise, those who maintained contact with their families and friends felt obliged to say that they were fine, despite the pandemic situation being severe in many European countries, including in neighbouring Sweden.

Creating and maintaining social relationships are not only important for life fulfilment, but also for finding the resources to survive (bridging social capital, crossing ethnic groups and differences; Putnam 2000): they constitute what is called, after Granovetter (1973), ‘weak social ties between individuals, such as friends of friends or indirect acquaintances. This form of social capital helps migrants to “get ahead,” to change their opportunity structure through access to resources in other social circles than their own’ (van Meeteren et al. 2009: 885). Five out of six respondents (83%) had made friends in Finland. Since many of them had already been in Finland for some years, it was rather natural that they would have made friends in the country. The respondents regularly met with their friends in the morning or daytime when it was light outside (80%) or in the evening or at night (77%) when it was dark outside. In the winter, it is already dark outside in Finland at 5 p.m. The female respondents met their friends outside at night slightly less frequently than the men did.

Overall, the undocumented migrants had made a variety of friends with different backgrounds. Almost three out of five respondents (58%) had friends who originated from Finland, one out of four (24%) had friends from other European countries, and half (49%) had friends from their former home countries. In addition, three out of five (59%) mentioned that they had made friends with asylum seekers (although the asylum-seeker category tended to be rather unclear for the respondents). Since most undocumented migrants we studied came to Finland as asylum seekers, many made friends when they were asylum seekers and not yet undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants who had made friends in Finland kept in touch with at least some of them at various intervals: two out of five (39%) daily, over one out of four (28%) weekly, and one out of six (17%) at least monthly. Very few (6%) lived with these friends, and only a few (10%) were never in contact with them. Those who had made friends with Finnish people most often originated from Afghanistan, Iraq, or Morocco.

Many of the studied undocumented migrants had made friends in Finland or had relatives and family in Finland or outside of Finland. Nevertheless, half (49%) of the respondents agreed that they often felt lonely in Finland (17% did not know; 34% disagreed). Of those who often felt lonely, six out of seven (85%) did not have any family with them in Finland, one out of four (26%) were rarely in contact with friends in Finland, and one out of nine (11%) had not made any friends in Finland. In our research, loneliness was thus strongly connected to not having close family in Finland; however, it could be said that, in general, migration itself causes loneliness:

When moving to another country, migrants leave behind their networks of family and friends. Despite increased options to maintain contact across borders (with new technologies), social bonds are most likely transformed over time . . . This disruptive and transformative effect of migration on existing networks . . . may contribute to feelings of social loneliness, especially when new ties in the country of residence still have to be developed (Koelet and de Valk 2016: 611).

Regarding the closest people to the undocumented migrants (strong ties), slightly over a third of our respondents (35%) had a spouse, a third (32%) had children, and two out of five (39%) had other relatives, but one out of three (32%) mentioned that

they did not have any of these. One out of six respondents (17%) mentioned that someone from their family was in Finland; thus, the majority (83%) did not have anyone from their family in Finland. Of the largest group of respondents (the Iraqi men), one out of seven (13%) mentioned that someone from their family was in Finland. Of the responding undocumented migrants who had family in Finland, but did not live in the same locality as them, one out of four (25%) planned to move to their family's location. Having family in Finland could also be a reason for a residence permit to be granted, either through family reunification schemes (usually, a spouse, children, or a parent being a refugee in Finland) or by having permanent relationships in Finland (e.g. having a spouse and/or children who are Finnish citizens or who have a permanent residence permit in Finland). It is not enough, however, to have such family members; a person must have frequent interaction with them and they must depend on each other. Our respondents were not able to show this (yet), because they were undocumented migrants. The authorities have become cautious about granting residence permits on family grounds, fearing that one family member with a residence permit in Finland could become an 'anchor' who will then attract and tie many other family members to Finland. They also fear fake marriages, whereby a migrant marries a Finnish citizen simply to obtain a residence permit, only to abandon him/her thereafter.

The large number of single undocumented migrants without family in Finland derives from the situation in Finland (which is not dissimilar to that in other European countries): many of them are young adults from Iraq who did not marry before leaving on their asylum-related journeys in 2015. Of our respondents, less than one out of five (18%) lived with a family member, or vice versa, while over four out of five (82%) had no family living with them in their current residence. Some came to Finland with their families, but others left their families in their home countries and came to Finland alone, and some had no family in Finland or elsewhere. Two out of three (66%) respondents made friends during their asylum-related journeys to Finland. Many (85%) still kept in contact with their family and friends while in Finland, often through social media (see Chap. 6).

Children living in Finland are, by law (the Constitution and the Basic Education Act), entitled to go to school. Local authorities have an obligation to arrange basic education for children of compulsory school age residing in their areas, as well as pre-primary education preceding the year of starting compulsory education when the child turns six. Compulsory education ends when the basic nine-year education syllabus has been completed or 10 years after the beginning of compulsory schooling (Basic Education Act 2010). The education is free of charge and is governed by a unified national core curriculum. Technically, however, it is not obligatory to attend a school; it is compulsory only to follow the school curriculum and obtain knowledge corresponding to the basic education syllabus. If a child of compulsory school age does not participate in education, the local authority of the pupil's place of residence must supervise his/her progress (Basic Education Act 2010).

The Constitution and the Basic Education Act provide the opportunity for 16–17-year-old children of undocumented migrants to attend school in Finland—a right confirmed by the Deputy Ombudsman of the Parliament in 2013 and followed by the

national and local authorities (Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies 2014: 100). As stated in the law, however, the national or local authorities cannot force children of undocumented migrants to attend school in Finland. In fact, not all of these children go to school, for various reasons. Some parents do not allow their children to go to school if they are afraid of being traced, caught by the police, and potentially removed (see also Khosravi 2010). In some cases, there are cultural barriers to allowing female children to attend mixed-gender classes. Sometimes, the family has to move from one place to another, which causes practical problems in knowing which school is appropriate. In addition, the family might not have sufficient resources to cover a child's use of public transport to travel to school, despite schools in Finland providing free daily lunches for the children.

Although children are by law entitled to go to school, younger children (the ones below the pre-primary education age; i.e. 6 years old) are generally not entitled to go to day care. They are thus more vulnerable and at greater risk of becoming isolated, especially if the parents are suffering great stress and do not have enough stamina to care for them properly. These small children might have to stay in precarious housing conditions for a long time. During our fieldwork, more than once, children highlighted their desire to have 'a normal life' and 'a house of their own'. Overall, undocumented migrant children suffer greatly from the unstable conditions their own parents are experiencing.

Even when they are far away, families (parents and relatives) constitute a very important dimension of many undocumented migrants' everyday lives (strong ties). They are a 'safety net' and a secure refuge in a precarious and insecure life. In that sense, one young undocumented migrant said that he could not let a day pass without contacting his parents, who lived in another country. We observed how much time undocumented migrants spent talking with their families—a practice of "doing the family" across borders' (Shinozaki 2015: 104). They loved to receive pictures of the family's children and to see them growing up. Over the years, some started to practice a specific transnationalism by sharing features of their countries of origin and of their current countries of residence (Mügge 2016). On the other hand, Bendixsen (2018b: 232) reported on transnational practices among undocumented migrants in Norway and explained how 'some avoided explaining their living conditions to family at home, because they were too ashamed or were afraid that their family would dismiss them as lazy or failures' and how 'sometimes, family members were difficult to locate due to political persecution or war, while others were afraid that contact would put family members in danger'. Family relationships greatly depended on each migrant's personal situation and might change over time.

The majority of undocumented migrants wanted to make friends so as not feel alone. As mentioned, friends and acquaintances (weak ties) were important elements of survival strategies, such as finding accommodation and temporary jobs (van Meeteren et al. 2009). Making friends in the receiving country—in this case, Finland—could be very difficult: 'Literature demonstrates how social networks not only include individuals, but implicitly exclude as well' (van Meeteren et al. 2009: 885). Undocumented migrants know that they are being rejected by the receiving country and are afraid to start conversations with local people. A language barrier

also exists. Nevertheless, 83% of our respondents had friends in Finland and 58% had Finnish friends. Many undocumented migrants tended to socialise with peers from their home countries, with whom they shared a language: 'Most interviewees find support and friendship in their fellow nationals, towards whom they feel "naturally" drawn' (Sigona 2012: 54); however, some prefer to live alone and not build any social contacts with their peers or the country's citizens. As academic research has shown, some of them are ashamed of their current status and situation, 'having to lie to new acquaintances about their irregularity out of shame or of fear that the new friends [will] stop seeing them' (Bendixsen 2018b: 233). In fact, some of the undocumented migrants we met preferred to say that they were still asylum seekers or even refugees or regular migrants.

Others, upon reaching Finland, no longer wanted to have anything to do with their ethnic group, as one undocumented migrant made clear to us: 'I chose Finland because I thought I wouldn't find people from my home country here'. In his study of undocumented migrants in another Nordic country, Norway, Bendixsen (2018b: 234) added: 'Consciously avoiding members of their ethnic group, some sought a different social environment, such as a church community'. In our research, those who purposefully sought a different social environment especially included migrants who changed their religion from Islam to Christianity (or claimed to be gay), either genuinely or in an attempt to obtain asylum. In these cases, they might no longer be able to stay in touch with their families. If they came from Islamic countries, changing their religion would have been illegal and offensive to the family of origin; thus, those who changed their religions preferred to spend time with their new peers at church. They also tried to hide from their peers the fact that they had changed their religion. In general, they felt uncomfortable when they talked with others from their ethnic group:

I do not want anyone to know that I became Christian. I am telling you now only because you are a foreigner—you do not belong to my community. It must remain a private thing that I am Christian, because I keep getting many negative reactions from people about this. I feel betrayed because I trusted some friends with this very private and sensitive matter, but these people started spreading the rumour, in a bad way . . . and this private matter is not private anymore, and I am getting a lot of trouble because of this.

I have become Christian . . . but here, I meet so many of my peers from my home country . . . Now, I am attending these groups organised by the church where I get to speak only Finnish. I don't want to go back to my home country; I want to become part of this country!

My family stopped talking to me one year and seven months ago, when they came to know that I decided to become Christian.

This need to hide one's religious change from one's community of peers contradicts Migri's requirements. Rejected asylum seekers who want to demonstrate that they have changed religion and have become Christian (and that they therefore could be prosecuted in their country of origin, if they were sent back) are required to give material, visible proof of this to Migri, if they want to reenter the asylum process. They must demonstrate that they are going to church, attending religious services, being active in the religious community, reading the Bible, and so on; therefore, they must be fully visible in the Christian community with Christian peers. At the same

time, such migrants need to hide this from their peers from their country of origin or from the same religious background, since disclosure can be risky. This produces stressful and unsettling situations, with the person's movements and behaviour radically changing depending on the space that he/she is in. Many of the undocumented migrants we saw during the field research had lived in this limbo between two religious communities while they were asylum seekers, and they did not manage to demonstrate to Migri that they had truly converted to the Christian faith. They failed the asylum interview with Migri (and the following appeals) and became undocumented migrants (see Tessieri 2017). For them, as converted Christians, it would be very difficult and dangerous to return to their countries of origin; however, their relationships with their peers were compromised by their change of religion. They had to set up new social networks, because they were often rejected by their family of origin and needed to hide their situation from their old friends (or acquaintances) or new friends (or acquaintances) from the same religious background.

4.6 Aspirations for the Future

Future aspirations are fully part of the everyday lives of undocumented migrants and shape their daily activities and decisions (Carling 2014; Carling and Collins 2018; Carling and Schewel 2018). Van Meeteren et al. (2009) divided the migrants into three groups, according to their three types of aspirations: investment migrants, legalisation migrants, and settlement migrants. The first are those who wish to earn money to invest in their home countries; the second are those who want to legalise their residence; whereas the third are those who wish to settle permanently, regardless of whether their 'settlement' is legal or not. In our empirical work, we mainly found a mix of the second and third type of migrants: people who aspired to settle, legally.

In general, we found that many struggled to keep their aspirations alive. Their precarious lives and uncertain futures made many think that there was no future for them. Others, who were more proactive and had built stronger networks and relationships, tried to plan their future and take simple actions towards that end, such as attending school and trying to learn Finnish (and/or English). In general, they tried to look after themselves and not forget that they were human beings who needed to be respected:

I am a human being, and I am not and I don't want to become a criminal, and I keep repeating that to myself so that I won't forget it, even if people here treat me as an object, as a number without a soul.

This migrant was learning Finnish and attending courses to give himself dignity, so that he could build the future he deserves—even though this future had been denied to him so far (Tedeschi 2021a).

Slightly less than half of the respondents (45%) agreed that they saw their futures positively, slightly less than half (46%) did not know what to think about this, and only one out of 11 (9%) did not see their futures positively. Those who were most optimistic about the future were those who still hoped to obtain a residence permit and employment, and had a rural background. Those who did not see their future positively were usually without family in Finland, had received several negative decisions on their asylum applications, and were between 30 and 49 years old and from Iraq:

Researcher: Do you feel safe here?

Undocumented woman: Yes, here, somehow, but generally speaking, I don't feel safe. I am undocumented. How could I?

Researcher: What do you do during the day?

Undocumented woman: I just sit here, with my husband.

Researcher: Why did you come to Finland?

Undocumented woman: We just came; no particular reason.

Researcher: What is the most difficult thing now?

Undocumented woman: The fact that I don't see any future ahead of us. We cannot go back, because we don't want to be killed.

Researcher: Do you have anywhere else to go?

Undocumented woman: Just the street. We just don't have anywhere else to go.

This undocumented woman saw no future for herself. There was no country for her to go back to, because she was afraid of being killed there; therefore, she lived in limbo, in an in-between space where she had been rejected by both her country of origin and the destination country. Still, she wanted to stay in Finland because she felt safe there—not completely, she maintained, because she was undocumented, but because nobody would kill her in Finland. Many shared this psychological condition of not belonging anywhere; however, like this woman, they tolerated the situation because their lives were not threatened in Finland. They considered living as undocumented migrants to be safer than returning home (Bendixsen 2018b). Since they could not visualise a better future, they focused their attention on the present, such as how to make ends meet or where to sleep. These were very basic, simple, and material everyday needs over which they felt they had some sort of control, through which they could exercise their agency. However, in his research, Bloch (2014: 1522) mentioned that 'there was little decision-making over and above surviving and staying hidden, and for some this mundane day-to-day existence was almost interminable—a state of on-going limbo'.

Many undocumented migrants had no energy to think about the future, because the future remained so uncertain for them. This also had consequences in their everyday lives, as another undocumented migrant mentioned:

In this precarious situation, I cannot plan my future. I cannot do or think of anything. I started a Finnish course, but how am I supposed to attend it? How am I supposed to learn the language? I cannot concentrate, I cannot think of anything but my current condition. I have a family, you know.

Planning the future is very difficult in precarious conditions, in which one needs to deal daily with the risk of being deported. In fact, over two out of five (43%)

respondents agreed that they felt insecure when they saw a police officer (17% did not know; 41% disagreed). Some would have liked to actively plan their future but, given their irregular status, were unable to do so. One undocumented migrant mentioned: 'I am highly educated. I would like to continue my studies, but here I cannot. The fact that I am highly educated should give me hope but, in fact, it doesn't. It's just an additional burden'.

Some looked for people they could trust and rely upon; others felt that there was no hope, but that perhaps 'hope' would show up one day and they would finally find a way forward. One mentioned that he needed to keep fighting for his future. Another said that it was important to recognise that he was of some value as a person, as his family taught him: 'I see only darkness in front of me. Only the values that my family gave me are keeping me alive'. Yet another said that it was important to 'steer clear' of wrongdoing, because this could adversely affect the future. The majority greatly hoped to find a way to settle and legalise their stay in Finland, be it through asylum, a residence permit for work purposes, or a residence permit based on family ties (in their talks, they did not really distinguish between the different 'permitted' stays). Such aspects were also found in earlier studies outside of Finland: 'You simply don't have any rights if you don't have your papers ... so my only hope is to get legal status ... Only then can I start to feel good and try to actively participate in this society' (van Meeteren 2012: 320). During our field research, one undocumented migrant said: 'I will go out and walk on the streets only when I get my residence here'. Another one mentioned: 'At the end of the day, I need to stay here; I just cannot go back' (Tedeschi 2021a). A few managed to study the Finnish language and could speak it fluently. Those were often the ones who found the mental strength to motivate themselves and fight back despite the hardships. They were able to visualise their future in Finland, and to dream about getting a job and being integrated into society:

I want to become a truck driver and move to the countryside. I don't want to stay in a big city. In the countryside, everyone speaks Finnish. I won't go back to my home country, no matter what. They will kill me there.

Others found strength through religion: 'I pray here much more than in my home country. It gives me strength to go on, when I have nothing left' (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Another one said: 'I need to pray that one day this situation will change; that I won't remain like this forever'.

Two out of three respondents (65%) agreed that they knew about their rights and responsibilities (whatever they might be) in Finland (25% were not sure; 9% did not agree). Almost three out of four respondents (72%) mentioned their most important life goals on the survey. By answering this question, an undocumented migrant (at least indirectly) indicated that he/she still had something to look forward to in the future. The most commonly mentioned goals were to have a generally good life (32% of the respondents); to be employed (17%); to gain education, knowledge, and/or skills (11%); and to start a family (10%). These goals were in general rather similar among all the undocumented migrants, regardless of their demographic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds; however, those with a family (in Finland or elsewhere) more often mentioned topics related to their strong ties with children or

parents than did those who had no family. Those who were employed in Finland more often mentioned work-related goals. Younger and not-yet-married undocumented migrants also mentioned their wish to start a family. Very few mentioned anything about a possible return to their country of origin. When asked about the most significant constraints impeding their achievement of their most important goal, the respondents often mentioned their lack of a residence permit (33% of respondents), their poor financial situation (6%), and bureaucracy and issues with the national welfare institute Kela (6%).

4.7 Migration to, Within, and from Finland

4.7.1 Migration to Finland

The respondents mentioned many reasons for leaving their countries of origin. The most common reason was escaping war and insecurity, as mentioned by half (48%) of the respondents. The next most frequently mentioned reasons were specific political reasons (19%), followed by social security benefits in Finland (18%), and poverty in their countries of origin (18%), indicating pulling and pushing economic reasons for migrating. For many undocumented migrants, migration to Finland was less about rationality and clear decisions and more about grasping opportunities and following their desires and aspirations: 'Migration intersects . . . with drives for going elsewhere or being otherwise, for achieving or avoiding (un)desirable futures, that are often not the result of calculative rationality as it is so often conceived in migration research' (Collins 2018: 977). People left their countries of origin, crossed borders to the neighbouring countries, and then continued their travels. Some had a clear destination country in mind; others simply continued their travels and, through various circumstances, ended up in Finland:

We conceive 'the journey' broadly. The journey, as an experience with indeterminate beginnings and ends, transcends easy conceptual borders, as well as physical ones. Thus, for us, the concept encompasses imagined journeys before migration, journeys from countries of origin through countries of transit to destination, as well as deportation journeys (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016: 244).

As discussed in Sect. 4.2, all our respondents came from outside the EU, and almost all (99–100%) from outside Europe. This meant that they had to cross many borders and countries to reach Finland (if they did not travel by air, which was rare). Crossing borders (illegally) highlighted these migrants' agency and ability to 'negotiate their mobility and contest migration controls, sometimes circumventing or even subverting them; in the aggregate, these flows of people are politically powerful' (Mainwaring 2016: 19). In addition to clandestine border crossings, unauthorised entry can be achieved with counterfeit travel documents or documents using false information, or due to ineffective entry bans (Könönen 2020); however, requesting asylum gives the authorities the right to inspect asylum seekers and the

otherwise-clandestine and unauthorised entry may become legally acceptable. This was the case for most, but not all, the respondents in this study.

Due to its geographic location, Finland is primarily an end destination because, in practice, it is not possible to continue any further north or east in the EU. Sweden is in the west, and the majority of the undocumented migrants arrived from there, because they could cross the land border rather easily into Finland (and, if necessary, back into Sweden). Estonia is in the south and is a substantially poorer EU member state (average income about 45% that of Finland), which is known for its hostility towards non-European migrants. Russia is in the east: a non-EU country where many non-European migrants can hide, but where social benefits for undocumented migrants are very limited. Finally, in the north, there is an easily crossable border to Norway, another non-EU member state that is also a Dublin Regulation country, although wealthier than Finland. Only in exceptional circumstances are regular border control checks implemented for all people crossing the border. Such a case occurred for periods in 2020, when Finland to reduce the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic established a lockdown that prevented free mobility across its borders, making it much more difficult for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to reach Finland (see Sect. 3.4).

The journeys from their countries of origin to Europe took different lengths of time for different people. For our respondents, the fastest trip was less than a week, the longest took over 6 years, and the median was 1 month. One out of ten respondents (10%) arrived in Europe before 2015, more than three out of four (77%) in 2015, and a few later (8% in 2016, 4% in 2017, and 1% in 2018). Most people thus arrived in 2015; in particular, the Iraqi men. To calculate exactly how much time it took to reach Finland after arriving in Europe was not necessarily straightforward. A few perforce stayed in reception centres or refugee camps, and others remained in other European countries, but the majority travelled quickly to Finland. The arrival years indicated that five out of six (87%) had been in Finland for at least 3 years. The data for detained rejected asylum seekers from 2016 indicated that only a few had stayed in Finland for longer after receiving an enforceable removal order. However, Könönen (2020) noted that, because of the difficulty of enforcing removals to Afghanistan and Iraq, this situation might be changing, and it actually has already changed. In this sense, the authorities have then tried to encourage voluntary returns to those countries.

The journey was very challenging and rough for the majority of the undocumented migrants we met. They hid and slept in the woods, were often treated badly, had to pay a great deal of money to smugglers, and had their money stolen during the trip. Half (48%) of the respondents crossed the Mediterranean and reached Greece (33%) or Italy (13%) first; however, very few (1%) came to Europe through Russia. One out of ten (10%) mentioned that the first country they reached was Finland; this meant that they could have travelled by air. Either this was true, or these people did not exactly remember the first country they entered in Europe. Nevertheless, many had frightening experiences crossing the Mediterranean. A community worker told us what happened to a family they knew: ‘when the parents left their home country,

their kid was less than one year old . . . and when they crossed the Mediterranean the kid nearly drowned'. The following are accounts of some of those experiences:

I am not feeling very well, have received my fifth negative decision, and soon have an appointment with the police—and I am scared. I don't know what will happen to me. I just want to be heard as a human being. I have a wife and kids back in my home country. During my journey here, I lost a lot of money; for example, when I ended up in Hungary, this person took 167 euros out of my pockets . . . just to get me to Budapest. I didn't want to leave my fingerprints in Hungary, so I had to hide. I left my fingerprints here in Finland, but why can't I remove my fingerprints from here and just go away? They should remove the Schengen area!

I came here from Egypt. I crossed the Mediterranean, and the trip was absolutely awful. Terrible! I was on a fishing boat, and I arrived in Catania. From Catania, they organised a car for some of us, and we arrived in Rome. From Rome, I bought a train ticket to Milan, then from Milan, I somehow managed to arrive here.

Ultimately, all of the undocumented migrants reached Finland, but this country was not everyone's initial goal in terms of where they were planning to travel. For two out of three respondents (64%), Finland was the country where they originally wanted to stay and live in Europe, followed by Germany (12%), and Sweden (5%). The majority of respondents (58%) had received information about Finland before coming to Europe, and two out of three (64%) before coming to Finland. Of those who originally wanted to come to Finland (and obviously did so, because they were already in Finland), almost three out of four (71%) had received information about Finland before coming to Europe and, in Europe, two out of three (66%) had received information before coming to Finland.

Some did not plan to go to Finland—they simply ended up there; however, as mentioned previously, for two out of three respondents, Finland was the initial destination country. Half (52%) mentioned that their reason for coming to Finland was that they considered Finland to be a safe country, which was a priority for people fleeing from conflict, war, and other life-threatening situations; however, a considerable number also looked for possibilities to get through the asylum process. More than two out of five thought they could receive asylum more easily in Finland than they could elsewhere (43%), and a third (31%) believed that, in Finland, asylum seekers would receive money more easily. Having friends and relatives during their travels or in Finland was motivation only for a few: one out of six (17%) came with a friend or relative, and one out of eight (12%) already had a friend or relative in Finland. Very few (5%) did not decide to come to Finland or did not have other options available in Europe. The respondents also mentioned other reasons for choosing to come to Finland, as shown in Table 4.2.

An undocumented migrant told us how he drifted to Finland with a large group of people, for several thousands of kilometres from Southern Italy to the northernmost areas of Europe, and regretted it:

You know, I was in Italy . . . in Catania. I remember the market in Catania; it is like the markets in the Middle East! I felt at home there, but I didn't leave my fingerprints in Italy. Italy is a poor country; everyone knows that. I already had this image in my mind; I wanted to be in Finland. I wanted to go as far as possible. I was looking for a peaceful and safe place (and Finland was that place to me, in my mind). Then I heard that many people were going to

Table 4.2 Reasons for choosing to come to Finland

In Finland I am safe	52%
In Finland I would be granted asylum easier than elsewhere	43%
In Finland an asylum seeker receives money easily	31%
Finland offers good quality of life	29%
A friend or a relative of mine also came to Finland	17%
I already had friends or relatives in Finland	12%
I could not stay in any other European country	5%
I did not personally choose to come to Finland	5%
I had another reason to come (social reasons, human rights, personal development, etc.)	15%

Sweden, Germany, and Greece . . . I wanted to be away from everyone, from my peers; this is also why I chose Finland. Then I found out that everyone thought exactly like me . . . I wasn't going to Finland alone. Now that I am in Finland, I wish I had remained in Italy, as they do not want me here.

Other reasons for coming to Finland were mentioned by seven undocumented migrants:

Finland is not like Germany, or Australia . . . or the US, where people are used to having migrants. Finland is like a virgin country in that sense; this is why I chose it.

I don't have any family or children. I am not in touch with anyone; I don't have any friends. I am basically alone. Still, I like Finland. I don't have anywhere else to go, so I will stay here and do my best.

I had a Finnish friend . . . and the friend told me to go to Finland. There, it is easier to find a job, she said. So off I went. However, as soon as I arrived here, I realised that it is not as easy as my friend told me it was.

Someone told me that Finland is the first country for human rights; this is why I decided to come here. I just wanted to be safe.

In Finland, it is very clear what is right and wrong . . . and if you respect all the rules and the law—that is enough. You do not get killed here.

Finland is a difficult country because of the weather and because of the cold . . . but it is a neutral country; it doesn't get involved in fights. It is a safe country, and safety comes first!

I decided to come here because I heard that here you get asylum, and people are nice, but I found the total opposite. My situation here is very unstable. There are nice people here, but not friends.

Some undocumented migrants stated that they had received information about good work or asylum opportunities in Finland, another had heard that the country was safe, another thought that he would have better opportunities in Finland because there were fewer migrants, and another came to Finland for no specific reason. In fact, four out of five respondents (82%) felt safe in Finland, 12% did not know, and very few (6%) felt unsafe in the country.

4.7.2 *Migration Within Finland*

It is very difficult to exactly determine the mobility and migration of undocumented migrants inside Finland. Many have lived in several places in Finland because, during the asylum process, asylum seekers are sent to different reception centres and might also change centres. These centres can be located in any region of Finland, from large urban conglomerations to remote rural areas. It can be difficult for undocumented migrants to remember the names of all the places in which they have lived in Finland, especially if they have spent several years in Finland; first in the asylum process and thereafter as an undocumented migrant. As we discussed in Sect. 3.4, at the end of 2017, the local authorities in 42 Finnish municipalities (14%) were aware of the presence of undocumented migrants, mostly in larger urban areas in the southern part of the country. There were undocumented migrants in all Finnish cities with at least 100,000 inhabitants (Jauhiainen et al. 2018) but very few in smaller and peripheral rural municipalities in the east and north. In general, the proportion of the foreign-born population in the latter municipalities is usually less than 2% (Heino and Jauhiainen 2020).

The respondents mentioned, in total, 22 municipalities in which they had lived in Finland. Over two out of five respondents (44%) mentioned that they had lived in the capital, Helsinki, and one out of four (25%) mentioned other towns and municipalities near the capital. In total, more than two out of three (69%) lived or had lived in the capital region. Some respondents were not able to precisely give the names of the municipalities, because they were not necessarily obvious in the urban landscape of the capital region. Helsinki is the municipality with the largest number of undocumented migrants, but it is also the largest city in Finland (almost 700,000 inhabitants). The majority of undocumented migrants in Finland live in and around the Helsinki area, which has, in total, 1.4 million inhabitants. Almost half (45%) of the respondents mentioned that the Helsinki area was where they had lived longest during their time in Finland; however, some had lived in small towns in Lapland, the northernmost area of Finland, 1000 km north of Helsinki. This was due to their periods as asylum seekers in Finland. In 2015–2016, asylum seekers were distributed to over 200 reception centres throughout Finland (Jauhiainen 2017).

Living in Helsinki is attractive for various reasons. One important aspect is that an undocumented migrant can find ethnic peer groups there, among both the regular and undocumented migrants. In general, the number of people born outside Finland is also highest there, at around 15% at the end of the 2010s, but estimated to grow to over 25% in the coming 10–20 years (Vuori 2019). This also provides an opportunity to 'hide in the masses' (i.e. the ordinary foreign-born population), and the police do not pay particular attention if they see a person who does not look like an ethnic Finn. Undocumented migrants can thus find empowering in-between spaces where they do not risk being singled out, where they can pretend to be an invisible part of the urban landscape, like the usual passers-by. This is why, when they walk, they often go to lakes, parks, gardens, and the seaside: places into which they can be absorbed and disappear (Tedeschi 2021b). A Helsinki city report (City of Helsinki

2018) explicitly highlighted that undocumented migrants come to the city, not because of the services—although, in Helsinki, there are more services for undocumented migrants compared to other cities in Finland—but because they can easily invisibilise themselves there. By contrast, in rural areas and smaller towns, the number of people born outside Finland is often less than 100 people (Heino and Jauhiainen 2020). People therefore recognise easily if a newcomer appears in a public space. This does not mean that, in general, people in the countryside are more hostile towards undocumented migrants; in fact, there are cases in which local populations in small municipalities have actively supported and hidden undocumented migrants when they have come to know them and found them to be friendly people, willing and able to work (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Nevertheless, overall, towns and cities in Finland have more undocumented migrants than rural municipalities ($p = 0.000$).

Our survey of local authorities in 2017–2018 indicated some changes in the migration of undocumented migrants (Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019; Jauhiainen et al. 2018). A few towns with small numbers of undocumented migrants (10–30 people) in 2017 mentioned that, in 2018, they had no signs of more undocumented migrants in their municipalities. The authorities explained that, in terms of the provision of services and help for them in the municipalities, there had been no changes, but that these undocumented migrants wanted to move to a larger town, usually to Helsinki or its neighbouring areas. In Helsinki undocumented migrants can find both public and NGO services that meet many kinds of needs. There are emergency shelters and day centres, as well as many more opportunities to find employment in the grey economy, compared with other municipalities in Finland, especially outside the core of the capital. Despite being a large city in the Finnish context, Helsinki still offers green areas, sports facilities, and many open air facilities for leisure time. In addition, as already mentioned, it is much easier to be ‘invisible’ in the capital area than in smaller Finnish town and villages (Tedeschi 2021b). In the survey, undocumented migrants mentioned many places they enjoyed, but for the sake of security and ethics, we cannot mention the place names here. As discussed in Sect. 3.4, the City Council of Helsinki decided to extend health services to undocumented migrants; however, migrating within Finland to receive better public healthcare services did not appear as a reason among our studied undocumented migrants. Slightly wider public services for undocumented migrants, in Helsinki, does not equate to the administration wishing to receive and agglomerate undocumented migrants. In fact, later, the local authorities in Helsinki narrowed the target group of undocumented migrants, mandating that such health services would be offered only to those who had clear residence ties with Helsinki. In addition, opinions in Helsinki often oppose taking in large numbers of asylum seekers, because rejected asylum seekers could remain in the city as undocumented migrants.

In the survey, we asked if the respondents thought they would be able to go wherever they wanted in Finland. Six out of seven respondents (85%) agreed, 13% did not know how to answer, and very few (2%) disagreed. This indicated that the majority of undocumented migrants (at least among our respondents) felt that they could move rather freely in Finland; however, ‘going’ could mean different things,

from particular places to different towns. Many wanted to frequent public places (like libraries, the seaside, and parks) where they could make themselves less visible and try to be like the other (Finnish) people:

Going to a church, a community centre or walking in a park are considered safe places for social activities by most interviewees. These are situations and moments when most interviewees feel they are not different from the others because of their status (Sigona, 2012: 58).

Being in Finland, undocumented migrants need to share the same space with native Finns, regular migrants, and their peer community in different ways. One out of four respondents (23%) agreed that they felt insecure when they were in the same space as native Finns whom they did not know, 22% were unsure, and the majority (55%) disagreed. Those who felt insecure were often young adults (under 30 years old) who had arrived in Finland less than 2 years ago.

4.7.3 Migration from Finland

All of our respondents lived in Finland, so their potential decision to leave Finland had not yet materialised; however, in general, very few undocumented migrants have left Finland voluntarily and informed the authorities of their departure. Some have been forcibly removed to their country of origin, and some have left informally and moved to another country—usually Sweden. For informal outmigration from Finland, Sweden can be an attractive option, because there are over ten times more undocumented migrants and over one million non-Swedish migrant background population there. Sweden is very easy to reach from Finland across the land border without travel documents and without the local population or authorities paying particular attention. It is much more difficult to travel to other countries if one does not have fake travel documents, because airline and shipping companies require a personal identification document such as a passport or identification card.

Six out of seven respondents (85%) mentioned that they would like to live in Finland, a few said maybe (9%), and very few (2%) did not want to live in Finland or were uncertain whether they would like to live in Finland (7%). Those who would like to live in Finland most often mentioned safety, peace, freedom, and social stability as the best aspects of Finland, as well as being with their families or having social relationships and financial stability. Each survey respondent mentioned the best and the worst aspects of life in Finland (see Table 4.3). To learn more about their stay or on-migration wishes, we also asked the survey respondents where they would like to be in 3 years' time (after responding to the survey; i.e. in the autumn of 2021). Three out of five respondents (59%) mentioned Finland, thus indicating their firm wish to stay in the country. Of those wishing to be in Finland in 3 years' time, in practice, all (98%) mentioned that they would like to live in Finland. Those who clearly wished to stay in Finland had most often arrived before 2016, were currently employed, and had made friends in Finland.

Table 4.3 The best and worst aspects of life in Finland for undocumented migrants

Best aspects of life	Worst aspects of life
Safety, freedom, and stability (36%)	Fear of refusal of entry or deportation (21%)
Family and other social relations (15%)	Discrimination or racism (11%)
Financial stability (10%)	Climate (11%)
Starting a family (6%)	Waiting for a decision (7%)
Everything (5%)	Financial issues (4%)

From the answers, we deduced that rather few (2–11%) of the undocumented migrants in our study would consider moving out of Finland, because they did not want to, or were unsure whether they wanted to live in Finland. There are many reasons why undocumented migrants might not wish to remain in Finland (i.e. there are push factors in Finland as well as pull factors from other countries; see Table 4.3). Regarding push factors, some are individual (i.e. how a person has been treated in Finland and how he/she sees his/her likelihood of living a meaningful life in Finland, now or in the future). Of those respondents who did not mention that they would like to live in Finland, one out of seven (15%) mentioned another country in which they would like to be in 3 years' time; Sweden and Germany were most frequently mentioned.

Two out of three (68%) respondents mentioned that they were usually treated well by people in Finland (17% did not know; 15% disagreed). They did not define what kind of people treated them well (e.g. ordinary Finns, Finnish authorities, immigrants in Finland, or members of their peer groups). Those who disagreed with the statement that they were usually treated well by people were most often 18–49 years old, unemployed, and had not made any Finnish friends. Two out of five respondents (40%) mentioned that they had been physically or mentally harassed in Finland. The definition of harassment varied, so there was no objective measure of it; it was a subjective feeling. About the same number of respondents (i.e. two out of five; 42%) disagreed that they had been harassed in Finland, and almost one out of five (18%) were unsure how to answer. Those who had been harassed were most often in the same age group as those who had not been harassed (i.e. 18–49 years old); however, the difference was that those who felt they had been harassed were more often employed males. Harassment could be, for example, verbal abuse or no one wanting to talk to them. There have also been cases of physical violence against undocumented migrants. In Finland, as in many other EU member states, there are extreme right-wing groups that are hostile towards all immigrants, whether undocumented or not.

We also asked about the respondents' specific wishes regarding return migration. Only a few respondents (8%) mentioned that they would like to return to their countries of origin, one out of seven (14%) stated maybe, and four out of five (78%) definitely did not want to return to their countries of origin. Of those who arrived in 2015 or earlier, very few (3%) wanted to return to their countries of origin, but 12% might consider it. This shows that long-term undocumented migrants are very reluctant to return. Of those respondents, who came in 2016 or later, one out of

three (36%) indicated that they would like (yes or maybe) to return (however, the number of respondents was too small to draw firm conclusions). The conditions that would make them likely to return their countries of origin were not specified, so the answer merely indicated an overall willingness to return. Nevertheless, only a minority of undocumented migrants in Finland wish to return, so it is not likely that they will do so through voluntary return mechanisms. Those who wished to return were most often from rural backgrounds, female, older adults (i.e. 30 years or older), and employed. Two out of five respondents (40%) mentioned that they missed their former home region (18% did not know; 42% did not miss it). Of those who missed their former home region, three out of four (75%) also wished to return to their country of origin. On the other hand of those, who did not miss their former home region, one out of five (25%) still wished to return.

4.8 Undocumented Migrants Needing, Asking for, and Receiving Help

Undocumented migrants need many kinds of help to survive everyday life in Finland. As Ambrosini stated, the role of intermediaries in the destination countries is of the utmost importance for the creation of semi-legal survival spaces: 'They are people or institutions who favour the entrance of immigrants, their entry into the labour market, accommodation, response to their social needs, and possibly regularisation' (Ambrosini 2017: 2). According to Ambrosini, there are five types of activities concerning intermediation: connection, provision of certain services, help, tolerance, and political pressure. In this section, we will list specific activities (Table 4.4) which can be attributed to the first three types of intermediation: the provision of useful connections to find job or accommodation opportunities; the provision of services that undocumented migrants cannot receive from formal

Table 4.4 Undocumented migrants (or their families) receiving help in Finland (%)

	Yes	No	Need no help	No answer
With the asylum process	40	13	13	34
With other legal issues	35	18	10	37
With health issues	35	15	12	38
Obtaining money	33	20	11	36
Finding leisure activities	29	18	15	38
Finding accommodation	26	21	21	32
Obtaining food	29	23	15	39
Obtaining clothes	23	23	15	34
With mental issues	22	23	16	39
Finding employment	18	20	24	38
With other issues	1	1	0	98

institutions (such as legal advice); and ‘concrete first-hand support in meeting actual needs’ (Ambrosini 2017: 4), such as finding food or clothing.

Not all undocumented migrants need and want the same kind of help, and some try to manage without any external help, especially from ordinary Finns, NGOs, and the authorities. The reasons for not wanting any help can be personal characteristics (like the negative feeling of being considered ‘beggars’, see Sect. 4.4), mistrust of potential helpers, or the fear of being exposed if help is sought. Three out of five respondents (61%) agreed that they trusted people (whether Finns, authorities, friends, or others) who wanted to help them (19% did not know; 20% disagreed). Those who did not trust others to help them were often either young or older (50 years or more), or unemployed men. In addition, half of the respondents (51%) agreed that they trusted their lawyer (26% did not know; 23% disagreed).

In the survey, we asked whether the undocumented migrants, or their families in Finland (if they had them), had received any help regarding several issues that are usually important in everyday life (Table 4.4). Overall, almost two out of three respondents (63%) mentioned that they had received some help. Almost half (43%) did not mention any area in which they had received help, 14% mentioned one to two issues, and almost half (43%) mentioned three or more issues. Most often, the respondents (or their families in Finland) had received help with the asylum process. More than two out of five respondents (44%) mentioned that nothing prevented them from asking for help, one out of three (32%) did not know, and one out of four (24%) mentioned that there was a reason or many reasons for not seeking help. The most common reasons preventing the respondents from asking for help were the fear of deportation or negative asylum decisions, not receiving help despite asking for it, experiences of racism, and/or religious and cultural barriers. The respondents could receive help from various sources, but in practice, many of them could not distinguish the help provider; for example, an individual Finn, an NGO, another organisation, a local or national authority, or another migrant with or without a residence permit. We therefore decided not ask for details about the help providers.

4.9 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have highlighted several aspects of undocumented migrants’ everyday lives. As indicated, in some respects, all the undocumented migrants shared commonalities, but they were also an internally diverse group consisting of individuals with individual trajectories and wishes; hence:

Migration theory needs to account for the multiplex componentry of migration, the way it is situated in imaginative geographies, emotional valences, social relations and obligations and politics and power relations, as well as in economic imperatives and the brute realities of displacement (Carling and Collins 2018: 3).

We have also sketched the feelings and thoughts that they experience on a daily basis. These often involve anxiety, largely provoked by an intertwining of

conditions, such as precarious, always temporary housing; illegal or unauthorised work, which might lead to exploitative situations, or no work at all, which was an undignified condition for many; the positive and negative sides of being in contact with family and friends; the difficulty of finding the strength to maintain aspirations for the future when the country of destination rejects them and the country of origin is often a place they miss, but also fear.

The majority of undocumented migrants do not want to be spotted or recognised as 'undocumented'; hence, they try, as far as possible, to invisibilise themselves and live normal lives (Tervonen et al. 2018). Some learn Finnish or English to integrate better into the surrounding society and be able to function in public places (such as libraries, the seaside, and parks), where they can be less visible and try to be like the other (Finnish) people. Others want to forget everything about their country of origin and try their best to 'become Finnish', despite the negative decisions received on their asylum applications. The situation is therefore multifaceted, and the reactions are different for each person; however, what is common to the majority of those who want to stay is their willingness to legalise their stay, work, integrate into Finnish society (van Meeteren et al. 2009), and live normal lives.

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Chapter 5

Healthcare of Undocumented Migrants



5.1 Introduction

The provision of healthcare for the population residing in a country is defined in related laws. A major issue is the coverage and cost of healthcare for individuals. There may be universal public healthcare, with users paying only a very small share of the cost, or healthcare based exclusively on being employed and/or having health insurance. A main issue is how the state defines the right to public health services for people in its territory, and whether human rights principles should override such legal healthcare rights and responsibilities (Nielsen 2018; Peers 2015; Savino 2016). Despite international agreements on human rights, not all countries apply them fully or consistently in the case of undocumented migrants and their access to healthcare (Biswas et al. 2012; Cuadra 2012; De Vito et al. 2016; Smith and LeVoy 2017; Woodward et al. 2014). This chapter discusses the background to the provision of public healthcare for undocumented migrants, who have no legal permission to stay in Finland.

Inequalities persist in the EU between non-EU migrants and non-migrants regarding access to healthcare services. Discrimination, and various legal, language, and communication barriers, result in unmet healthcare needs—in particular, through the underuse of primary and mental healthcare services and dental services (Lebano et al. 2020). Major differences exist between countries regarding their healthcare provision for undocumented migrants, even inside the EU (see Spencer and Hughes 2016). Almost all countries provide them with at least emergency healthcare (i.e. to recover from the sudden and unexpected onset of a health condition that requires immediate medical treatment and/or an operation). This does not mean that such provision is free of charge although, in practice, it is usually impossible to obtain financial contributions from these people. Few countries provide necessary healthcare services beyond emergency ones, and very few offer preventive healthcare. Nevertheless, earlier studies have indicated that the provision of wider healthcare services to undocumented migrants is less expensive for states

than providing them with only emergency healthcare. The prevention of illnesses and other health problems requires investment, but is less expensive than treating actual illnesses (European Union Agency 2015).

Despite undocumented migrants being provided with at least emergency healthcare, not all undocumented migrants use these, or even use wider official public or private healthcare services. The reasons vary and include, for example, challenges regarding language, culture or communication, inadequate information about the available services, difficult opening times and hours of attendance, lack of specialised services, fear of using the services, and lack of official and unofficial networks relating to social and healthcare services (World Health Organisation 2017). Another obstacle is what Bendixsen called micropractices of control in healthcare provision, whereby ‘individual authorities and street-level bureaucrats pursue micropractices of citizenship . . . in their encounters with citizens or non-citizens’ (Bendixsen 2018b: 168). These micropractices control the health of these people, excluding them from healthcare provision, while at the same time enhancing their agency, whereby they find new, creative ways to look after themselves.

Literature on healthcare for undocumented migrants in Europe is extensive and healthcare is among the most studied topics regarding undocumented migrants. Our own findings in Finland corresponded with the findings of other researchers on the matter: a tight (and dangerous) interrelation exists between immigration and healthcare policies, whereby a person can receive proper treatment only if he/she is a regular resident of the country (Chauvin et al. 2009; van Ginneken and Gray 2015). The Nordic countries seem to be particularly challenging in this sense, because of their personalised welfare society, meaning that people outside the system are easily spotted and questioned (Bendixsen 2018a, b), potentially leading to discriminatory practices (Hacker et al. 2015) at the local level. Undocumented migrants are often in great need of both physical and, as importantly, psychological treatment (see Andersson et al. 2018), but they might choose not to seek it for various reasons, such as fear of being identified and deported, combined with cultural and linguistic barriers (Hacker et al. 2015; Hultsjö and Hjelm 2005): ‘Undocumented migrants do not seek medical aid even in emergencies because they fear arrest’ (Khosravi 2010: 105).

In this chapter, we discuss the undocumented migrants’ access to healthcare and their use of healthcare services in Finland. After this introduction, in Sect. 5.2, we illustrate the viewpoint of Finnish local authorities regarding the healthcare (and other) services provided for undocumented migrants. As mentioned, the Constitution of Finland guarantees the availability of emergency healthcare services for everyone staying, permanently or temporarily, in Finland. Local authorities are responsible for providing healthcare for the people who live in the municipalities they govern; thus, undocumented migrants who live in a municipality may or may not turn to the services there. This chapter also discusses the impact on undocumented migrants of the measures taken against the COVID-19 pandemic, especially regarding their access to healthcare. In Sect. 5.3, we highlight access to healthcare from the perspective of undocumented migrants. Although undocumented migrants have access to emergency services and, in some municipalities, also to other necessary

healthcare services, in practice they face many challenges in using them. We also highlight specific aspects of their mental and physical health. In Sect. 5.4, we present the conclusions of the chapter.

5.2 Access to Healthcare: Perspectives of the Municipalities

Regarding undocumented migrants in Finland, one crucial aspect is their access to healthcare. In fact, the National Institute for Health and Welfare (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, THL) argued that whether a person is an undocumented migrant in Finland depends on whether or not he/she has valid health insurance. Having such insurance means that a person has access to universal healthcare in Finland, but not having it means that a person only has a right to emergency healthcare and he/she must pay for the full costs of other services (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2017). In principle, healthcare professionals have a right and duty to offer healthcare services to those who need them, including undocumented migrants. Furthermore, they have an obligation to maintain confidentiality and provide assistance (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2018). Nevertheless, the practices vary—partly because of the rather complex healthcare system and partly due to a lack of clear guidelines regarding the access of undocumented migrants to healthcare.

In Finland, local authorities (municipalities) are responsible for the provision of healthcare. To arrange specialised healthcare, a municipality must belong to a joint municipal authority for medical services. The joint municipal authority for specialised healthcare manages hospitals and other operative units, whereas municipalities are responsible for basic healthcare centres. The joint municipal authority can also provide specialised healthcare at healthcare centres, if the health centres themselves cannot provide such services. Nevertheless, all major and severe illnesses are treated in hospitals. In addition, many private clinics offer healthcare services, which are, however, several times more expensive than the ones offered by the public sector.

Universal healthcare is heavily subsidised for the insured population in Finland. In view of the increase in the number of undocumented migrants, an inter-ministerial working group for migration decided, at the end of 2016, that it is the responsibility of local authorities to provide necessary services for undocumented migrants. At the same time, the state promised to subsidise the related costs for the municipalities (Sisäministeriö 2016). This policy followed the recommendation set by the THL, which had conducted a review of healthcare for undocumented migrants in Finland a couple of years earlier (see Keskimäki et al. 2014). The review suggested three models for guaranteeing healthcare services for undocumented migrants: (1) access to healthcare services to the same extent as people domiciled in Finland; (2) services with a similar scope to those offered to asylum seekers; or (3) urgent care pursuant to current legislation and care for children under the age of 18, for pregnant women, and for women who have recently given birth (see Keskimäki et al. 2014).

As discussed below, in Finland the resulting policy adopted the minimal model (model 3). The local authorities were given general guidelines on how to proceed with the issue and what needed to be included in the services. Decisions about undocumented migrants' needs for health services must be based on medical evaluations, and emergency healthcare must be provided. In Finland, emergency care usually refers to immediate assessment and care required by a sudden illness or injury, a long-term illness that takes a turn for the worse, or reduced functional capacity that cannot be postponed without making the illness or injury worse, as well as urgent oral healthcare, mental healthcare, intoxicant abuse treatment, and psychosocial support (THL 2018).

As mentioned, only a minority of municipalities (42 municipalities; i.e. 15% of all municipalities) in Finland had undocumented migrants in their territories (or were aware that they had them up to the end of 2018); therefore, in practice, the migrants' access to healthcare was a critical issue only in these 40–50 municipalities. According to our telephone interviews with the municipalities, 82% of municipalities with undocumented migrants also helped them. All these municipalities provided them with healthcare. Moreover, 82% of the municipalities with undocumented migrants provided other social services and 70% of them provided specific accommodation services (Jauhiainen et al. 2018; Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019). Accommodation services were also provided by many NGOs and private individuals. The number of undocumented migrants is low, so the main issue of healthcare provision is how to provide the services in practice (see Sect. 5.3) and how to cover, in practice, the relatively low costs of these services.

The principle is that undocumented migrants (like any non-registered non-EU or Nordic country citizens) are liable for all the costs of their healthcare. If they cannot afford these services—as is usually the case—local authorities must provide services, and the national welfare institute (Kela) will reimburse the related costs to the local authorities. The principal decision regarding service provision was based on the Constitution, which states that everyone in Finland should be provided with adequate necessary services and support for living; however, the financial process became rather complex for the service providers, local authorities, and undocumented migrants. It imposed a heavy administrative burden on the municipalities to receive the reimbursement funding from Kela, including registering and accounting for the provided services for undocumented migrants. Since that sometimes created problems regarding anonymity, some municipalities were left without reimbursement, sometimes by their own choice. Kela also applied to the Administrative Court regarding its obligation to provide subsidies for undocumented migrants, and the court decided that Kela was liable for providing such subsidies. Undocumented migrants also face many challenges when applying for Kela subsidies. The application process for such subsidies requires patience and skill from undocumented migrants, so many have never applied for this money, despite being legally entitled to do so (Akimo 2017; Lakka 2017; Roslund 2017).

Due to such variations in the provision of the healthcare services, and differences in accounting for such services for undocumented migrants, it is difficult to obtain an overall view of the situation and estimates of the costs of the provided services.

Keskimäki and co-workers (2014: 35) estimated that, in 2014, the healthcare costs for undocumented migrants in Helsinki were around 0.4 million EUR and, nationally, up to 0.65 million EUR. Despite undocumented migrants not having to pay local authorities in Helsinki for the provided healthcare services, the amount was insignificant relative to the total costs for public healthcare. Overall, it was much less than one EUR per adult inhabitant of Helsinki; however, with the arrival of larger numbers of undocumented migrants, the service costs for them increased. The direct costs for Helsinki in 2019 were estimated to be 2.1 million EUR. These included direct costs for providing healthcare, social assistance, and short-term accommodation, together with the employment costs of the municipal staff dealing with undocumented migrants (Jompero-Lahokoski 2020). The total annual costs rose to slightly over three EUR per inhabitant in Helsinki; however, these costs did not include legal counselling or the provision of long-term accommodation.

Local authorities are not the only agencies providing healthcare services to undocumented migrants in Finland. In addition, Global Clinic, the organization specialising in the provision of healthcare for undocumented migrants by professional healthcare volunteers, operates in Helsinki, Tampere, Oulu, Turku, Lahti, and Joensuu, and undocumented migrants can use their services. There are small differences in the ways how the organization and its services are organized in different cities in Finland. Global Clinic Helsinki was established in 2011 to provide information, guidance, and healthcare services for people with irregular immigration status in the capital region of Finland (Global Clinic 2019). In 2016, Global Clinic Helsinki usually served undocumented migrants once per week and had, in total, 556 patients from 45 different nationalities. Typical reasons for visiting the clinic were digestive issues, skin problems, and musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders (Tjukanov 2018).

The number of undocumented migrants grew substantially in 2016–2017, especially in Helsinki, due to rapidly growing numbers of asylum application rejections and the reluctance, and sometimes inability, of many rejected asylum seekers to leave Finland. Facing the challenges of a worsening healthcare situation for undocumented migrants, and the increasing risks for the municipalities and population of Helsinki, Helsinki City Council, at the end of 2017, decided that, besides the provision of emergency healthcare as required by the law, undocumented migrants would also be provided with necessary healthcare, including treatment for serious chronic illnesses, vaccination, and certain other necessary healthcare services. Furthermore, pregnant undocumented migrants and undocumented migrant children would be given healthcare under similar conditions to all residents in Helsinki. The proposal to extend the services caused a heated political debate and the council decision was not unanimous (Jauhiainen et al. 2018). Opponents claimed that it would be another burden on the local taxpayers and would attract more undocumented migrants to Helsinki. On the other hand, preventing illnesses from becoming serious would ultimately save money. Developments in 2018–2019 showed a movement of undocumented migrants from other parts of Finland to Helsinki, but this was not due to healthcare provision; it was because there were more opportunities for work and social contacts, as discussed in Sect. 4.7, and to ‘invisibilise

themselves' in a larger city. Helsinki later implemented an informal policy to restrict the access of undocumented migrants to its healthcare services by asking them for evidence of them living in Helsinki. Later, some other large Finnish cities provided broader access to healthcare for children and pregnant migrants; however, the use of such healthcare services is a rather complex issue for many undocumented migrants, as discussed in Sect. 5.3. However, a continuing issue was the differences in the provision of health care to undocumented migrants within different municipalities in the capital region.

5.2.1 COVID-19 Pandemic

The sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 created additional challenges for undocumented migrants in Finland. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Globally and locally, various coronavirus challenges became evident almost everywhere in the spring of 2020. In particular, risks were highest in densely populated areas in which social distancing and maintaining hygiene were very difficult. These included densely populated camps and settlements in which asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers were waiting during the asylum process (Jauhiainen and Vorobeva 2020). In addition, risk areas included also cities and other places, where undocumented migrants did not know exactly what to do under these new circumstances or did not have proper means to protect themselves from the virus.

In Finland, soon emerged several major challenges for undocumented migrants as regards the COVID-19 pandemic: from where and how to receive accurate information about the virus; how to practice the prevention to lessen the exposure to the virus; what to do if one suspects of having the virus or at least some symptoms of it; and finally, how to cope in the new everyday situations with many new restrictions on access to public space (especially indoor space) and general mobility, no physical access to NGOs helping undocumented migrants, and how to follow the authorities recommendations such as to wear masks.

Many undocumented migrants became anxious due to the lack of proper information about the virus and how to prevent it. As regards receiving information about COVID-19, the national body responsible for healthcare—THL—provided soon in the spring of 2020 general information on its website in English, as did the World Health Organisation (WHO) in several languages. In addition, the City of Helsinki provided a website with basic instructions about what to do if one had symptoms of the virus. Such online information was available in Finnish, Swedish, and English. In .pdf format, it was also available in Arabic, Dari, English, French, Russian, and Somali. However, many undocumented migrants could not check or download these pages because of not having a proper access to the sites or not being able to find them. In addition, the online symptom assessment site was available only in Finnish or Swedish. Later in the autumn of 2020, during the second wave of the pandemic, were provided services that reached more directly the inhabitants. In Helsinki were

organized pop-up information desks in shopping malls and other sites in the districts in which the majority of foreign-background population lived. The aim was to provide information about the virus and deliver complimentary masks for passers-by. In these pop-up sites was present also foreign background staff who knew some of the most commonly spoken languages in these districts, including those spoken by undocumented migrants. The services were provided to all passers-by so also undocumented migrants could take advantage of these if they wished so.

A particular challenge for undocumented migrants was that they were unable to self-quarantine or avoid physical contacts with other, possibly infected, undocumented migrants and other people they were dependent on, and some were afraid to turn to hospitals when they became severely ill. Although, for most people, COVID-19 was a manageable, mild illness, it was serious for those, including undocumented migrants, with chronic medical conditions, high blood pressure, etc. (Page et al. 2020). In Finland, numerous undocumented migrants have such chronic illnesses. Some undocumented migrants were tested for COVID-19 and some had contracted this illness; however, according to the interviewed NGOs, until the autumn of 2020, the known cases were mild and had no major outcomes. An additional challenge for an undocumented migrant residing illegally in Finland was that the person might be reluctant to have any virus testing or monitoring, because this would require providing detailed information about oneself, and especially with the evidence of having COVID-19, one would need to give an exact address, as well as information about people with whom one had contact.

In practice, in case of the COVID-19 symptoms, an undocumented migrant should have first called the helpline (instructions available in Finnish, Swedish, and English). If medical assessment of a suspected respiratory infection was then needed, the person should have been directed to a health station. This was difficult for many of undocumented migrants. In Helsinki, initially two health stations were dedicated to the treatment of coronavirus (City of Helsinki 2020); however, the national authorities decided that the tests and treatment for COVID-19 for undocumented migrants would be based on a fee. Nevertheless, some municipalities decided to provide COVID-19 tests and, if needed, treatment at the same price as for the registered inhabitants. In these cases, the state would not reimburse the costs originating from undocumented migrants (Kela 2020); however, the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs recommended that the full cost of treatment should not borne by municipalities for COVID-19-related urgent care for undocumented people (PICUM 2020b).

Physical measures against COVID-19 such as masks were not very commonly used by undocumented migrants. Many undocumented migrants had experienced wars and serious conflicts in which a visible danger was present every day. Some authorities argued that therefore some of these migrants were not able to properly perceive the potential risks of the virus (which impact on healthier younger and young middle-aged population was usually limited) and the need to wear masks. Furthermore, there was no legal obligation to wear masks, only recommendations by the authorities. In general, at least until the late autumn of 2020, masks were not commonly used in Finland in outdoor public space as the pandemic situation had

been relatively less severe compared to most European countries. In addition, masks should be changed frequently, which was difficult to achieve, and many undocumented migrants did not have the cash or bank cards to enable them to purchase masks; therefore, some authorities agreed to issue vouchers that the migrants could redeem for masks in pharmacies. In Helsinki, there were sites where undocumented migrants, among other vulnerable and poor people, could obtain complimentary masks, but few of them took advantage of this opportunity.

Additional challenges became with the strict restrictions on the everyday mobilities. In March 2020, the Government of Finland announced a state of emergency in the country, due to the coronavirus outbreak, and a lockdown was imposed between the Uusimaa region (Helsinki and its surrounding area) and the rest of the country for 2 months. The authorities received additional powers to limit the rights of the population. In such situations, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) (2020a) asked to ‘put in place measures (‘firewalls’) that shield people from possible transfer of their personal data from services to immigration authorities, and the risk of deportation if they seek care’. As mentioned, having a positive COVID-19 test result would create a situation in which the person would have to reveal all contacts and the addresses of the people he/she had been in contact with recently. This would expose other undocumented migrants—whether ill or not—to the authorities.

During the lockdown most organised services for undocumented migrants were suspended or substantially limited, and the NGOs had to close the advisory centres or substantially reduce access. Undocumented migrants lost their contact with NGO staff who could have provided accurate information, not only about the virus but also about all aspects undocumented migrants needed. Obtaining this information via the internet or even by telephone was difficult for many. In Helsinki, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Global Clinic initially had to suspend its face-to-face activities; however, as the need to provide medical aid for undocumented migrants continued, it organised weekly pop-up clinics in a secret place in Helsinki. The health services in this outdoor tent were more limited than in the usual sites (Kataja 2020). In other locations, Global Clinic had to (at least temporarily) reduce or even cease its activities during the pandemic. The reasons varied, but they included the authorities’ recommendations for social distancing and some of the (elderly) volunteer staff belonging to COVID-19 high-risk groups. Furthermore, the access to their earlier frequently used indoor public space, such as public libraries was often limited or there was not access at all. Also in shopping malls and other more private indoor places were substantially fewer people thus creating a risk that particular attention would have paid on them, especially if one would be there without wearing a mask.

In Finland (as in many other countries), the most severe spread of COVID-19 occurred in the largest city of the country, Helsinki and its surroundings, where also the majority of undocumented migrants lived. It became evident that COVID-19 spread more rapidly and extensively in Helsinki among certain immigrant groups, among whom were also undocumented migrants. During the first wave of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, one specific ethnicity was singled out in the media that caused displeasure and fear of additional marginalisation and

discrimination among the members of this ethnic community (Teivainen 2020). There were cases of COVID-19 among undocumented migrants, but the exact number of cases is not known. By summer 2020, the COVID-19 cases lessened, but they rose substantially again in autumn 2020, especially from the mid-November onward (Worldometers 2020). The capital region was the area with absolutely and relatively the highest number of COVID-19 infected people in Finland. In December 2020 it became evident that the spreading of the COVID-19 in Finland was substantially higher, even manifold among the foreign background population compared with the Finnish background population (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2020). This suggests also high risks of the COVID-19 exposure among undocumented migrants and more challenges for them to actively prevent the exposure to the disease.

5.3 Access to Healthcare: Perspectives of the Undocumented Migrants

As discussed previously, in Finland, undocumented migrants have limited access to health services. Emergency services are provided to them and some municipalities also provide other necessary health services. It is important to recall that Helsinki was among those municipalities that slightly extended its services for undocumented migrants, although with certain limitations as discussed previously.

Of the undocumented migrant survey respondents, three out of four (76%) knew where to go if they felt sick, but one out of four (24%) did not know. A positive answer to this question did not necessarily indicate that these people would turn to public or private healthcare in case of need. In addition, ‘knowing a place’ may only have meant knowing where to go if one became sick. This might not be an official healthcare unit but, instead, the home of a friend (perhaps with some medical skills) or simply a return to one’s accommodation in case of illness. In fact, a large number of the undocumented migrants did not know where to go if they felt sick. This could have indicated a lack of information among them or that they, despite having this information, did not dare to use the health services provided by the public authorities, private authorities, and NGOs. Most often, those who did not know where to go when feeling sick were men, underage, with lower education levels, who were unemployed and without a regular place to stay.

Despite there being administrative structures to meet the needs of undocumented migrants (as discussed in Sect. 5.2), some undocumented migrants are afraid of using them. Some undocumented people are not willing to go to (and to be seen in) official public spaces such as hospitals. Some are afraid of being denounced by the healthcare professionals, caught by the police, and then removed, if they do not show the personal identification card proving that they are residents of the country (similar challenges of access to healthcare for undocumented migrants with personal identification numbers also exist in Sweden; see Andersson et al. 2018). In Finland,

practices that serve undocumented migrants vary locally and even within large cities. In some municipalities, the healthcare administration registers the use of healthcare by undocumented migrants, merely to provide evidence to the national authorities and reclaim some of the costs. While serving the visiting undocumented migrants, some municipalities suggested the voluntary return migration programme, as recommended by the Ministry of the Interior (2019). In other municipalities, these services were provided without any registration of the visiting person or recording of the services provided.

There was a general lack of information among undocumented migrants about access to healthcare services and what kind of access was available. Some chose to ignore their symptoms (Bendixsen 2018b), or did not have the energy to ask for help when it was needed or even look after themselves; hence, they allowed their conditions to worsen. As a psychotherapist we met reported:

For example, there was this guy who thought he didn't have access to anything . . . but in fact he did, at least to something. I realised that, asked around a bit, and now he is able to get treatment. They don't know which services are available to them and often, even when they know, they do not go.

Cultural habits might prevent other undocumented migrants from visiting a healthcare provider; for example, it might not be possible for a woman to visit a healthcare provider alone. In addition, she might not know where to leave her children during that time, and might need to be accompanied by a male family member who was not necessarily available. There might also be a language barrier (i.e. an undocumented migrant who visits a healthcare provider is never sure whether the receiving person will understand him/her or whether they can be trusted). One out of five survey respondents (20%) mentioned that they did not trust the people who helped them (19% did not know; 61% disagreed on this).

The challenges in providing healthcare for undocumented migrants are common everywhere in Europe (de Jong et al. 2017; Gray and van Ginneken 2012; Jensen et al. 2011; Ledoux et al. 2018; Spencer and Hughes 2016; Strassmayr et al. 2012; van Ginneken and Gray 2015; Weller et al. 2019; Winters et al. 2018) and especially in the Nordic countries, where the relationship with the state is personalised and constitutes the essence of their welfare programmes (Andersson et al. 2018; Bendixsen 2018c; Biswas et al. 2012; Jørgensen 2012; Thomsen et al. 2010). Not having a legal status is scrutinised by healthcare front-end personnel, so that the need for treatment is overlooked while the bureaucracy checks whether people have the actual right to that 'privilege'. In Finland, the access of undocumented migrants to healthcare is normally limited to emergency care (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2019; Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2018), even though municipalities can decide themselves whether to extend the basic services or not (e.g. as the City of Helsinki did) and how to do it.

Moreover, undocumented people may 'encounter several formal and informal barriers when seeking access to health care, including the financial barriers for general access to health care services, [and] the reported unwillingness of some health care providers to treat undocumented migrants' (Biswas et al. 2012: 56). They

may also feel mistrusted when accessing official healthcare services, as this interviewee in Bendixsen's (2018b: 170) study highlighted: 'Even if you are sick, you have to convince them that you really *are* sick'. This is related to the fact that they are offered (free of charge) only emergency services and they should pay for other services. Undocumented migrants suffer from diverse health problems. According to Ehmsen and co-workers (2014: 1), some patients with critical diseases, and an alarming number of pregnant women, did not seek medical care until a late stage, and the new mothers did not return for infant care after giving birth. Despite national and local programmes that offer good healthcare for every pregnant woman in Finland, some undocumented migrants preferred to give birth at home without going to a hospital or being attended by Finnish healthcare sector representatives. Home births are a normal procedure in many undocumented migrants' countries of origin, and can also be chosen in Finland; however, in case of complications, it is risky to give birth at home with no medical equipment or attendance of medically trained personnel.

Stress, anxiety, difficulty in breathing, a sense of disorientation, memory loss, high blood pressure, and sleepless nights (Bendixsen 2018b, 2019; Graham et al. 2014; Myhrvold and Småstuen 2017) are common among undocumented migrants and are issues that many undocumented migrants we met explicitly talked about. In addition to these, 'common keywords for their lives as undocumented migrants as they appear in the Nordic countries are loneliness, fear, hopelessness, dependency, unpredictability and powerlessness' (Myhrvold and Småstuen 2017: 826). The winter is usually especially challenging for them. Many have high levels of psychological distress, which should be brought to the attention of healthcare professionals, as was evident from a comment made by one undocumented migrant (Tedeschi 2021):

I am much stressed, and things from the past just don't go away. Now, even if I applied again and got a positive decision on my asylum application, ok yes, maybe a small piece of the whole puzzle would be in place, but all that happened to me won't go away, just like that. In that sense, it won't make any difference as I am still back there, where my colleagues got killed, and I then needed to flee. I don't know who I am, or where I am now.

The majority of undocumented migrants have had traumatic experiences in their countries of origin and/or during their journeys to Finland. Their precarious living conditions, the impossibility of clearly visualising or planning their futures, the risk of being removed, and their continuous irregular legal situation worsen their already compromised psychological states. As the previous quotation hints, this distressed psychological condition may still affect those who, in the end, manage to obtain asylum or residence permits. Indeed, we heard cases of undocumented migrants whose stay in Finland was finally legalised, but whose psychological condition barely improved (Tedeschi 2021):

The change of legal status did not have any effect on my body. My past is still here. I cannot rest; sometimes I become so restless and stressed-out that I have to go out, just anywhere. I cannot sit still. I cannot see myself in the place where I currently live. I do not find myself anywhere. I cannot see the future.

Even though this person (who was originally an undocumented migrant) had received legal status as a refugee, his words echo the ones an undocumented person might have uttered. These people have typically experienced war or other violence, such as torture, or have suffered traumatic journeys (e.g. crossing the Mediterranean was, for many, a dreadful experience, which was not easily forgotten). Such precarious psychological conditions do not only affect undocumented migrants, but also those whose legal status has been regularised and who are, consequently, part of official society. As Lebano et al. (2020) indicated, refugees and undocumented migrants tend to have a higher prevalence of mental distress compared to non-refugees in Europe. In their study about undocumented migrants in Sweden, the majority of respondents suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; 58%), moderate or severe anxiety (68%), and moderate or severe depression (71%; Andersson et al. 2018). Undocumented migrants' mental health conditions should not be considered as a separate issue from the official welfare state, but should be dealt with systematically, supported by forward-looking, proactive policies and practices aimed at preventing negative consequences. People who are mentally unstable may be more fragile and, hence, more vulnerable to the risk of human trafficking. Furthermore, untreated mental illnesses may lead to unpredictable behaviour, such as mentally unstable people harming themselves or others—which has already happened in the Nordic countries.

The urgent need for psychological help was also explicitly acknowledged by doctors working in Global Clinic, which is run by volunteers who provide healthcare services:

The services are primarily for patients who are not entitled to public health care in Finland regardless of nationality or migration status. [They] give information about health services in Finland. Services are free of charge, anonymous and in strict confidence. (Global Clinic 2019)

As said, Global Clinic runs clinics in six Finnish cities: Helsinki, Turku, Oulu, Tampere, Lahti, and Joensuu. Some undocumented migrants know about Global Clinic, but few are aware of how to access its services as undocumented migrants and tend to rely on their informal 'protected' networks if they need treatment. We interviewed doctors at one of the clinics, and they reported on the psychological condition of undocumented migrants they personally met:

We also have a psychologist in our team, because the number of mental health issues has sharply increased. Sleeping problems are just the tip of the iceberg . . . there are always other symptoms, such as depression . . .

Indeed, an undocumented person we met attended a Global Clinic and was ultimately hospitalised: 'I was depressed. My psychologist was very afraid that I could hurt myself, kill myself'. When an undocumented migrant does not receive adequate help—from a physical, but also from a psychological perspective—it can lead to a mental state that can place the person, and possibly surrounding people, at risk. The mental burden can cause psychosis in urgent and untreated cases. In such a situation, this undocumented migrant may think that he/she is in his/her country of origin (despite being in Finland) and may act accordingly, as we witnessed during

our fieldwork (see Tedeschi and Gadd 2021); therefore, the link between a lack of healthcare and actual risks to undocumented people's, and society's, safety and security should not be ignored. Rather, it should be addressed by considering whether extended access to healthcare for undocumented migrants might secure their wellbeing and the one of present and future society and, at the same time, reduce and/or prevent potentially dangerous events from occurring. This would include abiding by human rights legislation, as defined at the European level (PICUM 2010, 2017). As mentioned, the lack of information during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused additional psychological pressure for undocumented migrants, who did not know exactly what this disease was or what they should do about it.

Untreated physical illnesses are of no less importance, especially considering that they might be risky for both the undocumented people themselves and for local inhabitants (including children) who have not been vaccinated or are weaker and potentially more at risk of being infected. Indeed, as the Global Clinic doctors highlighted:

These people have been running for years, first in the Middle East, then in Europe . . . some of them have been running for 10 years . . . and for 10 years they have never had a health check-up . . . which is bad, because it is much better to prevent than to cure, cost-wise.

We met many undocumented migrants who had more or less serious physical health issues. One suffered from asthma and needed regular injections; one was hospitalised for heart problems; another collapsed after receiving a negative decision on his asylum application and was urgently sent to hospital, because his health condition was already precarious. He also had many visible scars.

Healthcare for undocumented migrant children is also challenging (Søvig 2011), as a study from Denmark highlighted:

We found that the number of contacts regarding care for infants and children was very low, which raises concern as to if these children are seen for vaccination and child examinations as they represent a particularly vulnerable group among undocumented migrants. (Ehmsen et al. 2014: 4)

All in all, for undocumented migrants, access to healthcare 'is not only a question about legal regulations, but also a matter of migrants' experiences and understandings of their rights and their practical access to care' (Bendixsen 2019: 529). Moreover:

The feeling of not legally or in practice having access to healthcare services was formed by a combination of experiencing situations where they had felt rejected or humiliated by healthcare workers, responding to misguided information from various 'helpers' and socially relevant others, and relying on rumours about the risk of being turned in by healthcare personnel and then deported by the police. (Bendixsen 2019: 528)

5.4 Conclusions

Healthcare is a fundamental need for everyone. When one is healthy, there is no acute need for healthcare; however, when one suffers from an illness, access to healthcare is crucial, not only for quality of life, but for life itself. The Constitution of Finland therefore guarantees access to emergency healthcare for everyone, regardless of their status in Finland, including undocumented migrants. The responsibility for organising healthcare lies with local authorities; therefore, some local authorities have extended undocumented migrants' healthcare to cover necessary healthcare. It is less expensive to treat certain illnesses (e.g. diabetes) before they have serious health-related consequences; however, only a few local authorities (around 2% of all municipalities in Finland) provide these 'extended' necessary health services for undocumented migrants in Finland. These cover about 15% of municipalities in which undocumented migrants live. Some municipalities recommend that undocumented migrants who are ill should move to municipalities that provide these extended services, thus increasing pressure on fewer municipalities.

Providing, in principle, urgent or necessary healthcare for undocumented migrants does not necessarily mean that they use it. There are many reasons for non-usage: they might not know about their right to use these services, they may be afraid of using them because they fear being caught by the police, they can face linguistic and cultural challenges (such as the availability of interpreters or male/female healthcare staff), and the bureaucracy and practices can be too demanding for undocumented migrants. Specific NGOs providing healthcare for undocumented migrants, in particular Global Clinic, have more appropriate practices for dealing with them, but not all undocumented migrants are aware of these services and some do not want to use them (e.g. being afraid of possible consequences leading into their deportation).

As in all populations, many undocumented migrants are physically healthy (especially because the majority of them are young male adults); however, they often have mental problems that they or the authorities might not be aware of. Ignoring undocumented migrants' physical and psychological health can lead to unexpected and unpleasant consequences at both the individual and societal levels. In addition, the recent COVID-19 pandemic showed how important it is that everyone has access to healthcare and that relevant health-related information is provided accurately, on time, and in as many languages as possible. Knowledge-based policies concerning the health issues of undocumented migrants would help to prevent risks associated with their poor health, and would improve the living conditions of this already officially recognised vulnerable group.

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Chapter 6

Internet and Social Media Use of Undocumented Migrants



6.1 Introduction

The internet and social media have become crucial tools for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers during their asylum-related journeys (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Frouws et al. 2016; Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a). They have also become an essential part of their lives: ‘I would never have been able to arrive at my destination without my smartphone ... I get stressed out when the battery even starts to get low’ (Brunwasser 2015). As international academic literature demonstrated—even though it does not yet provide a clear picture of ‘how the use of ICTs [Information and Communication Technologies] exactly impacts the way that migration works’ (Zijlstra and van Liempt 2017: 175)—the majority of migrants use communication devices, as well as the internet and social media (Dekker et al. 2016; Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a, b), to connect themselves in various ways to Europe (Borkert et al. 2018). Many use them in the country of origin to prepare and plan their journeys. The use becomes more common during their journeys, when they become more stable in transit countries, or in the first country of their arrival, both in refugee camps and outside them. There the initial digital divides, and the differences in usage between asylum seekers with different backgrounds, decrease or even vanish (Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020a, b). Finally, in the destination country, use of the internet and social media becomes even more common (Jauhiainen et al. 2019; Merisalo 2017).

Undocumented migrants can use various means to receive and exchange information and maintain social networks with family and friends. Among these are face-to-face meetings (direct communication with peers or relatives who have already moved to Finland); phone calls (international phone calls with family and friends); and the internet and social media (again, for keeping in touch with family and friends, sharing pictures, news, and updates; or finding a job, food, clothing, or shelter for the night). One risk the scholars have highlighted regarding the wide use of mobile devices by undocumented migrants is surveillance by the state,

particularly by the police (see, for instance, Borkert et al. 2018; Gillespie et al. 2016, 2018; Wall et al. 2017).

In Finland, the majority of asylum seekers seek online information about the asylum process, job opportunities, places to live, and their rights. Almost eight out of ten asylum seekers consider social media to be an important tool for building and maintaining their social relationships in Finland (Merisalo 2017). As previously stated, the majority of undocumented migrants with whom we conducted the research were former asylum seekers who failed the asylum process in Finland; however, communication devices, the internet, and social media remained essential tools, even after the migrants' change of legal status: 'Digital spaces have become vital for people to relate to family and friends, receive information about the new society they live in and pass time' (Witteborn 2014: 74).

In Sect. 6.2, we study the digital divides of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants: their access to the internet and social media applications, their ability to use them, and the impact of their use. Although asylum-related journeys were very challenging for most of the asylum seekers, use of the internet and social media became more widely practiced among the total population of asylum-related migrants. In Sect. 6.3, we discuss the details of the use of the internet and social media among undocumented migrants in Finland. Having gained the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to use these tools, the transition from asylum seeker to undocumented migrant did not substantially change their usage. These were very important tools for developing and maintaining social networks and searching for, and receiving, relevant information. In Sect. 6.4, we turn our attention to the rumours, as well as perceived and normative misinformation, that often spread rapidly through the social media undocumented migrants use (Ruokolainen and Widén 2020; Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Rumours and misinformation are always part of social media in general, but we indicate what particularities exist in social media for undocumented migrants. In Sect. 6.5, we present the conclusions and also make suggestions regarding the usage of the internet and social media by undocumented migrants.

6.2 Digital Divide

In general, three digital divides exist in the population. The first-level divide concerns access to the internet; that is, whether people have or do not have access to the internet and related devices (Hargittai and Hinnant 2008; Schreeder et al. 2017). In the contemporary world, the first-level digital divide often relates to which of the undocumented migrants have mobile phones with inexpensive internet access or easy access to wi-fi.

The second-level digital divide involves people's ability to use the devices to gain access to the internet, connect to social media, and use these in ways that are useful to them (i.e. having sufficient related resources and skills; Schreeder et al. 2017). For an undocumented migrant, the second-level digital divide concerns, for example,

Table 6.1 Internet use by undocumented migrants (%)

	Every day	Many times a week	Weekly	Less frequently	Never
In country of origin	54	18	1	17	10
During journey to Finland	34	23	10	21	12
In Finland	85	10	2	2	1

whether he/she is able to use social media to maintain contact with his/her family and friends or find information on the internet that supports his/her goals. Most undocumented migrants come from countries in which general use of the internet is less common than in the EU member states, including Finland; therefore, fewer members of the population in their countries of origin have learned how and when to use the internet.

The third-level digital divide relates to the impact of the internet, social media and, more broadly, digitalisation on the lives of the population (Schreeder et al. 2017); for example, how interactions in social media enhance the social lives of undocumented migrants or how information and misinformation (e.g., fake news and rumours) in social media affect their decisions and lead to improvement or non-improvement of their everyday lives.

We analysed the development of internet use among undocumented migrants and how the use developed in their countries of origin, during their journeys to Finland, and within Finland (see Table 6.1). In general, a larger number of migrants used the internet in Finland than in their countries of origin. Of the respondents, 10% had never used the internet in their countries of origin, 12% did not use it during their travels to Finland, and 1% did not use the internet at all. Compared to the total adult population of Finland, a larger proportion of the undocumented migrants (the survey respondents) used the internet (International Telecommunications Union 2019); however, the majority of respondents (96%) were younger than 50 years old and thus younger than the adult population of Finland. In general, the older population (older than 60 years old) used the internet substantially less frequently than the younger one (Barbosa Neves et al. 2018).

Three out of four respondents (73%) were at least weekly users of the internet in their countries of origin, slightly more (77%) during their travels to Finland, and almost all (96%) within Finland. Of the Iraqi men, six out of seven (87%) used the internet during their journeys to Finland. This suggested that they were communicating and searching for information on the internet during their travels, but not necessarily receiving accurate information about Finland (see also Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Very frequent users (i.e. those who used the internet daily) in their countries of origin constituted a little over half (54%) of respondents, substantially fewer (34%) used it during their trips to Finland, and many more (85%) in Finland. These results indicated that almost all became internet users between the beginning of their asylum-related journeys and achieving a measure of stability in their destination country; however, fewer undocumented migrants had the opportunity

to use the internet daily during their actual journeys, or simply chose not to use it daily.

Those undocumented migrants who were the most frequent internet users in Finland were, in general, employed men from urban backgrounds who had made friends in Finland. Almost all of the frequent internet users (97%) had internet access via their mobile phones; by contrast, those who used the internet less than weekly in Finland were unemployed and from rural backgrounds, a third (33%) of whom had internet access via their mobile phones (while 67% did not know about it).

6.3 Internet and Social Media Usage among Undocumented Migrants

Social media had different impacts on undocumented migrants in different phases of their journeys to Finland. About one out of three respondents (35%) claimed that information and/or interaction through social media affected their decisions to come to Finland (21% did not know; 44% disagreed). For those who did not use the internet and social media, social media had less impact; in fact, of those who were active users of the internet (at least a few times per week) in their countries of origin and during their journeys to Finland, two out of five (41%) claimed that information and/or interaction on social media affected their decisions to come to Finland (16% did not know; 43% disagreed). In general, social media was a supportive tool that influenced the mobility decisions of the asylum-related migrants (Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020b).

As we illustrated in Sect. 6.2, use of the internet has become common among undocumented migrants in Finland. Besides the internet, many of them also use social media. Three out of four respondents who used the internet (73%) were also users of social media. The most common applications they used were WhatsApp (55%) and Facebook (51%); however, they also used other social media applications, such as Viber (21%) and Skype (9%). The use of e-mail was less common (12%). There were some differences between the users of Facebook and WhatsApp. The Facebook users were primarily those who came to Finland in 2016 or later and who were younger (less than 30 years old); by contrast, the WhatsApp users were from all age groups. Such differences have been found to exist, in general, among asylum-related migrants (Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020b).

Of those respondents who used the internet in Finland, six out of seven (85%) believed that use of the internet, social media, or mobile applications made their lives easier in Finland (8% did not know; 7% were not of that opinion). Those internet users who did not think that the use of the internet, social media, or mobile applications made their lives easier in Finland were usually more than 30 years old, with lower education levels, and had been in Finland for several years (i.e. they came to Finland in 2015 or earlier).

ICTs also play a crucial role in the formation of transnational networks (Oiarzabal and Reips 2012). They facilitate the networking of families that are scattered around the world (Madianou 2014). ICTs thus, at the same time, help (though only to a certain extent) individuals to manage their loneliness, the obstacles that their migration journeys (including to their destination countries) often pose, and the lack of information and knowledge available through official channels (such as official websites, the online immigration pages of central and local governments, etc.):

Information communication technologies (ICTs) are supporting the transformation of family networks into transnational ones, with potentially significant consequences in the psychology of immigration and family mental health. Social technologies may be influencing and mainstreaming the transnational experiences while families are finding resilient ways to confront the difficulties posed by immigration (Bacigalupe and Cámara 2012: 1425).

Undocumented migrants use the internet, social media, and mobile applications for various purposes, as do regular residents in Finland. One important purpose is to maintain and develop strong and weak ties, whereby ‘the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie’ (Granovetter 1973: 1361). As discussed in Sect. 4.5, for example undocumented migrants use the internet and social media to keep in contact with family. ICTs facilitate communication across national borders and are crucial for the migrants’ transnational experiences (see Tedeschi et al. 2020), including those of undocumented migrants. Four out of five respondents (80%) kept in contact with their families and/or friends in their countries of origin, and all (100%) used social media for this purpose. Of those who kept in contact with their families and/or friends in their countries of origin, every respondent used either WhatsApp (53%) or Facebook (51%). Of those who were in daily contact with friends and/or family, many (45%) made phone calls, but also used social media (40%), Skype (12%), or SMS (10%). In addition, of the respondents who made friends during their journeys before coming to Finland and kept in touch with these friends, most (58%) used social media to maintain contact, but many (40%) also used phone calls. Speaking to one’s parents (by phone, Skype, or other devices) can be very important, as one undocumented migrant told us:

I need to talk with my parents on the phone every day. They are in Austria, and I am alone here. I am so worried that, since I am not with them, something might suddenly happen to them and I might lose them, so the first thing I do in the morning is call them.

Dekker and Engbersen (2014) highlighted that the use of communication devices in general, and of the internet and social media in particular, helps migrants to maintain strong ties with family and friends and develop weaker ties that might support their journeys and their survival in the destination countries. Migrants’ need to maintain and develop these strong and weak ties during their fragmented journeys increases their use of social media (Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020b). These tools build a new, dynamic infrastructure made of ties (people and also services) that influence and shape the migrants’ everyday lives. They also provide unofficial

information and knowledge that sometimes turns out to be vital and essential for asylum-related migrants, such as finding employment.

As discussed previously, communication devices, the internet, and social media are extremely important for maintaining and supporting contact with family members, as well as with close friends. In particular, those who came to Finland alone often highlighted the need to keep in touch with their families. During the qualitative ethnographic fieldwork, after a measure of trust was built, the first things they liked to show us were pictures, stored in their phones, of their families back in their home countries. Pictures of nephews and nieces, parents, brothers, sisters, and relatives in general were very common and often used as background images on their mobile phones. These contacts constituted strong ties for undocumented migrants who were living in very unstable conditions involving precarious and unsettled ties; therefore, being in touch with family was, for them, an element of stability in a life characterised by uncertainties, difficulties in making ends meet, loneliness, and rejection. 'Do you see how beautiful my little sister is? She is growing up very fast, and they send me her pictures via WhatsApp. I am so proud of her and my family, do you see? They are all so beautiful, and I miss them so much', said one undocumented migrant who was very stressed about his situation (his illegal status in the country), but for whom the family represented stability and an 'island of happiness' to carefully preserve and cherish.

As mentioned, the internet and social media were also important for forming and maintaining the weak ties that played important roles in their everyday lives. Referring to an online game he played every day, an undocumented migrant said:

You know, there is this new online game. It is very good, because I keep getting new friends through it. They come from all over the world, and I really like it, especially as I can also talk with them, not only chat. I get to speak in English, which is good. I also get to know other languages, so I have real conversations with people. Here [in Finland] I cannot talk with local people. I am very shy, and I also have the impression that they don't want me to talk with them.

This person seemed to have great difficulty making friends in the new environment of Finland, but could more easily do so in the digital world. These 'online friends' could be considered weak ties, but they constituted an important element of his wellbeing. He needed and wanted to build relationships, but apparently could not. The digital environment helped him compensate for what he could not find in the physical 'rejecting' space. Weak ties in unofficial networks, built casually through social media or through word-of-mouth in the migrants' own ethnic groups, can also open up possibilities of finding shelter for the night, food, clothing, and jobs (as the case of an undocumented migrant confectioner indicates):

When I arrived here I started selling my own sweets on Facebook (as I am a confectioner). This is how my current boss found me, there: he said that he was looking for someone exactly like me and offered me a job in his shop, which I accepted.

Roughly three out of five respondents used the internet for clearly functional purposes, which the respondents indicated from multiple choice responses: searching for information about work opportunities in Finland (58% of all

Table 6.2 Undocumented migrants' searches for information on the internet (%)

	Yes	No	Don't know
Finnish localities in which to possibly live in the future	62	30	8
Current locality of residence in Finland	62	32	5
Current situation in the former country of origin	61	38	1
Rights in Finland	59	32	9
Work opportunities in Finland	58	31	11

respondents), their rights in Finland (59%), or the locality in which they were currently staying (62%; Table 6.2). Those who were actively seeking such functional information from the internet were more often young adult females (18–29 years old) and those who arrived in Finland before 2016 (i.e. many Iraqi men). Those who rarely used the internet for above-mentioned functional purposes were often underage, unemployed, or had been in Finland for less than 3 years.

During the ethnographic study period, seeing them sitting alone and doing something with their mobile phones (talking, playing, chatting, listening to music, watching videos on YouTube, trying to learn the Finnish or English language with learning applications) for a long time (easily hours) was a very common occurrence: nowadays, 'stories, photographs, and videos are exchanged in online social networks on an ever larger scale' (Dekker et al. 2016: 539).

In fact, mobile applications can also be used for functional purposes, such as learning and practicing a language. Using mobile applications for learning and practicing a language signifies technical skills and motivation. Three out of five respondents (61%) used mobile applications to practice the local Finnish language (39% did not use mobile applications for this). Of those, one out of 12 (8%) knew Finnish well, (almost one out of three (29%) moderately, the majority (57%) little, and a few (6%) none at all). Learning the Finnish language with mobile applications applied to undocumented migrants with all levels of proficiency in Finnish. Of those who were using mobile applications to practice Finnish, almost all (92%) wished to stay in Finland, and the majority (57%) expected to be in Finland after 3 years (i.e. in 2021). Those who were using mobile applications to practice Finnish were often employed and had been in Finland for several years. Almost the same number of respondents (58%) used mobile applications to practice English (42% did not use mobile applications for this).

Use of the internet also related to potential migration inside Finland. Three out of five respondents (61%) who used the internet sought information about localities in Finland in which they could live in the future; however, fewer respondents (33%) were of the opinion that information and/or interaction on social media affected their decisions about where to live in Finland (45% disagreed; 22% did not know).

We also asked, specifically, whether the respondents actively followed events in their countries of origin. The majority (61%) continued to follow events (1% did not know; 38% did not follow them); therefore, the internet facilitated ongoing contact with their countries of origin, even without strong ties to family and friends. Those who did not follow events in their former countries were often undocumented

migrant women who had family with them in Finland and/or those with lower education levels. In general, very few wanted to return to their countries of origin. Slightly more (9%) of those who followed events in their countries of origin wanted to return to those countries compared with those who did not follow them (7%). When undocumented migrants, for various reasons, wanted to weaken or cut ties with their families or their countries of origin (see Sect. 4.5), the massive use and widespread presence of social media made cutting the ties difficult. In fact, a presence in social media has the drawback of deepening their existing traumas, unwanted connections, and bad memories.

6.4 Facts and Rumours on the Internet and in Social Media Affecting Undocumented Migrants

As indicated in Sect. 6.1, undocumented migrants and asylum seekers come across different types of information and misinformation on the internet and in social media. Some information seems truthful, but turns out to be misinformation because it is inadequate, presented inadequately, or outdated. Purposeful misinformation leads to false hopes or unrealistic expectations. There are also many kinds of distorted information and rumours. Undocumented migrants' different social, cultural, and historical aspects, situations, and contexts are involved in determining whether they perceive information as accurate information, misinformation, or disinformation. Misinformation can be defined as inaccurate, incomplete, vague, or ambiguous information, depending on the specific context or situation. Due to their vulnerable and marginalised situations, undocumented migrants may perceive information differently from the majority of the population (Ruokolainen and Widén 2020).

In Finland, the authorities use both 'analogue' and 'digital' channels to maintain contact with undocumented migrants; for example, the city of Helsinki effectively introduced one-to-one official mobile communication, with text messages to undocumented migrants regarding decisions about their social service requests. Upon receipt of an SMS notification of a decision, a migrant could go to the municipality offices and collect, in the case of a positive decision, his/her voucher to buy food in supermarkets and his/her public transportation travel card.

Sometimes such information is spread only through 'analogue' methods for security reasons. In one large town (Turku), a leaflet listing places where undocumented migrants could go for help after the termination of reception centre services was physically and directly handed to them in the centres. It was not available on the internet—at least not when this research was carried out. In this case, NGOs (e.g. Red Cross volunteers) distributed the leaflets to the reception centres in the Turku area. Indeed, the places where they could go to get help could be considered 'sensitive', and the decision to not publicise the locations on the internet was made to protect the migrants from 'unwanted visits'; for example, by far-right extremists.

The necessity of making the locations visible on the internet (recognised by the volunteers, considering that many undocumented migrants are very afraid of going to public places to seek information) needed to be carefully balanced against the security and safety of these vulnerable people.

Despite social and community workers from municipalities and NGOs being the official people on whom to rely, undocumented migrants often turned to unofficial social media channels and networks to survive in everyday life in Finland, such as by finding a job, accommodation, food, or clothes. This is what Williams and Baláž (2012: 178) called ‘lack of trust in expert advice and reliance on alternative knowledge sources’. Unofficial, rather than official, information and knowledge on the internet is often more widespread and ‘effective’ for undocumented migrants.

Indeed, official information on official internet channels was often not clear enough to be comprehended by undocumented migrants, considering the language barriers, to name but one factor. The purposeful information thus turned into perceived misinformation due to the specific contexts of undocumented migrants, illustrating the extent to which perceptions of information are social (see Ruokolainen and Widén 2020). In this respect, we very soon recognised a disparity in the former asylum seekers’ understanding of the asylum process. The lack of accessibility and clarity of official information on the internet about the asylum procedure and the status of undocumented migrants obliged many turn to unofficial channels that provided incorrect information or even purposeful misinformation—because it was easier to absorb than the information conveyed through the official websites.

The use of ICT devices and, in general, the information shared among their own networks (such as family and friends), whatever the chosen medium, thus had two facets. As indicated in Sect. 6.3, the positive aspect enabled undocumented migrants to keep in touch with their families and friends; build weak relationships with online friends while temporarily relieving stress; and find information about where and how to find a job, food, or shelter for the night.

There were also negative aspects regarding safety and security: the surveillance of undocumented migrants’ ICT use by the authorities, and cases in which rumours and false or criminalising information spread on the internet might negatively influence their actions. If, for example, they wanted to make a new asylum application, they might decide to marry or change their religion or sexuality, because this specific misinformation was widespread on social media as a viable option to easily get asylum. However, such information is usually fake, since Migri thoroughly assesses each application and its reliability.

Yet another critical aspect of the internet and social media concerns online news and its (often negative) impact on both society and undocumented migrants; for instance, dissemination in social media of the news that ‘20–34-year-old people from Iraq were found to have committed 10 times more sexual offenses of some kind in 2017 than Finnish citizens of the same age’ (Yle.fi 2019) made undocumented migrants, especially young Iraqi adults (who constitute the majority of undocumented migrants in Finland) or people who looked similar, go even further into hiding, due to a perceived increase of intolerance towards them (MacDonald 2017).

In our survey, we asked the undocumented migrants whether they had received misinformation about Finland through social media. Almost two out of five respondents (37%) answered that they had received misinformation about Finland through social media (as did many of those who actively used the internet), 15% did not know, and 48% said that they had not. We also asked if they had received misinformation about Finland from somewhere other than social media. One out of three respondents (34%) answered that they had received misinformation about Finland, 18% did not know, and half (48%) claimed that they had not. In total, over two out of five respondents (44%) had, and 56% had not, received misinformation about Finland. Those who had received misinformation about Finland were most often underage respondents, those with low education levels, and more often men than women.

Even though, as Carling and Sagmo (2015) maintained, ‘the literatures on migration and on rumour remain largely separate,’ still ‘rumours are powerful and widespread elements in the dynamics of migration’. From our empirical work, it soon became apparent how many of the undocumented people we met followed and believed in rumours spread through their own networks, among their contacts, as well as in social media:

I found this information in some Facebook groups . . . that Finland is in first place for human rights . . . This is why I am here.

I wanted to go as far as possible from my country. I wanted something completely different, and I was looking for a safe place. Finland was exactly that place to me. This is what I was told, and found in social media. I also found that I wouldn’t meet many of my peers in Finland, but reality was very different from what I had expected.

This is what Wall et al. (2017: 240) called information precarity, which risks leaving people ‘vulnerable to misinformation [and] stereotyping’. It cannot be said that information spread on the internet and in social media was the reason why they actually moved to Finland, but, along with comments from their ‘trusted’ networks (which were often used to double-check the truthfulness of information coming from unknown sources; see Dekker et al. 2018), and new rumours and information collected and accumulated during their journeys to and within Europe, it played an important role in their decisions to move and in their final choice of the destination country, as the previous quotations show.

Another undocumented migrant revealed one day that he had relatives already living in Finland, and, when he called them, they suggested that he follow them, because ‘it is so very easy to get asylum here, and then a job, and a place to stay’ (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). They shared their experience with him, and it was, to a certain extent, what he wanted to hear, confirming what was already in his mind (Burt 2001); however, it turned out to be untrue, as another research participant also clearly highlighted (see the second previous quotation): ultimately, reality was very different from what he expected and what he was told. This can often happen when, to some extent, the source of information is ‘trusted’ (as in the case of the relatives living in Finland). This is what Borkert et al. (2018) called ‘learning by experience’, when refugees told the researchers how they ‘became aware of when to distrust information only when facing different reality’.

Not only do rumours and unofficial information and knowledge affect the decisions of people to migrate and, in some cases, to choose Finland as the destination country, but, both upon arrival and through subsequent asylum applications, they also affect the people's approaches to their asylum applications (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021), as mentioned previously. This cannot be overlooked, specifically when considering cases of undocumented migrants who are ex-asylum seekers, as we do in this book. Via Facebook, through social media, they share stories and recommendations as to how to get asylum in Finland. These stories and unofficial recommendations might be more or less trustworthy, but asylum seekers and ex-asylum seekers tend to follow them, often ending up undocumented.

Let us, for instance, consider subsequent asylum applications. As Migri (2018) reported, and we already showed in Chap. 3, 'at the moment about every second asylum application is a subsequent application' and in 2020 they were two out of three applications. For Migri to process a subsequent application, new grounds (i.e. new information) must be provided by the asylum seeker, otherwise, Migri will drop the case without looking into it. Undocumented migrants, following the misinformation spread in social media channels and/or through the migrants' own more or less close networks, started subsequent applications where the new grounds were a change of religion, gender, or sexuality or new documents (false and sometimes sold online), with the purpose of 'demonstrating' that they were under threat in their home countries. There were cases with 'genuine' new grounds (some obtained new valid and reliable information from their countries of origin) but, in other cases, the new information was presented on purpose to legalise their stay in the country. Such information in social media channels is usually untrue. As previously stated, Migri often unmasks untrue intentions and denies asylum. The drawback, however, is that, due to the increase of these fake cases, there is always the risk that true, genuine grounds are not recognised and asylum is denied. Given the importance of this matter, both a clear stance from the competent institutions, revealing rumours and misinformation, and active engagement with the asylum seekers who ask for clarification from official sources, are now greatly needed.

The last critical point to mention relates to news, widespread online and especially in social media, of Iraqi asylum seekers or refugees committing sexual offences in Finland. Highlighting that this ethnic group committed the offences increased the general intolerance towards them. In Finland and elsewhere in Europe, 'immigration coverage [in the media] is often negative and conflict-centred. Frequent exposure to such media messages leads to negative attitudes towards migration [and] may activate stereotypical cognitions of migrant groups' (Eberl et al. 2018: 207)—even if the information might be trustworthy. Resulting from this media discussion, we noticed a clear difference in the behaviour of some undocumented migrants—especially the ones from Iraq. When they noticed increased intolerance towards them (Boomgaarden and Vliegthart 2009), they went further into hiding, even to the extent of denying their real nationalities. As one young man, upset by the news, said:

You know, now, because of this news that is everywhere on the internet and in social media, when I meet or speak with someone who is Finnish, I do not say that I am from Iraq anymore. I tried, but they then go away, they don't want to talk to me, because I am 'a bad guy from Iraq'—but I am not bad! I didn't do anything wrong. Therefore, I say that I am from Turkey. If I say like this, they then talk to me.

Information flows through migrants' own networks, or indirectly through the internet and social media, provide unofficial and official important and trustworthy information (i.e. how to get shelter for the night, food and clothing), but also untrustworthy gossip that can become dangerous (i.e. how to easily gain asylum in Finland). There are also (true or untrue) messages, widely spread on the internet, that have serious consequences because they stigmatise ethnic groups: 'The nature of these elements may stimulate an image of ethnic minorities as dangerous and threatening' (Jacobs 2017: 822). Undocumented migrants are greatly affected by misinformation and rumours, and modify their choices, decisions, and movements accordingly. It is very important to acknowledge how, where, and by whom information is transmitted, as well as the role it plays in the everyday lives of these people.

6.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have explored the usage and role of the internet and social media, as well as the facilitated information exchanges, in undocumented migrants' lives. In general, the digital divides among undocumented migrants narrowed during their journeys from their countries of origin to Finland. Most of them become acquainted with the internet and social media after leaving their countries of origin and, when residing in Finland, the first-level digital divide (access to the internet and social media) and the second-level one (ability and resources to use related devices) definitely narrowed. Not all differences in access, use, and impact disappeared. Moreover, some undocumented migrants—although very few—still did not engage with the internet and social media. Overall, the internet and social media were fundamental tools for undocumented migrants to keep in contact with their families and friends and to obtain various kinds of information.

On the other hand, undocumented migrants are becoming increasingly and similarly exposed to the third-level digital divide (impact of the internet and social media). Whatever the medium an undocumented migrant uses, information received through it can be either trustworthy or fake. Official information provided by authorities and local institutions sometimes remains obscure or is misunderstood, turning it into misinformation from the point of view of undocumented migrants. They may then become sceptical of the authorities, so that truthful information is perceived as misinformation that the migrants cannot rely on; therefore, undocumented migrants turn to their own networks (online or offline) to find the information they are seeking, as an easier way to solve their problems. When the information is unofficial, it runs the risk of being untrustworthy misinformation; for example, such

misinformation influenced some migrants' behaviour even before their arrival in Finland. The widespread word-of-mouth claims that it is easy to obtain asylum in Finland, or that one can receive substantial financial support as an asylum seeker, both turned out to be fake. Another example is that, after receiving misinformation, some undocumented migrants in Finland submitted new asylum applications with false new grounds that led (again) to their rejection. This and more dangerous misinformation on the internet and social media needs to be studied and explored further. Such dangerous misinformation relates to illegal activities, attracting undocumented migrants into exploitative situations and jobs that pay very little, or nothing, hoping that they might obtain a work-based residence permit (which is often not the case, see Sect. 4.4).

Finally, communication media assume a very important role in the life of migrants, whatever their legal status. Widespread news on the internet and social media that criminalises specific ethnic groups (even if the criminalisation is based on real facts) may result in increased intolerance towards all members of those ethnic groups, or even towards all immigrants. This pushes undocumented migrants and many other migrants further into hiding, creating a shadow society that is separate from the official one.

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Chapter 7

Conclusions



7.1 Introduction

Millions of undocumented migrants live in the EU, and many more live in the countries outside of it. They have become undocumented through various circumstances: some have entered a country without the legal right to do so and continued to live in this new country; others have entered the country legally, but stayed there after their legal right has expired; and some babies are born undocumented. Undocumented migrants are also called irregular, paperless, sans-papiers, unauthorised, or even illegal migrants (Anderson and Ruhs 2010). They differ from each other in details, but the common factor is that they reside in a country without the proper legal right to do so and their presence is not fully approved by that country's authorities. Many of them are asylum-related migrants (i.e. they left their country of origin to seek safety in the EU). For many, the asylum request is a tool that makes their initial entry into the EU possible, but others do not bother to start the asylum process, because the majority will not receive asylum, subsidiary protection, or, in general, any kind of residence permit in the EU. The reasons for them leaving their countries of origin vary; however, these assorted reasons often do not give them the right to be internationally protected (see Jauhiainen et al. 2019).

Triandafyllidou and Ricard-Guay talked about a general lack of historical awareness, whereby 'hard territorial and digital borders and the whole administrative apparatus of passports and visas and different migration categories are rather recent phenomena, compared to the age-long nature of human mobility' (Triandafyllidou and Ricard-Guay 2019: 115). Furthermore, during 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many European countries established temporary lockdowns and states of emergency, which limited the opportunities for people to cross borders and request asylum (Jauhiainen 2020), and also created particular obstacles in the everyday lives of undocumented migrants. In some countries (such as in Hungary and Greece, at least temporarily) openly hostile opinions were expressed, and repressive actions taken, regarding asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

Nevertheless, irregular migration is a common contemporary phenomenon around the world (see Gonzales et al. 2019). Undocumented migrants are forced to live fully or partly outside the common societal systems that ordinary citizens enjoy. They often experience racism (Sigona 2012) and, with increasing frequency, attacks from far-right parties (Muis and Immerzeel 2017; Vieten and Poynting 2016). In the 2010s, many countries became stricter towards irregular migration and undocumented migrants, especially after the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers in the EU in 2015. Many countries overruled international treaties and agreements and became more nationalistic in their migration-related policies (Brekke and Staver 2018; Niemann and Zaun 2018), some to the extent of totally stopping the arrival of asylum seekers (fearing that they would become undocumented migrants), as the situation in Greece at the EU border in 2020 illustrated (Jauhiainen 2020; Jauhiainen and Vorobeva 2020). Furthermore, the detention of asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers has become a tool of stricter immigration policies (Könönen 2020).

Thresholds of inclusion and exclusion are continually renegotiated. Even policies that aim to include migrants may have the drawback of ultimately exposing these people to a negative social and legal super-visibility (Brighenti 2010), especially with regard to far-right parties, which might then activate repressive mechanisms (Tervonen et al. 2018) and further restrict their opportunities for action. The above-mentioned changes also include Finland (Jauhiainen 2017; Saarikkomäki et al. 2018); however, as shown in recent decades, no countries have succeeded in expelling all undocumented migrants, so the political wishes to ‘deport them all’ cannot be enforced (Ambrosini 2017).

For this book, we studied undocumented migrants in Finland using quantitative surveys and ethnographic participant observation conducted among them. Furthermore, we asked about local authorities’ practices and gathered experts’ and workers’ perspectives on undocumented migrants. By triangulating the data and using mixed methods, we were able to study undocumented migrants in Finland, their everyday lives, and their broader concerns. From this empirical research and data analysis, broader concepts relating to irregular migration emerged: the agency of undocumented migrants, who manage to make ends meet despite the hardships, continually finding new and ‘creative’ ways to survive; the creation of semi-legal spaces, whereby the clear-cut and rigid definitions legal/illegal, regular/irregular, documented/undocumented, applied by immigration policies, are challenged by the everyday lives and practices of these people; and their position outside civil society but, at the same time, ‘inside’ it, testing its predefined rules and regulations. In addition, we studied their aspirations, particularly in relation to their journeys to and within Finland, and determined their desire for on-migration from Finland to other countries, including returns to their countries of origin. Furthermore, we paid attention to the internet and social media, specifically considering how the digital divides shrink along undocumented migrants’ journeys, how they build and maintain both strong and weak ties through these tools, how they use them, and how they are affected by them.

Conducting research about undocumented migrants is challenging everywhere; however, in countries with small populations (and especially low numbers of people

with foreign backgrounds) such as Finland, it is even more challenging, since undocumented migrants are few and their need to invisibilise themselves is compelling: they might be more easily spotted and pointed out as ‘the different ones’ (by the police, but also by suspicious ordinary people). They ‘experience the violence of being depicted as undocumented and are therefore liable to deportation and exclusion’ on a daily basis (also facing the risk of ethnic profiling; Keskinen et al. 2018). Nevertheless, they ‘also resist such impositions in their day to day lives’ (Villegas 2010: 148). Considering all these elements, finding them, and winning and maintaining their trust, was an endeavour that, on the researchers’ side, required time (months), dedication, strong ethical commitment, and profound caution.

As stated in the introduction to this book, and as many scholars have already recognised, being and becoming an undocumented migrant is not a clear-cut, definite status. The concept is such that it includes in-becoming situations and real-life circumstances, whereby the line separating a documented from an undocumented person is far from apparent. In Finland, the legislation and administrative practices are clear—if a person is an undocumented migrant, then he/she is in Finland illegally, should leave the country, and should have very limited rights, including no right to work. The legal definition of an undocumented migrant is clear-cut, even though it does not correspond with the everyday lives of these people or their understanding of their situations; for example, minors of a certain age have a right to attend school and an obligation to follow the basic education syllabus, but these children often cannot attend school, because of difficulties with transportation; the risk of exposing the parents to the authorities; or cultural issues, such as having both male and female children in classes together, or girls needing to travel alone to the school. Similarly, access to emergency healthcare services is legally available to everyone in Finland; however, in practice, many undocumented migrants are unable to use healthcare services, even in emergency cases, for different social, economic, and cultural reasons. We could present examples of ‘exceptions to the rule’ but, despite all efforts to define and frame who is classed as an undocumented migrant—and this is valid, not only in Finland but, we dare say, in every country hosting them—the definition is bound to fail, and can be proven wrong by simple examples drawn from the everyday lives of these people. Overall, with this book, we have tried to give voices to the migrants themselves, since it often happens that analytical or too-theoretical approaches, while providing valuable insights, ‘do not adequately capture the multifaceted and dynamic nature of migration processes, including from migrants’ perspectives’ (McAuliffe and Koser 2017: 7).

Regarding the practices concerning undocumented migrants, there are more commonalities between Finland and a number of Eastern European countries, where there are few of them and their rights are limited, due to tight legislation, than between Finland and many Western European countries, such as Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, the pre-Brexit UK, or the US: ‘In contrast with older European Union member states, Eastern European states did not have significant numbers of residents with Middle Eastern, African or Asian background and were determined to keep it that way’ (Dzenovska 2016: 2). Moreover, ‘overall, the least permissive integration policies are predominantly found in Eastern Europe’

(Schlueter et al. 2013: 675). We are not saying that the situations of undocumented migrants are the same in Western and Eastern European countries, suggesting a homogeneity between these countries; instead, it is of the utmost importance to recognise specific contexts, and the differences that emerge from them, when conducting studies about undocumented migrants and their everyday lives (McAuliffe and Koser 2017). This also means reflecting critically on theories regarding undocumented migrants—in particular their citizenship, agency, and individual–state relationships—and their applicability to various specific contexts. These concepts and their applicability (or the recognition of empirical instances of these concepts in fieldwork) can significantly change according to the context. In the case of Finland, studying manifestations of agency or the creation of semi-legal spaces presents obstacles in terms of the difficulty of conducting the fieldwork.

As mentioned, there are only a few thousand undocumented migrants in Finland and most of them are in hiding. On the one hand, it is not easy to find them and build relationships of trust with them; on the other hand, it is easier to gain both broad and general, as well as in-depth, understanding about them than in countries where there are hundreds of thousands of such people. The numbers of undocumented migrants in the whole of Finland are lower than they often are in a single large city in Western and Southern Europe. Furthermore, the key stakeholders and mediators are easier to find in Finland and, while in the field, it is easier to gradually grasp the big picture. Furthermore, despite the fact that the legislation in one country (such as Finland) sets the general rules for undocumented migrants in its own territory, research has demonstrated that their situations differ everywhere, even in Finland. Different migrants may thus be able to live different everyday lives and have different practices in each urban context; hence, proper contextualisation of concepts and theories needs to be applied, not only to different countries and locations, but also across undocumented migrant populations in the same country.

In Sect. 7.2, we present the main findings of the research, focusing mainly on Finland, which was our empirical case; however, the results can also be applied to the broader EU context and beyond. The many processes, challenges, and opportunities undocumented migrants face in Finland are, in some respects, similar to the ones they face in other EU member states, especially the smaller countries (in particular in the aforementioned Eastern European member states). There are also, however, particularities in each society, with regard to the legislation and the environment, that cannot be ignored when addressing the issues of undocumented migrants and irregular migration. Generalisations are difficult, if not too risky, to make in this field of study. In this sense, contextualisation remains very important concerning the use of specific terms, concepts, and theories, because the differences in contexts mean that the same concepts do not fit everywhere—starting with the very definition of an undocumented migrant. In this book, we have aimed to provide links to wider contexts and general concepts, while remaining as true as possible to the specific case of Finland. Finally, in Sect. 7.3, we discuss the novelty of our findings and suggest the most promising research themes we identified from our study.

7.2 Main Results

One significant result of this research was the need to study, in depth, the contexts of undocumented migrants, not as static elements, but rather in their evolution and ‘becoming’. Conducting a context-specific case study about undocumented migrants, as we did in Finland, reveals how difficult it is to directly transfer and apply general theories and concepts regarding them, and how those theories and concepts can become contested sites between authorities, migrants, and ultimately researchers, who are trying to make sense of a phenomenon that can hardly be classified and categorised. As shown in the introduction, this difficulty stems from the very concept of an undocumented (or irregular) migrant:

There is a wide range of definitions of ‘irregular’ migrants, including those who have purposefully crossed a border without authorisation, those who have inadvertently or unknowingly crossed a border without authorisation, those who have become irregular sometime after entering a country regularly, those who have been trafficked, and those who have been born into irregularity (McAuliffe and Koser 2017: 3–4).

As evidenced throughout the book, and discussed previously, no universal categories of undocumented migrants fit all contexts and individuals. This creates friction between the authorities, who need to have clear-cut categories and definitions that best fit this population; the migrants themselves, who often do not know their legal status, or how they can change it; and researchers, who try to identify recurrent patterns and generalizable concepts and theories. Indeed, any undocumented migrant could have belonged to several categories during his/her asylum-related journey to the EU and Finland. He/she has been (and is) a citizen of his/her country of origin, with all rights to reside there. During the journey, he/she might have gained the status of temporary protected person (e.g. from the UNHCR and the national government, as is the case with Syrians in Turkey). Later, he/she might have been an asylum seeker in the EU and, in specific cases, also had the right to reside in Finland through its asylum process. Finally, he/she might have become an undocumented migrant in a given country because he/she failed the asylum process and/or did not obtain a residence permit there. It is thus not who an undocumented migrant is, but who they are (plural), and the ways in which they are defined, that have consequences for their everyday lives, while remaining contradictory and ambiguous, even for themselves.

The category ‘undocumented migrants’ thus includes many kinds of people, from children to elderly men and women, illiterate people and those with university degrees. Among them are people originating from dozens of different countries. ‘Embodying’ different legal categories along their asylum-related journeys, and during and after the asylum processes, it is no wonder that many current undocumented migrants cannot properly understand and define their legal status or the stage they have reached in the legalisation process. Such complexity and blurring of externally and politically constructed categories should be reflected in both policies and research regarding undocumented migrants, because such categories ‘serve to perpetuate and reinforce a simplistic dichotomy which is used to distinguish, divide

and discriminate between those on the move' (Crawley and Skleparis 2018: 52). As mentioned, these categorisations become contested sites between authorities, migrants, and the researchers who are trying to make sense of the patterns that they study.

States, which need clear-cut (albeit unrealistic) categories and taxonomies, significantly influence the construction of the identities of undocumented migrants (Koopmans et al. 2005), obliging them to wear different masks according to each country's legal requirements (Mountz et al. 2002; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2008). Ultimately, these people often acquire multiple identities and masks, which are necessary for their survival. The ones who are not flexible enough to adapt (Ong 1999), or do not exercise their agency by creating semi-legal spaces for themselves, are the ones most at risk of being exploited or being caught by human trafficking networks.

Every country has a variety of undocumented migrants, but also particularities in their nationalities. This might be due to the geographical nearness of the countries from which many came or historical legacies of colonialism. In Finland, one particularity is the large number of youngish male Iraqi nationals among undocumented migrants. As discussed, most of them arrived in the summer and autumn of 2015 as asylum seekers. They failed the asylum process, mainly because of sudden changes in the Finnish asylum and immigration policies and their implementation (Saarikkomäki et al. 2018); however, they did not return to their country of origin—many due to obvious danger. Many Iraqi undocumented migrants (who actually have been 'documented' during their stay in Finland) cannot be removed from Finland to Iraq because they do not have the proper documents for international passage and the Iraqi authorities refuse to take them back. At the same time, they do not have the right to reside in Finland. In such a legal limbo, in-between categories, and unable to legally either leave or stay, they have become undocumented migrants. Such a limbo is common in many EU member states, although the rights of such non-deportable people vary; for example, in Germany, these people can and must extend and renew their 'tolerated' presence regularly with the authorities, and they have the right to be employed. This may open for them the possibility of legalising their residence (Jauhiainen et al. 2019); however, so far, this has not been possible in Finland, even though the Government of Finland plans to review such a possibility (Government of Finland 2019).

Another key finding concerned the complexity of the journeys of the undocumented migrants (i.e. during which they became undocumented). They used multiple modes of migration, but irregular mixed migration prevailed as a reason for them becoming undocumented migrants. Many pushing and pulling factors (van Hear et al. 2018) bring these people to Finland, or to other EU member states, and make them decide to remain there as undocumented migrants. Some factors relate to the asylum- and work-related requirements, while others do not. Many current undocumented migrants fled from their country of origin due to external factors that created insecurity for them. Indeed, many left because of political reasons, conflicts, persecution, and even war. Poor livelihood opportunities often prevailed at home, and they perceived better work opportunities in their destination—the EU, and in the

specific case of this book, Finland. Regarding the undocumented migrants we studied in Finland, very few had social pulling reasons to move, such as friends or family members in Finland. Some were lured into the country by misinformation about the ease of legalising their presence in Finland, receiving abundant social benefits, or having plenty of work opportunities in the country. Widespread rumours and misinformation in social media and in personal networks have serious (often underestimated, or insufficiently explored) material consequences for the movements of these people, adding to their already very complex aspirations, motivations, decisions, and actions on the move (Carling and Collins 2018; Thulin and Vilhelmson 2016).

Another significant finding related to the production of undocumented migrants through very complex asylum processes—an observation particularly relevant for Finland, but also for other EU member states. The migrants were often not aware of the details of the process and did not realise what stage they had reached, what their rights and duties were, or the consequences of the narratives they presented during the process. Sometimes the reasons for fleeing their country of origin were compelling enough to justify asylum or a residence permit in a given country, but the asylum seekers were not able to express these reasons in ways that would convince the authorities. After being rejected, some appealed to the courts and perhaps submitted subsequent asylum applications, but the majority finally failed the asylum process and became undocumented migrants. In Finland, therefore, one particularity is that many current undocumented migrants have been ‘known’ by the national and local authorities during their asylum processes (i.e. they have been registered and have been in contact with these authorities).

During the fieldwork, we recognised how often undocumented migrants’ personal conditions (in terms of trauma, memory loss, or anxiety) contributed to their failure of the asylum process. There are ‘connections between emotions and the way that policies are implemented’, as Gill (2016: 143) highlighted in respect of the British asylum system. In addition, if a person perceives that his/her opportunities (sometimes literally a matter of life or death) would be better in Finland (or another EU member state) than in the country of origin, he/she will try to remain in the new country, even as an undocumented migrant, as our study, alongside other studies, indicated. In general, very few of the studied undocumented migrants left Finland or the EU after failing the asylum process, despite the hardships they encountered in their everyday lives.

After 2015, in many EU member states, right-wing political parties argued for stricter immigration policies, including those regarding asylum seekers and undocumented migrants (Brekke and Staver 2018). Despite attempts to harmonise migration and asylum policies at the EU level, and create an integrated management system and European administrative body to deal with the asylum processes (see, for example, Kaunert and Léonard 2012), they remained incomplete in the early 2020s. Many EU member states have been reluctant to give such decision-making powers to EU organisations; hence, asylum-related practices are implemented differently in different EU member states, illustrating a lack of solidarity between those member states, which creates particular challenges for asylum seekers (and

undocumented migrants to some extent) (Scipioni 2018). Such disparity in the policies regarding asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, and the differences in how these policies are implemented, mean that the treatment of undocumented migrants differs depending on where they reside in the EU. Having seen the pace of development in the EU in recent years, necessary consensus and agreement over the Pact on Migration and Asylum proposed by the EC in 2020 (European Commission 2020) is unlikely to be reached. Furthermore, this policy renewal suggestion has certain aspects that could make the asylum process ever harder for asylum seekers, thus not necessarily reducing the number of undocumented migrants in Europe.

Another important issue that emerged in our study was the need to pay attention to the broad spectrum of the everyday lives of undocumented migrants. Disparities within the EU (and beyond it) make it very important to study, in depth, their contexts—a topic often overlooked because of challenges in obtaining information about and from undocumented migrants. In Finland, the large number of undocumented migrants is a rather new phenomenon; therefore, the administrative and enforcement practices have not yet been consolidated by the central and local authorities. Few authorities know much about undocumented migrants' everyday lives. Such a situation creates an obvious demand for authorities to receive more information about these migrants' situations; however researchers must be very careful not to reveal the few safe places and semi-legal spaces (such as employment) that these migrants have struggled to create for themselves in their everyday lives, despite the tight regulations.

In general, like many of us, undocumented migrants want to live normal everyday lives, but only a few are able to do so. They try to sleep in a secure place, wake up there, go to work, spend time with family and friends, communicate on social media, and then go to sleep again:

Window shopping, playing football or video games, surfing the internet, talking on the phone, visiting friends, having a barbeque, walking in a park, going to church or community organisations, going to the pub for a drink after work and sometimes to nightclubs [were] the most common activities mentioned by interviewees (Sigona 2012: 56).

However, for the majority of undocumented migrants we met in Finland, everyday life consisted of continual survival challenges that had to be overcome, such as avoiding being spotted by the police (or by far-right organisations); carefully choosing the public spaces where they could be present, but remain largely invisible; enduring exploitative working conditions; coping with severe psychological stress due to their precarious living conditions and past traumas (see Herlihy et al. 2012); not having a proper 'home', but instead needing to frequently change the places where they slept; and balancing the need for a social network with the necessity of hiding their irregular condition from new acquaintances. They always had to hide in the shadows and margins of society. Intermediaries (NGOs, private citizens, the church, and their own ethnic groups) often enable undocumented migrants to ultimately make ends meet in a country (Ambrosini 2017): 'Pro-migrant groups from within the majority society take up the cause of these immigrant groups' (Koopmans et al. 2005: 83–84). This was the case in Finland, even though these

intermediaries were often replaced by the migrants' own networks, if they were able to build them.

A major concern of undocumented migrants' everyday lives is how to sustain themselves. This issue emphasises undocumented migrants' agency, as well as their capacity to create semi-regular spaces for themselves, despite the hardships. In Finland, the majority of undocumented migrants would like to work, but the law does not allow them to do so; nevertheless, one out of four was employed. They crossed the line of legality, because they did not have residence or work permits, but undocumented migrants in Finland inevitably need money to pay for accommodation, food, clothing, mobile phones, internet access, and various other everyday needs. Their jobs might not be illegal as such, but the conditions of work, salaries, and other issues usually are. If there is no alternative, some undocumented migrants turn to semi-legal or illegal activities to survive. In principle, many refuse to do this, despite the hardships they undergo in their everyday lives: many want a regular job, and we met a few who eventually returned to their countries of origin, because they did not want to break the law. Precarious, underpaid (or unpaid), and exploitative working conditions are not confined only to undocumented migrants—in fact, they are deeply rooted in our society; hence, they need to be reflected upon, and concrete actions ought to be taken: 'Informal and precarious work is not only confined to undocumented workers and should not be understood as a marginal phenomenon, but rather as central to the organisation of the labour market in the global neo-liberal order' (Sager 2015: 125).

Health is a crucial everyday issue for everyone, including undocumented migrants, and access to healthcare is sometimes a matter of life and death. Finland appears to be among the EU member states guaranteeing only very limited access to healthcare for undocumented migrants. Access to emergency services is provided for everyone who happens to be in Finland; however, the non-EU residents and non-residents have to pay for these services. Some Finnish municipalities have decided to offer other necessary healthcare services; however, undocumented migrants are expected to pay for these services. Some NGOs help them with healthcare and other everyday needs, including accommodations, clothing, language, and legal aid; however, many undocumented migrants are afraid to use these services, do not know about them, or do not want such help because they consider it to be humiliating, especially when they are fit, working-age men or women with many skills. Healthcare systems are strongly linked with immigration policies and, therefore, with legal and registered residence in a country (Martinez et al. 2015). Non-registration in the system (this is particularly true for Nordic countries, where the welfare states are pervasive and highly personalised) prevails over undocumented migrants' actual health needs, making them afraid of visiting hospitals, to avoid being questioned about their residence by healthcare professionals (Bendixsen 2018): 'Institutional prejudice and discrimination as well as cultural differences were also reported by undocumented immigrants deterring them from seeking and receiving needed services' (Martinez et al. 2015: 964).

Health-related issues can change rapidly and profoundly, having a crucial impact on undocumented migrants—as the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in 2020,

showed. In many countries, the state versus individual relationships changed abruptly and dramatically. As a vulnerable group, undocumented migrants are often the people who suffer the most from these changes, especially if they touch the rights of citizens due to exceptional circumstances. As Collins noted:

While most governments have permitted the return of citizens and those with long-term residence rights, the fate of irregular migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and guest workers has been quite different. Irregular migrants find the conditions of survivability upended by new restrictions while they have no access to resurgent state responses (2021: 3).

In 2020, Finland, like many other countries around the world, suddenly experienced a lockdown and general state of emergency (due to prevention measures to stop the spread of COVID-19), under which the basic rights of all residents were substantially restricted. In many countries, mobility in public spaces became severely restricted, and many shops, restaurants, and other facilities were closed. Social distancing was required, often by law, and this was a problem for many undocumented migrants, especially those who lived tightly packed in others' houses and could not afford a place of their own: 'This pandemic has made us rethink our relationships with our bodies, not only in relation to space, but also in relation to other bodies' (Tedeschi 2020: 181) and with the law. In addition, many undocumented migrants lost their precarious jobs, creating an acute financial problem for them, since they continued to remain outside the society's official support networks. Combined with the already existing challenges in accessing the healthcare, such exceptional circumstances created an additional burden for undocumented migrants, who in most cases were not informed and protected like the 'official' citizens. Again, Collins sharply noted that we are facing a nationalist centring of the state, whereby 'whether in purportedly competent or incompetent, progressive or regressive state responses, it is "our" citizens that have been favoured and migrants of all kinds who have been deemed disposable' (2021: 4). In Finland, migrants who were afraid or unable to contact or visit healthcare service points, despite COVID-19 symptoms, posed risks for themselves and the people with whom they were in contact (i.e. often, but not only, other undocumented migrants). The NGOs helping undocumented migrants had to suspend their activities or provide the services only by phone or email. In these circumstances, many undocumented migrants in Finland had no proper institutional help. By contrast, to more effectively deal with the spread of the pandemic, Portugal (Drury 2020) and Italy (Testore 2020) implemented temporary regularisation measures for some undocumented migrants, and Spain made one of its permanent regularisation mechanisms more accessible (PICUM 2020). The impacts of the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic affected, not only health, but the rights of citizens and non-citizens.

Finally, but importantly, a significant topic we addressed was the use and impact of the internet and social media. Access to the internet and the use of social media were lifelines for the undocumented migrants. They could stay in contact with their families, and old and new friends, through these tools; thus individuals in Finland, and their families and friends, could receive (at least temporary) psychological consolation and security, as already highlighted by Sigona (2012: 58):

There is . . . another place where young undocumented migrants feel secure – the internet. Social networking sites (more often in their first language than in English), Skype, emailing and instant messaging are important components of the daily life of several interviewees, especially the younger ones.

The majority of undocumented migrants used the internet and social media for functional purposes, such as searching for employment, accommodation, and opportunities in other towns in Finland; to follow events in their countries of origin; and to learn the local language. In general, the first and second digital divides (i.e. access to the internet and the ability and resources to use the internet and social media) had narrowed among the undocumented migrants since their departures from their countries of origin (see also Merisalo and Jauhiainen 2020); however, in some of their countries of origin, these media were not yet ubiquitous, meaning that their family and friends did not have easy—or necessarily any—access to the internet. These tools could not cover all aspects of social networking; hence, a few undocumented migrants used ordinary telephone calls to their countries of origin. The internet and social media were also littered with fake news and misinformation that, while initially attracting them, ultimately caused discomfort, risks, and disappointment. In addition to the usual security risks (e.g. the police being able to trace undocumented migrants through their mobile phone use), there were migrants who wanted to forget about their home countries (because of traumatic experiences, or due to other personal reasons) and cut their ties with it. The ‘intrusiveness’ and ‘pervasiveness’ of these technologies in their everyday lives thus hindered, not only the right to be forgotten, but also the right to forget.

7.3 Suggestions for Research

We include here suggestions and topics for further research as indicated by questions left open by our study and its findings. At the moment, a challenging topic that requires further research is that no one seems to know how many undocumented migrants are in the EU and its member states. Our own estimation of the number of undocumented migrants in Finland clearly indicated the various challenges researchers have to overcome to make a correct estimation. In general, recent European estimates (see Pew Research Center 2019) have been rough and have perplexed many scholars and stakeholders concerned with irregular migration, who, however, at the same time have not been able to obtain or provide accurate data. Without systematic analysis, the issues regarding undocumented migrants rest on wild speculations, and such (potentially exaggerated) numbers and issues can be used for political purposes, to create anxiety in EU member states and encourage ungrounded policy measures.

From our research, other detailed topics emerged that require more in-depth research. These include, for example, the following: the connection between undocumented migrants’ knowledge of local language, employment, and integration; how information and misinformation on the internet and in social media influence

undocumented migrants' decision-making and migration patterns (based on the definition of connected, rather than physical, migration routes; Sánchez-Querubín and Rogers 2018); undocumented migrants' access to psychological healthcare in the EU member states; undocumented migrants' connections to individual, community, and national security; the immobility of undocumented migrants from the perspective of post-migration studies; the agency of undocumented migrants; the methodological challenges of conducting research about and with undocumented migrants, such as comparative methodological studies across various countries; and alternatives to overcome what Crawley and Skleparis (2018) called 'categorical fetishism' in migration research and policies. The last point is especially important: more research and clarification is needed of the terminology used to refer to undocumented migrants (e.g. irregular migrant, illegal migrant, sans-papiers, unauthorised migrant, etc.). More appropriate concepts, illustrating the in-between categories and definitions of the everyday lives of these people, and the relevance and variety of the contexts in which they live, are needed in the 2020s to support legislation and policymaking regarding migration-related issues. Of great importance is the need to provide clear research- and evidence-based open-access information about the various everyday life issues of undocumented migrants in their native languages, which could be incorporated into books—an attempt we made with this publication, which unfortunately failed due to reasons outside our control. On the other hand, we will make sure that at least the people most concerned with undocumented migrants (i.e. interviewees from municipalities, NGOs, and similar), whom we met, have access to this book.

Regarding other topics that emerged from the findings of our study, among others, the connection between undocumented migrants' knowledge of the local language, employment, and integration could open up interesting lines of research. Undocumented migrants who know the local language usually have more opportunities to integrate into the local community (and possibly find a job) than others who do not have this knowledge. Means of integration are (potentially) also the internet and social media, whereby undocumented migrants, who cannot freely visibilise themselves in public spaces, can anonymously navigate the internet and find information about housing, employment, education, etc. Internet and social media fake information can, however, mislead them and potentially lead to further segregation, rather than integration, by negatively influencing the migrants' decisions in their everyday lives.

Worthy of further research and study, also, is migrants' access to psychological healthcare in the EU member states. As explained in Chap. 5, our research findings showed how undocumented migrants often suffer from stress, anxiety, and mental disorders; however, at least in Finland, the healthcare system does not deem mental issues to require the emergency services provided for these people. Undocumented migrants' mental health conditions should not be ignored, isolated, or considered separately from the official welfare state, but should be dealt with systematically through forward-looking, proactive policies and practices aiming to prevent unwanted consequences for them and the society in which they live. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the geographies of migration flows in general, and on

the undocumented migrants' overall position in society, including the changes in their everyday lives (which may last for years), is a topic that requires proper scrutiny.

Conducting this research was methodologically challenging, as were the ethical issues that dealing with such a vulnerable group inevitably involves. In Chap. 2, we presented our choice to use mixed methods to study the everyday lives of undocumented migrants; however, we believe that in-depth analyses of appropriate (or new, even experimental) methodologies for studying a social phenomenon such as irregular migration, with its characteristic of continuous becoming, its lack of clear-cut definitions, categorisations, and of its varied population, are still greatly needed. Furthermore, a systematic, representative longitudinal study of undocumented migrants in all EU member states, including Finland, would be helpful. A large and weighted-sample annual or biannual survey conducted among undocumented migrants in all countries might be an option. The survey should be supplemented with in-depth interviews on regular and novel topics. These data should be as open as possible for researchers, policymakers, the media, and anyone interested in drawing research- and evidence-based conclusions. Obviously, there should be a very strong emphasis on research ethics in both the collection and use of the data.

Finally, research on asylum and migration policy failures is also needed, as well as constructive proposals for moving forward towards better policies. As our research and former studies indicated, undocumented migrants are a reality in all countries, and no countries have been able to expel all undocumented migrants (see Ambrosini 2017), even when resorting to strong measures. The policymakers and policies should take this as a fact and consider how to reorganise society so that undocumented migrants can contribute to it (see Castles 2004). While strict immigration and asylum policies are being implemented, the population in the EU is ageing, and the labour force and the EU's global economic impact are declining. Finland is among the countries where the proportion of people aged at least 65 years is growing fastest in the world, and every year the working-age population grows smaller (Eurostat 2019; Statistics Finland 2018; Teivainen 2017). Nevertheless, in recent years, millions of people in the EU (and tens of thousands in Finland) have tried unsuccessfully to receive residence and work permits in the EU member states through the asylum process. Part of the failure of the EU asylum policies and processes, including the Dublin Regulation, is due to legal immigration policies having failed, and new ones are urgently needed. A revision and functioning harmonisation of immigration and asylum policies in the EU are required, not only from human rights perspectives, but also because immigration to the EU and Finland is needed for the above-mentioned economic and demographic reasons. Unfortunately, as mentioned, it will be difficult to gain consensus in the EU on asylum and immigration policies and their implementation, and all proposals for asylum and migration policy renewal have to strike a balance between harder and softer solutions.

Finally, as anticipated in the introduction, we offer a few suggestions for the undocumented migrants in the EU, including Finland. This would require a lengthy and thorough discussion, but we present the suggestions briefly. Perhaps the main

recommendation for them is not to give up the hope that they will be legalised and can have meaningful lives in the countries in which they live. It is important for undocumented migrants to learn about the language, culture, and people of that country, and show in concrete ways how they can contribute, positively, to the communities they have become part of, thus eventually moving out of the shadows and margins into the shared societies of the countries in which they reside.

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