

“Lost in the Crowd” Audio Series Full Transcript

Trailer

More than 12,000 refugees and asylum seekers are living in Indonesia, a non-signatory country to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocols. With only one Presidential Regulation and no following technical guidance, each city responds to the issue differently, hence the different level of service availability and access to refugees. Often forgotten is the granularity of those decisions; what each local government decides to do has a great influence toward how refugees live their days while ‘in transit’ in Indonesia.

This audio series aims to show how refugees in a state of liminality in Indonesia experience their cities. We will follow the account of a young Hazara refugee from Afghanistan on his journey to establish himself as an emerging writer and film director since his arrival in Indonesia as an unaccompanied minor in 2014.

Music Credit: The Epic Hero by Keys of Moon on [Soundcloud.com/keysofmoon](https://soundcloud.com/keysofmoon). The music is used in the subject’s latest work, [“Fighting Forward”](#).

Lost in the Crowd – Part 1

Trailer and Audio: The Epic Hero by Keys of Moon on Soundcloud.com/keysOfMonth

Audio: Diamond Water Fall R&B Lofi Beat by Brentin Davis on Pixabay

01:41 Opening Narration

Hi, I am Akino. I am here to introduce a person, who fled his country to seek asylum and is now living in Indonesia. I see him as a very accomplished young man, a person who fought a lot to be where he is at the moment, throughout his prolonged displacement situation. Let us open the first part of this series with an introduction of who he is by talking about his latest works, a film called “Fighting Forward” and a book called “Lost in the Calm”.

01:52 Introducing Ali and his film, Fighting Forward

Would you please introduce yourself and your latest works?

My name is Ali. I'm from Afghanistan. I'm Hazara. I've been living in Indonesia since November 2014. And I'm a refugee. I have made some films. Generally it's all about migration, human trafficking and refugees issue in Indonesia.

I use this medium as storytelling, raising awareness and sharing those stories, which were important for me. It was always a challenge for me, in my mind. Something is important for me and this needs to be addressed, (so) how can I help with (it). I found out that always people, they feel more ready to do something to the issue when their emotions are engaged. And emotions are really in very direct relation to their senses and one of them is visual thing.

I decided very first days to do it with taking photographs of here and there, of documenting my days or the refugee community I was living in in detention center, or people I was studying with, people I was teaching, people I was doing any activity (with). And there were a lot of moments when I felt like I need to take a note. I don't want this moment to be forgotten when I'm getting into a different situation because every moment I was living was important for me and every feeling that I was, that was coming to me on that specific moment, was important to me.

So I have been living in Makassar for three years and that was a very turning point in my life. I came to know a lot of people. One of them was my very close friend. He had a story. Stories were very important for me. My friend is taekwondo athlete. He has been an asylum seeker living most of his life in Iran as a child. He has been asylum seeker and refugee for eight to nine years in Indonesia and he has spent a bit of time in his country of origin, Afghanistan. With all these challenges and movements that he had, he had that core passion for taekwondo, for his sport. Something gave meaning to his life, something brought him energy and a spirit of continuing when his days are so dark.

Audio: Audio excerpt from “Fighting Forward” movie, available on New Naratif Spotlights on YouTube

He was going to a club, where he faces a lot of challenges because, you know, refugees in Indonesia are not very much accessing a lot of facilities, but he was finding his place there and he received a good welcome. He gained that trust. He built that rapport. It's not very easy to connect communities. He was helping the club owner, his coach, to train other juniors. This is very important because based on many stereotypes or people's mind, whatever they hear from news, people coming to a country as an asylum seeker, they are not really being welcomed unless they prove themselves.

I was sitting and talking with him and saying that, you know, people need to see it. We need other refugees to see and learn from you and continue on their passion. We also need to show it to the host community that if you are welcoming us in your community, they can easily be part of your community and you can work together to kind of have a mutual benefit of the host community, the refugee community. I don't mean only Indonesia, but all around the world.

This was the idea for us to start working on making the films. The subject is Muhammad and his engagement, his friends involved as well, and how he does things.

07:31 **On his book, Lost in the Calm**

Okay, so you got the story after looking at how Mohammad connects to himself and to the community around him. What about your book?

My book, Lost in the Calm. It is my experience of living as refugee. So many parts of the book is a narration of a situation, which was my lowest moments. But then I was trying to turn those moments into a positive thing, into a good way of expression.

I wrote about them for different purposes. One of them was, of course, part of all this sharing personal experiences, wanting this to be helping someone else if (they're) going through the same experience. But one very big thing was this was part of raising awareness. This was part of advocacy. And then what happens after that is important.

And for that reason, I was considering a lot of things. I was considering it has to be representing a 15 year old boy just like me who entered Indonesia or any other country for seeking asylum and then going through all this difficult journey, going to detention, being deprived of all the basic human rights, not going to school, seeing violence, being discriminated, and you know, a lot of things in my refugee journey. Also, I mentioned about my origin country situation and the very core problem of racism and discrimination for me being Hazara living in a country, what is the problem, what is the thing forcing me to leave all those things behind and coming again, putting myself into a lot of other troubles.

My story is unique, but the background of the story or the foreground of the story is very much similar, maybe with thousands of other Hazara refugee in different places. Beside I'm representing my story, is it representing someone else's story as well? Because I need this to be helping something to be changed.

Audio: Audio excerpt from "Imagine" poem musicalisation by Gabriela Fernandez and Ali at Let's Walk My Journey Exhibition 2022, RDI UREF audio collection

09:50 **Feedbacks from audiences**

How do you think people, the Indonesian public and others, receive your works?

In the Let's Walk My Journey Exhibition, when a group of people were watching, I saw during the film people crying. I don't know what made them cry, the struggle a young person (has) been through or whatever they were resonating with. What's most important is people get the message from the film. They can know that, "Oh, people exist in our country, in our society, that they are going through this. We didn't know this", and this is an eye opening message. It's something that can bring us the knowledge that we need to know.

I received also some kind of feedbacks or some words from people as well that some parts are not really being exhibited the way it should be. I want to say two examples.

One is people coming to me and saying that "Why are you putting a lot of hardships and challenges in your film instead of showing gratitude of having a safe place to live?" Well, it really depends on how do you define safety. If someone is not feeling safe, emotionally, mentally, we cannot guarantee that a physical safety is there with him. So if there is no war in here, it doesn't mean that he will be living in real peace, you know. There are a lot of emotional times, the depressions, the anxieties, the stressful time. All those moments is just one trigger away to end that physical safety.

The message of the film is if everything is peaceful, a young person can do everything that he has in his capability to put into practice, to achieve some thing, to do for the betterment of the society. And the film has the message of inclusion, the film has the message of bringing people together. All those messages. But we don't have to be also censoring the reality of what and how Muhammad is living.

I also received feedback and it's exactly the opposite of the previous one. "Why are you showing that refugees are happy, refugees are doing sport, doing activity, you know, everything is okay, but instead, we really don't have anything? We are not allowed to do anything. And it's not possible for everyone to do that."

That is right to some part of what they say or all parts of what they say. But how we want to understand the reality and decide to do what? If we always sit and blame the situation and do nothing, life will not move on. We pictured the reality, we said there is no support from the law, we said there are challenges, we said this, this, this. We also said that despite all these things, we are humans and humans nature is to do their best to survive better. And then to thrive. And then to do something.

And yeah, I don't know how much people have heard the messages in the book, but it's coming with that good intention of sending out the messages. No matter if people are there to read here, understands and do something or not, but we do our thing.

So people found their story in my story, came to me or wrote to me an email or a message on somewhere, WhatsApp, Instagram, and they really were happy for that. They appreciated it and they wanted me to write more for myself and for them. And it is giving me a lot of energy. Because that was the big thing I wanted them to know that this is not only my story. They have seen themselves in a situation I have written. When I was longing for my home, when I was longing for my family, when I was finding myself lost in the calm, lost in the country, lost in the situation, lost in my life.

I got to know a lot of people actually, I made a lot of friendships because of the book. Some people out of nowhere, I didn't know them at all from any network and then they said, we read your book. This means a lot to me, actually, for them to read my book. This is very specific book. This is very specific situation. This will make people sad. On the other hand, this may give people hope. This can be a big way of protest. Some people came to me and they said we don't know really about this refugee journey, but we resonated. We kind of made that connection to other part of the book, which they might have experienced in their way of life.

I can say I received a lot of wonderful and amazing feedbacks and messages. And that was a very, very true and great experience for me. Just (as) I mentioned about the film, I had negative feedbacks as well but this is to my situation the most I can, and I could, (do) on that moment. Negative feedbacks are not worth to talk about because in every step I take, there might be opposing people, opposing perspectives, which they may not like, and that's quite understandable.

Audio: Sound Effect by Pixabay

15:20 **How specific places and spaces shaped the stories in Ali's works**

Alright, let's talk about these stories, how do you think the places that you've been to shape them? Do these places have any significance at all in your works?

In some parts of the book I have mentioned the name of the place that thing happened or the name of the location where I was writing that for different reasons. But the most important one was that was the place that was giving me that experience.

Because that was my unique feeling, unique experience, happened on that specific time and space. So I went around Unhas in the very early morning, and I was listening to a podcast and I had that walk, I had that vibe, and I was breathing and feeling the moment, and I wanted to write about that. And I wanted to mention that it happened to me in Makassar at Unhas (Universitas Hasanuddin).

Another thing happened to me in Kupang when I was this weekend with my friends going to a beach, trying to live like normal people in the city, which we could not but we wanted to, we were trying for that. And I wanted to write about what was that feeling, what we were doing on that moment in that place, what was happening on the way going there, what feeling was coming to me when sitting and watching the sunset.

I had this memorable memory of going to Unhas and walking for two kilometers around Unhas. Early mornings, or late nights. Sometimes alone, most of the times with one of my best friends in Makassar. A lot of those talks, talk about anything. Talk about football. Talk about a youth, young hood. The talk about our journey from Afghanistan to Indonesia. The talk about what's going on with our country. The detention time talk. The dreaming talks about our future. We talked about a lot of things we could do at the moment. We were planning, what can we do now. We are not allowed to go to school. We are not allowed to work. We are not allowed to drive. You know, a lot of not allowed. But again, we are allowed to breathe, we are allowed to live. So what can we do? Let's do something. And then ideas popped out. One of them is we made a documentary film. This is a very big achievement because of those night walks.

I had unique experience in living in my room when I was writing all these stories, which I wanted the illustrator artist to draw it, to kind of picture how is this place giving me this life, this story, this feeling, this intention of writing from that very small room with no window, with no good life in there but then that's where I lived. That's where gave me that part of my life story.

This is all because of that setup of situation in that place. These are all part of my life, my memories. Everytime I remember it, I remember the whole story. I remember the whole specific details I lived. So yeah, these places shaped my story on how it was for those places. And, every (one) of them were unique.

Audio: Diamond Water Fall R&B Lofi Beat by Brentin Davis on Pixabay

19:21 **Closing Narration**

That was Ali, talking about his film and book and the places that gave birth to his creative works. In the next episode, we will deep dive into his Indonesian experience and his life in transit. What has life in these cities offered or denied him?

Music Credit by order of appearance

The Epic Hero by Keys of Moon on Soundcloud.com/keysofmoon | Diamond Water Fall R&B Lofi Beat by Brentin Davis on Pixabay | Audio excerpt from "Fighting Forward" movie, available on New Naratif Spotlights on YouTube | Audio excerpt from "Imagine" poem musicalisation by Gabriela Fernandez and Ali at Let's Walk My Journey Exhibition 2022, RDI UREF audio collection | Sound Effect by Pixabay

Lost in the Crowd – Part 2

Trailer and Audio: The Epic Hero by Keys of Moon on Soundcloud.com/keysOfMonth

Audio: Java Music Jamming Music by framelens_id on YouTube

01:36 Opening Narration

Hello, back with Akino. In the second part of this series, my conversation with Ali will focus on his life in Indonesia, particularly on his experience of the cities he had been or still living in. We explore how he builds human connections and attachment to places following his movement from one city to another, and how his refugee status or the lack of its recognition hindered how he experience these connections.

02:11 Arrival in Indonesia

Maybe let's go back a bit to give some context to everyone listening. What is your story of arrival in Indonesia and where have you been since then?

It has been almost nine years. I've been to many places because of many reasons. But totally Indonesia is a good, safe place, which is very much important for me.

When I first arrived in Indonesia, I entered to Pekanbaru, if I'm not wrong. I've been placed in a very small house, but in a small room and the door was locked on us. We were just receiving food. After that I've been transferred all the way 45 hours in a car to Jakarta. When arrived in Jakarta, I didn't know anyone, I had to follow what people say. There were other asylum seekers who just entered as well, but they had some connection, maybe their families, relatives, friends. So I followed them to my very little knowledge on what I'm doing in this country. I followed the crowd and the crowd was going to Bogor.

Bogor is a place very close to Jakarta, few hours of ride. I was with one person, which later became my very best friend because he was just the same age as me. I was 15 years old and the other three adults decided to go to Bogor. I didn't have a lot of money with me. We stayed overnight in some place in Bogor. And, right now that I remember, I have a lot of feelings come to my mind, that new experience vibe, that smell, the fresh and kind of cold weather in the early morning, which was very close to the weather in Afghanistan. I kind of met with other Afghans or other nationalities going around. That was, I think, a warmth coming to me, kind of consoling that, okay, you are not alone in this country. There are other people like you, so you can connect with them, communicate with them, because you know their language, they know your language, so maybe they can help.

And after that, we were trying to find answers for our questions. One of them was what is next? They said you have to go register to validate your existence in this place so you will not be deported. We did the registration with the United Nation. After the registration finished I asked the officer and the interpreter, "What's next? What should I do?". I didn't expect such an answer from him. He said, go out and live for yourself. I was like, "I don't have a place to live, I know no one, at least guide me what to do." And they said everybody is like that and you're not the only one. He said, please go out, we need to register the next person. Again, what I had in mind was I only have to follow the crowd to see what's next.

Some people told me (to) go and sleep in front of the UNHCR office on the street if you really need help. I really need help but even for doing that I didn't know how to do. Another option came that you

can go to the camp. I remember there was a guy, almost 35 to 40 years old. He was big with bald head. And he was saying it with panic, very exciting tone of voice, "You want to go to camp at this age? I couldn't go to camp at two years ago when I came here. This is a terrifying place." He started to tell stories, which some other friends in the room nodding to confirm what he says. There is fight every night. There are people drinking and fighting. There are rapes happening there. There is no reasoned punishment from people. A lot of bad stories. When I ended up in camp, it was true. It really was that scary.

I didn't make any decision to be honest here and I just let it for other adults in our group to take it and we followed them. Later on when I was very familiar with the cities names, on that time I heard some cities like Makassar, Balikpapan, Pontianak, and Kupang. We ended up with deciding to go to Kupang. I stayed for five years long in Kupang. Forcibly, I suppose. Then after that I was transferred to Makassar and stayed in Makassar for three years. And after Makassar I was transferred to Surabaya and stayed in Surabaya for 10 months, 9 months until now. And recently I have been traveling a lot. During these nine years of living, of course, I could travel low key to some places as well.

Yeah, I had quite an adventure, going through many cities with lots of different experiences.

Audio: Indonesian ethnic music by Music for Life on YouTube

07:37 **Life in Indonesia**

And how have you experienced Indonesia?

Well, I think answering to this question has different angles because it depends how I see it, which then lead me to how I feel it. Short answer for that, it's very good to live in the cities of Indonesia, if ignoring my own realities.

Let's talk generally. So generally the cities in Indonesia, if sometimes I want to compare it with my little time of being in India, let's say, or Malaysia, or even to my childhood time of staying in my home country, or hometown, I think these millions of people living in this country, they are very much fortunate and privileged to have this privilege of belonging to such a home. Because I see personally many things here, which don't exist in other places.

First is the peace, of course, my very first important and priority in life. Peace is very much dominant in Indonesia. Peace is not always about you're not at risk of receiving a bullet out of nowhere. So that's the thing happening in my country in Afghanistan, that's why I'm not there anymore. But it's a very peaceful country. I go to a street, I rarely see accidents. I rarely see people fighting. I don't see people minding my business if they don't know me. That's another way of peace. People accept you the way you are, which is very good. In my little time being in India, I remember I went to buy a SIM card to the shop, he took all my money. Then in Malaysia, I had another way, another experience as well. The police are disturbing very much foreigners, especially if they are undocumented. Same might be happening in Indonesia but this is very specific, you know. Police don't do it to us. Yeah, I have this ID card of refugee card but almost nine years of living in Indonesia, no police stopped me yet to ask me for ID card.

If I really live in the city, I don't find many negative things to be honest and fair. If I live under surveillance, there are many negative things. I don't want to be complaining. I think I kind of need to mention it again here that I'm very much grateful for this peace and security, to be living in this country under this

whatever the system is. But how we live is important as human beings, as those people who came to find a safe haven here, a safe place to stay.

One of those biggest negative things is I always have this fear in the back of my mind, in me, inside me, that someone is chasing me. And it's coming to my nightmares. And it has a root in always being under surveillance, under interrogation. It gives birth something in me that okay, you have to be very watchful, very careful, very observant on what you do, where you go, because it will be the consequence, because you will end up to this situation. So this is part of that negative experience. I don't want to like relate it to the cities, or the country, or the people, the local people. It is just my own experience because of being in detention center, because of being in those refugee accommodations.

Sometimes it's impossible to understand what's going on for you right now. But after 10 years, five years, one year, we will see the symptoms coming to us that okay, we are turning to such a person. And sadly, I have missed some of my friends and one of my very closest friends lost his life in Indonesia, in detention center. And that's one of those negatives and big traumas with me, in me, and will stay my whole life.

But to separate it, people are very friendly, people are very welcoming.

But again, I had this experience. I can exemplify it in a very, very easy way. I'm a refugee, I'm not allowed to make money. I'm very much dependent on the monthly allowance that I receive from the UN agency, which is \$90. This is one of the things that my Indonesian friend finds out that every time I have to refuse him if he asked me to join, let's say. Okay this is weekend, let's go to a café. I go to a cafe, I have to pay for my meal, for my snack, for my drink. According to my budget, I cannot afford it. Of course, I cannot ask someone to pay for me too. What will happen if okay, today, I say I'm busy, sorry I have to study. The next week, sorry I have got a guest. And then the next week he will find out that, you know, you're making excuses. You really don't want to be my friend, but I really want to be his friend. This cannot be last long lasting friendship.

I still have very much understanding friends who understand my situation. But this is not ideal. And this was one of the things hindering us to make friends and start living in isolation. That's why, that's one of the biggest reasons I don't know Bahasa Indonesia now well because I couldn't really make friends. But it is how it is.

I got many psychological stages. All of them very much related to my condition, my situation. It was on the time that my hometown was under bombardment. You know, I couldn't sleep at night here, miles away from my family. Just every time waiting for a bad news come to me that something terrible happened to your family. And what can help me here? I suppose nothing. But I had to cope with all the situations. I had to try to survive on my own. I had to find ways.

IOM (*International Organization for Migration*) provides mental health access. I didn't know about it, to be honest. You know, I don't want to complain but the service is not really... you know, if you're being diagnosed with a psychological condition and they give you just like a tablet and that's it, but they were not considering, at least my psychiatrist was not considerate at all. I remember every two weeks I was going to him. He didn't recognize me. I went to him for more than six months. And every time I went there, I had to be starting from zero to introduce myself. And then even at the end of the session, he again, repeated what he said, as normal guidance to every other person.

If anyone from IOM listening to this, there is service, I admit. But the service should be improved. In detentions the system is corrupt, people could not access hospital with no bribe. Now in accommodations there is that system of insurance being paid by IOM, so we can go to clinics. So if I get sick and I need to go to take care of myself by my own money to hospital, this is another impossible

thing because if you're not receiving any insurance, the cost of treatment at hospitals, even government hospitals, are very high at least to my budget. Even if with insurance, we still need to pay.

Audio: Sound Effect by Pixabay, Daud and Plane Spotter ID on YouTube.

15:19 **Building connections**

You had to leave that connection you built when you move to another city, right? What does it take to get to know a new place and to do it repeatedly?

It takes a lot. It's a very challenging process. I have to leave everything I have made behind. All those relationships, all those memories, all those success only for another specific reason that I have. I'm very much prepared now, maybe after a lot of this experience of movements and displacement. And every time I look back at those times it makes me so sad. I was not really prepared.

Most of the times for me it is like unwanted thing. I don't make a choice to which room I go. I don't make a choice to which location of the city I be based. It is not a choice for me which roommates I may want to live with. But then I have to adapt. And the biggest achievement for me is that adaptability. You know this identity of becoming a refugee brings with it this adaptability. And at least that is the biggest thing that we can convince ourselves that, okay, you have no other way, pull yourself together, stand up, keep moving. Which, again I repeat this a lot, it's very difficult. I want to repeat this, because if anybody is listening to this, they have to wear my shoes.

For me, as someone who doesn't live with his family, who has been away for nine years from the family, I have to make attachments here with other people. I have to make connections. I have to start relationships. I have to find brothers from different mothers. I have to come up with, okay, if I'm not having a family here, I have to make a feeling of having a family here.

And coming to a new place and start to rebuild that again, all making those relationships, finding the place, knowing the city, that takes a lot of time. For some of them, we may fail. I failed several times for maybe finding the same friendship again or I found it very late in some places. I couldn't find my peaceful space in that specific city. But then I came to realization that you know, it's part of the process of how each location will give you each phase of life.

I see a difficulty in a place. I never had this in my mind that life can be this difficult. Life can be this sad. Life can be this scary.

18:42 **Experiencing the city as a refugee**

In terms of using the city as a person living in a place, in a city, you go somewhere, you want to buy something, you want to meet friends and everything else, do you think your status as a refugee make you use the city in a different way?

Of course. Simply saying, of course.

Well, let me say it briefly with an example. I was joining a program being funded by IOM, International Organization for Migration, in collaboration with Unhas, Hasanuddin University in Makassar. I was joining university because they give me that ID card badge to use the facilities. I liked the library. Just

to mention library was a public library. When I hold the card and I went with my few friends to study sometimes and to do part of our project in that library. And that was a good experience for one month.

But after that, I went there low key and not showing my ID card or whatever that they needed, but they spotted me. And after a few days, they came to me that we need to see your ID. And I showed my refugee ID card. They said no, we want to see your KTP (residential card). We don't know what this is. So then I was like, I don't have KTP. And then they were asking for passport. And I didn't have passport. And they asked me okay, a student card and I didn't have a student card. And that was the time I stopped going to library. This is one of the examples a citizen can go to public library and study but I could not. It is because of the document.

Sometimes it is not because of the document. Maybe it is because of somebody's rule. I had this experience of not being allowed to go to a nearby futsal court even though we were paying the futsal court and the futsal court management, or the person in charge, didn't have any problem at all. We were playing very peacefully but we were not allowed to by somebody else. But this is because we don't have the document, you know, if I have a passport of course I can benefit (from) the situation. Or if there is like a backup law that okay, this refugee ID card has a backup law and it can be valid for everywhere else.

Another example just came to my mind is the train. I may be wrong with the number but we have one extra digit in our ID card. And it brings issue, you know, when we buy the ticket and they check the ID card, they start to interrogate and question that no, this is a wrong number we cannot let you in, you know. Troubles arise. And everything is very much related to one another and all of them starts from that foundation of having not a proper ID card.

We cannot open a bank account, so we cannot do the payment digitally. I remember many times, we went to the coffee shops and we couldn't pay because the coffee shop system was they didn't receive cash. And if I'm alone, I have to ask a stranger or I have to ask the cashier to pay for me with his or her credit card or whatever, then I pay the cash, which is you know, it's a very embarrassing moment at that time.

Audio: Sound Effect by Julius H. on Pixabay, LovelyIndonesia on YouTube.

22:02 Attachment to places

As these kind of exclusion happen in different places, different cities, do you still feel any attachment, either to the places that you documented in your works, or just in general, of where you live?

That is a big yes, of course.

Again, very specific circumstance. I may not feel as a citizen in this place based on the perceptions but sometimes I think I feel more than a citizen if it comes to attachment, if it comes to memories, if it comes to such emotional things, you know. I live for nine years in Indonesia and I love the country, even though very difficult sometimes but again, I had good memories too. Even for the bad memories I sometimes miss it, because within those bad memories, I learned things. Smaller things happened which were, you know, kind of memorable for me.

Speaking of attachment, my smell sense is very powerful. So every time I remember things, I can smell that specific place. I was traveling from Surabaya to somewhere. On the way the bus stops and we have dinner. I eat a food which I only eat in Kupang and, you know, I was thinking for one week about

Kupang. I missed Kupang. This is an attachment. That place in Kupang. That place in Makassar. That gives me a feeling. That's a good feeling. That attachment to Unhas. I am an Unhas learner even though I was not a student there. It is my university too. I learned a lot from that environment of Unhas. But this was only bound to Makassar because of those people, because of those places available, because of those environment. And age. At that age, I needed that.

Every time I tell to my any other Indonesian friend, especially the same age friends, that when I move from one city to another city, it is like I'm moving from one country to another country. It's really like that. Even though Indonesia is a tropical, on the equator line and this climate thing, but every city has different climate, different weather, different vibe, different people, different customs, different culture, different religion, different everything. And what do we want? We want to travel the world and this is Indonesia. You traveling city to city means you're traveling country to country.

I came to Bandung last year when I was in Makassar in 2022. I came from Makassar to Jakarta then a short trip to Bandung and that was my very first... Oh my God, why I didn't know about this place before? This is not like Indonesia. Why is it cold?

So first of all the weather. Second, I think the vibe of the city is very different here, you know, the structures of the buildings. I remember when I posted a story on my Instagram last year in Braga and I received a reply from one of my friend, Afghan friend, who lives right now in US, I don't know that time where. So she replied and said, "I didn't know Indonesia is having such beautiful place". Because it really looked like Europe. Part of that yellow leaves of the tree was in the picture. Part of the structure of the street, part of the building and the background was there, and there is like a clock or something in the middle of the street, on the sidewalk of the street. So it had a Europe vibe.

Every other thing makes it very much different. Most of cities I've been to before are flat. Like Kupang, Kupang is very flat. Makassar is very flat, very urban. But Bandung is very different. It has urban side. It has this nature, environmental side. Then coming to people, people are more sophisticated. Their behavior is different a little bit. I don't say in a bad way or in a good way but in a different way.

If sometimes I feel homesick, I go to Braga. I don't know why. It doesn't have any relation to Afghanistan or whatever else but I think Braga is giving the person that vibe of you don't have to feel alone because people come there, especially the young people. Because there are indirect messages to any other person, if that is a foreigner, a local or someone, that you can live better. I don't know why I get that vibe but Braga is there. The Dago Street, those in the middle of the street lighting, and old times. I like histories. I most of the times watch documentaries or read histories or whatever else, so I like this vibe of old times and Dago street gives me that time.

And my experience a few days ago, I was in the gym. I received a call and I speak in Persian and someone was approaching me very fast and he started to talk in Persian. He was a student on a scholarship studying in Unpar, which I found interesting. I thought at first he is a refugee too and I said like, okay, then he said no, I'm a student. Bandung is not a place for refugees to stay because there is no detention, because there is no accommodation, because there is no IOM or UNHCR office, so Bandung doesn't host refugees. I never saw any Afghan student on a scholarship in Kupang, in Makassar, in Surabaya, but I encountered such a person here. And of course a lot of many other different things I encountered and I found in Bandung, which is new for me here.

Audio: Java Music Jamming Music by framelens_id on YouTube

28:23 **Closing Narration**

Join me and Ali in the last part of the series, where he will share his view on belonging and his continued search of identity as a young person in displacement.

Music Credit by order of appearance

The Epic Hero by Keys of Moon on Soundcloud.com/keysymoon | Java Music Jamming Music by framelens_id on YouTube | Indonesian ethnic music by Music for Life on YouTube | Sound Effect by Pixabay, Julius H. on Pixabay, LovelyIndonesia, Daud and Plane Spotter ID on YouTube.

Lost in the Crowd – Part 3

Trailer and Audio: The Epic Hero by Keys of Moon on [Soundcloud.com/keyssofmoon](https://soundcloud.com/keyssofmoon)

Audio: Lucid by Metro Vice, Music provided by Audio Library Plus (youtu.be/b2ryQCisQvg or free download/stream at alplus.io/lucid)

01:40 **Opening Narration**

Hello, back with Akino. In the last part of this series, we talk about how his movements and displacements shape Ali as a person. We also talk about his quest of belonging and what he will bring to his future. At the end of our conversation, he sends a message for other youth who are experiencing similar situation of displacement.

02:52 **Reflection on movements and displacements**

Hi again, Ali. I want to pick up from our last conversation. These cities that you have lived in and the attachment that you have of them, at your current situation, are the places that you cannot go back to. What's your thinking on that?

That's the sad part. I cannot go back to. Some people consider this a happy part because all these places I've been to had a lot of hardships and misery for me. But again, I'm longing for those places to go back even if for different reasons actually, but even if that was like, detention, that was the places.

I never want to experience that sad thing happened there, but I want to go back and experience those memories again, which incorporated a lot of other things in itself. And I had to refer to my memory, closing my eyes or finding somewhere calm to sit and think about what happened to me in that place if I want to write about that now. Because if I had the opportunity to go back, or I have the opportunity to go back now even, it gives me a different thing. It will not be the same as what happened in the past, how I was living on that time. That me on that time is not me now.

I always thought with myself that after 10 years, after 20 years, how would this place look to me? How would I feel in this place? For example in Kupang, in that very tiny room that I lived with my roommate for five years, it was very tiny. It was a very small room, but we had a big world in that. We made our big teenage world in that place. We did a lot of stuff there. We built a lot of memories there. We have to use that very tiny place to make a big world for ourselves. And I'm sure if after 10 years, I go back to that room, I would feel suffocating and choking. But when remembering those things, well, we had a lot we have done there. So yeah, if I go back to Kupang, if I go back to Makassar, I would do a lot of evaluation.

What do you think are the key takeaways? All these movements that you did in Indonesia would surely have some impacts on you, which you can bring into your future?

Definitely. If I was bound to that specific place and then city, it would influence me differently. And it would have different impact on how I see things. Every time I faced a different situation in different cities, I have become more aware of things. I found myself more educated indirectly because of the location, because of the space I was in. And when I'm in another place in another country, let's say, these all experiences will help me better understand the new place. So this experience I'm having here, every day I'm learning things of different contexts will help me a lot more in other places that I will go.

For example, I've always been discussing this with my friends. People having no experience of different cities or different places will face a lot of difficulties in terms of integrating in their new place. The diversity I have been exposed to, the tolerance I have learned in Indonesia is very much a big asset for me personally, which I think a lot of people lack.

So I'm very much proud of this. I can connect with people in a very easy way than those who have not had this experience of being in different cities. So it's not being learned by reading in the books. It's not being learned by watching in TV. It's not being learned by being told by someone about diversity, about tolerance, but people really have to live it. And living all these in different contexts, in different locations enabled me to connect better, engage better, integrate easier, and make a very meaningful connection with people. It's a big thing, this adaptability, this being exposed to diversity, this tolerance I've developed here. This understanding of and respecting of differences are the key takeaways.

Audio: Audio excerpt from Afghan ethnic music by the Shirafzal Band at Let's Walk My Journey Exhibition 2022, RDI UREF audio collection

07: 57 **On building identity**

And compared to the time when you first arrived in Indonesia, how do you think you have changed?

I became a man sooner. And that's a big thing. Sometimes a sad thing. Made me a man. If I was a child on that time, which I was, I couldn't survive. So I had to become a man. I had to be showing up old sooner. I don't know if I can say it in a better way because growing up and understanding things is not always good. But I had to do that. I had to take care of things. And I had to worry about things before it happens, because once it happens, there would be no room for regret. And this made me a very cautious, double thinker person.

But to understand things better, deeper, I did. This changes of places actually was a very big advantage for me. So many times my Indonesian friends say oh well you have been to a lot of places and you might have, which they have no clue of how it is. So it's a privilege, even if it is different.

I believe moving from one place to another place even if that has a cause of force or no choices in that, even if it didn't involve my own decision, but it helped me in a way to become more adaptable, more understanding, and more measured in some way, and a little bit a better person, a better version of myself than before. It really did brought changes to me since I came to Indonesia and here I am now.

Every place I moved to, I got to know and connect to people who I'm proud I have encountered them in my life. Get to know people that I can help with anything, either that was my very good friends who are children and I had the opportunity to teach them, or teenagers who I got to teach them or to study with them, friends that I made and I could in any way help them. I received a lot of help from different people but I want to mention that this is a big thing that if I'm put in a situation that I can help others, I'm very grateful for that.

What I think is enabling me, something in me is kind of pushing: go for it even if you see nothing in it sometimes. Go see what is. It's not always like I get benefit of or I get to use something or I get a reason for doing that, but I have to get into (it) to know what was out there. So unexpectedly sometimes it's very good, sometimes it's the opposite. But this is how it comes with exploring and trying to experience things. And how I bring it to my life in any way is more important.

11:05 **On belonging**

I know citizen has a legal aspect to its definition, but resident, would you call yourself a resident of these places?

It's a tough question.

I think I have clearly and deliberately said this in my poem and my book that I do not belong here. Living in a place for nine years is kind of a second home vibe, but a citizen or resident needs a first home, a home. But it cannot be home for several reasons. I'm going to be living half of my life and most of my meaningful life. Living most of my meaningful life in a place is giving me things and I'm giving things to it as well. Then why not calling it home if it's giving me things?

If I go outside and people call me Mister, can I feel like a resident? If in somewhere I'm being notified or pointed out as a foreigner, can I consider myself resident? It's about I don't feel included with what they have. If there is a deep conversation and meaningful conversation, and I don't understand, (it) means that the space is not wide enough for me to fit, to be there. I can't force myself to fit, but it's being part of them is so difficult thing. If I struggled a lot to achieve something, which is easy to achieve for someone else with a different label, it's again, can I be a resident? I feel excluded. I feel not part of them, I feel... So yeah, so many times, I don't feel as a resident, even though I've been residing here for nine years.

However, there are a lot of things that I have lived more than (a citizen) and I could get better use of this geography a lot more than a citizen. I might have lived a more meaningful life than another mate in here. So that's to consider as well. But people, by the time need to learn, grow, understand things, which because of so many reasons they might have not, but I have and I'm so proud of it. If that is because of a force situation, that was me to make it happen. So I'm proud of it. That's why I say I'm proud of that. It has helped me to become more powerful as a human.

I said my last word in the beginning that I do not belong here. It's all about that feeling the person receives after something, you know, after I tried so much, I didn't get it. I couldn't get it. After I tried to establish a connection, I couldn't be connected. And that feeling come to me in that way. So many times it's because of that piece of paper, and so many other times it is not. It really needs a foundation to be there to let me feel as a resident here.

Audio: Audio excerpt from "I do not belong here" poem musicalisation by Gabriela Fernandez and Ali at Let's Walk My Journey Exhibition 2022, RDI UREF audio collection

15:02 **On going forward to the future**

I've missed a lot and for every thing I've missed, I tried a million times to see to find out and to see how I can compensate what I've missed. If that is education, if that is work, if that is giving back to community, if that is engaging in the community. Even I have been deprived of being part of the community. This all have been enough reasons for me to be looking for and trying for accomplishing things. And what I have in me, in my mind is never enough. Like I go with this idea of it's never enough. It's like, okay, this situation is limiting me. Am I limiting myself again? No, I don't have to be. That helped me a lot of times.

Let me say a story here. This is I think one of my biggest thing I want this to really be heard. When I was Kupang in detention, when we were there, I just looked above and looked around and I found myself situated in a place I was never wanting that. After all those emotional of be in shock, being

terrified of why am I here, this all things past, and then what happens. I don't know how and when I can be getting out of that place. But then even if that is until tomorrow, what should I do until tomorrow?

I saw around people doing no meaningful thing. Just wasting their time and waiting for that tomorrow. I see them playing cards. Morning tonight. Night to morning. I see people amusing themselves with things. And I was thinking, I should be the one drowning in the situation and getting along with them or I have to be someone to pulling them up and changing them the way I think we should be doing. I had reasons to do that, but not them. I was thinking if there is a tomorrow, we need to be prepared for that tomorrow. And what should we do?

With my very little understanding of the situation, and with a very bit of skills that I had, I was like, let's put this into practice. And we had no facility at all, we didn't have our phones with us. So we had to come together and start to learn something together. Either that is English language, or debating about text, or talking about meaningful things. And it's improved, day by day, day by day, day by day, weeks, months, years until now.

I still think I'm still in that place. You know, because I said it's never enough. I started from that time and I have progressed to this level, which is not happening to a lot of people. I really didn't have access to many things but I did my best to reach to where I am now. And it's not enough. So, until the time that I'm in Indonesia will try as hard as I have tried before and, I mean all these impossibilities and a lack of access to a lot of things, I have to be kind of finding detours to see what can I do for myself? What's the possible thing? And out of Indonesia, if I'm there any time, hopefully, I have things in my mind to go to see how much my potential can go, how far my potential can go. I'll never stop learning. I'll never stop working and I will never stop looking for a meaning in something.

Audio: Sound Effect by Pixabay, Audio excerpt from Emplace online meeting, personal collection.

Last question. What is your message to young people who are also facing similar situation of displacement?

If you're 20 now, you won't be 20 again.

We all may have a lot of regrets of the past things that we wanted to do, we could not do, we didn't do. So wherever you are and whatever circumstance or whatever excuses that you have, put them all aside and see what the opportunity is out there. Try to reach that out. Try to make the best use of it. Things we make happen in a tough situation is a lot more valuable. And again the scope you should have in mind is years later. Because I've lived all this. If I had to be living as an obedient of a tyranny on a specific time, the only thing would pass was my golden time. So do not keep yourself bounded to all those things. Do not provide excuses. You keep continue on what you're doing and that will be worth it and help you very soon.

Audio: Lucid by Metro Vice, Music provided by Audio Library Plus (youtu.be/b2ryQCisQvg or free download/stream at alplus.io/lucid)

20:41 Closing Narration

That was Ali, talking about his life and his experience of cities and people, of connections and belonging, of the past, present and future.

We all have different lives and experiences. Where we are at a certain time and space shape our understanding of life and how we appreciate life as it is. Ali's experience of places are constantly disrupted by his forced displacement. But that doesn't mean there is no connection or there is no meaning to life. Because place is an organized world of meaning. Perhaps, his world consists of places connected by an invisible path, one that was forged in the margin, built by a system that allow, even choose, exclusion of "the others".

I would like to end this series by quoting what Yi Fu Tuan, a prolific human geographer, said of his book 'Space and Place', that the ultimate ambition of this work is to increase the burden of awareness. Our collective awareness.

Music Credit by order of appearance

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