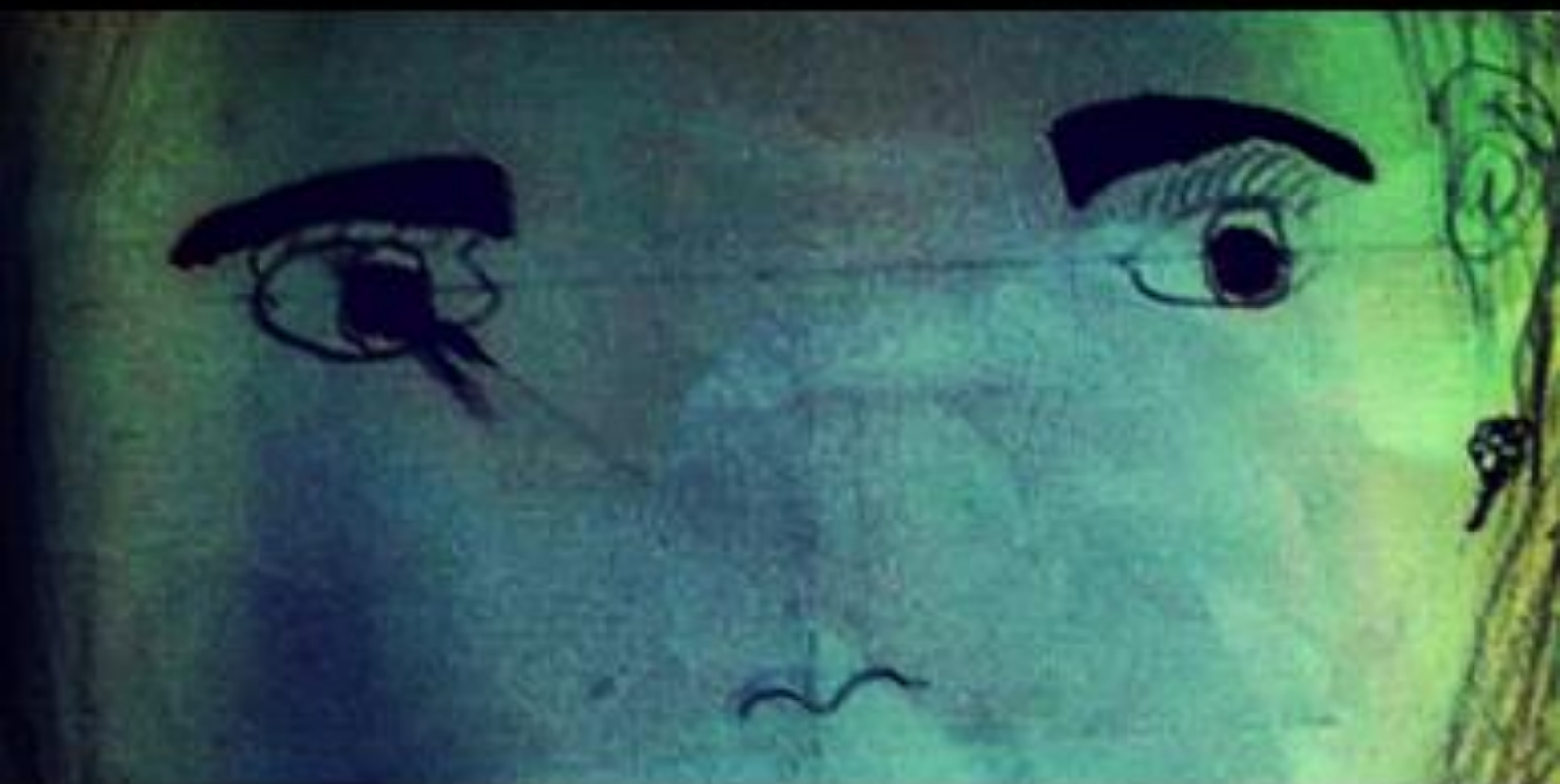# "Who (Not) To Be in a Refugee Crisis?"

Exploring Intramural Identity Formation among Syrian Refugees in a Dutch AZC

A Master's Thesis.

By Willemijn Dortant, (411084);
Supervised by Professor. Dr. Van Eijck

"Quaevis terra patria"

Desiderius Erasmus

I

INDEX

PROLOGUE

After almost three months (January 2016- March 2016) of attempting to approach a refugee-population for 'go-along' research, I had to face the 'crisis' of my Master-thesis project: I would never graduate with an empirical investigation of refugee identity formation. Whereas the Dutch Council for Refugees (Dutch: 'Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland') and several asylum-centres throughout the Netherlands considered my proposed study with interest; the Central Organ allocation Asylum-seekers [COA] rejected it, informing me it *"currently has no appropriate trainee/ graduate positions to offer"*. Asking informal support-networks to facilitate involvement sadly enough resulted in either a non-response (a.o. Paulus-church Rotterdam); or even some more unfriendly accusations my request lacks *"empathy for the good work of professional and insufficient awareness of refugee's vulnerability"*.

It should be clear by now; my final research at the Erasmus School of History Culture and Communication, appeared to be a bumpy road. I admit that I experienced the impossibility to operationalize my research design, and scale-down to a pilot-inquiry instead, as a major set-back. There were moments I lost faith in graduating at all, or at exploring the research topic that interests me most. What is a Sociologist without access to society? Where is the solution to intercultural hostilities if those hostilities may not be explored? The unconditional encouragement of my supervisor Koen van Eijck, my boyfriend Jelrik, friends and family, was more than welcome; sometimes even required to remember me why I ever decided to explore refugee identity formation in the first place.

The 'hardship' and 'despondency' I experienced whilst attempting to enter the *research field*; are of course effectively put into perspective whilst seeing and hearing the stories of refugees struggling to enter *society*. Instead of a rather 'superficial' graduation, their very *future* has been put into the hands of a third party. I can only express my deep respect for the resilient optimism characterizing my informant Mohammed Baghdadi. I moreover wish to emphasize that I do not question the good intentions of the several spokesmen discouraging my practical fieldwork. Especially the non-profit interest-groups can be trusted to share my aim for an improvement of refugees' wellbeing. I understand that the intensity of the current refugee crisis may sometimes be overwhelming to humanitarian agencies, causing them to be sceptical about attracting additional work.

Remarkably though, the most heard argument to renounce my request has been the claim that refugees should be protected and taken care of. "*Exposing*" them to research would harm the security that caretakers and voluntary workers aim to preserve. It is this very believe, or

rather *misunderstanding* that refugees should be taken care of, that encourages me to entrust this thesis-project (i.e.: a claim and design for empirical research in AZC-Rotterdam) to the Municipality of Rotterdam and workers in the professional field (COA; AZC-Beverwaard). I here wish to make an urgent call for the importance of participatory action research, hoping to support refugees from the current 'crisis' whilst dealing with the *real* crisis of refuge: an inner struggle to find a healing identity.

Willemijn Dortant, Rotterdam June 2016

SECTION A: THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF REFUGEE IDENTITY FORMATION

"Who (Not) To Be in a Refugee Crisis?"

Exploring Intramural Identity Formation among Syrian Refugees in a Dutch AZC

ABSTRACT: The refugee 'crisis' challenges (Dutch) local municipalities to host a sizeable community of (predominantly) Syrian refugees. Stigmatizing characterizations of 'the refugee' complicate both efficient care-taking and interaction with the host-society. This paper aims to substantiate the necessity of short-term ethnographic fieldwork on refugee identity formation. Beyond its theoretical interest to extend current knowledge about 'mediatized' realities, it aims to improve refugees' integration within the new cultural context. The first part of this paper (Section A.) illustrates how the concept of refugee identity formation has developed over time. Currently, its understanding encompasses both transitional and discursive theories, moreover recognizing concept's relatedness to bridging- and bonding ties. Still, the relative importance of *roots* and *routes* (Platts-Flower & Robinson, 2015) to refugees' cultural redefinition remains ambiguous. Moreover, the effects of world-wide digital disclosure on refugees' social reality lack sufficient consideration. Therefore, this study urges for an exploration of mediatized influences on refugees' lived experiences. It suggests to conduct a 'go-along' communication-ethnography in AZC-Beverwaard (Rotterdam, the Netherlands). Section B. reports on a pilot-inquiry aiming to sensitize the proposed research design to the refugee-perspective. Its preliminary results support that 'mediatized' experiences influence the reconciliation of past (trauma) and present (procedural stress) experiences in a post-refuge identity. Contrasting the protectionist signature of current refugee-assistance, this paper emphasizes refugees should be encouraged in their self-development, and facilitated to interact beyond the intra-mural community.

Keywords: refugee identity formation, AZC, 'mediatization', social capital.

Word count (excluding references): 10256

INTRODUCTION

The magnitude of today's refugee 'crisis' exceeds all migratory challenges faced in the recent past (McDougal, 2016). European member states agree to share 'burdens' proportionately (European Commission, 2015); still protectionist fears dominate political and societal sentiments (Alonso, 2016). The (announced) sheltering of refugees in Dutch cities has recently

evoked affective escalations (Preuss, forthcoming)[1]. Conservatives fear that an influx of religiously extremist migrants (Grossman, 2015: 72) will destabilize the good old order (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Louis, et al. 2006). Framing Muslim (immigrants) as potential aggressors, popular media tend to substantiate these anxieties (Saleem, et al., 2015). Right-wing associations such as *Pegida* further catalyse societal polarization (Heisbourg, 2015). (Local) governments on the contrary, seem more sensitive to avoid refugees' stigmatization. However, putting forth the imagery of traumatized war-victims in need, they fail to acknowledge crucial differentiations in refugees' medical, traumatized, and intra-personal conditions (Ullman, et al., 2015; Cutler, 2016). The notion refugees may advance the European knowledge economy (De Wit & Altbach, 2016) is excluded from this paternalistic discourse. Paradoxically, empathic support rather consolidates fears for exploding societal costs (Pupavac, 2008).

This June, the city of Rotterdam shall 'welcome' 600 refugees in a new housing-complex (Dutch: 'Asielzoekerscentrum', [AZC]) in IJsselmonde-Beverwaard (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2015). Citizens continue to express fear for increased sexual harassment and violence, either in real-life or via Social Media (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2015i). Theorists suggest refugees should be facilitated to present their true faces to counter structural stigmatization (Mautz, 2015; Allen & Cars, 2001). Recent initiatives by the Dutch Council for Refugees[2], moreover prove mutual learning and tolerance can result from rather mundane interactions. Unfortunately, it seems difficult to enthuse the most sceptical citizens for engagement in such project (Steijaart, 2016).

Commissioning this proposal to the Municipality of Rotterdam and the Central Organ allocation Asylum-seekers (COA), I wish to advocate the three-fold purpose of ethnographic fieldwork in ACZ-Beverwaard: 1. understanding the saliency of mediatized processes during the process of refugees' cultural relocation (theoretical relevance); 2. contemplating a short-term improved efficacy of social work-strategies (methodological/ professional relevance); and 3. facilitating refugee-empowerment by cooperatively determining the value of their (communicative) competencies to trauma-development and social integration (social relevance). This paper distinguishes two sections, i.e.: A. a literature review on refugee identity formation; a demarcation of research questions; and a design for investigation; and B. a pilot-study to test and improve the efficacy of the proposed methodology, and refine the theoretical focus for future research.

---

[1] See: Visser (2015).

[2] For example.: 'In gesprek met'[Eng.: 'In conversation with'], a project during which refugees and locals in the community of Bonte Veer (Enkhuizen, Friesland) meet each other for conversation (Streijaart, 2016)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses three theoretical approaches to refugee identity formation: 1. refugee identity formation as an acculturative transition (interpretative ethnography of assimilation processes); 2. refugee identity formation as a discursive practice (discourse-analysis); and 3. refugee identity formation as a consequence of ('mediatized') social interactions. The latter approach is most coherent, whilst reconciling both transitional- and socio-constructivist theories; furthermore acknowledging ('mediatized') social capital formation as an intervening force. The current investigation should therefore question which social mediators 'facilitate' refugee identity formation; specifically exploring the impacts of technological sociability on refugees' social integration.

2. Refugee Identity Formation vs. Acculturation

Theorists oftentimes embed migrant/refugee identity formation within a superordinate process of acculturation. Refugees' subjection to traumatic physical and psychological disruptions is associated with the need to establish a new sense of social status and belonging (Colcic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Already in the 1980s, Grove and Torbiorn (1985) described refugees' psychological development from early disorientation to an eventual normalization of daily life. Refugees would reconcile pre-flight identity features and newly learned values, whilst constructing a coherent post-refuge identity (Grove & Torbiorn, 1985 in: Gonsalves, 1992). Gonsalves added that refugee identity construction is not exclusively set in the post-refuge condition. According to this author, traumatic experiences before flight and during the flight itself translate back into refugee's present self-state (Gonsalves, 1992).

The theoretical thoughts of Grove and Torbiorn have informed multiple psychotherapeutic assistance-programs (Gonsalves, 1992). However, their standardized model of progressive cultural adjustment has been criticized for negating inter-personal/contextual differentiation. Revising his renowned work on adaptive strategies (Berry 1989), Berry emphasizes that the study of acculturation requires a contextualization of all related inter-group and intra-personal processes (Berry, 2005). Johnson-Agbakwu et al. (2016) confirm that 'multi-directional' acculturation, is navigated by an interplay of divergent personal attributes of contextual incongruences (Johnson-Agbakwu, et al., 2016). According to Baird (2012), the level of cultural integration may vary depending on context-specific 'transition conditions' (i.e.: facilitators, inhibitors and therapeutic interventions; Baird, 2012).

3. Socio-Constructionist Approaches of Refugee Identity Formation

Acculturation-theories consider identity formation within the broader process of cultural transition. Narrative research, on the contrary, approaches the *construction* of identity as a process in itself. Just as our reality can be understood as a social interpretation of objective events (Porter, 2008: 15), our self-representation too concerns a context-specific imagination. Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) was the first to define self-identification as an ongoing process of individual-initiated narration. According to him, how we understand ourselves and choose to represent ourselves to others, follows from discursive formation (Giddens, 1991). Seen from a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault, 1980; in Hall, 2013: 26-29): refugees will construct and communicate a concept of the 'self', hoping to affect their position in the multi-cultural context (Marsh, 2004: 30-31; Tonkiss, 1998).

Refugee identity formation has been described as an 'interactive acculturation process' during which refugees try to reconcile past and present experiences; meanwhile securing future legal recognition (Hatoss, 2012). The experience of physical and psychological disrupt reduces refugees' self-conceptualisation to a stripped off account of their physical being (Rajaram, 2002). Detachment from physical and psychological roots and exposure to cultural novelties, require refugees to decide which traditional or Western 'fashions' they wish to wear. The post-refuge setting figures as a warehouse that offers multiple style-options, from which the undressed human being may choose to suit himself with a clothed personality (Hatoss, 2012). Self-representation figures as a personalised coping strategy to ease the process of ethnic redefinition (Archambault, 2012).

The preservation of emotional linkages to the country of origin encourages refugees to 'dress' traditionally. Especially in the domestic setting, ethnic pride and the wish for return perpetuate traditional child-rearing and family rituals (Ertorer, 2016). Being subjected to a mistrusting 'lexicon of terror' (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016: 13), minorities tend to reaffirm ethnic ties in order to restore their threatened self-esteem. The cohesion, fairness, and support provided by symbolic identity-groups (Lamont & Molnar, 2002) successfully recovers feelings of lost group-legitimacy and personal belonging (Hogg, Adelmann & Blagh, 2010; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2010; Wichman, 2010). However, the eagerness to shed traumatized roots may rather encourage adjustment to Western standards (Hatoss, 2012). The resilience of ethnic belonging is furthermore subjected to structural forces.

Legal coping strategies assume that the uncertainty of statelessness encourages refugees' self-conformability to a socially accepted image, i.e.: the 'deserving' category

(Jacobson, 2006). The increasing restrictiveness of asylum-policies encourages applying refugees to strategically compose a *"(...) convincing and consistent personal account"* (Adams, 2009: 162) to procure legal recognition (Zetter, 2014). This strategic self-distortion can be explained by the Self-Discrepancy Theory. According to this thought, we represent our 'actual' selves as idealized, or '*ought-to-be*' derivatives from who we actually are, to preclude social rejection (Higgins, 1987). Research confirms that refugees reaffirm; or even exaggerate the protective ground of applications, to rebut 'bureaucratic identity'-labelling [3] (Zetter, 1991) and hostile insistences on return (Goodman, et al, 2015). Beneduce (2015: 554) concludes the Western context has thereby constituted a *"moral economy of untruth"*.

4. A Social-Interactionist Approach of Refugee Identity Formation

4.1. An Introduction to Social-Interactionist Identity Formation

The previous literature review show that theorists nowadays assume that self-conceptualisation *results* from social experiences. However, the importance of social interaction *during* the construction process itself is underexposed. Pupuvac (2008), however, illustrates how interpersonal processes crucially affect identity construction. The current exigency to authenticate asylum-claims makes refugees reliant on the legal assistance of human advocacy. Humanitarian councillors strategically degrade the multiplicity of the refugee's 'self' to the image of a 'speechless victim' (Rajaram, 2002: 248). While the consignment to a 'fixed'[4] category intends to enhance legal recognition, it also confines refugees' notion of autonomy, causing a dissociation from the inner 'self' (Pupavac, 2008).

Pupuvac makes us aware that it may be unanticipated social interactions determining refugees' social identities; sometimes perversely obstructing identity formation. In order to explain deficiencies in refugees' identity formation and social integration, we should enrich the acculturative- and discourse-perspectives described before with the inclusion of an interactionist dimension.

---

[3] Wood (1985) defines 'labelling' as "the process by which policy agendas are established and more particularly the way in which people, conceived as objects of policy are defined in convenient images' (see Wood 1985:5-31).

[4] The concept of 'identity fixation' has been put forward by Van Zoonen (2013), in a discussion of post-modern insistence on self-authentication. Van Zoonen observes how nowadays emphasis put upon 'realness' and legitimacy confines our understanding of the self to an essentialist construct. Rather than autonomously conceiving our intrapersonal idiosyncrasies, we are instead discursively taught to ask ourselves the questions: will others observe me as an authentic personality; will my personality be considered right? (Van Zoonen, 2013).

4.2. Bridging- and Bonding Social Capital

Social capital has been identified both as a facilitator or barrier to cultural integration (a.o. Colcic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Evergeti & Zotini, 2006). Theorists differentiate between 'bonding' and 'bridging' social ties (Putnam, 2001). 'Bonding' social capital refers to socialization within the refugee community conform pre-refuge ethnic/religious identity groups. 'Bridging' social capital, on the other hand, results from socialization with members of the host-community. Elliot and Yusuf (2014) argue that refugees' establishment of 'bridging' social capital fosters integration within the new context. Exclusive intra-group socialization rather perpetuates experiences of homelessness and dissociation (Elliot & Yusuf, 2014). Saint-Pierre et al. (2015) find that refugees' return-wishes, abide with the failure of among-group social interactions (Saint-Pierre et al, 2015).

The failure of inter-ethnic connections in multi-cultural societies give reason for concern. Korac (2003) relates the paucity of bridging ties to discouraging experiences in the initial phase of settlement. Refugees experience the inertia of asylum-procedures as obstructive to their social integration. They suffer from isolation and reduced aspirations in life. More optimistic is the notion that a lack of welcoming assistance programs (as in the Italian context) might paradoxically encourage refugees to connect with the host-society. Forcing refugees to rely on their own socializing skills was found to foster a process of two-sided integration among refugees and the majority population (Korac, 2003). Baird (2012) moreover questions whether intra-group socialization should be problematized at all. The preservation of ties with the country and culture of origin may actually foster the process of cultural adjustment in the long run (Baird, 2012). Religious and spiritual practises preserve hope to counter fear and boredom in post-refuge life (Jacobson, 2006).

4.3. The 'Mediatization' of Socialization and Identity Formation

Recent research situates processes of socialization in the 'mediatized' environment (Andersson, 2012; Deacon & Stanyer, 2014). In the 21th century, we define ourselves in relation to others via online interactions (Zhao, 2008; Strelitz, 2002). Madianou (2014) speaks of 'personalised media-environments', discussing how idiosyncratic search strategies and social interactions *in the cloud* constitute our individualized landscapes of 'mediatized' networks (Madianou, 2014).

Statistics (Eurostat, 2012) show internet-connectivity among today's relatively young, non-European asylum-seekers resembles the high rates of connectedness among native European peers (Froneberg, et al., 2015). Virtual surveillance performed by authorities back home no longer discourages integration into social media networks. As a result, 'mediatized'

learning about the receiving society fosters refugees' integration in the new context (Siddiquee & Kagan, 2006). Since many countries have become digitally disclosed, ICT-networks allow to spread localised knowledge among a broad range of prospective migrant populations preparing for resettlement (Felton, 2015). Secondly, Veiku and Siapera (2015) propose especially *new* media technologies (Internet and social media applications) compensate for migrants' physical and psychological dissociation. Instant-messaging provides a sense of 'unmediated co-presence', increasing experienced proximity (i.e. relatedness) to the country of origin (Veiku & Siapera, 2015). Lastly, (social) media connectivity helps refugees to explore their human and political potential; offering them a playground and stage to 'become', and represent the 'self' (Witteborn, 2015).

Still, critics suggest we should protect ourselves from media-centricity (Morley, 2009) whilst exploring refugees' cultural identification. It is important to understand how migrants' (here: refugees') media-engagements interact with other (non-mediatized) social experiences in daily life (Hepp, et al., 2011). It would be simplistic to believe in a sole technological solution to the identity crises refugees endure (Witteborn, 2015). Whereas this prudency for technological determinism (Witteborn, 2015: 15) is valid, we cannot ignore today's refugee-communities are substantially engaging in 'mediatized' interactions (Eurostat, 2012). Clarifying if and why 'mediatized' disclosure may foster refugees' cultural identification is therefore an important aim of the current study.

4.4. Information Literacy

Building on the idea that (social) media networking is salient to facilitate refugees' identity formation, we should question which conditions the construction and maintenance of 'mediatized' social capital requires. According to Lloyd et al. (2013), social integration presumes refugees are able to understand and participate in systems of information sharing. Alam and Imran (2015) support that incorporation into a new information ecology is crucial to connect with members of the host-community and public services (Alam & Imran, 2015). In praxis, refugees oftentimes lack the access and/or ability to successfully interrogate information. Their digital illiteracy and/or failure to comprehend and adjust to cultural norms, problematize participation in digitized informational networks. Refugees rather rely on their in-group to obtain information. Although in-group cultural similarities foster the establishment of intersubjective understandings, a one-sided focus on pre-refuge norms, values, and superstitions, increases the risk refugees remain separated from the host-society. Professional assistance may forestall that refugees will be shut off from fundamental and authentic

'compliance' (i.e.: legal) information. However, such paternalistic anticipation pre-empts self-exploration of information systems; eventually only perpetuating social exclusion and cultural segregation (Lloyd et al, 2013).

Siddiquee and Kagan (2006) show a more positive image of digital potentials. Their study proves African refugees are capable to use online information resources, thereby advancing socio-economic participation. Moreover: they find that the preservation of bonding social capital thrives by social mediation. Via channels such as Facebook and Skype, refugees (re-)connect with relatives in the country of origin, thereby allowing them to restore a sense of ethnic belonging and intra-group solidarity. Digital storytelling moreover enables refugees to reconcile past and present experiences, manipulate previous identity images, and reconstruct a 'new self' (Siddiquee & Kagan, 2006).

RESEARCH QUESTION; RELEVANCE & FOCUS

1. Objectives of the Proposed Research

Whereas theorists do agree refugee identity formation anticipates social norms, expectations and tensions (a.o.: Archambault, 2012), it remains vague to what extent and how certain social factors facilitate or obstruct refugees' potential to change their social positioning. Both bridging- and bonding social capital are recurrently associated with refugees' cultural assimilation (a.o.: Elliot & Yusuf, 2014), yet the direction of their influences remains ambiguous. It would be interesting to discover why refugees rely on certain social ties as a means of ethnic redefinition within the current context of mass migration and discouraging asylum regimes (Pupuvac, 2014). Contextualizing socialization, the progressive 'mediatization' of interpersonal connectivity, and it effects on diasporic communication, should be considered (Lloyd, et al, 2013). With both the degree and necessity of digital literacy to the process of assimilation being undetermined, we should moreover question refugees' familiarity with the Western media-ecology. In summary: this study makes an attempt to explore if and how refugees'('mediatized') socialization intersect with the process of their cultural assimilation.

2. Relevance of Studying Refugee Identity Formation

Previous research relating identity questions to the process of post-migratory acculturation focuses on *other*-identification, (i.e., how society (mis-)represents migrants); failing to explore the migrant-perspective (i.e. how migrants experience stereotyping and conceptualize a 'self'; Madianou, 2014). Moreover, merging refugees into the broader category of immigrants, the

forced nature of their flight and their lack of return-options have remained unrelated to refugees' well-being[5]. Recent studies, however, emphasize the importance of personal traumatic *roots* (Mosselson, 2006) and expectations/hopes for the future (i.e.: *routes*) to refugees' cultural-redefinition (Platts-Flower & Robinson, 2015). Building on self-reported narratives, this study makes a preliminary attempt to define the saliency of *roots* and/or *routes* to *refugees'* experiences. Focussing on media-ecologies, it specifically explores if the concept of 'mediatized migrant' applies to the current refugee-population.

Secondly: studying refugee identity formation, I aim to understand refugees' social marginalization and foster social integration (Lenette, Cox & Brough, 2015). According to the *Belief Congruence Theory,* inter-group tolerance and solidarity arise from mutual recognition of intergroup similarities (a.o.: Grant, 1993). The progressive incorporation of forced-migrant communities into digital networks might facilitate mediatized interconnectivity in, and/or among, culturally diverse members of society (Van Holm, 2015). Understanding the saliency and degree of refugees' digital competency, might moreover help humanitarian agencies to define whether digital learning programs are useful to facilitate refugees' asylum-procedures and improve psychological care (Murray, 2015).

Lastly, this research may advance the efficiency of post-traumatic care. Refugees are at high vulnerability to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorders [PTSD] in the absence of sufficient assistance (Shannon, et al., 2015). The likeliness of psychopathologic development increases when delay in application procedures stretches the period of uncertainty (Stenmark, et al., 2013). Although the professional field of psycho-traumatology has started to recognize the interplay of psyche and culture in posttraumatic experiences (Drozdek & Wilson, 2007), intercultural psychiatrists fear refugees' trauma-treatment fails to sufficiently contextualize grief and suffering. The perpetuation of hidden psychological struggle will obstruct refugee's social inclusion in the long run. Defining what practices provide meaning in post-refuge life, may foster the correspondence among refugees' needs and social work (a.o.: Borden, 2015; Ehlers, 2010; Freeman, 2015). Synchronization of care and needs, may prevent social marginalization; thereby forestalling high social costs later on (Groen & Khader, 2016).

If refugees prove digitally literate, post-traumatic assistance may directly empower

---

[5] According to the 1951 Refugee Convention (1 (A)2), the term 'refugee' refers to a person "...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." (UNHCR, 1951).

research-participants to advance their digital capacities (Lenette, Cox & Brough, 2015). Moreover, the incorporation of digital storytelling [DST] in narrative studies, will stretch the limits of ethnographic identity research by allowing subjects to exploit both visual and audial resources for narrative representation (Lal, et al., 2015). Eventually, a deeper and more authentic understanding of refugee's 'mediatized' experiences, may be established.

3. Defining the Research Context

3.1.Research Setting: AZC-Beverwaard (Rotterdam)

AZC-Beverwaard is a temporary refugee-shelter opening this June at the Edo-Bergsmaweg in IJsselmonde-Rotterdam. It has the capacity to host approximately 600 refugees awaiting the outcome of their asylum-procedures. Previous research emphasizes the criticality of the early post-migration experiences for refugees' welfare and distress (Ryan, et al., 2008). While the integration process of these newly arrived refugees has no (long-term) precedent, the construction of a refugee identity can be explored here from scratch. Moreover: since future inhabitants will have access to media-facilities in an *Open Learning Centre* [OLC] (Q&A Asielzoekerscentrum Rotterdam, 2015), AZC-Beverwaard enables to explore assumptions about refugees 'mediatization'.

3.2.Research Population: Syrian Refugees

This research focusses on Syrians being allocated in AZC-Beverwaard for several reasons. Firstly, the term 'refugee' has been scrutinized lately. It proves difficult to distinguish economic luck-seekers from 'authentic' refugees. To dissociate myself from political controversy, I focus on a refugee group that is cross-nationally recognized as suffering from deteriorating violations of humanitarian rights (UNHCR, 2016).

Secondly, the majority or refugees currently hosted in Dutch AZC's (44%, N = 19.070) is of Syrian origin (COA, 2016). There is no indication future asylum-applicants in AZC-Beverwaard will be different. Aiming to foster inter-group understanding, I should start understanding lived experiences of 'the other' who is statistically (i.e. number-wise) most likely to interact with inhabitants of the Beverwaard. Syrians with an oftentimes Arab appearance are moreover likely to suffer disproportionally from prejudices concerning terrorist threat and religious fundamentalism in receiving societies, especially in the aftermath of recent terrorist attacks (Benitto, 2015).

3.3. Timing of Research

The operationalization of fieldwork should start soon after AZC-Beverwaard opens. That way, process-experiences and research results may directly be utilized to improve refugees' wellbeing. Approaching refugees directly upon arrival, chances they will suffer from PTSD, and will be emotionally vulnerable to research participation, are still low (Stenmark, et al., 2013). Moreover, experiencing empathy and regaining a sense of trust might even slow down or prevent the development of PTSD in the first place (Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998).

Interaction with informants should last as long as their residence may last (max. 5 years) under the condition their willingness and mental/physical conditions remain stable. I acknowledge the temporality of their hostage might suddenly interrupt our interaction. This study might therefore not cover all stages of cultural assimilation (Gonsalves, 1992). However, continuing to explore refugees' identity formation beyond the asylum-process would by far extend the current focus on intra-institutional experiences.

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction to the Ethnography of Communication

Ethnographic fieldwork in the AZC-context is a purposeful practice to study *in situ* why and how refugees use mediatized communication modes to negotiate cultural re-identification. Trusting refugees to be the experts of their own experiences (Gilhooly & Lynn, 2015), qualitative interviewing will add individual differentiation to stereotyped generalizations of 'the' refugee (Sekala, 2015). As in discourse-theory, personalized modes of communication are assumed to help individuals create, represent, and consolidate social relationships and identity. However, which (non-)verbal communication strategies are applied, and *why,* depends on their social meaning (Carbaugh & Boromisza-Habshi, 2007). Skype can be used for mundane chitchatting, however it can also appear as a crucial tool to share legal strategies among refugees. In addition: the experienced trustworthiness or accessibility of information channels in *OLC*'s, will direct communication choices. To understand the meaning of communicative strategies from the refugee-perspective; I should consider them in the restricted context of the AZC-setting.

2. Advantages and Limitations of the 'Go-Along' Approach

Orthodox (i.e., sit-down) interview sessions oftentimes fail to stimulate non-verbal association, additionally providing the interviewee with a sense of inferiority. Kusenbach (2003) therefore

suggests a 'go-along' method of ethnographic research that combines participant observation *in situ* with reflexive communication (Kusenbach, 2003). Joining AZC-refugees in their daily (media-) routines, 'go-along' interviews provide a unique opportunity to explore 'mediatized' practices and their meaning in the least insinuating way. Moreover, it allows to observe how social and situational features intersect with conceptualisations and representations of refugees' selves (Carpiano, 2007). Although preservation of the natural context should foster the validity of investigation, researcher-reflexivity may not entirely be shunned. My presence as a researcher should go unconcealed for ethical reasons. This may problematize the establishment of trust and the willingness to share information. Adding to this: lacking the quietness of formal interviewing, the 'go-along' setting may sometimes trouble structured investigation. Thick descriptions of observations and conversations are required to structure the chaos of ethnographic field notes and allow for the identification of general patterns (Kusenbach, 2003). The pilot-study in section B more critically evaluates reservations of the 'go-along' approach.

OPERATIONALIZATION

1. Sample Construction

Considering the inductive nature of 'go-along' research, it is hard to determine an ideal sample size ex-ante. I aim to cooperate with a group of ten refugees. Although this might be considered a small sample, Carpiano (2010) emphasizes 'go-along' research sessions, by their nature, will provide access to new informants for study; or instantly include by-passer insights within the phenomenological framework. Statistically, my informants are most likely to be young and male refugees[6]. In terms of educational background, I assume highly educated informants will be over-represented, for linguistic barriers limit me to interact with English (or Dutch)-tongued refugees only[7]. It is important therefore to remember that the assessment of identity processes has a limited external validity.

2. Ethical Constraints and Selectivity

Aiming for an improvement of refugees' well-being, this study should guarantee the harmlessness of my participation, and foster spin-off empowerment of refugee-participants

---

[6] Statistics about the refugee population currently hosted in AZC's show the majority of refugees are Syrian natives, or pre-hosted asylum-seekers by the Syrian Arab Republic (resp. Iraq, Somalia and Sudan). 39% Is 18-29 years old, and 65% is male. (Refugee-work the Netherlands [Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland], 2015).

[7] For a discussion of linguistic barriers to the research practice, see: Section B, 'Objectives of ex-ante inquiry'.

(Hugman et al., 2011). My interference should therefore be reciprocal and cooperative. Organizing preliminary group discussions, I permit refugees' to autonomously evaluate the implication of participation. Being clear about project-aims and expectations, I lay the foundations for a trustful, mutual learning relationship. All refugees willing to participate, are required to confirm their given consent by signing a formal document. Thereby I respect the guidelines of ethical investigation; meanwhile reducing chances informants will cease participation over time (Hugman, et al., 2011). Although I consider refugees as autonomous and capable individuals; I still wish to rely on professionals whilst establishing an informant group. Social workers have the expertise to determine whether, regardless individuals' willingness, project participation is harmless to refugees' well-being.

The sampling-technique described may cause selective bias. Firstly, one's willingness to cooperate may vary with personal determinants of identity conceptualisation. Moreover, shielding vulnerable refugees from identity research, the influences of severe traumatization on post-refuge identity remains undefined. Still, I prioritize informant-centred sampling to guarantee the harmlessness of investigation.

3. Sensitive Topics

Conducting 'go-along' research, it is the flow of interaction defining the course of study. I should therefore prepare to manage the unpredictability of the research setting and reflect on its spontaneity (Kusenbach, 2003). Still, anticipating on previous insights (i.e.: theoretical framework) may help to recognize patterns, contribute to the practical relevance of inquiry, and foster theory-development (Barbour, 2011). Appendix A provides a non-prescriptive topic-guide for 'go-along'-participation. During ex-ante inquiry, a preliminary indication of topic relevance might be established.

4. Gradual Theory Development through Feedback-Loops

A proper 'go-along' investigation requires intensive cooperation with informants over a course of time (Hugman, et al., 2011). Habituation is a prerequisite for trust establishment and the normalization of researcher-presence. The actual investigation should therefore be preceded by a period of participant observation. After this first stage of acquainting, the actual investigation starts with a replication of participant interviews in multiple settings. Only rehearsing 'go-along' sessions, it is possible to distinguish which customs and practices take a prominent place in daily life, and are salient to informants' identities. Having traced habitual consistencies and

frequently mentioned topics across sessions, a 'middle range theory' about identity performances should be determined (Baird, 2012). Informants will be asked to reflect on preliminary findings. Such active involvement is assumed to increase refugees' commitment to the project; and empower self-reflection (Doyle, 2007). The first feedback loop is succeeded by a more active and focussed questioning of behaviour and underlying meanings. This should ideally be done in a least intruding and non-directive manner, encouraging the refugee to define and explain the saliency of identity concepts autonomously (Kusenbach, 2003). Again, the validity of either directly retrieved or interpreted observations must be assessed. In a final stage, the empirical results are related to previous theoretical insights (i.e., determination of theoretical validity, Maxwell, 1992). Most importantly, conclusions should be considered I terms of practical relevance, and communicated back to 'the field' for practical purposes.

5. Introduction to Section B.

To assess and improve the research instrument, a test procedure of 'go-along' investigation is recommendable (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). However, lacking support for a 'go-along'-research *in situ*, an alternative test phase should be designed. The following section elaborates on a small-scale pilot-inquiry conducted. It describes the research procedure and presents the most salient data and recommendations (Knafl & Howard, 1984). The results of this ex-ante interview should *sensitize* the research topics and practice to the relatively unknown refugee perspective (Madianou, 2014). Additionally, the results provide a preliminary opportunity to determine the empirical fit among theory and the refugee reality. I therefore conclude with some considerations to refine the list of sensitive topics for future research. The reflective inquiry of Section B should eventually convince professional workers and Municipal politicians that future study in AZC-Beverwaard is feasible, realistic and, most importantly, needed to improve refugees' support and well-being.

SECTION B: EX-ANTE INQUIRY

OBJECTIVES OF EX-ANTE INQUIRY

Previous literature mentions that experiences of shock encourage us to employ personalised adaptive strategies. According to this thought, refugees will adjust understandings of fear, loss, righteousness, existential suffering and identity to preserve a sense of inner harmony (Sillove, 1999). To forestall refugees will feel endangered by traumatic memories, I should adjust to the self-protective narratives *current* refugee adhere to.

Secondly, my inability to speak Arab necessitates communication in English. However, it is unclear whether refugees will be sufficiently fluent using this tongue[8]. Self-censorship to mask incompetency or invalid responding are associated risks (Marshall, 1994). Moreover, the English-language may simply lack the adequate vocabulary to explain culturally specific experiences; especially the traumatic memories that just cannot be captured in words (Kay & Kempton, 1984). Lastly, speaking a foreign language, might cause inferior feelings. The alternative use of a translator might negatively affect the non-artificiality of 'go-along' research; and add the risk of translator-bias (Esposito, 2001). Ex-ante inquiry should identify the best-case solution to linguistic barriers.

Acknowledging the interview is a stage for narrative production (Talmy, 2010), it is insightful to understand participants' motivation (event-validation) and their experiences of collaboration (reflexive progression) (Hiller & Diluzio, 2004, Talmy, 2010). I should consider how power balances, especially patriarchal attitudes common in Arab societies (Valter, 2015), may confound my recognition as a female researcher (Esterday, et al, 1977; Finlay, 2002). I wish to respect cultural norms and privacy by critically defining which contexts and activities qualify for 'go-along'-sessions. Lastly, to explore the theory of legal coping strategies, I should be able to recognize subtle indicators of 'bogus' storytelling. Moreover, I should prepare to deal with suspicions of bias. During a pilot-investigation, I wish to familiarize myself with the limits and possibilities of truth discovery[9].

---

[8] The majority of today's Syrian refugees allocated in Dutch AZC's, is middle, highly or even academically educated (Deira, 2015). However, the relationship between education and English-proficiency has not been determined. Research shows that the majority of refugees in Great-Britain depend on intermediates to understand procedural hearings (Gill, et al., 2016). With Syrians being the largest refugee population both in GB (45%, British Red Cross, 2016) and the Netherlands, it is likely Syrian natives in both host-countries are unfamiliar with the English language.

[9] I assume it is impossible to trace and unmask lies, considering refugees' are conditioned by an intense fear of return to a repressive system that has moreover permeated them with the idea we should lie for survival (a.o. Goodman, et al. 2015). It would moreover be contradictory to my intention of refugee's empowerment, to proof with specificity the non-credibility of their identity claims (Kagan, 2003).

OPERATIONALIZAION

1. Method

This pilot-study combines both implicit and explicit assessments of the research design. Via a case interview on refuge experiences, I familiarize myself with the role of an empathic listener. Without explicitly questioning uncertainties in the research design, I ingeniously observe the effects of qualitative engagement on my informant. Especially notions of non-verbal (dis-) comfort, and problems of understanding/recall are useful to inductively define sensitivities of investigation. A second part of the interview concerns a 'member-check' (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to validate presumptions underlying the research design. I encourage my interviewee to evaluate the efficacy of the methodology and add practical solutions to complexities. My reliance on interviewee's expertise and cooperation promotes the mutual equality of interaction.

2. Respondent Selection

Lacking the support to access AZC-inhabitants, I can only conduct a small-scale test inquiry with one informant. I cooperate with Mohammed Baghdadi (further referred to as M.), a 24 year old Syrian refugee and Medicine student at the VU Amsterdam. Having passed the entire asylum-procedure (2.5 years ago), M. has the in-group knowledge to retrospectively report on experiences[10]. Due to his successful cultural integration afterwards (re-entrance of the school-trajectory; learning the Dutch language), it is likely M. can discuss the past from a sufficient emotional and intellectual distance. My connectedness to M. is close to zero.[11] Without prior interactions determining M.'s trust and overtness, nor my expectations; it is likely I can preserve research' objectivity and confidentiality sufficiently. Moreover, previous insights confirm that the absence of interaction prior investigation fosters fertile cooperation among participants (here: informant and researcher); and spin-off applications of insights (Huberman, 1990).

I contact M., early April, to determine his eligibility and willingness for research participation. Though speaking with an accent, his linguistic capacities are remarkable (B2-level) considering his short stay in the Netherlands. M. instantly confirms future participation (M. *"I totally agree, let's do this!"*). Respecting his busy schedule, we agree to limit our cooperation to a single appointment.

---

[10] To preserve the usefulness of results, my informant should have expertise knowledge; and resemble my future research population in terms of age, gender, linguistic competence (Marshall, 1996).

[11] Having told friends from my own social networks about my study; and the impossibility to contact refugees in AZC's, one friend handed me the contact details of 'another friends' friend' who might be adequate and willing to cooperate.

3. Procedure

The interview with M. takes place April 26th at the VU Amsterdam. The entire interview is audio-recorded. A transcription (translated from Dutch to English) of the interview is included in Appendix D. Prior our conversation, M. has signed a form of consent describing the topic and purpose of our conversation, moreover explicating his rights and the confidentiality of information (Appendix C.). The actual interview starts with an introduction to the research project and our mutual benefits (Karnieli-Miller, et al. 2009), i.e.: the improvement of future research relies on his expertise, whereas the eventual aim is to improve refugees' well-being in return. To establish an equal relationship, I share my own presumptions and concerns in a dialogical context. This disarming attitude is supposed to reduce the likeliness of biased information sharing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). Advancing M.'s involvement in the interview may furthermore reduce chances of faulty retrospectivity. Dedication to the research project was found to reduce problems of recall (Coughlin, 1990).

I confront M. with the relatively broad question to elaborate on his flight-process and asylum-procedure. I thereby allow him to discuss experiences of personal saliency, instead of conforming to the discussion of some pre-established probes. In the results section below, the first paragraph will evaluate the efficacy of this technique; aiming to improve interview skills. Note that these inductive results draw from implicit observations and personal interpretation, rather than M.'s explicit answers. In the second part of the interview, I more structurally question pre-defined ambiguities in the research design. Sticking to a topic-list (Appendix B) ensures that all uncertainties of interests will be discussed, meanwhile providing M. the flexibility to add new insights and experiences that may foster research applicability (Turner, 2010). Part 2 offers several derived recommendations to improve the research design.

RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 1: Advancing Researcher-Sensitivity

1. Importance to Determine and Understand Participant's Engagement

Without hesitation, M. eagerly tells his personal refuge story. The remarkable lightness of his speech, should however not be confused with flippancy:

"I really wanted to discuss my situation with other people. And I really wanted to explain the Dutch people that, what happened to me and how I came here…"

Later on, he adds the intrinsic motivation for his research participation:

"So the people really have a bad idea about me, a negative idea about me, and I also have a negative idea about the other. The problem starts, or the solution to the problem starts with me firstly introducing myself: I am like this, I did that…experiences so and so. And I am pretty sure that in 95 % of the cases, he will get a positive response by the other".

Discourse-theory (a.o. Tonkiss, 1998) suggest M.'s story will be coloured by intrinsic motivations. Aiming to upgrade his social image, his self-presentation might be positively biased. Imagining a different scenario: refugee X. personally suffering from delayed procedures, might engage in research as a means to blow the whistle for bureaucratic failure. His grief and anger are likely to filter positive experiences out. Such narrative bias is not necessarily a bad thing. For example: without X. biasedly emphasizing the inefficiency of the IND, the human impact of procedural delay might have been downplayed. It is the fundamental task of the researcher however, to filter exaggerations out of the story, and nuancedly put them in perspective. Again, a profound comprehension of the emotional motives for storytelling are deemed important (Komeda, et al. 2009). To trace the personal or societal condition a story is told in/ supposed to change, I therefore suggest:

Recommendation 1. *: "Define the reasons for interview participation to understand the contextual meaning of narrative strategies".*

2. Prudency in Determining of Emotional Impact

Laughing about complications and his own naivety during the flight process, M. proves able to distance himself emotionally from the traumatic past. According to him, the cognitive consequences of traumatic experiences, have faded over time. However, throughout our conversation, M. realizes how past experiences still touch him:

"Now I tell you the story… I thought well I have sort of, well I thought would never be traumatized or so, but now I tell you the story, I am like: 'Wow!'"

The emotional impact of the past he claims to be experiencing, is only sporadically verbalized. Instead, M. uses intonation and non-verbal expression to address his emotional state. Heightening his voice trying to communicate amazement, or adding facial expression of emotions whilst talking, M. is able to deal with his lack of *"sensitivity for words"* using the Dutch language. Returning to the moment of his status-approval in the Netherlands, he even cries out of happiness:

"So really, I cried, I laughed… All of it. All feelings came in one second (Crying whilst speaking). I may stay! I may laugh, I may cry, I may do anything! (...) Sometimes, you don't believe your ears, your hearing. What? Really? Again please? So to me that was really… I was really, really happy!"

M.'s instant realisation of persistent emotional impact shows that re-telling of a refuge story might be a confronting experience to refugees. Previous research confirms that traumas of war and ethnic cleansing may appear in delay (Weine, et al. 1995). Although an explicit verbal confirmation of distress might fail, non-verbal expressions and subtle details in refugees' stories might testify the emotional impact of storytelling. If instant confrontation with emotions is respectfully dealt with, the research context might provide refugees the safe environment to re-address the past (a.o. Borden, 2015). To allow for such empowerment, I recommend:

<u>Recommendation 2.</u> *: "If emotional legacies are nog explicitly verbalized, attention should go out to non-verbal manifestation; or spontaneous realisation of perpetuated impact"*

3. Contextualization of Emotional States

To guarantee the harmless of the interview setting, I should be able to recognize and respect the emotional vulnerabilities of refugees. M. explains that refugees' hopes and/or fear for the future, should be understood in the political asylum context. He describes how his mother dealt with the prospect of forced return to Italy, a country were family-reunion would be difficult[12]:

"(...) I told my mother: In a week we will be in Italy. And she looked at me with eyes…Not good. (...) Because the children call us all the time: Mamma, when we are going to see you again? But she didn't replied them. (...) My mother was really depressive. She cries all the time. (...) She may go to the G.P. But what can he do? Look, the problem is like this, Ì want to be with my children, I miss them. (...)"

Conform Hatoss' (2012) discussion of refugee identity formation as a process of 'interactive acculturation', M. nuances that a specific political context (structural factor) may trigger distinct psychological conditions (human agency). Depending on your cognitive resilience:

---

[12] M. is referring to the implications of the Dublin regulation. Stemming from February 2013, this policy provided the criteria determining which member state of the European Union was considered responsible for the effectuation of refugees' asylum-procedure. Important to the praxis of the procedures was the decree that refugees' asylum-application should be treated in one country. In 2015, the regulation has been partly suspended out of solidarity with countries at the EU borders being over overtaxed with refugee influxes (No 604/2013). For M. and his mother, this suspension had the consequence their asylum-procedure would take place in the Netherlands, instead of Greece; the European country first eentered.

"You feel nothing anymore, or you will have a very hard time. (…)".

M. furthermore confirms that experiences during the asylum-procedure negatively influence refugees' willingness and preparation for future integration (Korac, 2003).

"I was really dedicated to learn the Dutch language (…). So I was printing and thinking how do I pronounce this word? And what means that and what means that? And I started: 'alstublieft', and I wanted to speak…But sometime I was like…No. No I don't need to speak it anymore. (…) They told me, I don't want to disappoint you, but, you can not stay here, you just have to go to Italy".

Beyond emotional implications, M. shows that how refugees rationally construct a 'bogus' history, to increase chances a 'deserving' status will be approved (See: part 2.4). Observing how behavioural and emotional coping strategies relate to legal expectations; it is important to characterize how current legal conditions, and their implications, are experienced by applying refugees and their families:

<u>Recommendation 3</u>. *: "Refugees' behaviour and emotional conditions should be understood in relation to their legal expectations"*

4. Asking for Clarification

Notwithstanding the consistency of M.'s discussion, I sometimes need to ask for clarification of details that he assumes to be 'common sense'. M. empathically acknowledges how absurd some experiences must sound to a Dutch person:

"You as a Dutch person, you see us go into the sea and you think, that is really dangerous. And you are really shocked how they, how they dare do that. But to us? Sea! Wow! Doesn't matter. That is really safer (…)".

I suggest his familiarity with intercultural misunderstandings, and his potential to adjust to them, relates to his successful integration in the Dutch society. Recently arrived Syrian refugees in AZC's might have more difficulties to communicate their story in an understandable manner. To prevent the interviewee will feel misunderstood and discouraged, it is crucial to explain that requests for clarification should foster accurate reporting. It is the task of the researcher to leapfrog intercultural misunderstandings by 'translating' cultural pre-givens to Western norms and values. As a result:

: "Dealing with cultural misunderstanding, the researcher should encourage clarification by introducing creative probes and rephrased questions"

5. Dealing with Problems of Recall

Sometimes, M. verbally expresses difficulty with memorizing precise details. Asking M. to describe how to prepare a refuge, he notes:

"What should I take? And you look, well, you look at the house, all your stuff and so. And you only take such a little bag. (...) And the most important thing for you is, in my case, I have then of course: My iPad, my telephone, my iPhone. My iPad... Sorry, wait, I have to remember (...). My laptop, take with me. Two iPads (Laughs). And, what again? And oh yeah, my white coat. Yes, my white coat is really, to me... I am a doctor so... that white coat was really important, so I took it with me also".

The previous quote shows that sometimes recall of crucial events can be rather complex. This might be related to a decreased functionality of explicit memory, a deficiency regularly found among traumatized war victims. Still, research debunks the suggestion traumatic experiences result in untreatable amnesia (Sondergaard, 2002). Instead, proper recall can be encouraged. Refugees should not feel restricted by time whilst recollecting the past. Comforting words or probes may moreover ease memory retrieval. Lastly, we should not suppose the saliency of a discussion can be read from its ordering (Schauer, et al, 2011). Initially, M. forgets to mention taking the white coat on his flight, though later on confirms it is his most precious belonging. I therefore finally suggest:

Recommendation 5. : *"Patiently encourage refugees' faltered memorization with probes; learning to determine the importance of separate memories in a dialogical context"*

Part 2: Recommendations to Improve the Research Design

1. Cultural Anticipation

M is surprised when I question the eligibility of refugees to participate in qualitative research. Explaining him humanitarian agencies fear harmful confrontation with trauma, he argues:

"You see, you are sitting in the AZC, you are waiting (...). And they all, they really have nothing to do. So if you go to them, and talk to them, then ....then...they would really think that's good".

According to M. even depressed people might be willing to interact. Stating refugees are well able to draw their own boundaries, he supports the suggestion refugees should not be

stigmatized as victims (Pupuvac, 2008). Still, M. argues some cultural sensitivity is required while approaching recently arrived refugees. Regardless war-related trauma-pathologies, Syrian community functions by *"high-context communication"*:

"In Syria, I must interpret a lot. One words, or two word may say whole texts. But here in the Netherlands, the whole of Netherlands, exactly what you say, that's what you mean. So, more direct. We are indirect. (...)"

Understanding refugees' reluctance to participate or answer a question, M, suggests:

"*You should tell from his face, from his hands, from his movement….I don't know… From his attitude. When he is like, I don't want to talk about it, he is like: eh, eh, eh…"*

Whereas M. debunks the idea I should adjust my questions with sensitized references to safety, attachment, justice and existential meaning (Sillove, 1999), he advises me to be aware of sensitivities: sex, intimacy and alcohol use are taboo in Syria. If discussion of these topics is considered crucial, it would be proper to introduce them, and ask whether people feel like engaging in such a discussion. Remarkably, M. rejects that pre-flight experiences or the asylum-procedure are sensitive issues.

Recommendation 6. : *"Refugees can be asked about any (sensitive) topic, but it is especially their non-verbal communication that should be interpreted to understand a response"*

2. Linguistic Barriers

M. mentions the level of English or Dutch language proficiency will be relatively low among people in emergency AZC's such as Beverwaard. To facilitate interaction and allow for a better understanding of cultural (non-verbal) cues, M. suggest to involve somebody fluent in the Arab language. However, he considers a full-mediation of the interview by a translator unnecessary.

"In the AZC there are always people who speak English. (...). For me, it was a huge step. It improved. It was okay to speak it".

Somebody willing to help in emergency cases via telephone, would suffice. Building on this:

Recommendation 7. : *"The necessity of a physically present translator can be obviated by reliance on intra-group knowledge, or emergency calls with an Arab translator"*

Just as previous literature emphasizes (a.o. Holstein & Gubrium, 1999), it is more important though, to establish a relationship of trust. According to M., this can happen relatively fast:

"In Syria, in our culture, you can be very good friends from the first time onwards. Very good. Your best friend from the first time. Here in the Netherlands, I must really go step by step".

M. suggest it would be useful to interact with refugees' prior to research as a voluntary worker. Beyond building mutual trust, such informal interaction allows to observe and learn about the norms and values of Syrian refugees.

<u>Recommendation 8.</u> : *"Mutual trust is the most important facilitator of communication, and can be established relatively easily via intra-AZC participation prior research"*

3. Dealing with Power-Balances

M. rejects the idea my gender will complicate investigation. He only points out some practical codes, after I explicitly asked him to think about possible complications.

"That (i.e.: inter-gender communication) is not a problem at all (…). Well, I think, the most people will shake your hand. But there are some people that may be shocked. So wait, wait till he decides, and shaking your hand or not. (…)"

M. thereby attenuates the theoretical concerns that gendered inequalities will complicate my interaction with male informants (a.o. Finlay, 2002).

<u>Recommendation 9.</u> : *"Inter-sex communication requires no specific precautions, though awareness and recognition of non-verbal norms would bear witness of cultural empathy"*

Rather than dealing with gender issues, M. suggest it might be more complex to overcome refugees' secretive attitudes. He thereby contradicts his earlier notion that Syrians are trusting by nature. Explaining this paradox, M. describes mistrust is a gradually developed coping strategy to protect oneself from *panopticon* authorities:

"In Syria it's always… Any person who, talks with me, there is a chance he works for the government. So he will tell what he knows".

In the context of research, he forestalls this post-traumatic adaptation will appear as an apprehension for researcher non-confidentiality. Conform M.'s advice, previous research too emphasizes the essentiality of trust establishment if the researcher wishes to access the authentic 'backstage' of refuge stories (Miller, 2004). I therefore suggest:

<u>Recommendation 10.</u> : *"It will be impossible to counter deep-rooted fears for authorities, still pre-research (informal) interactions may encourage interviewees' trust in confidentiality"*

4. Validity Issues and Practical Response

Asking about experiences with 'bogus' storytelling, M. repels always having stuck to the truth:

"I didn't knew the consequences. So I thought, in the Netherlands you always have to tell the truth. But if I knew the consequences…."

Without having a concrete purpose in mind, I empathically express that *I* would be tempted to lie if it would increases chances of legal recognition. M. then seems more confident to elaborate on the high-frequency of biased storytelling:

"That's what most people do, say they come directly to the Netherlands. (…) But you came from Turkey to Hungary? Why didn't you stay there? Hungary is a safe country. Then they take a point to make you stay waiting for six months or so. Then the most people will say: we came with a truck…"

It seems his alacrity to tell me about the more 'shady' features of refugee-life rises with my spontaneous expression of empathy. Although I discourage fake and strategically used emotions from a moral perspective, I do find confirmation for the idea that disclosure of one's authentic, personal perspective fosters mutual trust and fertile information sharing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). Providing refugees with experiences of confidentiality might even pave the way for the establishment of trust relationships in the AZC and beyond. Therefore:

Recommendation 6: *"Being overt about personal vulnerabilities, the researcher can foster mutual equality and empower refugees' interpersonal trust beyond research"*

Notwithstanding the likeliness I will encounter fake stories, M suggests not to encroach refugees' privacy with persistent interrogation. I should instead focus on subtle facial expressions of discomfort. According to M., mistrust consolidates refugees' minimal protection against Assad's repercussions:

"Look, some people, their families are still in Syria. (…). So they are afraid that, for the press something saying, or in the newspaper, then the other people will take the guilt of his guilt. They are afraid for their families who stay behind. (…) Depends from person to person. Some people are really afraid (…). Some people will think like, 'wow', she might be, for example from the police. And she may, she may want to know from us, to know and then tell the police".

Keeping in mind I aim to encourage refugees' trust establishment, instead of harming their emotional integrity, I conclude:

Recommendation 7. : "*Be prepared to question non-verbal expressions of discomfort, but eventually respect refugees' decision not to tell the truth*"

LIMITATIONS

I should be cautionary building on this pilot study to improve the future research design. Firstly, lacking inter-subject comparison, the representativeness of M.'s reflections remains ambiguous. Moreover, somebody being allocated in an AZC over two years ago will not have suffered from the intensity of asylum-stress that marks the current refugee crisis (Jacobson 2006; Adams, 2009). Furthermore, since M. is presently granted an asylum-status, his accuracy in describing procedural uncertainty might have suffered from retrospective bias (Brewin, et al., 1993). To prevent data contamination (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), M.'s accounts must be excluded from future analysis of AZC-interviews.

Secondly: although M. is almost fluent in both English and Dutch, and well-adjusting to cultural differences, there remains a risk the cultural/symbolic context of speech/ non-verbal communication will not be understood sufficiently. As suggested, narrative bias may cause some more purposeful distortions that might not be traced as such. Still, I assume our shared motivation to improve refugees' well-being has positively influenced both our commitment to share information and reach for mutual understanding (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999).

Thirdly, I am the only person having interpreted the data. The risk of subjective bias should therefore be taken into account. By providing a thick description of the research setting and a full-transcript of the interview, I have attempted to provide the critical reader insight into the research procedure (Shenton, 2004). Translating the interview, I stayed as close to the contextual meaning of speech, taking into account intonation and non-verbal expressions observed. Moreover, I made an attempt to transpose broken-Dutch into broken-English, assuming the translation of flawed language is necessary to replicate the difficulty of interpretation for second readers. Especially the occasional stumbling over words, or the 'working towards' full-sentences, provide contextual meaning to words and my (subjective) interpretation of the story. To improve the interpretative validity of interviews with future refugees, I however advise researcher-triangulation.

Lastly, building on the most important recommendation from this pilot-study: it is naïve to think interaction with, and observation of one refugee will make us understand the ways and needs of an entire community. Sensitivity to the research topic and the unique characteristics of its participants requires the researcher to observe participants over some time and adjust the

interview setting to each individual's needs and requirements. Such intensive interaction should not be limited to the research-context and the application of an informant-focussed methodology (i.e.: 'go-along'). It should instead be stretched to a development of a fertile sympathization prior to research; and include a continuation of involvement afterwards. An understandable feedback-loop of research insights to informants and the professional field is required to reduce post-refuge stress among AZC-refugees.

Acknowledging theory assessment requires the consideration of more than just one case, the manifestation of theoretical concepts in M.'s discussion can still provide premature directives. I therefore conclude with some suggestions to focus subsequent investigation.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. Elaborating Identity Coping-Strategies

M. emphasizes refugees are dedicated to accelerate the asylum-procession:

"That's what most people do, say they come directly to the Netherlands (...). Otherwise, they take a point to make you stay waiting for six months or so. Than the most people will say: we came with a truck... So you need to take into account, if somebody says he came with a truck... the chance he really came by truck is 15%. ".

Moreover, he supports that refugees aim to foster the likeliness they can stay in a country that facilitates family-reunion. This pilot-study thereby encourages to further explore the instrumental functions (a.o. Beneduce, 2015) of identity discourse: how and to what extent does 'artificial' compliance with a 'deserving' identity status influence the process of identity formation? Evidence of identity formation as a personal coping strategy (Hatoss, 2012) is only implicit. Whereas M. is clearly distinguishing how emotional dissociation, depression, or discouraged enthusiasm follow from legal considerations; the linkage with its extended influences on identity construction remain untouched. It would be interesting to more profoundly consider refugees' emotional adjustment (depression vs. emotion dissociation) in association with the saliency of roots and appraisal of the host-society. Also, the co-presence or interactivity of legal- and emotional coping, deserves attention.

2. Dynamic Interplay of Roots and Routes

M.'s references to Syria (ns) exhale pride, nostalgia and love. Talking in terms of 'we', M. clarifies his national belonging:

"Look we love our country! That's why our country got destroyed. We wanted, like you, to have freedom, that we have a right on everything. And when we went on the streets against Assad."

His nationalistic commitment seems strengthened by experiences in the Dutch context. Familiarity with anti-refugee discourses among *"Wilders-supporters"* translates back into a slightly pessimistic glance at his future in the Netherlands:

"I want that my children, in the future, that they live in a country where they feel at home. But that one, they won't have here in the Netherlands. When they would be here, stay here, then they would be 'allochtonen'. And that I don't want. So for now, now... I don't know what will happen in the future, but for now, I want to return to my own country. (...) But a little bit of safety, I want to bring a little bit of safety from here to Syria (laughs)"

M.'s resilient affection for Syria and determination to return as soon as possible, indicate that traumatic experiences may fail to cut refugees loose from their roots. Moreover, the absence of bridging social ties seems to deprive prospects on finding Dutch belonging, possibly fostering in-group commitment and the shared wish to return (Korac, 2003; Saint-Pierre et al, 2015). The AZC-context provides a unique setting to explore how identity formation and cultural belonging build on the interplaying forces of experienced roots and 'routes' (Platts-Flower & Robinson, 2015); and how the perceived availability of in- or among-group socialization (a.o. Elliot & Yusuf, 2008) facilitates therein. Future research should aim for a reconstruction of refugees' narrative framework that is both the result of; and driving force behind their self-conceptualisation in a fragile context.

3. Support for 'Mediatized' Refugee Life

Contrasting the image of digitally illiterate refugees (Lloyd et al, 2013), M. illustrates how mediatized social networking crucially facilitates refugee life as an information resource and communication channel. Mediatized communication seems a common activity in AZC-life:

"I went on the Internet all the time, Facebook, talking with friends (...). It was really, we were all in Syria. And then suddenly: one in Sweden, one is in England, the other is in Germany (...).We asked each other: how are you? And we always asked about the procedure".

To obtain an understanding of refugees' realities, it seems their communicative strategies and social media engagement should be taken into account (Witteborn, 2015). I therefore advise 'go-along' participation should include the *OLC* as a research environment, providing access to refugees' media-ecologies (Madianou, 2014).

4. Concerns about Refugee's Victimization

Lastly, M supports that the AZC-community functions as an isolated society (Korac, 2003).

"In the AZC you are in the Netherlands but in your environment you are in another country. So you are in the Netherlands, but everybody around you is Syrian, Arabs or Iraqi. (…)"

Whereas he regrets the lack of interaction with members of the Dutch society, moreover relating this directly to the persistence of intercultural prejudice, he seems sceptical about a fast and easy solution.

"It is good to bring people in the AZC in contact with other people, but there are a lot of barriers to that. A lot of complexities. (…)"

The feeling of isolation and intergroup dependency M. expresses, confirms that we should be concerned about the perverse effects AZC protectiveness may have on refugees' well-being; and their future societal integration (a.o. Pupuvac, 2008). I therefore wish to conclude with the urgent advice to open the discussion about current migration policies; and encourage empathic research to allow for short-term improvements.

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (2009). Stories of fracture and claim for belonging: young migrant's narrative of arrival in Britain. *Children's Geographies*, 7 (2), 159-171.

Alam, K. & Imran, S. (2015). The digital divide and social inclusion among refugee migrants: a case in regional Australia. *Information Technology and People,* 28 (2), 344-365.

Allen J, Cars G. 2001. Multiculturalism and governing neighbourhoods. *Urban Studies* 38: 2195-2209.

Andersson, M. (2012). Media and migration through the lens of mediatization and transnationalism. Communication and Community: The annual ICA Conference, 24-28 May 2012, Phoenix.

Archambault, J. (2012). 'It can be good there too': home and continuity in refugee children's narratives of settlement. *Children's Geographies*, 10 (1), 35-48.

Baird, M. (2012). Well-being in refugee women experiencing cultural transition. *Advances in Nursing Science,* 35 (3). 249-263.

Barbour, R.S. (2001). Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: a case of the tail wagging the dog? *Education and Debate,* 322, 1115-1117.

Barras, A. (2009). A rights-based discourse to contest the boundaries of state secularism? The case of the headscarf bans in France and Turkey. *Democratization*, 16 (6), 1237-1260.

Beneduce, R. (2015). The moral economy of lying: Subject craft, narrative capital and uncertainty in the politics of asylum. *Medical Anthropology*, 34 (6), 551-571.

Benitto, M. (2015). Multiculturalism and community cohesion in Britain: the case of Arab minority. *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies,* 9 (2), 31-41.

Berry, J.W. (1989). The acculturation process and refugee behaviour. *Context: South-East Asians in California,* 10 (75), 2-12.

Berry, J.W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 29, 697-712.

Borden, W. (2015). Theoretical pluralism and integrative perspectives in social work practice. In: C. Corcoran & A.R. Roberts (Eds.), *Social work desk reference* (275-287). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brewin, C.R. et al., (1993). Psychopathology and early experience: a reappraisal of retrospective reports. *Psychological Bulletin,* 113 (1), 82-98.

British Red Cross (2016). 'Refugee facts and figures', Retrieval: 2016, May 25th, from: http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Refugee-support/Refugee-facts-and-figures

Carbaugh, D. & Boromisza-Habshi , D. (2007). Ethnography of communication. In: K. Tracy, T. Sandell and Ilie, C. (Eds.) *The International Encyclopaedia of Language and Social Interaction.*

Carpiano, R.M. (2009). Come take a walk with me: the "go-along" interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being. *Health and Place,* 15, 263-272.

Centlivres, P. and Centlivres-Demont, M. (1988). The Afghan refugees in Pakistan: An ambiguous identity', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 1:2, pp. 141-152.

Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers [COA] (2016). 'Cijfers en jaarverslagen'. Retrieval: 2016, April 12th, from: https://www.coa.nl/nl/over-coa/cijfers-en-jaarverslagen.

Colcik-Peisker, V. & Walker, I. (2003). Human capital; acculturation and social identity: Bosnian refugees in Australia. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 13, 337-360.

Coughlin, S.S. (1990). Recall bias in epidemiologic studies. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology,* 43 (1), 87-91

Creswell, J.W. & Miller, D.L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice,* 39 (3), 124-130.

Deacon, D., & Stanyer, J. (2014). Mediatization: Key concept or conceptual bandwagon? Media, *Culture & Society*, 36, 1033-1044.

Deira, S. (2015, September, 18th). "COA-topman: asielzoekers 'verrijking' voor samenleving", · Elsevier. Retrieval: 2016, September 15th, from: http://www.elsevier.nl/Nederland/achtergrond/2015/9/COA-topman-asielzoekers-verrijking-voor-samenleving-2688601W/.

Doyle, S. (2007). Member checking with older women: a framework for negotiating meaning. *Health care for women international,* 28, 888-908.

Di Saint Pierre, F. et al. (2015). Return wishes of refugees in the Netherlands: The role of integration, host national identification and perceived discrimination, *Journal of Ethnic Migration Studies,* 41 (11), 1836-1857.

Drozdek, B. & Wilson, J.P. (2007). *Voices of trauma: treating psychological trauma across cultures.* Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media.

Ehlers, A. (2010). Understanding and treating unwanted trauma memories in posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Psychology*, 218, 141-145.

Elliot, S. & Yusuf, I. (2014). 'Yes we can; but together': Social capital and refugee resettlement. *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences*, 9 (2), 101-110.

Ertorer, S.E. (2016). Acculturating into the Canadian society: a case of Karen refugees. *Journal of Ethnic Migration Studies,* 1-22.

Esposito, N. (2001). From meaning to meaning: the influence on translation techniques on non-English focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research,* 11 (4), 568-597.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. (2013, June 29th). Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council, *Official Journal of the European Union,* 180, 31-59.

Felton, E. (2015). Migrants, refugees and mobility: How useful are information technologies in the   first phase of resettlement. *Journals of Technology in Society,* 11 (1), 1-13.

Freeman, E.M. (2015). *Narrative approaches in social work practice: A life span, culturally centred, strengths perspective.* Springfield (USA): Charles C Thomas Publisher.

Finlay, L. (2002), "Outing" the researcher: the provenance, process and practice of reflexivity, *Qualitative Health Research,* 12 (4), 531-545.

Froneberg, E. et al. (2015). Creating community: Social media, a tool for integration. *Btogether.be* (Research Proposal Vesalius College Brussels).

Giddens, A. (1991). The trajectory of the self. In: A. Giddens (Ed). *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age* (70-108). Stanford (California): Stanford University Press.

Gill, N., et al. (2016). Linguistic incomprehension in British asylum appeal hearings. *Anthropology Today,* 32 (2), 18-21.

Gonsalves, C.J. (1992). Psychological stages of the refugee process: A model for therapeutic interventions. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 23 (5). 382-389.

Goodman, S. et al. (2015). 'I can't go back because if I go back I would die': how asylum seekers manage talk about returning home by highlighting the importance of safety'. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology,* 25, 327-339.

Gorst-Unsworth, C. & Goldenberg, E. (1998). Psychological sequelae of torture and organised violence suffered by refugees from Iraq. Trauma-related factors compared with social factors in exile. *The British Journal of Psychiatry,* 172 (1), 90-94.

Gozdziak, M. E. & Tuskan, J, J., Jr. (2000). Operation Provide Refuge: the challenge of integrating behavioural science and indigenous approaches to human suffering. In: M. E. Gozdziak and D. J. Shandy (Eds.). *Rethinking refuge and displacement: selected papers on refugees and immigrants.* Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association

Grant, P.R. (1993). Reactions to intergroup similarities: Examination of similarity differentiation and the similarity attraction hypothesis. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science,* 25 (1), 28-44.

Groen, J. & Kader, S. (2016, April 21th). "Nemen vluchtelingen een rugzak vol trauma's mee?", *De Volkskrant,* Retrieval: 2016, April 21th, from: http://www.volkskrant.nl/4286302.

Grossman, M. (2015). Disenchantments: Counter-terror narratives and conviviality. In: F. Mansouri (Ed.) *Cultural, religious and political contestations* (71-90). Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.

Hall, S. (2013). The work of representation. In S. Hall, J. Evans, & S. Nixon (Eds.), *Representation,* (26-28). London: Sage Publications.

Hatoss, A. (2012). Where are you from? Identity construction and experiences of 'othering' in the narratives of Sudanese refugee-background Australians. *Discourse & Society*, 23 (1), 47-68.

Hepp, A., Bozdag, C. & Suna, L. (2011): Mediatized migrants: Media cultures and communicative networking in the diaspora. In: L. Fortunati, R. Pertierra and J. Vincent (Ed.): *Migrations, Diaspora, and Information Technology in Global Societies* (1-21). London: Palgrave.

Heisbourg, F. (2015). The strategic implications of the Syrian refugee crisis. *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy,* 57 (6), 7-20.

Higgins, E.T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94 (3), 319-340.

Hiller, H.H. & Diluzio, L. (2004). The interviewee and the research interview: analysing a neglected dimension in research. *SRCA/RCSA,* 41 (1), 1-26.

Hogg, M.A., Adelman, J.R. & Blagg, R.D. (2010). Religion in the face of uncertainty: an Uncertainty-Identity Theory account of religiousness. *Personality and Social Psychology Review,* 14 (1), 72–83.

Holm, Van, E.J. (2015). Applying the maker movement to refugee situations. *Social Science Research Network,* http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2603386.

Holmes, S.M. & Castañeda, H. (2016). Representing the "European refugee crisis" in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death. *American Ethologist,* 43 (1), 12-24.

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1999). Active interviewing. In: A. Bryman & R. G. Burgess (Eds.), *Qualitative research. Volume II* (pp. 105-121). London: Sage Publications.

Huberman, M. (1990). Linkage between researchers and practitioners: a qualitative study. *American Educational Research Journal,* 27 (2), 363-391.

Hugman, R., et al. (2011). When 'Do No Harm' is not enough: the ethics of research with refugees and other vulnerable groups. *British Journal of Social Work,* 41 (7), 1271-1287.

Jacobsen, K. (2006). Refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas: A livelihoods perspective. *Journal of Refugees Studies*, 19 (3), 273-286.

Johnson-Agbakwu, C.E., et al. (2016). Adaptation and acculturation scale for African refugee women. *Journal of Immigration Minor Health,* 18(1): 252–262.

Kagan, M. (2003). Is the truth in the eye of the beholder? Objective credibility assessment in refugee status determination. *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal,* 17, 367-414.

Karnieli-Miller, O. et al. (2009). Power relations in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research,* 19 (2), 279-289.

Kay, P. & Kempton, W. (1984). What is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? *American Anthropologist,* 86   (1), 65-79.

Kirkwood, et al. (2016). Who counts as an asylum-seeker or refugee? In: S. Kirkwood, S. Goodman, C. McVittie & A. McKinlay (Ed.) *The language of asylum, refugees and discourse* (78-95). London: Palgrave McMillan.

Knalf, K.A. & Howard, M.J. (1984). Interpreting and reporting qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health,* 7, 17-24.

Komeda, H. et al. (2009). Differences between estimating protagonists' emotions and evaluating readers' emotions in narrative comprehension. *Cognition and Emotion,* 23 (1), 135-151.

Korac, M. (2003). Integration and how we facilitate it: A comparative study of settlement and experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands. *Sociology*, 37 (1), 51-68. (1), 72–83.

Kusenbach, M. (2003). Street phenomenology: the go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography,* 4 (3), 455-485.

Lal, S., et al. (2015). Digital Story Telling: an innovative tool for practice, education and research. *Occupational Theory in Health Care,* 29 (1), 54-62.

Lenette, C., Cox, L. & Brough, M. (2015). Digital storytelling as a social work tool: Learning from   ethnographic research with women from refugee backgrounds. *British Journal of Social Work,* 45, 988-1005.

Lloyd, A., et al. (2013). Connecting with new information landscapes: Information literacy practices of refugees. *Journal of Documentation*, 69 (1), 121-144.

Louis, W.R., et al. (2006). Why do citizens want to keep refugees out? Threats, fairness and hostile norms in the treatment of asylum seekers. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 37 (1), 53-73.

Madianou, M. (2014). Polymedia communication and mediatized migration: an ethnographic approach. In: K. Lundtby (Ed.) *Mediatization of Communication* (323-346). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Marsh, J. (2004). Ritual, performance and identity construction: young children's engagement with popular culture media texts. In: J. Marsh (Ed.). *Popular culture, new media and digital literacy in early childhood*. London: Routledge.

Marshall, M.N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practice,* 13 (6), 522-525.

Marshall, S.L. & While, A.E. (1994). Interviewing respondents who have English as a second language: challenges encountered and suggestions for other researchers, *Journal of Advanced Nursing,* 19, 566-571.

Mautz, C. (2015). The refugee in Europe, *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 293-311.

Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review,* 62 (3), 279-300.

Miller, K.E. (2004). Beyond the frontstage: trust, access, and the relational context in research with refugee communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 33 (3-4), 217-227.

Municipality of Rotterdam (2015). "Veelgestelde vragen over AZC Rotterdam", Retrieval: 2016, March 29, from:
http://www.rotterdam.nl/Clusters/BSD/Directie%20Veiligheid/
Documenten%202015/Veelgestelde%20vragen%20AZC%20Rotterdam%2010
12%20%28dyn%29.pdf.

Municipality of Rotterdam (2015i). "Verslag rondetafelgesprekken op 30 november over azc Beverwaard", Retrieval: 2016, March 29, from:
http://www.rotterdam.nl/Clusters/BSD/Document%202015/Verslag%20rondetafelges
prekken%20azc%20Rotterdam%2030%20nov%202015.pdf

Murray, C. (2015). Rethinking multicultural/multiracial media and the integrity of immigrant integration. *Global Media Journal,* 8 (2), 5-14.

Pettigrew, T.F. & Tropp, L.R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 90 (5), 751-783.

Porter A., H. (2008). *The Cambridge introduction to narrative* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Preuss, M. (forthcoming). Severe worries and anxieties? Concerned citizens and their attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees. *The future we want: Global sociology and the struggles for a better world: 3rd ISA Forum of Sociology* (2016, Juli 12th).

Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rajaram, P.K. (2002). Humanitarism and representations of the refugee. *Journal of Refugee Studies.* 15 (3), 247-264.

Saleem, M., et al. (2015). Exposure to Muslims in media and support for public policies harming Muslims. *Communication research,* 1-29.

Shannon, P.J., et al. (2015). Characteristics of successful and unsuccessful mental health referrals of refugees. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research,* 1-14.

Shauer, M. et al. (2011). *Narrative Exposure Therapy: A short-term treatment for traumatic stress disorders.* Göttingen: Hogrefe Publishing.

Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information,* 22, 63-75.

Siddiquee, A. & Kagan, C. (2006). The internet, empowerment and identity: an exploration of participation by refugee women in a community internet project (CIP) in the United Kingdom (UK). *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 16 (3), 189-206.

Sondergaard, H.P. (2002). *Post-traumatic stress disorder and life events among recently re-settled refugees.* Stockholm, Sweden. Karolinska Institutet, Department of Public Health Sciences, Division of Psychosocial Factors and Health.

Steijaart, M. (2016, April 18th). "Wil kritische Enkhuizenaar in gesprek met vluchteling?", *De Volkskrant.* Retrieval: 2016, April 18th, from: http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/wil-   kritische-enkhuizenaar-in-gesprek-met-vluchteling~a4284166/.

Stenmark, H., et al. (2013). Treating PTSD in refugees and asylum seekers within the general health care system. A randomized controlled multicentre study. *Behaviour Research and Therapy,* 51, 641-647.

Ryan, D. A. et al. (2008). Psychological distress and the asylum process: a longitudinal study of forced migrants in Ireland. The Journal of Nervous and Mental disease, 196 (1), 37-45.

Sekala, S. (2015). Efficacy of narrative/ discourse analysis and auto-ethnographic research methods in communication/ media and ethnic conflict studies. In: S. Gibson. *Impact of communication and the media of ethnic conflict.* (38-58). Hershey (USA): IGI-Global.

Sillove, D. (1999). The psychosocial effects of torture, mass human rights violations, and refugee trauma. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease,* 187 (4), 200-207.

Talmy, S. (2010). Qualitative interviews in applied linguistics: from research instrument to social practice. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics,* 30, 128-148.

Teijlingen, V. E.R., & Hundley, V. (2001). The importance of pilot-studies. *Social Research Update.* Retrieval: 2016, April 26th, from: http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU35.pdf.

Titzmann, P.F. and Fuligni, A.J. (2015). Immigrants' adaptation to different cultural settings: A contextual perspective on acculturation. *International Journal of Psychology,* 50 (6), 407-412.

Tonkiss, F. (1998). Analysing discourse. In C. Seale (Ed.), *Researching society and culture* (245-260). London: Sage Publications.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] (2016). '2015 UNHCR country operations profile - Syrian Arab Republic'. Retrieval: 2016, April 12th, from: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486a76&submit=GO.

Valter, S. (2015), Violence and masculinity in the Syrian conflict. In: F. Canty (Red.), *Handbook of research on transitional justice and peace building in turbulent regions* (119-139). Hershey: IGI Global.

Veiku, M. & Siapera, E. (2015). Rethinking belonging in the era of social media: migration and presence. In: W. de Been, P. Arora and M. Hildebrandt (Eds.) *Crossroads in new media identity and law: the shape of diversity to come* (119-137). London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Verkuyten, M. & Yildiz, A.A. (2010). Religious identity consolidation and mobilization among Turkish Dutch Muslims. European Journal of Social Psychology, 40 (3), 436–447.

Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland (2015). *Vluchtelingen in getallen 2015.* Retrieval: 2016, April 12th, from:http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/sites/public/Vluchtelingenwerk/Cijfers/ VLUCHTELINGEN%20IN%20GETALLEN%202015%20definitiefst%20OO%2002 092015.pdf.

Weine, S. M. (1995). Psychiatric consequences of "ethnic cleansing": Clinical assessments and trauma   testimonies of newly resettled Bosnian refugees. *The American Journal of Psychiatry,* 152 (4), 536-542.

Wichman, A, L (2010). Uncertainty and religious reactivity: Compensation, repair, and inoculation. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 40 (1), 35-42.

Witteborn, S. (2015). Becoming (im) perceptible: Forced migrants and virtual practice. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 28 (4), 1-18.

Wood, G. (Ed). (1985). Labelling in Development Policy, In: G. Wood (Ed). *The Politics of Development Policy Labelling* (5-31). London: SAGE Publications

Zetter, R. (2014). Creating identities, diminishing protection and the securitisation of protection in   Europe. In: S. Kneebone, D. Stevens & L. Baldassar (Eds.) *Refugee protection and the role of law: Conflicting Identities* (22-35). London: Routledge.

Zoonen, Van. L. (2013). From identity to identification: fixating the fragmented self. *Media Culture and Society*, 35 (44), 44-51.

EPILOGUE

In the 15th century Desiderius Erasmus, citizen of Rotterdam, provided us the wisdom: "the entire world is your homeland". It is the slogan graduates from our University use.

Over the past two years I studied at the Erasmus School of History Culture and Communication, I came to love *my city* as if it were my homeland. Rotterdam has grown to be my safe harbour, the place I belong and I am happy to return to after traveling the world. I feel proud having to tell people I am a Rotterdam-citizen, feeling misunderstood with the city being stigmatized as an ugly, industrial area. I once described my feelings saying *"I followed the love and found Rotterdam".* Love here, equals my studies and of course my boyfriend Jelrik. I was searching for a purpose and a place to host my passion. With my movement to Rotterdam, all fundaments in my life however started to shake.

Graduating today, I realize that moving to Rotterdam made me find the girl *within* the city. Whilst becoming a Master in my discipline, I learned to master myself in real life. I experienced how it feels to almost loose, being distanced from everything that seemed to protect me. I had to start from scratch building my way back to the things I cared for. Actually, I had to learn how to care at all, especially caring about myself. With so much things falling apart, there was always this solid rock. Rough, plural, coloured and sparkling: there was always Rotterdam. They say that home is where your heart is. I would like to say: a heart beats only where it feels like home. You cannot 'be' without the safety of belonging. You cannot love, lacking the fundaments of a home. Rotterdam really allowed me to explore my belonging. Rotterdam allowed me to love and to 'be'.

Finalizing my thesis, so many thoughts capture my mind. I might be superstitious, but it is just hard *not* to see how my thesis was meant to be. In fact: it is strange how I did not see the parallels between my personal identity search, and refugees' search for belonging before. Though I will (luckily) never be able to experience how it feels to be stripped of from your roots, I empathize with their search for a 'home'.

Having a place to feel safe and to actualise yourself to your full potentials should be a fundamental right for every human being. As a Western girl, I was granted with this right at birth. Beyond our implicit plight to use this privilege, we should strive for the universality of identity rights, i.e.: the human right to define your belonging, your routes and your dreams. *The right to 'be'.* We may not be able to stop war and human-repression; we may not have the means to take care of all refugees' and migrants the current crisis provides. We should however do the

most we can do to offer the victims of Syrian civil-war a temporal 'home' where they can mourn, recover, stabilize and hope for a future life. A context that stimulates them, anew, to belong, love and… 'be'.

"The entire world is your homeland" (DESIDERIUS ERASMUS)*,*

        "but only if you're allowed to belong" (Willemijn Dortant, June 2016).

Sensitive topics derived from literature review

- Saliency of post-refuge vs pre-refuge experiences to the concept of the self
    - Attachment to roots (ethnicity, physical location, left-behinds, nationalism)
    - Experiences with the host culture (and appreciation)
    - Experiences of stigmatization
    - Expectations for the future
    - Feelings about return

- Personal coping strategy:
    - Dealing with trauma
    - Dealing with experiences in the current context (boredom, anxiety, hostility)

- Legal coping strategy:
    - Awareness of legal procedures
    - Fear for return

- Bridging vs. Bonding capital:
    - Relations with the refugee community
    - Preservation of rituals/ties
    - Relations with the outer context
    - Experienced accessibility of the out-group
    - Meaning of these relationships (functional, symbolic, emotional)
    - Feelings of belonging

- Communication strategies:
    - Knowledge retrieval: how, what, why, who?
    - Social networking: how, what, why, whom?
    - Meaning of communication in everyday life
    - Information literacy: knowledge of social media?

Design for Pilot-Interview

1. Introduction

1.1.Research project in General

1.2.Background Researcher

1.3.Aims Pilot Study

- Understanding of the traumatized condition of Syrian refugees shortly after arrival
- Defining how my appearance as a researcher is understood by my informants, and how the perception of our mutual relationship may influence the interview
- Assessing to what extent and why 'bogus' answering may be expected, how I should recognize it, and how I can deal with it

1.4.Consent-Form

2. Introduction Informant

- Background, family
- Reason for refuge, how, with whom…
- Asylum-procedure after refuge
- Integration in Dutch Society; difficulties; experiences
- Current social status
- Preservation of ties with homeland/ refugee community
- Involvement in current asylum-practices/ knowledge about
- Expectations for the future

3. Sensitive topics

3.1.Adjustment –frameworks vs. topic-list

- Emotional state after arrival
- Experiences in the AZC context
- Considerations of safety, attachment, justice, existential feelings, meaning
- Interactions with others

- Boredom vs. anxiety

- Under-, vs. overprotection

- Ability/willingness to communicate

- Linguistic boundaries

3.2.Researcher-effects

- Opinion about researchers/scientific research

- Experiences with authority

- Gender-balances

- Status of social research in Syrian culture

- Curiosity vs. disdain

- Equality of relationship: formalities vs. kinship

- Context for go-along/interaction context/researcher characteristics

3.3.Assessing authenticity

- Risk on distortion

- Experiences prior refuge

- Fear of return

- Signs of bias (verbal/ non-verbal)

- Possibility to insist on true stories?

4. Conclusion

4.1.*Generalizability of Accounts*

- Information about current conditions

- Experiences of others

- Increases protectiveness/ fear for return?

- Severity of trauma?

4.2. *Other*

- Summary of interview

- Refinements/ adjustments

- Questions and remark

<center>**APPENDIX C.**</center>

Consent Form

You are invited to engage in an interview that should contribute to the actual ethnographic research of refugee identity formation in the near future. I am grateful you decided to cooperate with me as an informant, thereby confirming you will share experiences and memories about your previous asylum-procedure. However, it goes unquestioned your agreement on participation is voluntarily, and can be retreated at any point during our interaction.

The interview you will engage in, serves as an ex-ante inquiry to increase the feasibility and ethical righteousness of the study I will propose to the Central Organ allocation Asylum-seekers (COA) and AZC-Beverwaard (Rotterdam). In June, about 600 new refugees will be hosted in the municipality of IJsselmonde, among which a majority will be of Syrian descent. My proposed research aims to understand their processes of identit -formation; and the meaning communicative strategies may provide in the post-refuge phase. Exploring processes of cultural redefinition in the AZC-context, I hope to contemplate an improved efficacy of socio-psychological assistance; and empower refugees' self-actualization, and cultural integration.

Purpose of the interview:

Unfortunately, I have experienced difficulties to conduct participatory fieldwork among the refugee community of Syrians so far. COA, responsible for the support of research projects including asylum-seekers, has disapproved my participation among AZC refugees. My intrusion as a researcher would negatively affect their feelings of safety. Voluntary workers assisting refugees, moreover insisted my request to participate proved my paucity of empathy and my lack of respect for the traumatized refugee. I wish to emphasize my intentions are eminently directed at the improvement of refugees' well-being, both in and beyond the AZC context; both during and after research participation. To prove my integrity as a researcher and increase chances participation in an AZC will be harmless, I should be able to understand the sensitivity of topics for discussion from a refugee-perspective. Moreover, I should reflect on my role as a researcher and the way my presence will be understood. Lastly, I wish to understand to what extent, and how distortions of stories may be expected whilst using traumatized war victims as informants.

In order to explore the previously mentioned questions, I ask you, as a member of the Syrian refugee community, to talk with me about your previous experiences during the post-refuge phase. Having passed the procedure of asylum-application yourself, you may provide me with some crucial facts I should take into account whilst cooperating with AZC inhabitants. I empathically ask you to speak about you own personal experiences while responding to the questions. Please indicate when you disclose information about observations or experiences others shared with you. Notwithstanding the fact such information might be useful, for reasons of authenticity first-hand information should be separated from second-hand stories.

Procedure, risks and rights:

If you decide to participate you will be asked to reconsider your experiences of previous allocation directly after your arrival in the Dutch context. Specifically I am interested to understand how traumatization defined your everyday life, probably limiting possibilities for mundane (inter) actions. I will therefore request you to define, if possible, how experiences of the Syrian war, remained of influence during your life in the AZC context. Be aware of the fact that reflecting on AZC-experiences and traumatic experiences in the Syrian context, may influence your emotional conditions. It is important to emphasize you should mention discomfort, or your wish to renounce from further questioning any time during the interview. Your psychological well-being should not be harmed by research participation. It is your right and responsibility to recognize when further participation would have negative consequences.

If you do not understand a question, you should be encouraged to ask for clarification. If you have no answer, please say so too. Moreover, it is your right as a research participant to have insights into interview-data after the research is conducted.

To improve the accuracy of data-analysis, your agreement with the terms and conditions will allow me to audio-record the interview. The audial data will be transcribed for analysis. The entire interview will last about 60-90 minutes. If this amount of time proves insufficient, another date for interviewing can be scheduled. Moreover, you will be asked to contact me any time you recall important information, or wish to add or refine your disclosures, after the interview has closed. This can be done either via e-mail, or telephone. Information provided beyond the interview-setting may be considered as research data only with your permission.

Confidentiality:

I will take the following steps to keep information about you confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage:

- If you wish to be anonymized, your personal data will be substituted
- The information you provide will be included as a background to the research proposal handed over to COA and AZC-Rotterdam. Moreover, both my supervisor Professor Koen van Eijck and his co-reader will evaluate the data to grade my research project
- There will be no references made to direct quotes that might trace to you
- Sharing of data with other individuals or agencies beyond the before-mentioned, should be accorded in advance. Without permission, no publishing may occur

Contact information:

You may contact me via telephone at 0636006472 or email willemijndortant@hotmail.com if you have questions about the study, any problems, unexpected physical or psychological discomforts, any injuries, or think that something unusual or unexpected is happening.

Please feel free to contact my supervisor if you have any questions about the organisation of masters' graduation, the workings of the exam committee and the faculty regulations about ethics and consent.

Professor Koen Van Eijck

T: +31104082461
E: vaneijck@eshcc.eur.nl
Woudestein, Van der Goot building, M7-13
P.O. Box 1738, NL-3000 DR

Yours sincerely,

Willemijn Dortant

Consent of Subject (or Legally Authorized Representative)

Signature of Subject: Date:
_____

Transcript of Interview with M. Baghdadi,

Date: 2016 April 26th

Location: VU-University (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Time: 115 minutes

Conducted by: W.M.M. Dortant

Transcribed by: W.M.M. Dortant

Note: In the transcript, researcher interferences are showed in italics. Keywords are used to capture the topic of question. M.'s accounts however are integrally covered.

Transcript of the Interview

Introduction of research: explanation audio-recording, research origins, difficulties of fieldwork, importance ex-ante inquiries

Background, refuge story…

"Well, I am Mohammed Baghdadi, but not from Iraq, but from Syria. I am twenty four years old. I have done medicines in Syria four years. And well, our situation in Syria was, my situation was super good. I studied there in a private University. And suddenly, well, the government of Assad started bombing our city, and so. (…) In Idlib, in the north of Syria, and my village is called Albar *(Writing down)*. That is the village there, Albahra, in the province of Idlib. Well, in Syria, we don't have, well, villages belong to city. Here in the Netherlands it is, village is village. Done. (*Laughs*) I went to University in Damascus, the capital city. (…) I lived in Damascus. So, for the four years I studied there. And when the family was in danger, I sort of, I., I had sort of a political activity on Facebook, with all the Syrians who wanted freedom, and still want, of course…"

Moment of escalation violence…

"That was in, well, let me see… 2012. End of 2012, yeah. (…) Than Albahra was bombed, yeah. (…) I was in Damascus. That is really 250 kilometres of distance. It is like the highest point of the Netherlands, to Heerlen. (…) I went to my parents two weeks, every two weeks."

So, you experienced bombings yourself?

"Yes, yes for certain".

Religion family? Importance religion to the situation of family

"Sunni. (…) Well, the balance is like, 80% is Sunni and the other percentage is other religions. Alevi, Christian… Name it. Jews, a small, a very small percentage. And Shia. They are the very close friends of the Alevi. (…) The bombing started gradually, but in 2012, in 2012 the situation was, in 2012 a bombing came down next to the house of my family. And then one of our neighbours, our neighbour families, in 2012 they all died. And then we thought: 'Oeh', we thought, this is really un…unacceptable."

Lost family members?

"No. But we did loose neighbours, neighbour-family."

Decision to leave

"Well, on the way there are snipers, nobody can move. Everywhere snipers from the Assad-government. And we really had to leave at three in the night, it was night and we really had to shut down the light of the car. Without the light. Until, about… 1.5 hours. Until we were at the borders of Turkey and Syria."

How do you prepare?

"Well, you have…you want to go, and you don't know. What is the *doerst,* and what is the bear necessity? What should I take? And you look, well, you look at the house, all your stuff and so. And you only take such a little bag. What is the *doerst*? And the most important thing for you is, in my case, I have than of course: My IPad, My telephone, my I-phone. My I-pad… Sorry, wait, I have to remember. My laptop, take with me. Two IPads (*Laughs*).And, what again? And oh yeah, my white coat. Yes, my white coat is really, to me… I am a doctor so… I had there, the last two years in 2012, the last year, I did sort of an internship at the hospital, and there we all got sort of our white coat. Everybody than started to call us as 'doctor'. The called us like doctor. And, to me, that white coat was really important, so I took it with me also".

Directly left after deciding they should leave? How traveling?

"Well, yeah. So, evening, the day before we left, it was evening and we were looking, and so we went to search for the car, that could, that could bring us to the borders. Between Turkey and Syria. And at three o'clock in the night, directly leaving (…). With my family. (…) With his car. He is, he is known in our village that he works with his car, works sort of as a taxi. But

we really went with nine people, so… (…) Without my parents. Nine people, my parents excluded. So eleven all together (…) I am the oldest (*Laughs*) So, I am 24, and you should, per person detract 2 years. So… (*Laughs*), 22, 20, so… (*Laughs*) Yeah, but then, I was not 24. I was 21, so… The youngest were for sure babies."

Taxi until?

"Taxi may only drive to Syria, the last point of Syria… There he has, other taxi, other taxi searching…"

Difficult to cross the borders?

"No, no, we had sort of a passport. So it was a little easy, also because, also if you…go illegal into Turkey, also was….. Little easy, yes. In our time. But now, it is now a little dangerous"

And then, plan?

"Well, now… (*Laughs*) We had no plan. Well, now, well, if you crossed the border in Turkey and you are in Turkey, now than you're really like: 'Wow!' I have, we have, we really have had a hard time, but now it's over. I don't even want to think about a plan. Nothing. So, I am safe now, in a safe place, and chances of…now there is no chance that there will be helicopters above you, and directing, (*Mumbling*) don't have to come, so… Very quiet, very safe feeling. Yeah" (…) And I remember, my brother, he… then there came a real, a normal airplane, so… a passenger's airplane, crossing the borders. And then he went, he (brother) really went running, sort of, to the walls. He thought that the airplane was, a sort of, normal reaction. Do you know that voice? (*Knocks on the table*) That voice, when you are in Syria, when you hear that voice, you really go under the ground. This voice means that, or, a very… a bombing is very is from really far, or if the tank, than you here that (*Knocks on the table*), tick! So, also in the classroom, everything… You may never do (*Knocks on the table*). (…) Immediately, you sort of have to run immediately, to search for a safe place. You think that it is safe, but it is not like that. They always say that… there are always… You have walls, and, how how, how do we call that? (*Points at pillar*) I mean, you have walls, and, ehm, and you have something that's… So for example here, you have here one… look… (*Pointing again*, *I mention it is called a pillar*), Yes, pillar, yes, I don't know whether it is correct, but… so, you have here one, and there one. And they always say that that is the safe spot to be next to. So, chances you stay alive, here is big. So, when you hear the noise (*knocks on the table*)… Immediately go to, what was again his name? Pillar (*Laughs*). To the pillar, just, hanging there, hugging… (*Laughs*)".

So, in Turkey you immediately feel safer?

"Right, yeah, that's right. You can go in the streets…Here, you don't worry. Whether you sleep in the streets, or go into the water. Everything is safer than there (i.e.: Syria). So, everything… Okay, I become for example a homeless person, that's fine with me! But I have some sort of, safe... I may be cold, chances I may have a cold, get sick… It doesn't matter, because you are in a safe place (…)"

Living conditions?

"There was no hostage, but, I had a sort of friend, who for me searched for me for a house to rent. But for… for…and I talk here in the opinion of all the Syrians: Once you are in Turkey: it doesn't matter! You sleep in street, well…you as a Dutch person, you see us go into the sea and you think, that is really dangerous. And you are really shocked how they, how they dare do that. But to us? Sea! Wow! Doesn't matter. That is really safer. You are in a boat, a rubber boat. Well, that's safer than there. Here, for example, if the rubber boat, bomb… how we call that? Collapse? Than you can always, for example, swimming, or there is always the chance that he police comes and gets you from the water. But, there, in Syria, as the bombing comes… At least 8 people, sometimes 12, sometimes really 20 or so… And you can imagine, as in, as in, in the *Doe'a* in the *Doe'a*, we are Muslims, we have sort of a, the *Sallat*. So than that is where most men from the village meet in the mosque. And you can imagine, well, if a bombing *(Knocks on the table),* gets into the mosque. Than is, really, really big disaster. ".

I would feel afraid, especially leaving all my belongings behind…

"Exactly, well…You get priorities. In the Netherlands, not leaving your house if you are not forced. But there? Leaving your home? Leaving wife? Leaving husband? Leaving family? You come… Sometimes... you get in really, very dangerous situations, that you so my son, okay? I safe place. So really… And it happened, that some people, some women have left their children, lost. That they went to one place and children went to other place. Because if the bombing comes… Well, yeah, so… I really cannot describe that situation. I can just not describe such situation with the words"

Still the same sensitivity?

"Well…For me it's sort of over now. But now I tell you the story… I thought well I have sort of, well I thought would never be traumatized or so, but now I tell you the story, I am like: 'Wow'."

How difficult was it to leave?

"Well, I did think I would return very soon. But it wasn't like that. We, all Syrians went, most Syrians went into the streets and we thought, well, he never goes, maybe one year or so… I go to Turkey maybe two months or so. And that is the reason, when we went to Turkey, we really were at the borders. We didn't went to Istanbul or so. We were still close to the borders. I kept going back and forth to Syria and to Turkey and so. Really at the borders. I found an emergency hospital at the border, and I came to work there as a volunteer. I, I had the feeling I really would return to Syria. I said, oh: one months, maybe two months at the most, and then Assad will be gone and we all go back into Syria. But it wasn't like that (…). Here is the point. As you fly, when you decide to fly, you really don't think, thinking is for later".

Why leaving Turkey?

"We had in Turkey sort of, three months a stay. And then… we had a sort of money and that money kept… losing. So, decreasing. And we had no, we had no income. So: now? What do we have to do now? The situation is not only one month, two months, we are now in Turkey three months and the situation did not ended. So what did we have to do? I decided with my mom to just go to Greece. And there maybe go to a place in Europe where we maybe… Because we, all children, they had, we not had school, and we stayed always at house. So: what is the use of life if, if… If you cannot send your children to school?"

Safety not enough anymore…

"Here is the point, so my family, the rest of my family, was in Turkey. So we safe. So I always went back and forth (to Syria), so for me, was really… I stayed in the situation. I stayed in the situation, oh, comes bombing…"

Why keep on going back to provide aid in Syria?

"Well, here is the point. You think, we studied always at high school, and at primary school, nationalistic. How we should be nationalistic. We should keep our nation. And then you think, at a certain point: Oh, I have for example a bit of knowledge. But… Maybe I can contribute to the help of the people there (i.e.: Syria). Because not everybody has the money to go to Turkey, or live there. The majority of people are living at the borders, in camps, in, very….eh, very horrible situation. So I was like, Okay, I go there…maybe… help a little maybe (…). Not as a doctor, but as a doctor-assistant (…). Sometimes for example for a week. And then, sometimes for two weeks and then back".

Afraid of crossing the borders again and again?

"Yes, but, sometimes, at some point you get tolerance, a sort of tolerance. I'll die? Okay, there are four people who had died. Am I better than those people? (...) If you enter the hospital, and you see all the he has lost his legs or he is, he is in the intensive care… Why should I go? I am not better than those people. If I go, then… I safe myself. But all the other people are… so, they are all remaining in a very dangerous situation. So I must…help".

Hard to leave those people and go to Greece?

"Right, yeah. Leaving for Greece, that was, it was really horrible. But at some point, they had enough doctors at the borders. So we as students, eh…those without diplomas, we… well... there came some regulations at the hospital that students may no longer work, while there are enough doctors. So why do we need students? (…) So I was between two options. So, so I was back… So, at the borders there were enough doctors. But, as long as, as long as you are deeper into Syria, there was a lack of doctors. Because at the borders it is a little safer than inside. So, I might still work inside, but that is really, really dangerous. So I than said: no. I just want… (…) And here, here there is also another reason. I left for example the University, I have left my studies, my study unfinished, left it. But my fellow-students, are continued their study. That was, that was for me also an issue. The continued with their studies, they are fifth grade now. And I, yeah, I couldn't go back to the borders, or… o mean, Damascus".

So, life continue is Damascus?

"So yeah, in Damascus. Assad, I you say nothing against Assad, in the regions of the Assad… you are safe. So than you hear all the noises, but it never comes to you. The other people, for example Shia… oh sorry, so… the most are Sunni or so. So they are… Assad only bombs those people who are against him. But the other's, no… And the centre of Damascus, they are all, all Assad-regions. All pro-Assad. For them was: safe".

Continue to Greece after three months, who, how why?

"I, my mother and I. Well, it is, now. Look. There (i.e.: Turkey), than it was really difficult to, eh, to find money for eleven persons. And you want, you want to take as many people as possible. And, we already knew that in the Netherlands, or in the whole of the European Union, the family reunion. (…) That's common knowledge."

Did you know it was difficult to enter Europe?

"Yes, I knew it is really difficult. But for me it was: okay. Let us go. For me it was sort of: we go. Without a feeling. My feelings were really, I sort of lost my feelings. (…) My father is really nationalistic, he really want stay there *(Laughs)*. My mother, my mother always agrees with me. So I said to my mother, that it is good for the children that they can go to school there. And she was okay."

So, you travelled by boat and arrived in Europe?

"No, not exactly. With the boat, first time, I was caught by the police the first time. If the police gets you on the way, than the hang your boat, like this, with a rope, and then they bring u back to Turkey. (…). It was not a rubber boat, for the first time it was wooden boat. (…)"

How did you know the smuggler?

"In a certain place in Turkey, then, if you are there, and say: to Greece, then there are a thousand people (…). For the first time, about a thousand euros, more than… a little more. And that's for two persons. (…) About 1.5 hours".

Afraid being caught by the police?

"For sure, but I felt tranquil than. So the Greece police, than give to Turkish police. I was caught by the police and put on their boats. It was safe at least. They gave me food and so on (…). And then jail. For sure! It used to be, you may not just go to Greece. (…) Underneath the ground for 12 days, and then you may out. With a piece of paper that you… (…) With my mother, in the same prison. But she was up, at the upper level, and I was the lowest, underneath the ground"

Scared?

"Nah… it was a little safer. So you just sit there, quietly, for 12 days, and then you may go out *(laughs)*".

Second try?

"Again. Well, we had our money at the smuggler and he gives sort a, he has a guarantee. You stay, your money stays with somebody. As long as you keep trying…for free. Some people are really evil, they take the money and… gone. But, a sort of third person. (…) The other was with a rubber boat. And the smuggler had decided: wait a minute. I go with a rubber boat, no wooden boat, and that rubber boat…as, as, the police caught him, he, the gives the money and he may travel for free, and then with the knife so….eh…. 'lek maken'"

How many people on the boat:

"17".

Arriving in Greece:

"You are like: Oh, you are Oh: I arrived in Greece now, I am safe country, safe now! Oooh! (…). The I-Pad was lost, there was sort of water in. I still had, I still had, but it was broken (…) I had nothing, but I was so happy! So you went to the police office there to get, to get a paper. With this paper you can go to Athens (…). The smuggler had told us so".

Contacted family?

"I called my family. And they said… they was like….: 'Ah, you are in Greece', so the time, the time to again meet, that we would meet again, is close, so… Hey! (…) You are like, you are in Greece, so you are in Greece, you are in Europe. You may go with the train to England or the Netherlands or whatever you want. (…) But, really, we had for two months, and two months, nothing happened. And my mother she missed her children. (…)

Where did u stay?

"Three months, in Mitilini, Miti…and Lesbos and Athens and... eh… I don't remember. (…) Well, the first half months, was in a centre. Then I get paper, than you must look for a house, or a room. Until you leave. But you don't know how long you stay in Athens. (…) There are many rooms, but very crowded. With very high price. And a lot of people. There are… 4 rooms, and per room maybe four persons. You can also for yourself, but than pay more, a lot more. (…) It was good we were with the two of us, but at some point my mother really couldn't handle missing her children. So her feeling was really…She started to cry every day and so. And that had a huge effect on me, that I…. 'Oh, how should we get to, to France?' Okay, to France, but how? And then you meet someone who might… but than two days, seven days later he can't… And after two month, I still know, I think my mom, she was decided, she wanted to go back to Turkey. And at that moment, I decided… I… I once tried to go with a fake passport, but the police got me, so… the Greek police."

Afraid to be send back to Turkey?

"No no, a lot of people try and they are say to you… If you go and try…Or it works out, or the police takes your passport from you and send you away, so…"

So, when you see your mother like that, you really try everything…

"And here is, I came at a point… My mom she had the passport in the airport with the headscarf. Of course you are Arabic, are you refugee or something like that. So they, more controlling, they control you more. And it was really impossible. And every person that you ask, he says: what, it's, you see… the smugglers in Greece always ask: what is the colour of the eyes, and what is the colour of the hair from your mother? And, she looks blond? Or… *(Laughs),* well, yeah, now…. For example: somebody who really looks like the European appearance, for him it is really easy to come here. But for the others it is… very difficult. So, if you have no headscarf, blond. It costs maybe 2000 euros, to Netherlands coming. If you: headscarf? 5000 euros. With not blond hair and, nothing, your appearance is really Arab, than you have to, 8000 euro or higher paying."

So, you paid a lot…?

"Yeah, for us it was… Certainty. I wanted something with certainty"

Why not stay in Greece?

 "No. Well, now, you have… Daily expenses in Syria, eh… Greece, are higher. You would better stay in Turkey then in Greece"

But why exactly Europe, not Turkey… you are all together there

"Well, I told you, my future is gone. I want to finish my studies. In Turkey that is very difficult. (…) In Turkey, the government does nothing for you. You have to work and meanwhile take care of yourself. And there… you most imagine. Two million people (i.e.: refugees) entered the country. So also, the impression Turkish people have is: 'Oh, he is Syrian. So he may work, but maybe he will make one third or a quarter of the average salary. So if you for example get eight euro's an hour, for the Syrian its two euro. And I don't know the language. The Turkish language, it's different from our language. And you have nothing there! (…) In the Netherlands, it is different. The government takes care of the people. They can go to school, for free, they pay your school. The future is just better."

So how did you get to Europe?

"With the boat, to Italy. A little bit bigger boat, no rubber boat. While we had to stay there four or five days. It was from Crete. Maybe you know, Crete…That was the other country I wanted to say. So from Crete, or Heraklion, so, from Herklion, you have to go there, to Italy. So if you see the card, it is sort of…five days. With the normal boat, the big boat, it is maybe 1.5 days, or 48 hours."

Conditions on the boat?

"Well, the conditions were a little, well… Not so good. Not so perfect. But the disadvantage was: the boat goes like this *(Demonstrates a U-shape),* so not like, straight, but, so… *(Points out again).* A U-shape, you always go from the upper to the low, and then you get the nausea, and…and… you cannot eat anymore. And you really get not to eat for five days.(…) You are really with a lot of people, maybe 40 or so, really a lot (…) Eh…. 3000 500. 3500, per person. But that was just really cheap".

And then you arrive…

"After four days I was in Italy on the ground… I could not stand any more. I really couldn't find my balance. I wanted to run because I, I, I did not want the Italian police to get me, take me away. So stood up, running but, *dush,* on the ground because my balance, I really could not balance myself. I really could not stand up."

Was there police?

"No, we arrived at night, so there was no police (…). After half an hour, well than you could walk again. I wanted to go find a taxi, but we were really in a village. There were no cars. You have nothing… And then at some moment, we get really tired and you want to get some sleep. You haven't slept well the whole night, so you really wanna sleep. But I was really cold. How can we sleep? I had decided with my mom, we go sleep. I go lie on my right hand, she lays on her left hand. Back to back. Sort of, to keep each other warm (L*aughs quietly*)"

And then it turns into day…

When it was day, and then you want, I, I, we woke up, and I thought: 'Oh, oh, where am I? In Italy, okay!' I had took my back, with my mother, and we went, so, to search for a hotel or a taxi. And then the police got us *(Laughs).* And then we had to stay in some sort of camp. And we had to give our fingerprints. And if you give there your fingerprint, so you give your fingerprint, you may not go to another country anymore. But I said together with my mother, we said, we go to another country, we go to France".

But, not possible because of the fingerprint

"When you give fingerprint, you may do everything. If you give your fingerprint, you may go where you want. They give you a sort of room, room, and there you still have to follow the

procedure. So, still six months or eight months or something like that. But in Italy it was really hard to reunite the family. And still, you have to take care of yourselves, so for yourself"

Difficult to go to France?

"Not so easy. But we went by train to France. Well, when we were in France we… So, we wanted to go to England. Because, I thought: I speak the language, English. So maybe that would be a little easier to integrate into society, with my studies. But, yeah when I gave my fingerprint in Italy I… From France to England you have to pay much more again, and…and chances you will be accepted are very small. So I said: now, no, we are not going to do this anymore. We want to go to a country where the procedure is easier and quicker. So yeah, okay let's go to the Netherlands".

How did you know it was easier there?

"You have all the sites on Internet, Facebook, so we knew in the Netherlands, Netherlands at that time it was one month of procedure or something. Now, no, now its 12 months or six months or so. (…)The procedure was very fast. You know, you may also go to Sweden, but then you have to wait 8 months to get a reply. But you can also go to the Netherlands, and there you wait one month for a reply. So of course you will choose for Netherlands. But the chances you will get, eh, get an asylum there: really low, because your fingerprint is still in Italy, so…"

Chances low, but still…

"We go try… I was really, I was… I said, I was in Ter Apel, and I had a conversation with VVN (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland), and also with the IND, *Immigratie* and…. Something more, and they told me very honestly: 'The chance you will get an asylum here is 0%'. And I said to the man: but, look, I am here, the first day in the Netherlands. Tell me, 99% and 1%, than maybe for the 1 percent, then I live here for the 1%. He said: 'No, 100%, and we going to talk to Italy to get your procedure, to, to send you back there, and you have to finish your procedure there".

You came with the train to the Netherlands?

"Well, no. I had, well. Wait a second. I did not came to the Netherlands with the train, I came with a sort of car, a car. Because it was easier. I did not, I did not wanted to give my fingerprint somewhere else anymore. (…) I arrived in Amsterdam, in Amsterdam, in a police centre. *(Laughs).* So in Amsterdam, Amstelveen, I was still looking for that place *(laughs).* I could find him nowhere. And the man said, no, we cannot receive you, not receive you. You must

somewhere else, so he said to me: Ter Apel. Or Utrecht. I know, I, after that, I went to Utrecht. I have, I went to an AZC there. AZC, AsielZoekers Centrum, and there they also said that you should go somewhere else. So to Ter Apel. There they said I had to go to Ter Apel…"

And they tell you: 0% chance you can stay. What does it do with you?

"Depression, some sort of depression. You get depressed. Yeah, to me, it was not so important. I was really, I had really a period, I was a person without a feeling. (…) But my mom, yeah my mom was really depressed"

Are those the two options you have: be depressed or block your feelings?

"Yeah, you feel nothing anymore, or you will have a very hard time. (…) Only people who gave their fingerprint somewhere else, the Dublin agreement. If not, people where kind of happy, I think. Because they could stay, an here it is a safe country"

Very important to determine situation: having given the fingerprint or not.

"Life in an AZC, to me it was just super *(Laughs)*. You see, you was someone who heard *(knocks on the table)* and then I really got scared. I want to show you a picture…when I was in Syria, I had really fat cheeks, but during the bombing, in that period in Syria, I really lost about five kilo's in weight. I didn't eat anymore. Well, in the University we learned, that if u go into surgery, than you should not eat for six hours, before the surgery, six hours; and, really, I always had the feeling, that if there always would be a bombing, I might have to go into surgery, so I may not eat. So my appetite, it was really really small. (…) But in the Netherlands, I was really happy. You have everything here. A sort of life. I may not stay here, that… that to me was a fact. Because they said I must go back. But, I was happy. If not here, I may go back to Italy. I go live there. I, I, maybe I have to work and study at the same time, but it's okay. All better than going back to Syria. (*Laughs*) But my mom, it was different, because she left all the little children you know. She had sort of a feeling of guilt. And if somebody maybe wouldn't eat. Always talking with them…"

So you and your mother experiences it entirely different…

"And here I wanted to add: I really wanted to discuss my situation with other people. And I really wanted to explain the Dutch people that, what happened to me and how I came here… But you don't find anybody. You just sit there in the AZC. And, I didn't, I couldn't do the language… But I always had the feeling that those people around the AZC, they were always looking like… Not with normal eyes looking at us. So okay…Now I am, I am really surprised

that you, that the COA told you, well, no these people are really traumatized and you may not talk to them. Why not? Look, as, if as somebody is sick, and you come. Your friend. One of your friends… is sick… Is the solution to abandon him and not to talk with him? Or is it just different, you go to him and talk to him, say to him: be strong and so on. So I am just really surprised that, that the COA told you that."

How was life in AZC?

"You get three meals a day, and you, should, you should get your food. And the rest of your life, you just sit and do nothing. (…) Nothing, just waiting. (…) I was talking to people. I was really dedicated to learn the Dutch language"

Could you learn?

"No, I was really dedicated to learn, but no. They told me, you will go back to Italy. So I thought, so…so I told myself… Well, it would be better to learn Italian, instead of Dutch *(Laughs quietly)*".

So, you sit there, and wait…

"For three days. You are for three days in the AZC, then you go to a different AZC. You make a photo, x-ray photo, a Rontgen-photo. And nothing with your lungs, than you may go to another AZC, to Wageningen."

And life continues the same way?

"You have computers, you print print things. So I was printing and thinking how do I pronunciate this word? And what means that and what means that? And I started: 'alstublieft', and I wanted to speak, but sometime I was like…No, no I don't need to speak it anymore. Why? And you also have an office there where you may ask questions. And I went there and they told me: I don't want to disappoint you, but, you cannot stay here, you just have to go to Italy".

But you continued try?

"So than, a little less. I was really willing to, but then not anymore (…) I went on the internet all the time, Facebook, talking with friends. Friends from there, from Syria. It was really, we were all in Syria. And then suddenly: one in Sweden, one is in England, the other is in Germany. *(Laughs)*"

What do you tell each other?

"We asked each other: how are you? And we always asked about the procedure. (…) Yeah, you compare, but I thought: I am going back to Italy".

Disappointed?

"No, me no. Right, I wanted to learn the Dutch language first because I wanted to continue studying. But when they told me no, then I said: well okay, then not. Look, I waited two months for getting a reply, you know, that was just a little bit difficult to me. Look, if I had heard immediately, I would be like: Okay, Italy, bye bye. (…) So and then, after that, I went to Arnhem. In Arnhem, there starts the procedure. Look, I was there for about five weeks. And there it's really like: all people get their status and leave. And I just sat there. (…)".

How was your mother than?

"My mother was really depressive. She cries all the time. (…) She may go to the G.P. But what can he do? Look, the problem is like this, Ì want to be with my children, I miss them. (…)"

And then the procedure starts…

"And then, there is the first day of the procedure. And I told my mother: In a week we will be in Italy. And she looked at me with eyes…Not good. Well, so, well because the children call us all the time: Mamma, when we are going to see you again? But she didn't replied them. So it was for her really difficult to tell them. I don't know, but it is, it is… as soon as possible. (…)".

Procedure

"So I went there, the first day. And I went there, you know, just the first talk. And if you may finish your procedure here, then you should come a second time. But I you should go back to another country, than one talk suffices. And for me it was like: I just go one day and then, done. I don't go… And when I went there for the first day… we were sitting there, and then there came this woman to us. And she came to get my mother, and she went to do the talk with her. And I set there, just waiting. At suddenly this woman came to me, and she asked me: are you Mohammed. And I said: yes, I am Mohammed. Of course I said it in English *(laughs)*. And she said: we got a reply from Italy, and you may not go back to Italy. So, Netherlands was obliged to keep us here. (…) According to the Italian authorities that we came from Greece to Italy. So… so according to Dublin: the first country, the first safe country in Europe you enter, you have to go back to. So Greece. And the European Union doesn't send refugees back to Greece any more, since the conditions there are so bad. So really, I cried, I laughed… All of it. All feelings came in one second (*Crying whilst speaking*). I may stay! I may laugh, I may cry, I

may do anything! (…) Sometimes, you don't believe your ears, your hearing. What? Really? Again please? So to me that was really… I was really, really happy! (…) My mother was inside, in the conversation, and I was outside. And the old women to me. And my mother had been inside, so she didn't knew that I knew. She came and was like: whaaaaaah! She was crying and went to hug me and so on (…)

Did you called your family immediately?

"Yeah, for certain. And my family was super happy (…). They still had to follow a procedure, but then you have at least… we said… it will soon come. Hope…"

And so, what followed?

"So than we had to finish the procedure, two talks. So two talks, and then sort of seven days. First talk, then correcting it, and then second talk. Then correcting again. Then you wait two more days, and after seven days you get your reply. If you may stay here, or if u maybe… there are many possibilities. Or you are rejected, or you get a status, or you still have to wait, another six months or so (…) And after seven days, there came the reply that is was positive. We have a status."

And then?

"Yeah, what happens then? Then we went to another AZC. To Heerlen. (…) So we arrived in Heerlen. And we had to stay there sort of three months. And then we applied and we told we wanted to bring our family here."

Learning the Dutch language? How?

"For sure, I really had a strong motivation. At first I did it myself, and after that I may do learn to lessons a week or so. With a volunteer at the AZC. (…)

My sister does that, she teaches the language and plays with the little children…

"Oh, really!? Oh, fantastic, that is really good. That is also very good for the refugees. You see, you are sitting in the AZC, you are waiting. So many people are just waiting for the procedure, or they are waiting to hear if their children may come, or they are waiting for a house…And they all, they really have nothing to do. So if you got to them, and talk to them, then then….then…they would really think that's good"

So, you say you can interact with the refugees…

"You really can. Look, you may have to take into account some of the culture, the difference. But then…. I also do that, when I go talk with somebody, then I take into account the culture. But for the rest, they are also people, so yes… *(Laughs)*"

Even when depressed? Like your mother?

"For sure!"

What to take into account from a cultural perspective?

"Well, not about the culture, but for the culture…I study medicine and I have to do talks with the patients. For example, I noticed that in Syria, the conversation goes differently than here. Here you may be honest about expectation, you may say what you expect from me, what is your expectation. But in Syria, you may not say that. The patients… You just have to interpret that yourself. A lot of people ask you… Maybe here it is normal to ask: what is the reason you came? But in Syria you may never never ask a person: Why did you come? That is just rude. If you say that"

So what than do you mean by taking into account culture

"We have some sort of sensitive issues. Maybe, eh, maybe I should think it is difficult to… *(Seems a little confused)* I think it is difficult if it's a conversation about drinking or not, alcohol, alcohol usage, or about drugs, about, eh, about good, eh…. About, the intim…intimacy or sex, so…So these topics are more sensitive to us then here. Here you may talk about everything, but….other things: you may discuss all! But, admit it, I want to treat these topics, or: I want to talk about these topics, and you don't want to talk about it, you say that honestly"

Would it be difficult to ask about flight and conditions in Syria?

"No, I don't think so. Now, of course, there are always people who think it is difficult. But, if. When, when. You could for example ask: 'Do you think it is difficult when I ask you about…?'"

Would they honestly tell me if not?

"Not always, not always. But then you should tell from their faces. That they turn red for example. (…)"

How should I recognize it?

"He is on the one track, and then he goes on another track, or another subject. And from his face, expression. But it is difficult, difficult. (…) Don't always say what they don't want.

Because, look, we are, in Arabic countries, we are high context countries. And your countries, you are from low context communication. So if you, so if I in Syria, so, in Syria, I must interpret a lot. One words, or two word may say whole texts. But here in the Netherlands, the whole of Netherlands, exactly what you say, that's what you mean. So, more direct. We are indirect. (…) To me it is… I am from a high context culture.To me it's from high context communication to low context communication I was shocked. Somebody says that to me and I am like, okay, okay, okay. But for you it is really: very, horribly difficult. (…)"

So, how to prepare?

You should tell from his face, from his hands, from his movement….I don't know… From his attitude. When he is like, I don't want to talk about it, he is like: eh, eh, eh…So… but it is also difficult because you will be talking in English, and they may not be so good in English. So that might also be difficult".

Would it be good to have a third person involved?

"Yes. Somebody who speaks Arab. (Agrees: who also understand non-verbal signs)".

But then, translator bias. Would I be able to do it by myself?

"Yeah, yeah".

About the population: Majority young men?

"No, well, not always. Well there are more men than women (…)"

Do they speak English?

"Depends on AZC. Look, if it is an emergency AZC, people have no status. These are the first person, the first person arrived here. Like me and my mother… my mother and me! But, sometimes you have people, waiting for their housing, they have no problem at all, they are open for everything. They are like, the life to them is open. They wait for a house, okay. They wait for, they go for a school. They also get money to live. Sort of pocket money to buy and so. They are a little less depressed. Of course one is more depressed than the other".

I am interested in the most difficult group, but still possible?

"Yes, yes for sure (…)"

From your experience, do many people speak English?

"There are always people who speak English. These are mostly the people who also translate for the COA. COA has no translator. If you for example have a question, you go talk with somebody who speak English. Mostly that person is present. (…)"

Did you had the feeling you could express yourself sufficiently, tell your story?

"I am not good at reading English, but speaking. For me, it was a huge step. It improved. It was okay to speak it".

Would you wished to have had a translator back then?

"Maybe, But no, it was doable (…) Not really translator, in the AZC there are always people who speak English so that is just enough. But you can think of someone, for example, somebody who knows the Arab language, in case of emergency, than you can call him on the telephone"

Is it important to take my position as a woman into account, for example shaking hands?

"Not a problem at all (…). Well, I think, the most people will shake your hand. But there are some people that may be shocked. So wait, wait till he decides, and shaking your hand or not. (…)"

So, should I wait for the other taking the initiative?

"Well, I don't know, I cannot say… For me, I always wait till the other decides. There are sometimes girls that don't want to shake hands. So I always wait. So if she gives hand, I shake her hand. If nothing, than nothing. And I have the same problem here, I should, I should…I have, I am always used to wait for the other"

Explanation of Go-along method. Would it fit the idea I have to take into account the refugee-perspective and culture?

"Yeah yeah, but I thought, if you walk along… well. Also good. But you should still consider the face.

Benefit to do things together in the natural context? Reduced unease?

"No, for me there would be no difference. In my opinion no difference (…)"

How to build trust than?

"You should for example work as a volunteer in the AZC. Than you already know the people. And, later on, you tell about the 'effort' of the interview. But it might not always work if you

are in an emergency hostage. If you stay there for two weeks… well, now it's not, it's four months, or six months. But it used to be different. (…) In Syria, in our culture, you can be very good friends from the first time onwards. Very good. Your best friend from the first time. Here in the Netherlands, I must really go step by step. (…) It can go really fast. In Syria, really fast."

Experiences in Syria, Asylum-procedure: will you be more mistrusting to others, not tell the truth?

"Some people think, I don't want to share my story with anyone. I just want nobody to know that I came here in the boat for example. I want to keep it a secret. There is always the risk people will lie"

How to deal with that?

"Well… I don't know (laughs uncertainly)"

Should I keep on asking, force an answer?

"I think, leave it. Or just ask: Do think it is difficult if I ask about, if I will talk about this topic? (…) And some people for example, look, some people, their families are still in Syria. So under control of the Assad government. So they are afraid that, for the press something saying, or in the newspaper, than the other people will take the guilt of his guilt. They are, they are afraid for their families who stay behind. (…) Depends from person to person. Some people are really afraid (…). Some people will think like, wow, she might be, for example from the police. And she may, she may want to know from us, to know and then tell the police".

Position researchers in Syria, how do people look at researchers?

"We have, the most people have very little knowledge about research. In Syria, in Syria it's always… Any person who, who talks with me, there is a chance he works for the government. So he will tell what he knows. So always you need to keep in mind… maybe he is for you".

Building trust via voluntary work for example extra important?

"Yes, sure".

Hard for me to imagine, I was born in a country where I can trust everybody. But: are you mistrusting?

"No, well, because I have been here for 2.5 years now. (…) But before I got a status, sure. I was afraid for example… Consider for example, in the conversation you have with the IND, it

is really sensitive. Consider, in the first conversation you say: I have been, I fled on 10-12-2012 to the Netherlands. And after, and at the end of the conversation you say: 12. So about 1 or two days, then the IND takes that as a proof of you lying. So he will not get a status. So then you really have to think and think what you want to say. And exactly the time and exactly…Then you are really afraid, you may have…. Yeah, I remember that maybe I at twelve o'clock, 12-12-2012 I left from Syria, but whether that was in the morning or the evening, I don't remember that. At first you say the evening, and then you say the morning. So then they count: so, he has been lying, so he doesn't get a status. So then it is really… (…) I was always afraid, I always wanted to tell the truth because otherwise I would have the risk that they, that they would arrest me or so. So I always really, really wanted to be precise. From the door that's there, from the window that was on the left side. (…) And the more because I had a first conversation and then in two days a second conversation, and that one decides whether I can stay in the Netherlands or not. So, okay! I will tell the truth, and the truth only.

But you could have told that you came directly from Greece…

"That's what most people do, say the come directly to the Netherlands. See, if you don't gave your fingerprint somewhere, but you just came to Italy or France by walking: Oh, why didn't you stay than, than, in Italy than? Or in France? But you came from Turkey to Hungary? Why didn't you stay there? Hungary is a safe country. You gave… then they take a point to make you stay waiting for six months or so. Than the most people will say: we came with a truck… So you need to take into account, if somebody says he came with a truck… the chance he really came by truck is 15%. (*Laughs*)"

If you didn't gave the fingerprint, would you have lied?

"I didn't knew the consequences. So I thought, in the Netherlands you always have to tell the truth. But if I knew the consequences…."

And if you did?

"Maybe I would have told another story that I would have been flying from Syria or so. (…)"

I would understand it, if you would lie...

"I would do it. If I would tell him I came via Italy, he would say I send you back to Italy. So, and then I would have to wait for another six months. No! I am just, I buy a passport or so. (*Laughs*) If they tell you, truck… yeah, and above me there was a little beam of light, and the 'driver', the man, gave me some food through a hole. Eating, eating, eating, and in five days I

arrived in the Netherlands. I didn't knew where I was. (…) Nobody knew where he was? Look, we are in a time that everybody has a telephone, has a smartphone. Look, it is very funny. I have from Geert Wilders supporters, they say: Oh look, the refugees have a telephone, an I-phone, an I-pad. Well, of course we have an I-pad! How would we otherwise have come here without an I-pad, and without GPS? (*Laughs*) Well, some people might really think that we are, that we are maybe from the 16th century or so, that we really have nothing and that if we have an I-phone: Oh, he has an I-phone! Refugee has an I-phone? That's really impossible! *(Laughs)*"

Important to give refugee a face, no more…

"Exactly. Look, if there is a group here of 40%, 40 people and I come here without introducing myself. That is really strange. So the people really have a bad idea about me, a negative idea about me, and I also have a negative idea about the other. The problem starts, or the solution to the problem starts with me firstly introducing myself: I am like this, I did that…experiences so and so. And I am pretty sure that in 95 % of the cases, he will get a positive response by the other. If I say to somebody: I am a refugee, I am here for 2,5 years, I don't speak the language entirely perfect… than he will understand that I don't understand the language, that I not know. Then he will start to respect that. But if I just would start speak Dutch with him or so, then maybe he is like: oh, he says so, then he means so. And then he is going to think strange things about me".

I give him a compliment about his language.

"Yeah….but there, there is always. Look, I don't have the sensitivity for the words. So for me ' Hoe gaat het?' en ' hoe is het?': zelfde. Like, 'Hoe is het met jou?', 'Hoe is het met jij?', but to a certain extent, there is a little bit of difference.

Experiences with hostility in AZC?

"Look, in the AZC you are in the Netherlands but in your environment you are in another country. So you are in the Netherlands, but everybody around you is Syrian, Arabs or Iraqi. (…) Only when I went to a house, I started to feel it. (…)"

Important to bring people in AZC in contact with people outside AZC?

"Here is the point. Is good, It is good to bring people in the AZC in contact with other people, but there are a lot of barriers to that. A lot of complexities. (…)".

But, necessary?

"Well, look, well…If you ask a Dutch person: what do you think about a refugee. Than his opinion largely derives from what he hears from other people. On television, what he reads on Facebook, what he reads in the newspaper. But, with direct contact, not! And that is really a shame. You want, you want… you have, you have an opinion about somebody you don't know, but you only heard from other people. Well, if we had a third person, my friend, not your friend, and I heard from him about you, and I have an opinion about you, but I don't know you. So of course, the, the opinion I have, that one is in most, in most of the cases wrong. So, be in direct contact I would say".

Thanks for open-heartedness. How did the flight story end?

"We are all in the Netherlands. Except from my father, he doesn't want to. He once came to visit, but he just doesn't want to. He is, he, I don't know…We have a lot of people in Syria and also in the Netherlands who really love their country and the rest of the world is, really…nothing…. He lives in Turkey, close to the border. (…) Sure I miss him and my mother too".

Do you wish to return?

"Yeah, sure. Look, I have everything in Syria. Of course I have everything in the Netherlands too now, but I sure want to return to my country. (…) I don't know, I will talk about myself. Maybe for the little children it is different. They are here, the will be grown up here, they go here to school. So for them, I cannot say anything. But for me, it's different".

Dutch people think you want to stay…

"Yes, I know that. Over the media…I have always…The first time I started to learn Dutch I opened the YouTube and wrote down 'vluchteling', and I saw words from Geert Wilders, and from the Moroccan, and that he, well, I, I, think that, here the people are, here they think about all foreigners, either Moroccan or Syrian…. Look, if I would ask you: what is a Moroccan? What is the difference between a Moroccan and a Syrian? To you: the same. Same case with Iraqi and Syrians. Also the same. You all see them on the same side. But we are all… Look we love our country! That's why our country got destroyed. We wanted, like you, to have freedom as you, that we have a right on everything. And when we went on the streets against Assad, then it happened. So we are also victims. And I also read on the television on internet reading, on television about ISIS, and then the people think: oh, he is refugee, so he is ISIS, you should

be careful! Or about the family in the Netherlands, some of them, I don't want to talk the same of everyone because then I make the same mistake as Dutch people do, some say: you should not hang out with foreigners. You should only go with the pure Dutch, not with 'allochtonen'. What, you have 'allochtonen'-friends? (…) I want that my children, in the future, that they live in a country where they feel at home. But that one, they won't have here in the Netherlands. When they would be here, stay here, then they would be 'allochtonen'. And that I don't want. So for now, now… I don't know what will happen in the future, but for now, I want to return to my own country. (…) But a little bit of safety, I want to bring a little bit of safety from here to Syria (*Laughs*). (…) I want to ask you, before the revolution, or something happened in Syria, did you ever saw a Syrian here, or a Syria in the media? Exactly! So we have, we are people who only eat, live the good life, and just: that's it! We are really, you will really, we don't like problems. Only yourself and a little bit of good company, that's it. (…) You are always welcome. (…) To me it's like: Germans, Dutch people, Sweden, people from Sweden…The same! I cannot find the difference. And here in the Netherlands, because there is no communication with people, so the first impression plays a very important part. So, for example somebody, I look at him, and get an impression of him and, done. That impression is a fact in my head. So I am, I think, we should communicate a lot with each other. And we should contact each other a lot.

Informal ending, mutual invitation to visit each other's place. Want to add something?

"Well, about the refugee crisis… That is, if you ask me, very important. So as a refugee, I want to speak on behalf of the refugees, look, imagine, for example, what you study… In about two years, you have a diploma (…) or half a year, and you go working. And, imagine, you go to Iran. And you have to stay there. So you have nothing there, no friend, nothing. The chance you will get a job is: 0%. Your diplomas, not recognized. The common sentiment in Iran about you, about Western people, the sentiment is bad. So, in that situation are we, when we arrived here. Well, and, if about all those you hear: they are here, they stay at home, do nothing, and they get social money. Well: what else should we do? We are refugees, are diplomas go unrecognized, we have to learn a language anew, we have to rebuild everything again…So…, that I wanted to say to all the Dutch people, that's what I really want to tell. We are not on holidays here (…) I wanted to go learn Dutch. And then they told me my diplomas will not be recognized, and then I got depressed. I didn't wanted to study anymore. But in the end, I learned Dutch, adequate Dutch, level 2. There are 4 levels, I had level 2. And then I went to the VU, to join the VWO-system as a preparation year. And I did that for one year, nine months, and then I got my

diploma in Dutch, level 4, or B2 in the state-exam. I don't know if you know the Dutch system. And then I graduated in Mathematics and Natural Science and all those subjects. And then I went to all the faculties. (…) But not every Syrian gets the chance I have gotten. I maybe was a little bit lucky to go and study here at the VU. Not everybody gets such a chance. For example I, I was really curious, 'nieuwsgierig aagje' *(Laughs)* I was really curious to go to the university. I went to Delft, to the HAN. My initial plan was to go to the Erasmus University. So I went to all universities of the Netherlands, and I went to ask the admission offices. I spoke English, and I asked: how can I enter? What should I do? So I had already got a lot of information, also from Maastricht, from Utrecht, Amsterdam, Central Amsterdam, all the universities. Except from Groningen, that was a little far for me, so I sent them an email.

Informal ending talking about his study interest.