Thomas Stodulka

COMING OF AGE ON THE STREETS OF JAVA

Coping with Marginality, Stigma and Illness
This book is based on almost five years of fieldwork with street-related communities in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, between 2001 and 2015. The author inquires into children’s and adolescents’ coming of age on the streets and their remarkable social and emotional competences, instead of resorting to a dreadful discourse of pity and despair. The ethnography’s multi-vocal narrative couples vivid accounts of ethnographic case studies and life stories with current theory on affect, emotion, empathy, structural violence or social interaction in the context of marginality, stigma and chronic illness.

»An outstanding analysis of a socially relevant phenomenon and a significant contribution that counters the politicized and media-dominated homogenizing discourse about »street children« in Indonesia and other parts of the world. This book offers a highly compelling anthropological focus on the manifold meanings, experiences and practices of young people’s life on the streets.« (Prof. Dr. Hansjörg Dilger, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Free University Berlin)

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For further information:
www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3608-6

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1 Theorizing Life on the Streets

My enthusiasm for so-called ‘street children’ developed as early as I was still a student in Social, Cultural and Visual Anthropology. Triggered by media reports on ‘street children’ in Brazil, Guatemala, Uganda and South Africa, I became eager to learn how the situation was like for ‘street children’ in Indonesia, where my regional interest lay (and still lies). I intended to depict the ‘situation’ of young street-related adolescents by making a documentary about them. Still a student that intended to test his ethnographic skills, I prepared for assumingly demanding six months during my first visit to Yogyakarta in 2001. I tried to imagine how I could ever get close to supposedly glue-sniffing, extremely violent and rude, opportunistic kids that would take advantage of me on every possible occasion. Yet, these assumptions were shattered. None of the stereotypes fit with the boys and young men that I met at an open house for ‘street children’ at Parangtritis beach, some 20 kilometers south of the Javanese court city.

What struck me most at that time were the friendliness, the open-mindedness and good manners with which the adolescents, who described themselves either as anak Bendoro or as anak Congklak¹, approached me. After spending three months at the bamboo hut, where we made handicrafts together that were sold to a local street art gallery and exchanged language skills, which included first insights into their very special bahasa senang (‘happy language’), a group of three asked me to join them to sleep at their community hangout near the Congklak street junction in the North of the city. 21 year-old Monchi, Kris (19 years) and Harvey (25 years) assured me that they would take care of me and that if I didn’t like it there I could leave at any time. Out of curiosity and the feeling of being offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn more about life on the streets in a close-up, I agreed. In retrospect, this decision (presumably based on my desire and longing to establish field rapport and

¹ | Anak (Indon.) can mean ‘child’ or ‘belonging RELATING TO someone or something’. In this context, the terms can mean both ‘Bendoro kid/Congklak kid’ or ‘relating to the Congklak/Bendoro street junctions’.
immerse myself into the young men’s lives) marked the beginning of a series of events that would keep me attached to them for over fifteen years now. I spent three months with the komunitas Congklak near one of the city’s biggest six-lane street junctions and joined their night sessions of joking and drinking, busking (ngamen) during the day, running away from security officers, and sharing leftover food (hoyen). Sometimes I joined Monchi and the others to hang out (nongkrong) at the Bendoro street junction in the city center near bustling Malioboro Street. As I learned, this was the domain of the anak Bendoro, a community that shared a similar history and ideology with the anak Congklak, and whose members gave shelter to each other in case it was needed.

I revisited Yogyakarta again in 2005 for three months. Once there, I was invited to the wedding of Monchi, the emerging key informant and main protagonist of this ethnography. Since he had finally broken ties with his family at the age of 15 in 1995, he asked me to represent his part of the new adjoining families. It was only then as I observed the beaming newlyweds, nearly four years after the beach hut and street junction experiences in 2001, that I slowly realized that the lives of the former ‘street kids’ had changed considerably. Whereas the biggest change in my life was my recently acquired Master’s degree in Anthropology, many of them had become husbands and fathers who attempted to exit the streets. With the wedding transpiring as a mirror, the penny inside my head dropped and I realized that with age and the maturing of bodies, the behavior, the collective rituals on the streets, the identification with particular street-related communities, former alliances, and their future-oriented dreams and desires that I had frozen in my memories over four years had changed and continued to shift. Another very striking occurrence was the slow but steady rise of HIV infections affecting street-related communities. Some of the former visitors of the bamboo hut at the beach had died and others were chronically ill or diagnosed HIV-positive in the years to come. I was not prepared for these rapid changes. Their bodies’ physical decay and the related social suffering affected me deeply. Moreover, I had the impression that the young men actually disapproved of my plans to conduct research and write about them. A few days after then 24 year-old Monchi’s wedding, we had the following conversation:

Thomas: What would you think if I lived with you again, but this time for longer?
Monchi: Why?
T: I would like to know more about you and your community. The last time I enjoyed it very much and I am still very fascinated by your way of life. You made quite an impression on me.
M: Yes, that was really a great time. We were still young. And you are a crazy man. But why do you want to stay with us again? You can stay in a better place now.
T: I would like to know more. And I would like other people to know more about how life here really is. We could write a book together.

M: Why do you want to write about us? Better stay our friend! You know, I’m not a robot who tells you his stories in order to provide you with a manual on how to use us.

The animosity against researchers did neither really strike nor did it surprise me at that time. During my first stay in Yogyakarta I had heard stories about anthropologists and NGO-workers and how they were selfish and mean and that they had forgotten about them after they published their books or got a steady position at campus or an international NGO. Then, I read the young men’s refusal to cooperate as a strategy to subvert irreconcilable power asymmetries between the researcher and the researched. In retrospect, I understood that their narratives about other ‘bad’ anthropologists (that were ‘so different from me’, the ‘good’ anthropologist) might not have necessarily been based on their severe ethical transgressions; they were a very subtle, but effective technique to discipline and educate their guest in their terms.

The young adults knew what I wanted from them: stories, authenticity and a feeling of belonging. Then, I had to find out what I could offer them in order to remain a ‘good’ anthropologist. The times had changed and the adolescents have matured into young men with ‘adult’ problems. The times of chasing girls, experimenting with drugs and making motorbikes and guitars disappear in the one place and appear in another seemed to have passed. Their stories were now circling around marriage trouble, providing for the family, exiting the streets and integrating into neighborhoods, or ways of coping with chronic illnesses. Upon my return to the field another year later in 2006, this time for twenty months, we had to readjust our mutual expectations and imaginations. After mutually exhausting and subtle psychological micro-battles regarding my role as friend, researcher, and activist, I began to understand how the street-related young men positioned me and what they expected from me. They wanted attention; full attention – economically, socially and emotionally.

This book describes that the young men’s ways of avoiding harm in some and seeking attention in other situations when navigating the city did not only apply to their encounters with me, the anthropologist-activist. Over the years it became apparent that I was not as exceptional as I thought I was during some phases of fieldwork, but that their practices of encountering me were ultimately related to, what I call, their ‘emotional economies’, a noticeable style of coping with marginality and stigmatization. To put these subtle affective and emotive practices into perspective, I focus on the extended street careers of five male protagonists and their friends, and scrutinize the adversities they encountered with regard to their maturing and rebelling bodies, changing self-ascriptions and social role expectancies during their coming of age. I focus on five life stories without omitting significant experiences of their street-related
cohorts. The protagonists’ transitions from street-related ‘children’ to ‘youth’ to ‘adults’ shall be analyzed with a critical research perspective, which considers bodies’ physical maturation and rebellion as crucial for age-related techniques of coming to terms with marginalized resources and contesting stigmatized social identities.

As the chapters proceed, I will emphasize that the coming of age on the streets was not only economically, socially and physically demanding, but also an emotionally arduous process. Moral stigmatization, intersecting marginalities and rebelling bodies in times of illness did not only influence and limit the protagonists’ income generating opportunities, but also affected their self-perception and subjective well-being. My ultimate aim remains to emphasize the protagonists’ resilience and remarkable social and emotive skills in transforming marginality and stigma into vital socio-economic cooperation and affective ties with various actors of their widespread social networks.

Since street-related coming of age and/or socialization theories are predominantly rooted within the boundaries of disciplinary rationales I take in a more integrative anthropological perspective. My training as social, cultural and visual anthropologist and my subsequent interdisciplinary exposure (predominantly to psychology, sociology, neuro-anthropology and philosophy) as doctorate student and post-doctoral scholar over the course of the last ten years will color the sections in this chapter, in which I intend to elaborate the theoretical perspective in relation to the situations, events and narratives that I had encountered ‘in the field’.

**STREET-RELATED CAREERS**

The ‘street child’ label is ineffective for practical (policy making) as well as academic purposes. This becomes evident when one considers the label itself and asks: whose interests are served by the labeling of ‘street children’, and whom does this label represent (de Benitez 2011; de Moura 2002; Glauser 1990; Panter-Brick 2002)? Benno Glauser (1990: 143) argued in his groundbreaking contribution *Street Children: Deconstructing a Construct* almost thirty years ago, “when talking about street children we may do so without having a clear idea about what we are talking and, in addition, we take the risk of mutual misunderstanding”.

And yet, the ‘street child’ remains a label that sells from a media perspective and wins potential donors for the appeals of transnational NGOs (Aptekar/Stoecklin 2014; Glauser 1990). Giuseppe Bolotta (2016) and Didier Fassin (2012; 2013) have discussed such global developments in our age of humanitarian reason as a ‘passionate ethos’: “an extreme attention to human suffering produced by the continuous staging, production, and circulation of
discourses and images concerning grief and pain” (Bolotta 2016). Based on
a propagated simplicity of solving ‘street children’s’ problems by donating
money to global and local social welfare institutions, the ‘street child’ seems
a particularly suitable opportunity for various people along the organizational
chain of humanitarian reason (from donors to those who make a living by
working with them face-to-face) to ‘do good’ and help relocate the children and
adolescents into more adequate places (i.e. asylums, families, extended families,
or orphanages). Such simplified problem solving mechanisms often target
symptoms but not causes of homelessness, stigmatization and marginalization.
‘Street children’ help to satisfy the urge to ‘do good’ without the need of a deeper
involvement in political action or a more profound analysis of underlying social
conditions. Anthropologist Catherine Panter-Brick describes the concept of the
‘street child’ as a highly manipulated construct, which ultimately represents
the needs of welfare agencies and governments. She is convinced that numbers
of children on the street are often inflated, essentially produced to justify the
agency’s work. She argues that, “At best, these estimates rest upon largely
elastic and nebulous definitions of homeless and working children. At worst
they are made up.” (2002: 153)

The lack of concise definitions does not only provoke welfare agencies’
(intentional or unintentional) exaggerations in order to legitimize their own
existence and funding, but on the contrary to the downplaying of the numbers
by governments in order to retreat from their social welfare obligations. “In
brief, the statistics are problematic: They reflect the particular agendas of
organizations that collect them, and they are part of the construction and the
management of homelessness as a social issue.” (Panter-Brick 2002: 154)

The oversimplification of the ‘street child’ label is not limited to the mass
media and the project-oriented agendas of NGOs, but also affects the social and
cultural sciences (de Benítez 2011; de Moura 2002). The pressure to publish
with all speed and the difficulties to conduct research with street-related
persons and communities beyond the brokerage and the open houses of NGOs
can result in methodological rapid assessments that create analyses that are
strikingly similar to media and NGO-discourses. Referring to theory-building
in a more general perspective Henrietta Moore stresses that it is crucial to
acknowledge that academic discourses are adopted and subverted by media
and other public discourses, but for our work as anthropologists it is equally
important to acknowledge the influences of public discourses, global and local

Olga Nieuwenhuys describes the ‘street child’ as a “category of discourse
construed around the children of the poor, with a firm rooting, as remarked,
in the history of the West” (2001: 552). More provocatively, the ‘street child’ is
a social category, arbitrarily applied to urban settings that have hardly more in
common than the existence of streets and children. Contrary to de Moura and
Nieuwenhuys, Panter-Brick describes the anthropological research on ‘street children’ since the late 1990s in more positive words compared to media and social welfare discourses. She assures us, that “several discourses about street children compete for attention. One is journalistic, descriptive and atheoretical, targeted to mass audiences; another is research-focused and aims to promote critical understanding and to influence effective policy development.” (2002: 156) The latter is where I hope this book is heading.

Without embellishing the harsh social and spatial environment of street-related persons, anthropology has demonstrated that ‘childhood’, ‘adolescence’ and also ‘youth’ are best discussed as social and cultural constructions of maturing bodies (Herdt/Leavitt 1998; Korbin/Anderson-Fye 2011; Lancy 2008; LeVine 2011; Manderson/Liamputtong 2002; Worthman 1998). The childhood and adolescence of European contexts as it emerged since the 18th century (Ariès 1973) is a historical, social and cultural phenomenon that has highly influenced the perspectives of globalized upper and middle classes. Lewis Aptekar and Behaile Abebe describe the scientific practice of comparing the lives of ‘street children’ in non-European or non-Northern American contexts with an idealized concept of a globalized middle class as a “contemptuous ethnocentrism” (1997:478). Such ethnocentric perspectives denied children who worked on farms, in manufactories, or on big city streets their own ‘childhood’. They are construed as “a subject defined by a ‘lack’. Not only do children in the global South lack childhood as it is constituted in the North, but their economic savvy disrupts ideas of children as innocents and so they transgress boundaries between constructions of adult and children.” (Aitken 2001: 124)

The ‘happy childhood’ concept creates differences that divide the world into hierarchically organized zones of a humanistic and moral evolution, in which the globalized middle classes emerge as moral authorities over ‘Others’ who send their children to work. Accordingly, Aitken asks, whether we are “led to believe that contemporary Western society is much more complex in its moral stance regarding children whereas early modern society, and poor neighbourhoods and parts of the global South today, have a warped or non-existent notion of childhood?” (2001: 124)

Protecting children’s and adolescents’ rights to maturation, education, health and subjective well-being is paramount, but only if the ‘othering’ that remains deeply ingrained in the ‘street child’ label is scrutinized, and local perspectives of those affected are taken into accounts of advocacy, activism and research.

To conclude this section on a more constructive note, I shall integrate the lessons learned from previous debates into a definition of street-relatedness as it applies to children, youth, and adults. Owing to de Benítez’ concept of
‘street-connected children’ (2011), I prefer the term ‘street-related persons’, which I define very broadly as those, who have left their families or primary caretakers either through exclusions, self-conscious decisions, or combinations of both; who use the streets in ways that are considered socially and culturally inadequate when compared to their local peers; who integrate themselves in fluid communities whose members do not only share similar past experiences, but also future-oriented targets and motivations to make a living; who identify themselves with and who share a temporary feeling of belonging to these communities.

When differentiating between ‘children’, ‘adolescents’ or ‘youths’, and ‘adults’, I will not exclusively refer to chronological age, but local perspectives on the life course and maturing bodies. This perspective relates to ethnography-based insights that ‘street children’, ‘street youths’ and ‘street adults’ do not necessarily form exclusive age-specific communities. On the contrary, as we shall see in the context of Yogyakarta, people of different ages and life stages lived together in the same street-related communities. The extension of the ‘street career’ concept as derived from pedagogic and applied social work studies proves helpful in the anthropological aspiration to include the lifeworlds of those street-related persons into our analyses that cannot be subsumed under the misleading term ‘street children’.

With few exceptions (Brown 2011; Evans 2006; Glauser 1990; Hecht 1998; Lucchini 1993; Panter-Brick 2000; Visano 1990) – which at least mention the importance of a ‘street career’ approach in their outlooks – the temporality of the ‘street children’ phenomenon has rarely been systematically addressed within anthropological studies. As a request for future ethnographies, Ruth Evans urges ethnographers to consider a ‘street career’ approach in their analyses, since it can prevent the anthropologist from snapshot research and instead bring into focus past life stories, contemporary practices and future outcomes of street life (2006: 110; see also Ennew/Swart-Kruger 2003). So far, Evans’ claims remain requests within anthropology as street-related children, adolescents and even more so adults slowly disappeared from ethnographic research and social welfare agendas during the last ten years. A recently published reader on ‘cross-cultural perspectives on street children’ by the two senior scholars Lewis Aptekar and Daniel Stoecklin (2014) and Paula Heinonen’s (2011) ethnography on street children and youth gangs in Ethiopia might hint to a renewed (publishers’) interest in the issue.

The North American pedagogue Jeff Karabanow (2004; 2006; 2008) gives an excellent example by applying the concept of the ‘street career’ in his analyses of Canadian and Guatemalan ‘street youths’. Like Evans, the author draws on the notion of ‘careers’, originally espoused by sociologists such as Howard Becker (1963) and Erving Goffman (1963), in an attempt to understand how youths move towards or/and away from street life. By drawing on the
concepts of the classical US sociology of Anselm Strauss ‘careers’ are perceived as “(1) the course of any experienced phenomenon as it evolves over time [...] and (2) the actions and interactions contributing to its evolution” (1993: 53-4). When analyzing the life courses of street-related persons, it is crucial to consider all actions and interactions that contribute to the development of the ‘career’, not only supposedly deviant social encounters and networks. Although Karabanow’s model is rooted in different local and disciplinary contexts it proves valuable for my analysis of street-related young adults’ life stories in Yogyakarta. The model highlights the agency of street-related persons, and does not approach their lives in a deterministic way that translates negative turning points in life into a deviant ‘street world’ (Karabanow 2006: 51). The author highlights that street-related persons do not only dwell in deviant ‘street worlds’, but also relate to the social world around them by constructing and maintaining extensive socio-economic networks over sometimes many years. The author’s classification of the ‘street career’ into the five stages of pre-entry conditions; contemplation; entering street life; building identity; and exiting or disengagement has also influenced the structure of this ethnography’s alignment of chapters.

To integrate pedagogic and social work perspectives that are deeply ingrained in the literature on street-related communities into the anthropological study of the experience of persons with regard to structural violence I consider theoretical discussions of marginality and stigma helpful. Focusing on structural and inter-personal power asymmetries and social inequalities prevents an essentialized outlook on coming of age processes. Moreover, the integration of street-related persons’ emotional experiences vis-à-vis their social encounters also in relation to their rebelling bodies (Scheper-Hughes 1990) and changing social role expectancies over the life course, promises insights into the protagonists’ sense of self-efficacy, coping with stigma and marginality and their motivations to live on and exit the street at a certain point of time.

**Marginality and Stigma**

Marginal living conditions are not considered as fixed states, but possess an innate potential for social change. Societal marginality alludes to social conditions in terms of lacking opportunities, resources and skills compared to ‘mainstream society’. These social inequalities can be related to restricted participation in public decision-making as well as low self-esteem. The discrimination of marginalized people frequently arises from markers like race, gender, sexualities, ethnicity, culture, social class or age. Spatial marginality delineates geographical disadvantages, which include a geographically obstructed accessibility to economic centers, lacking infrastructure or an exclusion from technological advancements (Gurung/Kollmair 2005: 13). In social and human
geography, spatial marginality is further typified into macro-spatial (between central locations and areas distant from economic activity, i.e. the metropolis – countryside divide), micro-spatial (between geographically closer locations and areas, i.e. urban townships within metropolitan areas), and in situ-spatial marginality (within very small territories, i.e. in areas of urban gentrification where wealthier people move into less prosperous neighborhoods).

These concepts are helpful analytical guidance, but seem suspiciously clear-cut when applied to anthropological studies of lifeworlds, which focus on complex intersections and frictions of power asymmetries and how they affect and are affected by collectives and individuals (Boellstorff 2005; Chuengsatiansup 2001; Li 1999; Tsing 1993; 2005). Anthropological definitions stress the relational dimensions of marginality as contested asymmetric power relationships between self-claimed or ascribed centers and constructed peripheries. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) describe margins as a space where power is exercised but where its implementation cannot be ensured (Bubandt 2014).

Various authors have insinuated that the stigmatization and marginalization of persons and communities are closely related (Baskara 2014; Boellstorff 2014; Sakti 2014; Stodulka 2014b; Thajib 2014), but a combined theoretical and analytical perspective is yet to transpire. A combined approach might nurture an understanding of the experiential dimensions of how it feels to live at the margins of a system one aspires to, or is expected to belong to (Röttger-Rössler/ Stodulka 2014). A combined perspective focuses on the interplay between the moral and affective dimensions of the street-related young men’s coming of age in a social architecture of exclusion, discrimination and structural violence. This book illustrates that stigma theory contributes to discussions of local moralities and how related discourses influenced street-related children, adolescents and young adults’ ways of dealing with marginal social, cultural and economic resources. It shows how the protagonists’ experiences and practices of dealing with everyday adversities were deeply connected to the interplay between marginalized resources and stigmatized identities. Monchi, for example, tried to get access to the *kampung*

2 | *Kampung* (Indon.): a closed social community, which is organized along strict social and cultural rules and norms of conduct. *Kampung* life is strongly ritualized and comprises of various status-related social duties and economic obligations of mutual help (*gotong royong*). Java’s cities are both geographically and socially structured as mega-clusters of thousands of *kampung*, which are only interrupted by the commercial units and centers along the cities’ highways or big roads.
helps to understand why marginal living conditions can stick like a parasitic worm that causes severe fever and pain, when all one actually needed to do is to take an anti-worm pill. The problem with marginality is not the worm, or a lack of knowledge about the pill, but the weak social and physical body, the closed doors and cut-off opportunities of articulation and access that prevents the marginalized from taking and swallowing it. The protagonists did not keep falling back into various forms of drama, disaster and adversity, because they were incapable of coping and contesting their marginal resources. Those who insinuated to their assumed immorality kept pushing them back into vicious stigma-marginality circles.

In his seminal book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Erving Goffman defined stigma as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” (1963: 12). Although the author advised researchers to focus on the relational aspect of stigma\(^3\), subsequent approaches defined stigma as a mark in the person. Only during the early 2000s, social psychologists (Crocker/Major/Steele 1998; Heatherton et al. 2000; Lewis 1998; Major/O’Brien 2005) and social medicine scholars (Corrigan/Watson 2002; Sayce 1998; Yang et al. 2007) have begun to theorize stigma as a social construction, relational to the socio-cultural, political, and historical context and its local hierarchies. This relational turn situates stigma in its socio-cultural environment and power asymmetries between stigmatizers, bystanders, and the stigmatized, by actually adopting anthropological marginality frameworks.

Accordingly, the medical sociologists Bruce Link and Jo Phelan (2001) argue that a stigma can be identified when particular ‘others’ are distinguished and labeled ‘different’, their ‘difference’ is associated with negative attributes, ‘they’ are separated from ‘us’, and finally ascribed a status loss that results in ‘their’ discrimination. In an extension of this decidedly cognitive perspective, epidemiologist Lawrence Yang and anthropologist Arthur Kleinman (2008) advanced a stigma model that is more sensitive to cultural and moral dimensions. It elaborates how the negative changes in a person’s ascribed moral status result in the deprivation of an essential social position by limiting his or her ability to mobilize social capital when interacting with others. The authors define stigma as a consecutive chain of changes (of a person’s ascribed moral status based on local models of morality), deprivations (of essential social esteem leading to social inequality), and limitations (of social mobility, which includes a high potential for marginalization). Stigma never exclusively

\(^3\) “The term stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes is really needed. An attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usualness of another, and therefore is neither creditable nor discreditable as a thing in itself.” (Goffman 1963: 13)
affects individuals, but stigma-related emotions dissolve into the social and affective network of one’s family and community. Regarding the transition of stigma-related emotions from the stigmatized person to the collective, Veena Das emphasizes that stigma should not be treated as an individual affair, but “as a matter of connected body-selves” (2001). At the interpersonal level, a stigma comprises all social interactive forms of discrimination, distancing, rejection and marginalization. In other words, stigma is contagious in terms of the shared emotions between the stigmatized person, her or his partners, friends, family, and community. Stigma does not only affect the stigmatized person but also those associated with him or her. Depending on the visibility of the stigma, the fear of transmission and contagion can result in hiding behavior and silencing on behalf of the affected and co-affected persons, and their marginalization, isolation and exclusion by opinion-leaders and the wider public. Contesting a stigma is particularly arduous since it deprives persons or whole communities of their social positions as moral beings and most likely triggers rather paralyzing shame-like emotions. Because stigma and marginality are considered as processes and relations between persons, communities and institutions, or any combination thereof, they can be increased, but also contested, negotiated and resisted. These latter practices ultimately aim at improved access to resources, decision-making processes and the amplification of the affected persons’ subjective well-being. I define these social and affective practices as ‘coping’.

Compared to other attempts of explaining both similarities and differences between social actors (i.e. personality, temperament, level of education, or family socialization, to name just a few) regarding their emotional and behavioral responses to adversities and emotional distress, the coping concept admits to the person an increased potential of both social agency and affectivity. The central and explicit notions that “coping processes are not inherently good or bad” and that “the adaptive qualities of coping processes need to be evaluated in the specific stressful context in which they occur” (Folkman/Moskowitz 2004:753), make the concept applicable to the anthropological study of local worlds4, and as such can be integrated into anthropological theory (Zaumseil et al. 2014). The combined emphasis on biographic, personal, contextual,

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4 The term ‘local word’ does not refer to spatial or ethno-local scales, but “to a somewhat circumscribed domain within which daily life takes place. This could be a social network, an ethnographer’s village, a neighborhood, a workplace setting, or an interest group” (Yang et al. 2007: 1528). In relation to the concept of ‘culture’, Veena Das clarifies that it is not perceived as a patterned following of habits, but assures us that “it is Kleinman’s thought that the making of moral beings depends upon the way we place ourselves within local worlds and relationships. Local then does not have an exclusively spatial reference – it relates rather to quality of relationships” (2001).
cognitive and also affective dimensions that shape social actors’ coping styles thus provides a more integrated perspective on the now overused term ‘agency’.

Coping and the ways of addressing the other in social interactions is not only a matter of socially positioned cultural actors. Positioning oneself and being positioned by others is deeply political, and hence emoting and affecting. Therefore, I argue that the anthropological analysis of how asymmetrical power relations affect the street-related protagonists’ ways of perceiving and interacting within their local worlds can gain substantially if emotions and related phenomena are not only included in the ethnography as descriptive rhetoric, but are also thoroughly defined as theoretical concepts, as what here follows.

**AFFECT, EMOTION, EMOTIVE, FEELING**

Contemporary emotion research agrees on basic theoretical assumptions regardless of scholarly origin: emotions are defined as those social, cultural and physiological processes that emerge when persons negotiate, engage or interact with someone or something, be that real or imaginary, be it related to the past, present or anticipated future (Dixon 2012; Engelen et al. 2009; Godbold 2015; Izard 2010; 2011; Lindquist/Gendron 2013; Matt 2011; Mesquita/Boiger 2014; Mulligan/Scherer 2012; Russell 2014). Emotions are considered relational phenomena that never exist without ‘the other’. Epistemic dissent does not primarily arise from incompatible theoretical premises (except we intentionally misread each others’ arguments), but mostly results from different scales and units of analysis: does the researcher focus on physiological arousal; individuals’ experiences; or their encounters, communication practices and language patterns; or the transmission and circulation of emotions and emotion words within and between groups and collectives; or the feeling and display rules of collectives and societies; the emotion rhetoric of nation states; the social and cultural force of emotion words articulated in and between cultural and social contexts? Compared to other empirical disciplines, anthropology considers if not combines, these different scales within its practice-oriented ethnographic approach. And yet, despite anthropology’s ideal of holism, ethnographers have to prioritize particular analytical scales because of emotions’ complex and intertwined physiological, embodied, communicative and rhetoric dimensions. This ethnography intends to illustrate that analytical prioritization does not have to go hand in hand with an artificial atomization of the phenomenon of ‘emotion’ itself (Stodulka 2017), or conjoins with an evaporation of analytical clarity where everything and nothing becomes ‘affect’ (Wetherell 2015).

I agree with Andrew Beatty’s critical review of anthropological (2014) and also interdisciplinary emotion research (2013) that the analysis of emotions is
best represented in ethnographic narratives that transcend mere self-reports and experimental snapshots stripped from social and cultural contexts and temporalities in which they emerge. Beatty’s argument that anthropologists can never be sure what persons in cultural contexts other than their own actually feel when they articulate their experiences in local emotion terms or act in a supposedly ‘emotional’ way helps to expose the Eurocentric limitation of universalizing psychological, neuroscientific and biological emotion theories. But an overly skeptical Geertzian rhetoric (Gable 2014) that rejects even the possibility that emotion-related phenomena are related to translocally shared human dimensions and that withdraws to a constructivist particularism obstructs anthropology’s epistemological resourcefulness. I lean towards the stance that with sound theoretical reflection, transparent methodology and careful ethnography, the ethnographer is bestowed with a notable authority on the physiology, embodiment, practice and articulation of emotion-related phenomena. The anthropology of emotion is also, but not exclusively about the languages of emotion. And it is not only a narrative genre either. It is in need of a more robust theory (Good 2012).

Affect and emotion is reemerging as a research topic within anthropology (Davies 2010; Hage 2010; Milton/Svašek 2005; Reynaud 2014; Röttger-Rössler et al. 2013; Sakti 2013; Slama 2010; Spencer 2010; Stodulka/Röttger-Rössler 2014; Svašek/Skrbiš 2007; Thajib 2014; Wilce 2009) after it had been absorbed within theoretical discussions of the self, personhood and subjectivity. However, emotions are rarely a primary theoretical focus of ethnographies and predominantly remain implicit subject matters, a tie-in to burgeoning medical and psychological anthropologies (Castillo 2015; Good 2012; Good/Subandi/ DelVecchio-Good 2007; Hollan/Throop 2011; Kirmayer 2010; Kleinman/Smith 2010; Lemelson/Ng/Supartini 2010; Throop 2010). In other ethnographies, emotion labels that supposedly describe human behavior and talk are often used without further analytical definition. They remain a narrative rhetoric that targets the production of vivid texts.

In what terms can we define emotions and related phenomena from an integrated body, practice and language perspective? Affects, feelings and emotions are more than verbally articulated symbols that hint to a deeper social

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5 | On anthropological evidence and authority, see Kuipers 2013.
6 | The ‘Culture and Personality School’ of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, whose prominent proponents were Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, or Ruth Benedict, has implicitly focused on ‘emotion’ within the theoretical frameworks of personality structures and cultural patterns. The 1970s and 1980s have produced what are now considered classics of the anthropology of emotion: Jean Briggs’ Never in Anger (1970), Robert Levy’s Tahitians (1973) Michelle Rosaldo’s Knowledge and Passion (1980), or Catherine Lutz’ Unnatural Feelings (1988).
and cultural meaning. This book illustrates that they can unfold as important embodied non-verbal communication and interaction practices. Besides words and prosodies, particular facial expressions and body postures are socialized by means of cultural transmission, intergenerational and peer negotiation. As biocultural processes (Hinton 1999; Röttger-Rössler/Markowitsch 2009) within and between persons, their bodily displays and verbal articulations are related to local discourses of appropriate and inappropriate experience, expression and conduct (Hochschild 1979; 1983; Röttger-Rössler/Stodulka 2014; von Scheve 2009). They are not mere rhetoric analogies of cultural norms related to the articulation of emotion words. I argue that we need more conceptual clarity not only in relation to the local worlds that we study, but also in terms of disciplinary and interdisciplinary academic communication. I follow linguistic anthropologist Joel Kuipers’ line of argument here, “Conceived as communicative events, authority and evidence are characteristics of not only the activities of the people we study but our own professional interactions as well.” (2013: 410)

What complicates the theorizing of emotions and related phenomena, besides their difficult systematic observation, documentation, and lucid translation into ethnographic narratives, is a terminological mystification of emotion and related concepts. There has been little anthropological interest in compelling theories of ‘affect’, ‘feeling’, ‘emotion’, or ‘emotive’ from neighboring disciplines. Despite diverse scholarly origins and analytical scales, contrastive definitions of emotion-related phenomena can benefit the ethnographic description and anthropological analysis of human experience, behavior and speech. Instead of rejecting concepts due to their ‘alien’ disciplinary backgrounds, their integration can add to the scientific comprehensibility and transparency of ethnographies. Which underlying theories we apply is not a matter of eclectic ‘tool-kitting’, but allies with our field encounters and theoretical preferences. The following definitions are related to my long-term fieldwork with the anak Bendoro and the anak Congklak. As living theory they can become effective aids to translate field encounters into a scientific language and an attempt to communicate with other researchers regardless of their disciplinary backgrounds.

Although anthropologists (Martin 2013; Skoggard/Waterston 2015; Stewart 2007) start feeding the ‘affective wave’ that spills over from cultural studies (Ahmed 2004), critical theory (Berlant 2008; Blackman 2012; Callard/Papoulias 2010; Protevi 2009), philosophy (Masumi 2015; Slaby 2016) or human geography (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Thrift 2008), my theoretical perspective inclines to accomplished discussions from social psychology

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7 | Tim Ingold (2014) has discussed the overuse of ‘ethnography’ in scientific contexts and elaborated on its difference to anthropology as a discipline.
and follow Margaret Wetherell’s line of argument, which prioritizes the praxeological approach to affect and related phenomena. The call for attention to the relationality and ambiguity of human experience in the context of shifting discourses and contested power asymmetries is welcomed, because it reminds the anthropologist that affects, emotions and related phenomena are deeply ingrained in the politics of the everyday (instead of mere ‘cultural transmission’). But the innovation behind this line of thought is limited. The relationality and particularity of human experience has been highlighted in the anthropology of emotions of the 1980s and 1990s (Abu-Lughod 1986; Leavitt 1996; Lutz 1988), when the concept of ‘feelings’ was promoted as more liquid and anti-essentializing alternative to ‘emotions’, who were then primarily discussed in terms of six (Ekman et al. 1982), eight (Plutchik 1980) or nine (Tomkins 1984) universal basic human emotions. That human experiences circulate between and not only within individuals has been thoroughly discussed in anthropological debates on the self and personhood of the 1990s (Mageo 1998; Morris 1994; Sökefeld 1999). The synthesis of universalistic (emotion) and particularistic (feeling) schools of thought in the early 2000s has promoted an anthropological understanding that feelings and emotions are both affective and cognitive, both physiological and cultural, both practical and discursive (Röttger-Rössler 2004). From an anthropological perspective it seems odd to celebrate ideas that claim that ‘affect’ (as concept in vogue, but still up to theoretical and empirical probing) is beyond conventional cultural processes of representation, hormonal, rhythmic and connecting bodies with each other, untouched by cognition, and that humans merely receive and transmit instead of harboring them (Thrift 2008), or that “emotion doesn’t in fact have a location” and “is neither inside nor outside, neither a property of subjects nor a property of objects” (Ahmed 2004; quoted from Wetherell 2015: 158). Where are affects and emotion then? If they are phenomena ‘beyond’ the explicable, ‘without location’ in disembodied landscapes of discursive relationality, how can subjects, social actors or persons contest, mould and practice them within their local worlds? How can we diagnose for example the street-related protagonists’ suffering and pain with regard to structural violence, stigmatization and illness, and acknowledge their techniques and practices of coping with these adversities?

My anthropological perspective conflates with the social psychology of Wetherell, when she writes, “affect is distributed. It is an in-between, relational phenomenon. Subjects cannot be disentangled from objects, or individuals from their situations. This is why a concept like social practice has such power and persuasive force.” (Wetherell 2015: 158; emphasis in original) That affects are distributed is lucid, but from my point of view the author makes another, more important point: affects, emotions, feelings and other human experiences and discursive formations are best captured, described and discussed with regard
to social practices in relation to their biographical, social, cultural, economic, and political entanglements within normativizing and contested discourses of their respective local worlds. But before I can do so in relation to the coming of age of this ethnography’s protagonists, I am inclined to define emotions and related phenomena first, instead of listing what they are not.

Keeping Wetherell’s focus on social practice in mind, I refer to Deborah Gould, who defines ‘affect’ as “nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body. [...] Affect, then, is the body’s ongoing and relatively amorphous inventory-taking of coming into contact and interacting with the world.” (2009: 19-20) The sociologist continues to explain that affects are considered opaque experiences,

“as something that we do not quite have language for, something that we cannot fully grasp, something that escapes us but is nevertheless in play, generated through interaction with the world, and affecting our embodied beings and subsequent actions. I call that bodily, sensory, inarticulate, nonconscious experience affect.” (Gould, ibid.)

Relating to both sociology and social psychology, I define affects as self-aware physiological arousals. Gould continues and defines ‘feelings’ as an overarching analytical term that encompasses both affect and emotion. This seems like an easy way out with regard to the thorny debates on the sociocultural dimension of affect and the affective dimension of social and cultural experience and practice. I understand feelings, affects and emotions as interrelated and mutually constitutive phenomena that need to be analytically disentangled within empirical analyses of human experience, communication and interaction. I contend that feelings are what we subjectively ascribe to self-aware physiological arousals (i.e. affects), when we experience someone or something as pleasant, unpleasant, or something in-between, that we have an idea for but not necessarily the right words. In short, I define feelings as cognitively appraised affects.

Both affects and feelings are relational to other bodies, minds, social and cultural environments. They are considered universal human capacities, but their physiological configuration is not necessarily identical between different persons, social or cultural contexts. Although human bodies, minds or brains might share similar universal capacities, the physiological build-up and the situations that induce affects and feelings are related to biographical, social, political, and cultural dimensions. The physiological arousal that relates to ‘love’ for example might not ‘feel’ the same nor are the social events that trigger the affect, or its connotations as pleasant or unpleasant necessarily similar within and across different cultural contexts (Jankowiak 1997; Lau 2012; Röttger-Rössler/Engelen 2006). Affects are not non-conscious, but
compared to feelings they lack the physiologically aroused persons’ cognitive appraisals. In the original sense of the Latin word *afficere* (*ad-facere*; ‘to work on’ or ‘to influence’), affects are changes in the person’s physiology. Feelings are considered as cognized affects, and yet, from a contrastive perspective, they lack the communicative capacities of emotions in the form of intersubjectively constructed, shared and circulated emotion rhetoric.

Emotions relate physiological arousals and their cognitive appraisals with their surrounding local worlds in terms of mutually shared intersubjective rhetoric. Moreover, emotions comprise of cultural, or better, intersubjective repertoires that enable persons to express their own and label others’ observable and detectable affects and articulated feelings in intersubjectively shared and understandable emotion words. Relating to their particular pre-experiences, biographies and sociocultural socializations, persons are able to exchange information through impulsive, learned, habitualized and staged emotions by means of words, facial expressions, gestures and body postures. Even presumably staged physiological arousals and cognized affects carry important cultural and social messages in the form of emotions. The analyses of social encounters (particularly in chapter 6) intend to illustrate that orchestrated emotion displays can provoke a wide array of consequences for oneself and related others. Within the daily politics of social life they can make up powerful practices in order to manipulate others for one’s own and related others’ gain (Rebhun 1993; Röttger-Rössler/Stodulka 2014). This social force can be fashioned through the communication of emotion words, facial expressions, and body language.

Besides ‘affects’, ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’, the neglected concept of ‘emotives’ promises to further the understanding of the complex physiological, cognitive, linguistic and intersubjective interplay of emotion-related phenomena. In its literal sense of the *New Oxford American Dictionary* ‘emotives’ are defined as

“arousing or able to arouse intense feeling [...] The words emotive and emotional share similarities but are not interchangeable. Emotive is used to mean ‘arousing intense feeling,’ while emotional tends to mean ‘characterized by intense feeling.’ Thus an emotive issue is one likely to arouse people, while an emotional response is one that is itself full of arousal. [italics in original]”

William Reddy (1997; 2001) has introduced the ‘emotive’ as a concept into the anthropology of emotion. Although compelling in terms of distinguishing between emotion articulation, display, and affective experience, it has remained widely ignored. Reddy’s ‘emotives’ brought the person’s physiological experience back into the anthropology of emotions. The author considers emotives as predominantly performative utterances, which refer to a person’s inner feelings (*langue*) and “actually do things to the world” (1997:331) in
terms of a social *parole*. In an extension to Reddy, I argue that emotives are not necessarily related to utterers’ affects as self-aware physiological arousals. Emotives can be strategically orchestrated in order to provoke affective arousals and responses in the other. The protagonists’ and interlocutors’ narrative strategies that were imbued with emoting intensity (see chapter 2 and chapter 6) had ultimately shaped my inquiries on how they coped with stigma, illness and marginality from an emotion-related perspective. Hence, the usage of the terms ‘affect’, ‘feeling’, ‘emotion’ or ‘emotive’ throughout the ethnography draws on the outlined theoretical concepts in the context of the anthropological analysis of protagonists’ narratives and practices.

**The Chapters**

The subsequent Chapter 2 (*Fieldwork and Ethnography*) provides an overview of the methods of data production, and Chapter 3 (*Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Javanese Hierarchies, Javanese Ways*) introduces the historical and political context of Yogyakarta, Indonesia and demonstrates that the city’s streets were in many ways considered ‘special’ in the Indonesian context. Moreover, the chapter comprises an anthropological portrayal of the place’s prevailing social structure and local understandings of socially and culturally prescribed norms of adequate social conduct and emotion display from a subaltern perspective.

The chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 follow the life story of Monchi. He is the leading figure that guides the reader through his own and others’ coming of age. The other four protagonists, ‘Kris’, ‘Harvey’, ‘Jempol’ and ‘Jim’, along with their cohorts, will complement and enrich Monchi’s life story. I invite the reader to follow the protagonists’ life stories from childhood to young adulthood against the background of a more collective perspective on life in the *komunitas Bendoro* in the city center and the *komunitas Congklak* at a street junction of the Northern city highway. Each chapter will be concluded with an analytical summary, which spotlights and summarizes theoretical discussions relevant to the presented extended cases and life stories. More precisely, chapter 4 (*Becoming tekyan*) introduces the protagonists and focuses on their ‘fragmented home’ stories told in retrospective. It illustrates that the decision to finally turn to the streets and not return home was a long and often painful process, and also describes the protagonists’ arrival on the streets of Yogyakarta and their integration into their respective street-related communities. The trials that had to be mastered and the processes of becoming acknowledged community members will be analyzed from an integrated perspective, which merges concepts from the sociology and anthropology of emotion. Chapter 5 (*Being tekyan*) focuses on central aspects of the *anak Bendoro* and *anak Congklak*’s community identity. The self-attributive term ‘tekyan’ is an acronym of the
Javanese ‘sithik ning lumayan’, which translates as ‘a little but enough’ and describes the protagonists’ freedom narratives, group hierarchies, performed masculinities, the importance of in-group solidarities and the significance of music as both lifestyle and income generation. Chapter 6 (Emotional Economies of Avoidance and Attention) emphasizes the protagonists’ distinct coping style. I describe their particular social and emotive skills of empathizing and emotional attunement by introducing the theory of the ‘emotional economy’. This term has been used by anthropologist Johan Lindquist (2009) in his study on the labor migration of young men and women to the Indonesian island of Batam and Candace Clark (1987) introduced the concept of the ‘socio-emotional economy’ into the sociology of emotions. Lindquist highlights the role of emotions in the labor migration (merantau), but does not focus on their role within social interaction and communication. Clark’s model proved analytically valuable, because she understands social actors’ displays of emotions as central economic ‘currencies’ and combines it with Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) perspective on economy and social capital. Chapter 7 (Leaving the Streets) focuses on the young adults’ desires and efforts to leave life on the streets behind, and move on. It demonstrates the interplay between the development and ‘rebellion’ of the protagonists’ matured bodies and their changed social role expectancies, social identities and subjective well-being. Next to focusing on HIV-AIDS related suffering, stigma and death of some of the protagonists, I will emphasize that the transitions to young adulthood comprised of health-related, physical, emotional, societal and economic challenges that could only be managed once formerly developed coping strategies were transformed and adapted to the new life stage and its challenges.

Chapter 8 (Epilogue) encompasses recent developments in the protagonists’ lives with regard to the city’s authoritarian and neoliberal shift to public disciplining and the control of social spaces and relating bodies within them, which manifested most profoundly in the adoption and application of Yogyakarta’s by-law on the ‘homeless’ and ‘beggars’ in 2014 (Perda Gepeng No. 1 2014).