Master's Thesis

Influence of Digital Technology on the Formation of Social Connections during Syrian and Eritrean Refugees' Journeys

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Abstract

The Syrian crisis has been one of the worst crises in the present century. Europe was struggling to handle and control the amount of refugees seeking asylum and safe countries to live in. In addition and comparison to that, Eritrea has been ruled under a military doctrine since the 1990s, a lot of Eritreans try to escape through Sudan and Libya in order to reach Europe. The European Union is therefore under constant struggle to avoid refugees' deaths during their journeys, especially when crossing the seas, and handle the amount of refugees, who enter the European Union from Italy and Greece and try to arrive in the Netherlands. Moving individuals leave behind their home, ordinary lives and families in order to live in freedom and peace. Therefore, social resources are lost and refugees in need to aggregate new ones. The journeys taken by Eritrean and Syrian refugees differ in relation to the routes, but are similar in seeking and providing information, relying on social connections and access resources in order to reach Europe and the country of destination successfully.

Coming from recent studies and migration literature, digital technology is understood to be part of and helpful concerning the journey process. Refugees are digitally connected and access online platforms in order to inform and update themselves. In this regard, smartphones and Internet cafés can be of great importance since they enable refugees to access various social media platforms, websites and communication services and provide access to different kinds of social resources like social connections, sleeping places, transport devices and information about border crossings and routes. Differences in the use of digital technology can be drawn between Eritrean and Syrian refugees, parallels are observed looking at the journey processes and accesses to resources.

The present study aims to understand and investigate the influence of digital technologies on the formation of social connections before, during and after the journey experience of Syrian and Eritrean refugees.

Qualitative in-depth interviews and in location produced network maps are conducted to analyze the impact and importance of social connections, established and maintained, on refugees' journeys in relation to digital technology. Qualitative methods were considered as appropriate since the study addresses a sensitive topic and aims to understand personal experiences. By means of a comprehensive speech interaction, insights and opinions were gained in order to add to a deeper understanding and knowledge of refugee journey processes in modern times.

KEYWORDS: refugee crisis, refugee journeys, refugee experience, social connections, interpersonal communication, social media, Facebook, WhatsApp, mobile communication, social networks, qualitative interviews

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I. Introduction

Digital technology plays a significant role in today's life and societies. Corporations and researchers keep track of and quantify online behavior and user profiles in order to benefit from the data and monitor humanity for a better understanding of societal issues (Diminescu, 2008, p. 568). For migration, social media access is important and helpful for mobility and/or living geographically dispersed from the home country in order to stay connected through online networks (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 4). Social media platforms enable refugees to communicate synchronously and more frequently with these geographically dispersed contacts. Furthermore, social media provide options for refugees to produce, consume and share information, which result in merged and diverse knowledge and content that can benefit them in preparation of, during and after their journey (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 13). Therefore, online networks and communities may serve as information providers, sources and communication platforms for refugees along their route. Refugees are able to use the Internet in relation to their needs and aspirations.

This study focuses on Syrian and Eritrean refugees' social media use and their ability to virtually establish connections during their flight. The term refugee is used throughout the study in order to refer to former moving individuals and their experiences during their forced migration (Zetter, 2007, p. 175). Thus, participations of this study made the journey and have successfully arrived in Europe. In contrast to the current politicization of the label refugee, the present study relates Syrians and Eritreans only to their flight experience and does not use the label as an identity formation of the humans themselves (Zetter, 2007, p. 172; p. 185). In order to explore the refugee experience of their journey, attention is given to the social and individual processes of refugees, with a focus on the exilic journey and the process of the flight. Moreover, refugees nowadays must be seen in relation to their media use. Smartphones and their applications have the potential to be important and empowering factors and helpful tools during the journey process (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 9). In this regard, Hepp et al. (2012) refer to "mediatized migrants" to define moving individuals seen and understood in the context of their media communication (p. 1). Refugees use their smartphones as communication and navigation tools during their journey. Therefore, in addition to "big" mass media, "small" media of personal communication are of great importance and used during migrant mobility processes (Hepp et al., 2012, p. 2).

Social media, as a web-based communication tool, facilitates online interaction and furthermore, enables organizing, information gathering and commercial practices accessible for and provided by users (Treem et al., 2016, p. 768). In other words, refugees are able to use social media technologies in different ways. They can browse and download needed information, and engage with online content passively without actively sharing or distributing content.

According to Treem et al. (2016), communication refers to social relations and connections; therefore, social media enables establishing online ties and bonds. Thus, users maintain current relationships and establish new connections on a personal or professional level. Refugee studies refer to maintaining or establishing strong, weak and latent ties during the refugees' journeys as referred to in the following theoretical framework (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, as Treem et al. (2016) explain, in addition to establishing social connections, social media plays an active role in establishing and legitimizing social movements, because of the offered ability to participate in activities that previously would have been inaccessible to them (p. 774). Opportunities to mobilize and connect diverse networks of people enable movements. Social media mobilizes humans as the number of individuals and organizations using social media increases constantly (Treem et al., 2016, p. 779).

However, access to technologies remains unevenly distributed, access to mobile devices and a working Internet connection are inevitable in order to contribute to and participate in virtual communities or networks (Treem et al., 2016, p. 778). Therefore, demographic differences in social media participation are discovered and identified throughout this study. As Gillespie et al. (2016) explain, African migrants are often unlikely to own smartphones, thus it is widespread to share and collectively own a smartphone (p. 27). Furthermore, the authors point out that smartphones' ownership in general is rare among economically poor refugees. Although at the same time, technological changes allow poorer individuals previously restricted to migration networks to take advantage of the provided information, if access is available, and to travel further (Collyer, 2010, p. 277). In order to examine potential challenges and limitations related to social media use among refugees in exile, this thesis project will focus on the analysis and contextualization of the journey of Syrian and Eritrean refugees.

In this research, the refugee journey is defined as a form of mobilization and movement that has become increasingly dependent on the development of transnational socializing in online environments (Collyer, 2010; Dekker & Godfried, 2014). Drawing on BenEzer and Zetter's (2014) study on refugee journeys, it is important to investigate in which ways refugees react and interact with these online networks during their journey and how these interactions define their experience of the journey. Digital technologies play an important role in enabling access to different kinds of resources needed before, during and after the flight experience. Factors like social capital can be accessible and attainable via transnational networks. Social capital relates to the aggregation of actual or potential resources connected to relationships (Alencar, 2017; Komito 2011; Strang & Ager, 2010). Using Hobfoll's (2001) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study examines how digital technologies are used among refugees in order to acquire social capital or resources

throughout their journey. The loss of social connections due to the flight experience cuts off the known social and cultural support systems of refugees. Following this assumption, refugees are able to maintain and establish different ties during the process of the flight, strong, weak or latent ties are investigated and understood in relation to the events that take place along the journey. In this regard, the importance of social media and transnational networks in having or enabling access to these resources need to be considered and researched. Furthermore, the influence and, or affect of the journey experience on established ties, and therefore, the role of transnational networks are addressed. The aim of the present study is to address and research the interrelation and influence of media, established social connections and transnational networks, and the journey process.

1.1 Social Connections

Social connections enable and encourage mobility and movement. Social media technologies do not only facilitate migration, but also make it more complex at the same time. The journey is fragmented and semi-permanent (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 309; Kuschminder, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, the journeys are a process of episodic and circular displacement and migration. The multi-phase journey needs to be discovered and researched, as well as the influence of fragmented journeys and transit countries on the flight experience. Access to resources is related to and dependent on countries' refugee laws and support (Collyer, 2010, p. 275). Therefore, current refugee movements are characterized by fragmented journeys, as Collyer (2010) explains (p. 276). The impact of these fragmented journeys on the flight experience and the importance of transnational networks during this process are researched. Reasons of fragmented journeys can be caused by or related to the waiting time for documents, registration processes, border controls or risks, incidents during the flight (Collyer 2010; Kuschminder 2017). The complex and therefore, fractional journey needs further development in current literature and conceptualization. Refugees' journeys are more likely to move partly, because of national refugee conventions, differing from each country or unions. These conventions can complicate and extend refugees' journey processes (Kuschminder, 2017, p.2; Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017, p. 175). The duration of the journey takes longer and is divided. The influence and challenges of social media technologies need to be contextualized in order to understand the reasons and drivers of fragmented journeys and the agency of refugees before, during and after their journey in relation to their route and experienced events.

Furthermore, as illustrated above, social media networks enable immigrants to maintain strong ties with friends and family, create new ties or virtual communities and access more sources to widen their knowledge. Family and community networks enable new dynamics of connection and bond formation among migrants. Refugees are using social media sites and applications for negotiating their cultural identities (and identity construction).

Furthermore, mobile applications establish intercultural contact and networks. Therefore, digital technology provides important knowledge and information before, during and after the journey. In this regard, this study claims that social media and digital technology facilitate and enable social connections and therefore, influence, facilitate and transform the process of the flight. Transnational networks can form and change the journey process, provided information and social connections might therefore influence transits. The interrelation of media use and fragmented journeys is studied.

1.2 Syrian and Eritrean journeys

The present study focuses on the journey of Syrian and Eritrean refugees to Europe by exploring the perceptions and experiences of those who have already successfully arrived and claimed asylum in the Netherlands. Countries like Syria and Eritrea have become politically destabilized and more dangerous for civilians. The political and humanitarian situation leads many citizens to escape from their homes (Fiedler, 2018, p. 2).

Eritrea is one of the most oppressive, totalitarian governments in the world and ruled by an unelected president for 25 years now without legislature, independent judiciary, and independent civil society organizations or media outlets (Human Rights Watch, Events 2016, RefWorld, World Report 2018). According to an UNHCR report, by the end of 2015 about 12 percent of Eritrean citizens flee from the country or applied for asylum worldwide. Involuntary returnees could count on imprisonment or torture, which happened after Sudan expelled Eritrean refugees.

In addition to Eritrean refugees, Syrians are researched and compared to Eritreans in order to understand the different journeys and struggles accompanying the flight experience. Syrians face a different situation in their home country. The armed conflict in Syria, known as one of the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of today, is taking place since 2011 and caused more than 400,000 deaths (Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, stated 13.1 million people are in need and 2.98 million Syrians residing in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. Furthermore, the crisis counts 6.1 million displaced citizens and 4.8 million seeking refuge in neighboring countries and Europe (Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017). Due to the diffusion of the crisis, Syrians flee from the country leading to a displaced crisis (Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017). Neighboring countries and several countries in the European Union refuse to take refugees and to guarantee asylum and shelter. The World Report 2017 by Human Right Watch mentions techniques like unlawful administrative and legal and physical barriers in order to curb the massive flow of Syrians. These drivers of migration are researched and illustrated in reports and studies; hence the resulting fragmented journey process is not completely researched. Existing studies are still underdeveloped (Kuschminder, 2017; Ilse & van Liempt, 2016). Therefore, the present study pays attention to

the nature of Syrian and Eritrean refugees' routes to Europe and their complex challenges during the journey. Reports point out the importance and influence of countries like the Sudan for the Eritrean journey process and the difficulties resulting in denial of asylum (Human Rights Watch, Events 2016; RefWorld, World Report, 2018). Further research is needed in order to understand the notion of the fragmented journey of Syrian and Eritrean refugees.

Syrians and Eritreans experience different kinds of journeys, they follow different routes, and face different challenges or struggles. The border controls, transfer countries and the infrastructure of the routes differ. Therefore, the refugees' engagement in social connections and interventions correspond, especially in the way of making use of digital technology. A comparison of both refugee movements and flight experiences is of importance in order to understand sociocultural differences and characteristics, as well as infrastructural constraints in relation to digital technology. The access to digital technology during the journey and therefore, the use of it, is depending on WiFi access, charging stations and reception. In this regard, both routes influence the refugees in different ways and change the journey process.

1.3 Social and scientific relevance

Most of the current research focuses either on cause of migration or refugees' process of integration. This study tries to close the gap and advance the understanding of current fragmented refugee movements by connecting social media use and experiences before, during and after the journey with the formation of different types of transnational networks (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 307). The importance of transnational networks and their influence on the journey process are going to be addressed and contextualized (Leurs, 2012, p. 676). It is social and scientific relevant to explore the journey process of refugees in order to gain further understanding of the notion of fragmented journeys and the reasons behind fragmented journeys. Thus, as BenEzer and Zetter (2014) explain, investigating refugee journeys is relevant for policymakers in order to respond to integration processes and refugee movements (p. 304). Therefore, a change in understanding and perceiving the refugees' world and experiences can be discussed. In addition, voicing refugees' experiences and legitimizing their journey to Europe can enrich Western societies and decrease the societal and political division of host countries and refugees (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 304). The ideal and needed research would track the journey or parts of it, but the post-journey focus helps to widen the current research field. The main aim of this study is to gain insights into the journey and different stages of refugees' experiences and events along this process. Shared insights into journey events can contribute to exiting refugee literature. Current research and perspectives on refugee movements may be advanced by understanding how and to what extent Syrian and Eritrean refugees' social networks provide

them with resources to face the journey and reach Europe. Researching the journey experiences and analyzing the impact of digital technologies facilitating the journey process strengthens the insights of current refugee movements and journeys of different ethnic groups. Empirical data about Eritrean refugees are limited within refugee studies as well as knowledge about the nature of the fragmented journey. The notion and reasons of a fragmented journey process are conceptualized in this study in order to enrich and widen refugee studies' understanding of current movements. Drivers of fragmented journeys, as well as the role of social media for obtaining and maintaining social connections are addressed to understand the current refugee flight experiences in the context of digitalization.

In this regard, the present study pursues the following question regarding Syrian and Eritrean refugees' social media use in relation to their journeys and established social connections via transnational networks. The role and influence of digital technologies on the journey process, on the formation of social connections and access to transnational networks are questioned.

Research question To what extent and how do digital technologies influence the formation of social connections before, during and after the journey experience of Syrian and Eritrean refugees?

II. Theory and previous research

2.1 Conceptualizing Refugee Journeys

Current migration and refugee studies differentiate between motives and drivers of migration, the journey process and integration in host country (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 307). Contemporary refugee movements can be characterized as 'fragmented' and related to migration processes that involve periods of time in different countries (e.g. transit countries in refugee journeys to Europe), various motivations or migration drivers, modes of travel and experience, and living conditions (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014; Collyer, 2010; Kuschminder, 2017). In order to understand the fragmented, partly disconnected refugee journeys, a nuanced and differentiated understanding of the situation and experiences of forced migrants is needed (Leurs, 2012, p. 677). At current stage, fragmented journeys are reasoned due to stricter border controls or smuggling processes (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017, p. 176). Different reasons for or factors influencing irregular journeys, such as the use of digital technology during the journey process and the evolving agency of refugees to organize their routes have not been yet fully explored within refugee studies (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017 p. 174, Gillespie et al., 2018; Collyer, 2010). Empirical work is necessary to comprehend the dynamics of irregular journeys and migration processes in current mediatized age to highlight the importance of smartphones for refugees before, during and after the flight (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 9). Furthermore, research on the motives of fragmented journeys and the influence and impact of social media and social networks in this regard are essential (Kuschminder, 2017, p. 2). Different journey steps and transit stops are neither conceptualized nor researched to evaluate fragmented refugee movements. Furthermore, the importance and influence of social media before, during and after the journey process and in regard to establishing social networks are not yet addressed. Therefore, the present study develops the journey process further by adding information about the journey itself and an understanding of events that refugees face before, during and after the flight. Following these aspects, the notions of fragmented journey processes and split routes have to be explored.

This study claims that current refugee journeys are processes merging the drivers and motivations for migration, the journey experience itself, the different fragmentation points and the integration process. The preparation of the upcoming journey is already part of the journey process as well as time residing in different countries than the home country or the destination country (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014; Alcanzar, 2018). Refugee journeys cannot be divided into a time before, during or after the journey. A clear definition of the refugees' journeys beginning or ending, or a conceptualization of challenges during their journeys does not exist yet. As Kunz (1981) outlined, refugees are not equal in social relationships. Refugees moving in a community differ in their sense of identification and adaptation with their surroundings (p. 42). Furthermore, the author explains that refugees' marginality within

or identification with their home country is relevant in the journey and settlement process. Kunz's kinetic model (1981) focuses on factors affecting refugees' displacement, journey and arrival in the host country. Kunz uses the terms "home related factors" to explain the refugees' identification with the home country, their attitudes towards displacement and their ideological orientation abroad, "displacement related factors" to illustrate events and experiences during the journey, and "host related factors" to express cultural compatibility, population policies and social receptiveness (p. 50). In this context, Kunz's kinetic model was important back in time, but does not suit nowadays refugee movements. The importance and transformation coming along with digitalization and globalization are not considered or addressed in Kunz's model. The effects of virtual communities need to be analyzed in order to understand societies' transformation due to digitalization. Virtual communities function as extensions of offline communities (Komito, 2011, p. 3). Research did not pay attention to the influence of the communities' dynamic on refugees' journeys at current stage. Refugees combine their knowledge and information provided by online and offline interactions across social networks, therefore, network sociability virtually and in real life deserve to get attention of research.

2.2 Role of social networks during the journey process

Smartphone GPS tools and social networks can not only ensure physical mobility, but the device itself can become a trigger for mental stability as in the feeling of safety or the smartphone as a lifeline, more important than food or shelter (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017, p. 177; Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 11). The connections established through these processes and exchanges are analyzed in this study, helping to develop an understanding of current refugee movements to get an idea of refugees' needs and experiences as well as the relevance of digital technologies for the formation of social networks during the flight. Refugee studies focus either on the motivations to flee or the settlement process, while journey tracks and information about events during the flight experience remain relatively underexplored (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 299).

The literature reveals that migrants prefer to move to locations, where they have contacts or other interactions (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 5). It has been widely acknowledged that contact to relatives or friends can lead to lower levels of social loneliness, as well as the learning of the local language (Koelet & De Valk, 2016, p. 610; Kunz, 1981, p. 47). Besides, migration literature points out the consistency of strong ties based on shared identity or experiences or friendship in networks. But weak or latent ties, terminated connections established during the journey and in order to facilitate the journey process and provide access to social resources like information, contacts or sleeping places are not considered in current refugee studies. A definition of social connections or networks given by

Dekker and Engbersen (2012) refers to a differentiation of strong, weak and latent ties. Strong ties are connections and relationships with a strong (fundamental and often homogenous) base, for example relation with family, shared origin community or friendship (p. 5). Weak ties are contrary to strong ties, loose and flexible, often existing in changing, hybrid networks linking diverse groups, based on providing information or serving personal needs during journey (Komito, 2011, p. 27). Thus, strong ties inherent parts of identity formation, whereas weak ties serve professional and situational connections (Schaub, 2012, p.10). Furthermore, latent ties are connections, which exist, like mutual friends or contacts within reach of refugee, but are not activated or "in use", but are available for refugees' needs and could be converted into weak ties (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 6). Social media enable connections of the three forms of ties and provide platforms and hybrid networks to maintain strong and establish weak and latent ties (Komito, 2011, p. 26). However, the interrelation of social connections and journey experiences remains underexplored (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Komito, 2011; Schaub, 2012; Fiedler, 2018). Furthermore, the importance of social networks on resource access is not clarified or conceptualized to understand current refugee movements. The impact of digital technology on mobility processes and therefore, route adjustments are not yet fully investigated. Refugees do not leave behind their network of family and friends anymore. Technology enables refugees to overcome distance virtually and no longer limits communication with their social connections (Komito, 2011, p. 3). This study argues that technologies have transformed and changed refugees' social connections and their journey processes. Moreover, solo moving refugees, who are able to individually and independently plan their route by means of their smartphones are not yet fully researched (Collyer, 2010; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 5).

Digital technology transforms social connections between refugees and their strong ties in the home country and enables professional ties to be established during the journey. Nowadays, refugees are able to participate in the home community via social media without being physically present (Komito, 2012, p. 29; Diminescu, 2008, p. 567). As Diminescu (2008) explains, refugees maintain and develop networks and ties that link them to their home country and host country, re-introducing mobility and digital proximity (p. 567). The impact and changes of these strong, weak and latent ties are going to be addressed in this study in order to develop insights into the consequences of virtual communication on existing relations. Finally, common knowledge about the journey as traumatizing and hard on refugees is widened and contextualized. Although personal journeys and stories are investigated, insights on networks and transformations of connections are shared and brought in relation to social and current digital phenomena. In conclusion, this study pays particular attention to the role of digital media in the formation of social connections along the refugee experience of migration and illustrates the personal meanings refugees assign to the

experienced events and the journey itself.

2.2.1 Digital media and contemporary refugee mobility processes

The fragmented journey of refugees can be directly related to technological advancement among refugee communities. Gillespie et al. (2018) state that 98% of the population of the Middle East and North Africa use a mobile phone (p. 4). In this regard, Collyer (2010) argues that digital technologies have facilitated refugee movements by enabling instant money transfers along the route and cheap mobile communications (p. 276). Therefore, access to digital technology and its features can be seen as an additional factor serving as an organizational facilitator and relationship provider before, during and after the flight. Refugees actively use technology in favor of their particular needs, interests or emotions (Alencar, 2017; Leurs, 2017; Smets, 2017). Web 2.0 applications offer users and virtual communities the opportunity to write and contribute, co-create, share, discuss and modify user-generated content (Treem et al., 2016, p. 769). Similarly, blogs, social networking sites, virtual social world, collaborative projects and content communities count as social media (Treem et al., 2016, p. 770). Social media do not only consist of visible users, non-visible users gathering information, but also actively distributing, taking part in online networks and profiting from knowledge production and sharing.

Furthermore, digital technology enables planning, navigation and documentation of journeys (Gillespie et al., 2018, p. 1; Dekker et al., 2018, p. 1). Social media applications, instant messaging and translation websites changed the journeys' process and added a new infrastructure (Gillespie et al., 2018, p. 2). In this regard, online media are used for social reasons, contacting family and friends or virtual refugee communities as trustworthy, reliable networks for approaching smugglers or obtaining information about different modes of transportation, routes and accommodation. Therefore, digital technology is dependent on material infrastructures like charging points, WiFi hotspots and reception. Most refugees have access to digital technology and benefit from shared and collective use of online services, but therefore also rely on their digital connectivity (Gillespie et al., 2018, p. 4, Smets, 2017). Digital navigation and communication platforms are crucial in order to access resources (Gillespie et al., 2018, p. 9). Information and communication resources enable migrants to develop strategies and ways to structure and plan their journeys to some extent (Dekker et al., 2018, p. 2).

Dekker and Engbersen (2012) state that social media are able to enhance strong ties, address weak ties and establish or activate latent ties (p. 2). Therefore, technology functions as an extension of offline networks and serves as an information distribution channel and personal communication tool. Refugees choose and establish ties and connections to orient their journeys (Schaub, 2012, p. 8; Dekker et al., 2018, p. 7). These multiple-tie networks or

hybrid networks capture a central part in refugees' journeys and guidance of their route (Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 596). However, little is still known about the relationship between refugee movements and the role of transnational networks through the digital. Contemporary refugee studies lack information about the influence of virtual communities and established social connections on refugees' journeys.

Furthermore, through smartphone and digital devices, refugees enable themselves to actively contribute to digital diaspora formation (Leurs, 2017, p. 676). The literature gap needs to tap into the connection of refugees and social media devices and the practices and activities refugees do online in order to overcome the obstacles of their journeys or help their online communities (Collyer, 2010, p. 276). This study complements existing literature by adding the perspective of media and communication studies to research on refugee journeys. Since refugees' use of information and communication technologies (ICT's) during their journey became visible and dynamic, research needs to be widened in order to fully understand their role in current refugee movements (Leurs, 2017, p. 684; HRW, 2016; RefWorld, 2018). In this regard, Schaub (2012) describes that mobile phone coverage expands in Western and Northern Africa and a parallel is drawn to increasing attempts of African refugees to migrate to Europe (p. 1). But empirical data on the correlation of mobile phones across the African continent and increasing migration processes is still missing. The "migration business" does not only include smugglers, but also mobile phone, Internet and SIM-card providers, as they influence and support the refugees' journey (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012, p. 4). For instance among money transfer, communication applications or navigation tools, smartphones in general can facilitate access to resources like healthcare and humanitarian aid.

2.3 Hobfoll's Resource Theory

As resources are essential before, during and after the journey process, Hobfoll introduced the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to conceptualize fierce trauma responses when personal, social or material resources, elementary to the self, survival and social attachments, are lost due to a crisis, war or shock (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 21). The COR theory responds to and conceptualizes the impact of war and disaster on individuals (Hobfoll, Tracy & Galea, 2006, p. 868). The theory assumes that individuals strive to obtain and maintain their personal, social and material sources to be in control of their lives and achieve a sense of wellbeing (see 2.3.1). In that sense, individuals strive to obtain and maintain resources in order to satisfy needs and overcome challenges in life. Traumatic resource loss is defined as the loss of elementary resources like safety, calmness, attachment and hope, the loss occurs rapidly and suddenly (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 22; Dekel & Hobofoll, 2007, p. 161; Fiedler, 2018, p. 3). Throughout life, individuals establish social connections and structures,

which are necessary to obtain and maintain personal, social and material resources (see 2.3.1). Resources are obtained and maintained in aggregation, linked to each other and operating in groups. Therefore, Hobfoll (2014) talks about resource caravans, linked resources create a support system for the individual. For instance, available social support is associated with sense of control and stability (Dekel & Hobofoll, 2007, p. 161). The environment of the individual like families, organizations and societies enables the individual to obtain and maintain different kinds of resources at their best. Furthermore, the loss of particular resources leads to the loss of other resources as they substantially influence each other. Digital technology plays an important role in providing access to different kinds of resources needed before, during and after the flight experience. Factors like social capital can be accessible and attainable via social online networks. Refugees might be able to establish and acquire different resources during the process of the flight.

Trauma responding is personally and individually related to life history, but losing sense of safety and experience traumatic, life threatening events lead to similar effects of fundamental psychosocial and material resource loss. Furthermore, an inability to access and get access to resources when in need is caused since Hobfoll (2014) relates this kind of trauma responding to individuals living in an unsafe environment (p. 4). The encounter of the individual with stress is socially, culturally and politically situated (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 338). Resources are not individually or personally determined; they are rather both transcultural and products of a given cultural context (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 341). The loss of resources for one individual is often perceived as loss by others experiencing similar circumstances (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 342).

Furthermore, it results in an ongoing loss of safety and the fear of loss of social connections and a stable home (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 3). The COR theory explains that the more resources individuals obtain and maintain, the more likely they will be able to recover and handle stressful situations (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 7). Therefore, if vulnerable populations are exposed to traumatic events, the more likely it is that they experience the feeling of loss. Refugees' journeys are coming along with the loss of employment, social connections, housing, social and cultural knowledge (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 8). Furthermore, the COR theory addresses that the deprivation of elementary resources can be used to firstly assess resource losses and secondly determine the individuals' capacity to resist experiences or events of trauma or stress.

In this regard, the COR theory is helpful and relevant in order to explain refugees' journeys involving the loss of social connections and the establishing of new ties. The journey itself is accompanied by a fundamental and rapid loss of resources. According to the

COR theory, stress or trauma occur due to the threat or loss of resources, and in addition to one's inability to (re)gain resources (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 22). Furthermore, George (2017) links migration-based stressors to stress occurring during the journey process of refugees and their health difficulties and struggles (p. 460). Physical and psychological distress is associated with refugees' experiences and the loss or shortage of resources (George, 2017, p. 461). The loss of resources during the journey might generate disillusionment among refugees. The COR theory conceptualizes in what way individual exposed to traumatic events respond to stress and in what way the access to resources might change, influence the journeys' process of refugees. The ability to access and build resources enables refugees to establish future connections and resources, which furthermore leads to the aggregation of resources in a new environment and therefore, helps in the process of integrating and regaining resources. The ability of refugees to invest in them and get access to resources might help to establish social interventions. As mentioned above, initial resource loss contributes to long-term resource losses, and therefore, on-going difficulties and stress in refugees' lives (Hobfoll, Tracy, & Galea, 2006, p. 868).

Furthermore, resource gains impact refugees' experiences beneficially and are connected to decreasing levels of stress. As Hobfoll et al. (2006) state, the minority status has an impact on and is furthermore linked to the access of social and material resources (p. 869). Refugees leave behind resources and give up on existing resources and support systems (Phillimore, Humphris, & Khan, 2018, p. 216). Access to social networks is able to offer approaches of resources and resource exchange, mutual benefits enable to build new connections and maintain resources. As Phillimore et al. (2018) explain, social connections have a great value for refugees, as they help decrease stress and share traumatic experiences (p. 219). Furthermore, social connections and social networks enable access to other relevant resources, such as places to rest, sleep, eat and recharge. Resource exchange comes along with mutual loyalty and the ability to establish a new, different social support system (Phillimore et al., 2018, p. 220). In this regard, the COR theory provides a framework to better understand the importance of social resources, in particular in the journey process for refugees. The loss of the known social support systems and its impact on the refugee in exile are contextualized within the framework. Maintaining and establishing social connections during and after the journey process can be linked to providing access to different kinds of resources and can be understood in terms of the COR theory. In this regard, 2.3.1 includes a table listing essential social and material resources, which are introduced by Hobfoll (2001) as an orientation and understanding of resources aggregated or lost through one's life.

2.3.1 Table COR Theory

Personal transportation (car, truck, etc.)	Adequate food	Adequate financial credit
Feeling of personal success	Larger home than needed	Feeling independent
Time for adequate sleep	Sense of humor	Companionship
Good marriage	Stable employment	Financial assets (stocks, property, etc.)
Adequate clothing	Intimacy with spouse or partner	Knowing where one is going with life
Feeling valuable to others	Adequate home furnishings	Affection from others
Family stability	Feeling of having control over own life	Financial stability
Free time	Role as a leader	Feeling that personal life has meaning / purpose
More clothing than needed	Ability to communicate well	Positive feeling about oneself
Sense of personal pride	Providing children's essentials	People one can learn from
Intimacy with one or more members of the family	Feeling that personal life is peaceful	Money for transportation
Time for work	Acknowledgement of personal accomplishments	Help with tasks at work
Feeling of accomplishing personal goals	Ability to organize tasks	Medical insurance
Good relationship with own children	Extras for children	Involvement with church, synagogue, mosque etc.
Time with loved ones	Sense of commitment	Retirement security (financial)

Necessary tools for work	Intimacy with at least one friend	Help with tasks at home
Hope	Money for extras	Loyalty of friends
Children's health	Self-discipline	Money for advancement or self-improvement (education, starting a business)
Stamina / endurance	Understanding from employer / boss	Help with child care
Necessary home appliances	Savings or emergency money	Involvement in organizations with others who have similar interests
Feeling that own future success depends on oneself	Motivation to get things done	Financial help if needed
Positively challenging routine	Spouse / partner's health	Health of family / close friends
Personal health	Support from co-workers	
Housing that suits personal needs	Adequate income	
Sense of optimism	Feeling that one knows who one is	
Status / seniority at work	Advancement in education or job training	

(Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342)

III. Research Design and methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

The present study focuses on Syrian and Eritrean refugees' social media use and their ability to maintain and establish social connections before, during and after their flight to Europe. To generate insights into refugees' motivations to flee and their social media use throughout the mobility, a qualitative method is needed to understand their personal journeys and encourage refugees' to talk about and share their experiences (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 313, Fiedler, 2018, p. 6). The aim is to illustrate the different kinds of connections Syrians and Eritreans coalesce in order to arrive in Europe. In other words, this study seeks to understand in what ways and to what extent Syrian and Eritrean refugees' social networks provide them with resources to face the adverse conditions of the journey and reach a European host country. For this research qualitative in-depth interviews will be conducted in order to facilitate flexibility and the possibility to interact directly with the observed reality (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 312; Boeije, 2010, p. 63). In a sense, interviews enable research to get a deeper understanding of personal views, experiences and opinions, but further fieldwork and complementing methods are useful in order to understand and connect events and experiences.

In addition to the interviews, the interviewees are asked to draw network maps of their journeys in order to gain insights into dynamics and relationships that interviewees might not be able to put into words or feel more comfortable sharing via their drawing than talking (Hepp et. al, 2012, p. 7; Boeije, 2010, p. 58). Firstly, the refugee participants are asked to draw a geographical route in order to understand their accomplished physical journey. Secondly, the interviewees are encouraged to draw and later on describe parts or events of the journey and related, established social connections on the basis of their map. If the interviewees are able to and willing to remember, they are asked to describe the importance of each social connection and interface to them personally and, or their flight in general, their route or means of transport. The network maps should include their relationships, interfaces and destinations, so that the researcher is able to evaluate the acquaintances throughout different events and, or stages of the flight. As the authors BenEzer and Zetter (2014) point out, social support enables resource management of various situations confronting refugees during the flight (p. 311). Interviews and network mapping are useful and appropriate to answer the research question and its sub-questions, as well as confirm or dismiss the theoretical hypothesis. However, it is important to point out, that the interviews and network map do not exactly represent experiences or a universalized reality; interviewees are encouraged to share their own perceptions and experiences during their journey. Since the interviews were conducted in English, and neither the interviewer nor the interviewees spoke

English by mother tongue or everyday use, limitations of expressing were taken into account and tried to deal with by enabling interviewees to draw and show their experience via the network map.

3.2 Sampling Design

Ten semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with Syrian and Eritrean refugees settled in the Netherlands in order to get insights into their personal perspectives as well as motivations and experiences regarding their social media use before and during the flight as well as their early resettlement stage in the refugee camps. The interviewees were proximal and accessible to the researcher. Because of the limited time frame, availability of the participants needed to be guaranteed; therefore both purposive and snowball sampling were used to conduct this study. The interviewees were approached personally or via a personal contact at a NGO, which is working especially with Eritrean refugees. The limitation of the sampling procedure was taken into account and used in order to fit into the established criteria like refugees' active social and digital media use and varied, comparable data. As mentioned in the introduction, it is common among African refugees to share smartphones and media devices due to economical reasons. Active social and digital media use is therefore related to regular usage during the journey and to the establishment of social connections. The selected sample focuses on aligning with the theoretical framework and therefore is not meant to be understood as a representation of the diverse population of Syrian and Eritrean refugees or refugees in general. The interviews were in between 45 minutes and one hour each, depending on the dynamic of each interview and the interviewees' willingness to share their personal story. The interviews were conducted in Amsterdam and Rotterdam between April and May 2018.

The majority of Syrian participants had studied or belonged to the most educated class of Syria's society. There was an obvious distinction between the educational status of Eritrean and Syrian participants. This bias is not on purpose and did not affect the sampling procedure. As Fiedler (2018) explains, usually more educated and experienced people are willing to participate in research and are more likely to open up to a stranger, therefore it is easier to approach them and convince them to share their personal experiences. The study also includes individuals with less education and different certificates than university diplomas, including an analphabetic citizen or electrician. In addition, only one Syrian woman agreed to an interview, no Eritrean female could be found. Therefore, the study presents four interviews with Eritrean men, five interviews with Syrian men and one interview with a Syrian woman. As Eritrean participants shared during their interview, Eritreans are shy and not willing to share their personal journey with strangers, especially women. The journey can be harsh and inhuman; therefore reminders might be hurtful and blocked. Due to time limitations,

the sample could not be extended or diversified. Even though the sample is not representative and not meant to be understood as a generalization of Eritrean and Syrian refugee journeys, the integration of one female participant was on purpose in order to include another point of view. The focus on the study stays upon the comparison of Syrian and Eritrean refugees and tried to be as equally diverse as possible considering the enormous struggle to find participants willing to share and open up about their journey experience. It was impossible to find any female participants, firstly because of the time limitations and the pressure to get the interviews done quickly, therefore slow and trust building relationships could not be established, second because of existing language barriers. Most Eritrean and Syrian women speak Eritrean or Arabic and Dutch, interviews held in English were not practical, translated interviews did not hold enough useful information.

3.3 List of respondents

Participants needed to be Syrian or Eritrean, who fled to the Netherlands in the past five years. They needed to be active media users before, during and after the flight. Active social and digital media use is therefore related to regular usage during the journey and to the establishment of social connections. In order to comprehend refugees' experiences, interviews were conducted with participants, who were able to and willing to talk about social interactions and the quality of social ties they established during their flight. Furthermore, the participants should be currently residing or living in the Netherlands. Priority was given to interviews conducted in English language in order to ensure a common ground and way of understanding (Kvale, 2011, p. 3). However, if participants felt more comfortable speaking Dutch or Tigrinya, a native translator was available. The aim is to understand personal experiences; therefore the focus stays upon the participants' comfort and ability to express themselves. Language is an important factor in self-expression (Kunz, 1981, p. 47). The participants are between 26 and 38 years old. Furthermore, there is a potential of less accessible female respondents, which could shift the research's focus on male respondents only. This is not intended in the established criteria. Former occupation and, or educational status were taken into account and addressed while transcribing and analyzing the findings conducted in the interviews, but were not considered as a formal criteria in the selection of the sample. Reasons to focus the study on Syrian and Eritrean refugees were explained in the introduction, but are going to be addressed again.

The Eritrean government is accused of systematic and widespread crimes against humanity by the United Nations for disregarding the liberty of Eritrean citizens. The law provides that every Eritrean needs to serve the military for 18 months, starting at the age of 18. In practice the military service does not end after 18 months, the timeframe is indefinite. Human Rights Watch illustrates the indefinite conscription as one of the drivers of Eritrean migration. Physical abuse including torture occurs frequently, attempts to flee are punished.

Prosecution and imprisonment are applied ways to dictate Eritrean citizens. Public critics of the government are not allowed and individuals detained by imprisonment. The length of imprisonment is undefined and conditions are harsh, most people die, according to the guards. Furthermore, the government pursues Eritreans practicing another religion than the four acknowledged by law. In addition to internal human rights violations, Eritrea makes war on Djibouti and Ethiopia, as well as supports the war in Yemen. Furthermore, Eritrea is accused of arming and training anti-Ethiopia and anti-Djibouti militias.

The situation in Syria is different, but not less important and devastating. The on-going crisis gives place to torture and ill treatment in detention, human rights are not observed. The use of toxic chemical weapons during attacks by government forces is assumed and researched, military responsibility proven. Furthermore, cluster munitions are actively used and applied, acknowledging the risk of killing civilians. In addition to the civil war, organizations like ISIS and Jabhet Fath al-Sham terrorize civilians and destabilize Syria. Both organizations publicly claimed responsibility for bombing civilians, abductions, arbitrary detentions, executions and unlawful sieges (Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017). Women and girls face discriminations and restrictions in areas held by ISIS. Especially, Yazidi females are tortured, murdered and sexually enslaved by ISIS fighters, as well as homosexual men, due to religious prosecution and degradation. Since 2011 many parties are involved in the Syrian crisis and persecuting internal, personal interests. Russia's involvement in crimes is assumed, but not proven, the United States are part of the crisis, as well as the Assad regime and different non-state armed groups, and the mentioned terror organizations.

Participants	Gender	Nationality	Age	Educational Level
P1	Male	Syrian	35	University Degree
P2	Female	Syrian	26	University Degree
P3	Male	Syrian	32	University Degree
P4	Male	Eritrean	37	Job Training
P5	Male	Eritrean	38	School
P6	Male	Syrian	35	University Degree

P7	Male	Syrian	28	University Degree
P8	Male	Eritrean	33	University Degree
P9	Male	Syrian	28	University Degree
P10	Male	Eritrean	33	University Degree

3.4 Procedure

As soon as an interview contact was established, access to the community and organizations occurred in order to make the interviewer familiar with participants' environment and comfort zones and decrease imbalance of power. Challenges of creating culturally sensitive research are considered and techniques to avoid imbalance or influence implemented (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 313). Places and settings of interviews are discussed and selected to minimize external factors disturbing the interviewee and enable to build a trustworthy relationship and a meaningful exchange. The locations differed due to interviewer's flexibility to adjust and travel to interviewees' favored destination. Some interviews were conducted at cafés or restaurants in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, some were held at refugees' houses, or on campus of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

In preparation for the interview a topic list, based on former literature and research related themes, was produced. Concepts and ideas approached in the theoretical framework and grouped into blocks of questions. The topic list includes issues related to social media use and application or platform use, the influence of migration networks, social connections established before, during and after the flight and their importance to the interviewee in a logical and encouraging manner for the interviewee to share and open up about the journey experience. Furthermore, the process and event of the journey as well as refugees' motivations in terms of drivers and destinations are discussed. This part includes the network maps produced by the interviewees. As mentioned before, the participants are asked to draw their journey, once the geographical route, then the established networks and connections, and then the importance of these established connections for the journey's process. The interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim. The approach was to code the transcriptions manually. Reliability in a qualitative study is difficult to guarantee, but the study's factors are clearly outlined in order to be replicable, comprehendible. Furthermore, emphasizing the consistency, credibility, trustworthiness and transferability of the study

ensures validity. In addition, the interviewees are asked to read and check certain parts of the transcripts as a means of ensuring validity. If the interviewee acknowledges the abstract as a reflection of his responses and the analysis of the network maps in a true way, validity is applied.

3.5 Interview Design

Even though each interview was conducted in a different place and in favor of the interviewees' needs, the structure of the interviews was held the same in order to ensure a reliable and replicable research. Each interview began with a short introduction and description of the research and upcoming topics in the interview. All of the participants were informed about her rights and signed a consent request (Appendix A) to ensure they understood and accepted the conditions of the research. Complete anonymity and confidentiality of participants' data were guaranteed in order to establish a free environment, independent of fear or pressure and to enable a calm and safe surrounding for the interviewees to share their personal journey experiences. Each interview followed the structure of the topic list. However, a flexible and dynamic interview was favored in order to relax the situation and take upon the flow of the interviewees' responses. Therefore, the interviewer responded to and included ideas or comments provided by the interviewee or the supervisor, if she was present. The interview began with simple questions concerning some demographical information and moved on to the open and loose questions about the journey. Each interviewee was different in the way of responding to questions about the journey, some talked and shared many information without any need of asking for details, some needed some assistant, but provided enough content to ask about further experiences and events. None of the interviews were paused or ended; the interviewees seemed to enjoy talking about this part of their life and sharing their unique story. Furthermore, the journey was connected to social connections and whether and which role digital technology played in that sense. All of the participants talked about different kinds of social connections, established with and without the use of digital technology and the impact they had on the journey process. Following the part about social connections, the last part addressed digital technology and the use of it in general. The interviews followed a logical manner, linking each part to one another and arranging an easy order for the interviewees to respond to in depth. The interviewees often mentioned experiences, which could be linked to upcoming questions and topics, and therefore made the interview comfortable and manageable for both sides.

3.6 Data analysis

Thematic data analysis, theoretical refinement and elaboration of the findings lead to a better understanding of respondents' experiences and experienced social relationships

during their flight. Each interview was recorded and afterwards transcribed. Each transcription was named P for participant 1 to 10 in order to identify the interviewees and ensure complete anonymity. The listing does not refer to objectify any interviewee or shared story. Since the interviews were transcribed, data were prepared and read carefully and repeatedly. Several definitive and sensitizing concepts and preliminary themes are identified and extracted from each interview (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013, p. 8). Qualitative analysis is divided in two parts, the data segmenting and the data reassembling (Boeije, 2010, p. 76). Present data are segmented into pieces and reassembled again into a coherent manner. Data are organized and segmented into relevant and meaningful categories, relevant in regard to the research question and sub-questions, as well as the assumptions. A system of categories and concepts is created with the intention of gaining knowledge and insights about the studied social phenomenon. To identify each category, codes are ascribed. Each code describes various remarks about the category and interprets data meaningful (Boeije, 2010, p. 90). A label that depicts the core topic of a category is used as a code. The different pieces of data are compared in order to ascertain their similarities and differences (Boejie, 2010, p. 77). Similar parts of data are grouped together. In this step, topics and themes become clear and obvious. Topics of relevance can be identified throughout data and often in multiple and different parts of each interview adding to the same category. Even though interviewees might use different words, various fragments relate to the same category and are therefore combined. Categories either inductively emerge from data or are decided upon beforehand, in a deductive approach (Boeije, 2010, p. 79). Furthermore, the different categories are linked to one another to generate a theoretical understanding of the researched phenomenon. While reassembling the data patterns, relationships or challenges are identified and explained in order to make sense of the data from a theoretical lens. Each description and interpretation is based upon researcher's observations and approach in theoretical framework. Either a core concept or conceptual elements are identified and observed with regard to theoretical sensitivity (Boeije, 2010, p. 81, p. 88). In this regard, theoretical sensitivity means that ideas are developed from data by viewing data through a certain theoretical perspective.

Furthermore, Boeije (2010) discusses open, axial and selective coding in order to benefit from the findings and experience either consensus or differences between the interviewees' responses (p. 90). Since the present study uses a code-based analysis, the process is divided in the three different. The relationship between the data and concepts is initially open and unfixed (Boeije, 2010, p. 83). In order to identify concepts and themes, data is read carefully and divided into fragments. These fragments are compared to each other. Via constant comparison of the given data the purpose to describe the similarities and differences that are found within a certain category manifest itself and are grouped into

categories dealing with the same concepts and therefore, labeled with the same code (Boeije, 2010, p. 96). The thematic approach of the open coding process therefore breaks up data into fragments of data, compare them and assign them to the same category. Data is compared until no new insights are gained and saturation is achieved (Boeije, 2010, p. 84). Following the open coding, axial coding is applied. In the process of axial coding data are put back together in new, logical ways by linking categories. The different categories are related to subcategories, specifying the variation and themes of a category, and reassembling data (Boeije, 2010, p. 108). Topics and themes are identified concerning the refugees' journey and related experiences and connections. Motivations to flee, social media use and influence on the journey, as well as events during the flight are categorized. Data is furthermore refined and re-coded, organized into relevant categories and evaluated in order to extract a structure on refugees' media use concerning their social ties during the flight. In order to identify key concepts or connections between concepts and themes, data are compared across the categories and individual interviews to facilitate the integration of the findings (Boeije, 2010, p. 90). Therefore, new ideas are generated. Axial coding is finalized when the distinction between main codes and sub-codes is established and no new or further connections can be identified (Boeije, 2010, p. 114). The last step of the coding process is selective coding. During this phase categories are linked or challenged in order to understand the main concepts and gain new ideas and insights on the researched phenomenon. Certain categories become part of the presented theoretical framework and are furthermore added as theoretical concepts (Boeije, 2010, p. 115). Data is synthesised as either a core category or main concepts in order to answer the research question and sub-question. The results are contrasted with the approached literature and presented concepts are challenged. New assumptions and conclusions are presented as results of new material and additions to the current literature.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Because of shared personal stories and the chance of emotional distress throughout the interview, the topic list and the interview itself are based on ethical and safety guidelines. The study accounts for ethical considerations and includes elements securing the interviewees' safety and comfort (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014, p. 314). The interviewer is going to clarify the study and tell the interviewee about discussed content during the interview. Unfortunately, the interview is not able to avoid questions about journey that might cause hurt or stress to the interviewee. The interviewer tries to provide a safe environment, in which the interviewee is able to establish a feeling of comfort and shelter. If the interviewee does not feel like answering certain questions or feels uncomfortable in continuing the interview, the interviewee is free to decide and to leave anytime. Attention is giving to interviewees' needs, information about a drop-in center for help is offered anytime. As BenEzer and Zetter

(2014) explain, the interviewer needs to acknowledge the fact that the interviewee is going to talk about traumatizing events and disturbing content (p. 314). But as both authors explicate, taking about these events may have a therapeutic effect on the interviewees. Respondents' rights are explained before signing an informed consent form. Besides, strict confidentiality, anonymity and responsible handling of each interview data are ensured. Furthermore, the interviewer ensures awareness of insecurities that might come up during the cross-cultural interviews (Kvale, 2011, p. 3).

Concluding the methods and leading to the discussion, the aim is to find insights into Syrians' and Eritreans' use of social media in order to maintain relationships to family and friends in and from Syria and Eritrea, as well as encounter new connections along the way like contacting human traffickers or Dutch citizens.

IV. Results and Analysis

Comparing Syrian and Eritrean refugees enables to find out, which sources of information both groups use in order to benefit their journey and reach the Netherlands (Fiedler, 2018, p. 3). Cultural and political differences of both refugee groups are not part of the analysis, the focus stays upon the differences and similarities of digital technology use and the ability to obtain and maintain social connections, as well as access different resources via digital or personal communication during the journey process. Although many applications and online services used by Syrians and Eritreans were similar, there were main differences in the access to these online platforms and ability to use them. In general, it is to conclude that out of the given sample, Syrian refugees are more familiar with digital technology and use various applications on their smartphones during their journey, whereas Eritrean refugees are more likely to go to an Internet café in order to access websites and do not own a smartphone, more likely owning a phone to make calls only. In this regard, studies of UNHCR show, that the infrastructure and familiarity with digital technologies is neither common nor established in Eritrea yet. Especially in rural areas the Internet and digital technology use is not accessible, or even known as a helpful resource to seek and gain information (UNHCR, 2016). One of the Eritrean participants worked in the field of communication and explained the differences within the Eritrean country of using digital technologies. Citizens of bigger cities do access and use online media, whereas the infrastructure and connections get worse the further one leaves to the countryside (Male Eritrean participant 4). On the other hand, Syrian participants talked about the difficulties in accessing digital technology due to the war and the regime's control over the Internet connection (Male Syrian participant 3). In some parts of cities like Damascus, the Internet is turned off or connections are damaged and therefore no access is possible due to bombings. Both countries struggle with Internet restrictions due to governmental power and ideology spread. All Eritrean participants confirmed, that one cannot log onto most websites due to restrictions, the connection is extremely slow and therefore no help in accessing online information or entertainment.

"The network is limited for Internet and even restricted. You cannot log in to things something, they close the Facebook sometimes, close the calling function. You cannot log to every websites. Like problematic websites, before it was open, but later it was restricted. Everything is controlled." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

"Of course, in Eritrea there is a critic of technology and the connection is very slow and also there is limited access to technology." (Male Eritrean participant 10)

All Syrian participants highlighted difficulties in accessing digital technology, some because of the danger of being controlled by the government, others because of destroyed connections.

"Facebook, because WhatsApp in Syria is dangerous to use it. It's controlled by the government." (Male Syrian participant 3)

In addition to the political and societal circumstances, the isolation of both countries and the citizens, represented by the given sample, were reasons leading to the journey to Europe. Hobfoll's COR table (2001) maintains different social resources, which should be contained in a personal fulfilled life (see 2.3.1). During the analysis it appeared that apart from loyalty and support of family and friends, none of the mentioned social or material resources suited the life of the ten participants before they left their home countries and therefore added to the reasons to flee. The participants mentioned the strong will to regain hope and a feeling of a free and peaceful life for themselves and their family. In fact, both types of resources are listed by Hobfoll (2001) in order to scale a stable live.

"I know that in Europe there is freedom. The best thing is freedom." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

4.1 Journey

4.1.1 Reasons to flee

Throughout the interviews many participants talked about their reasons to flee and opened up about factors pushing them towards a journey to Europe, and in particular to the Netherlands. Most of the reasons are related to the Syrian war or the abuse of power in Eritrea, but read between the lines, many of the participants visualized themselves in positions close to their previous life.

"My main goal was to escape from Syria and I was also, the whole city was tensioned." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"I left Syria, mainly because of two things. The first was the war, and the second was, I knew that I'll get the job in Jordan." (Male Syrian participant 6)

All of them thought of working in a field related to their educational background or previous work experience. Furthermore, education plays a significant role as a reason to leave Eritrea. Almost every Eritrean in this sample mentioned scholarships and university grades as reasons to come to Europe. In this regard, Hobfoll (2001) lists the ability to

maintain people throughout live one is able to learn from and gain helpful knowledge as a social resource. Furthermore, the author highlights the importance of advancements in education or job training, which participants strived for to obtain in the Netherlands.

"My decision was like, I didn't like the system and also I want to study abroad." (Male Eritrean participant 8)

4.1.2 Preparation of Journey

Fiedler (2018) mentions that refugees are often linked to the idea of a rushed and unprepared flight (p. 7). But all of the participants, even though the time of preparation was short and sudden, took time to access information, either by personal interaction or online communication, and thought about the first steps to take and arrange before leaving. Not one of them left overnight, or just ran off without gaining information or any preparation. In particular they escaped because they were not able to feel that their personal lives have meaning or purpose in their home countries, which Hobfoll (2001) lists as an important social resource.

"All of a sudden, I prepared my journey, because it was series of actions, series of incidents that took place at that time and I needed to plan my journey as soon as possible. And I planned it on Thursday, and I travelled on Sunday. It was only three days of planning, of organizing this trip, this journey from Syria to Turkey." (Male Syrian participant 1)

Since three Eritreans and three Syrians crossed the borders illegally, one of the first steps was to contact smugglers and access information about the border crossings and a rough estimation about the route. All of the male participants left by themselves. Seven of them left after they arranged a safe environment for their children and their wives for the time they were separated. Most of them did not consult anyone in their present environment in order to plan their journey. If the journey was communicated, it was shared with friends or family members already residing in Europe, or elsewhere in the world. The reason was, independent of Eritrean or Syrian men, the danger of being caught or punished for the idea and will to flee the country of origin. The remaining family needed to be secured from governmental actions to come after the husbands and pressure them to come back. In this regard, family stability or safety was not given, neither health nor integrity were warranted. According to Hobfoll's COR table (2001), family and friends' happiness, health and safety are of great importance as social resources in order to live independently and without constant worrying about the wellbeing of loved ones.

"And I didn't also tell my wife. And then the next day, I told her I was having work outside here, maybe for a week or something, I not going to call you, because I was working in the communication in Sudan, we go outside to make the networks, the towers, so it is normal for her. She said okay. And a good thing, her mother was with us. I was a little bit for her relaxed, because her mother is there. Good woman." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

4.1.3 Transportation Devices

Preparations were made in order to escape and assure safety for the remaining family members. In this regard, routes and transport devices were looked up and communicated. Crossing the borders illegally includes smugglers and private, personal transportation devices, as in walking or shared cars. Both groups of refugees needed to cross the Mediterranean Sea and therefore relied on one of the boats offered by human traitors/smugglers. Eritrean and Syrian participants talked about the use of trains and busses, even taxis sometimes in Europe, because they did not need to rely or use the services of smugglers anymore and could coordinate their journeys and further steps by themselves enabled by information accessed online or personal networking. In addition to the use of smugglers during an illegal journey to Europe, organizations like the Red Cross coordinate and accompany Syrian refugees arriving in Europe. They helped to manage the journey, gave advice and assisted buying tickets or registering for documents. In this regard, the participants were able to establish and aggregate one resource listed by Hobfoll (2001), the involvement in organizations with others who have similar interests and are therefore able to help and influence the journey process. Contrary, Eritrean participants were not able to identify any organization or guided help during the journey process apart from a French military boat offering food or crowded sleeping places in Italy. Visible and recognizable NGO's were not observed or remembered by Eritrean participants.

"There is no more dangers, because the most dangerous thing is to cross the sea. After that it is managed or organized by the Red Cross and the organizations that accompany the refugees. From one country to another." (Male Syrian participant 1)

4.1.4 Refugees' Status

To draw a clear distinction between legal and illegal refugees is not easy. One participant left Eritrea illegally and flew from Sudan to the Netherlands legally, because of a student visa and his scholarship application. Another Eritrean participant flew out of Eritrea legally to study in China and then decided to come to the Netherlands as a refugee.

"For me, I think, it's a bit different compared to other people, because I came out illegally from my country, but I from Sudan I came legally to here as a scholarship." (Male Eritrean participant 8)

The distinction concerning Syrian refugees was the same, either the participants left Syria illegally due to missing documents and became temporarily legal due to temporary documents given by the Syrian embassy in Lebanon, or they left Syria legally and used different ways and routes to Europe. Three participants came by plane, one because of his disability and his application to a program founded by UNHCR to help Syrian refugees in special need to arrive safely in Europe or the United States. Almost 100 refugees were selected to enter Europe by plane, leaving from Beirut. Another Syrian participant used his Jordanian working visa to leave Jordan and come to Europe. The female Syrian participant, left legally because of her husband's request for family reunification. The participants leaving legally communicated their will and idea to leave their country of origin with friends, colleagues and family members on location. In fact, they worked closely with embassies and governmental representatives to ensure a smooth journey.

"I only hearing people by watching people in news in television that people move from Lebanon to Europe with this program United Nation program. I thought it suit my situation; because I am not in the condition to travel by boat, it's not an option for me. I think it's more safe way, because also my accident is relative to war in Syria. So I have a advantage, because this program." (Male Syrian participant 7)

Most of the Syrian participants mentioned the difficulties of applying for a visa with a Syrian passport. Only few of the neighboring countries enable Syrian refugees to enter without a visa, the dependence on governmental restrictions makes it hard to leave Syria and enter surrounding countries legally.

"Because we don't have a lot of options. Whenever we wanted to go to another country, they ask us for visa. So the discussion was mainly about what's the easiest and simplest way to arrive to a safer place." (Male Syrian participant 6)

4.1.5 Routes

The refugees used different routes, not only due to geographical factors of the different countries, but mainly due to changing governmental restrictions and the admission of refugees (Male Syrian participant 9). Two Syrians went to Turkey by car, entered Greece by boat and mainly walked through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Belgrade, Croatia, Austria,

Germany and the Netherlands. The participants were therefore dependent on their bodies' strength and endurance, and not able to use or take personal transportation devices, which would enable independence. Hobfoll (2001) lists personal transportation as a material resource, which does count as a luxury device, but at the same time covers personal success and independence of public transport and structure of own life apart from official schedules.

"After that the most way was walking. Walking and sometimes by train, sometimes by car. But the most is walking. It was about- it takes 20 days. First Turkey by sea to Greek then to Macedonia, then to Serbia, then Belgrade, then Croatia and Austria, Germany, Holland. It was so long." (Male Syrian participant 3)

The Syrian female entering the Netherlands by plane left Syria to Beirut, Lebanon, took a plane to Istanbul, Turkey and another one to Amsterdam, Netherlands. The journey took about one day, including a taxi drive to Beirut and a stop in Istanbul.

4.1.6 Fragmentation

Participants choosing journeys by plane took longer due to differing assumptions about leaving Syria and the journey process. Most of the participants did not leave their country with a clear idea of ending up in the Netherlands. They went country by country, stayed in each for quite some time and decided to move further, therefore experienced fragmented journeys. One Syrian participant left Syria to Lebanon and stayed eight months until he and the UNHCR decided to fly him to the Netherlands. Routes are individual and most of the times represent the mindset of the one taking it (Syrian participant 6; Eritrean participant 8). In this regard, the participants' network maps show the relation of fragmented journeys and formed social connections and the use of digital technology (compare Appendix D).

Three Eritrean and five Syrian participants stopped in countries to make a living, earn money and thought about staying and residing in the country, establishing a new home.

"After that I worked with the company for the water. And I worked also in a restaurant. Also for few months." (Male Syrian participant 3)

Most of the participants left Syria and Eritrea without the intention of going to Europe. The first step was to leave the home country and find a safe place to settle with the family, therefore, one of the neighboring countries seemed like suitable change. The unawareness of the upcoming need to flee to Europe was mentioned in most of the interviews. Three Eritreans lived and worked in Sudan, one for a few months, another for two years until the

situation was not suitable for his family anymore. A lot of Syrians worked and stayed, or studied in Lebanon without any intention to leave the Middle East. A participant contributed, that Syrian refugees are not welcomed or liked in the neighboring countries at the moment due to historical reasons and tensions in the societies, the participants decided on leaving towards Europe.

Current migration literature characterizes contemporary refugee movements as fragmented and relates to migration processes that involve periods of time in different countries (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014; Collyer, 2010; Kuschminder, 2017). Motivations of fragmented journeys are reasoned by stricter border controls or smuggling processes (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017). Among these reasons, fragmentation is often caused by an unawareness and maybe naivety to hope for a settlement in one of the neighboring countries, the participants relied on their educational background and previous working experiences.

"I have big job. It was not in my mind to go out, but this things happens and I got to Sudan, when I come to Sudan also the life was a little bit rough and I can't manage it. I cannot live in Eritrea and not in Sudan, so what can I do, I have to try. I contact nobody in Europe. Just it was accident and I have to manage it." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

"Originally, when I left my country, I didn't just intend to leave for Europe. Of course my intention was to leave to China to study." (Male Eritrean participant 10)

During the journey, participants mentioned fragmentation because of the weather or personal health conditions. Furthermore, dependence on availability of and the access to sufficient amount of money for smugglers caused waiting time. Arriving in the European Union, registration processes and paper work took time and refugees needed to wait for days to be processed and move forward. Papers proving one's identity were necessary in each and every country of the European Union. In this regard, Syrian refugees were dependent on open borders in Europe, some countries closed their borders due to political power struggles or the attempt to handle the amount of refugees, therefore, the remaining refugees needed to wait in front of the borders until they were able to cross. These arguments are in line with previous studies justifying fragmentation with stricter border controls or smuggling processes.

Furthermore, loosing track of the right way or getting lost caused unplanned stopovers and further waiting time. One Syrian and one Eritrean participant talked about the problem of being imprisonment due to an illegal status in Lebanon and Sudan, the Syrian participant waited for documents, which legalized him as Syrian for six months. Even though he got the papers, he was still imprisoned a few more times and unable to leave right away.

Therefore, fragmentation is caused by more factors than governmental restrictions. Refugees' conditions and environmental occurrences influence and impact the journey process and lead to unplanned waiting times and stops. The reasons of fragmentation differ and are often linked to individual routes and behaviors.

"I stayed there three days, because of the weather. I stayed three days, the weather was not good to travel." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"We stayed there for three days in order to get the papers, the documents from the Greek police. We need to get the paper from them that we can go to Europe." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"I stayed in Lebanon because I didn't have passport. Because the government in Syria, they don't give passport. It's so difficult now to have a passport." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"I studied in China for 6 months. In the beginning, I thought about Europe." (Male Eritrean participant 10)

Three Eritreans left Eritrea to Sudan, crossing the border illegally. Two continued the way by foot and in help of smugglers crossing to Libya using trucks, crossing over to Italy by boat, then moving on to France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

"Within twenty-one days I was in Italy." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

"It was eight months, all in total. From Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and to reach." (Male Eritrean participant 5)

In order to cross borders illegally, the participants contacted and relied on smugglers, paying a lot of money; most families and refugees save up all their salaries and savings to pay smugglers and the journey to Europe for one family member. Even though, refugees contact smugglers voluntary, they are dependent on their services and their networks.

"But when I reach Ethiopia, I was helped by people. They took me to Sudan, from Sudan also I was helped by people, they took me to Libya, and from Libya also I was helped by people, they took me to Europe until here, I come with people, just helped by people." (Male Eritrean participant 5)

"But because I am traveling illegally I need to pay too much. 2200 Dollars is too much." (Male Syrian participant 1)

In this regard, smugglers had the power to place participants to sleeping places, where they needed to wait for further instructions. This is mostly related to Eritrean refugees, since they depend on smugglers for hiding them from officials and bringing them to a boat to cross over to Europe. Syrian participants talked about the freedom to arrange and look up sleeping and resting places independently and on their own due to information they accessed online or that was communicated to them personally. Some booked hotel rooms or looked for different, even private places to rest since the majority confirmed that refugee camps are neither safe nor clean. Most of the camps are crowded and inaccessible, some chose to sleep on the streets in order to avoid going to a refugee camp. Different social resources like housing that suits personal needs, time for adequate sleep or personal health are not guaranteed or even possible to maintain. Hobfoll (2001) lists these social resources as warrantors to handle different struggles in personal life, none of them are achievable or accessible and therefore add into the downfall of refugees.

"I don't have my mobile telephone and I cannot talk to anyone. The next day in the morning at 5 o'clock, they removed us into another part of Syria to the militant groups and they submitted us there." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"I went to the hotel. To stay outside the camp. I could not stay in the camp, because it's very dirty, and it's unhealthy to stay there and I need to stay on the ground without any facilities to help you to sleep." (Male Syrian participant 1)

Because of that, both groups of participants, Eritrean and Syrian, confirmed that most difficulties approached them in Europe since the refugee situation was out of control and supervision (nine out of ten participants arrived in 2015).

"The most difficult thing was for me, when I arrived and I didn't know where to go when I arrived to the Netherlands. […] *But there was no place for us to sleep, so they gave me like a sheet and they told me 'go sleep somewhere', so I slept on the ground and this was for me the first time in my life I sleep on the ground."* (Male Syrian participant 6)

Already mentioned, but not analyzed are the importance and function of social connections before, during and after the journey to Europe. The interaction and encounter

with different people along the way is obvious, but the actual impact on the journey and the refugee himself are going to be discussed in depth.

4.2 The Role of Social Connections

Current studies reveal that refugees prefer to move to locations, where they have contacts or other relations (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012). It has been widely acknowledged that contact to relatives or friends can lead to lower levels of social loneliness, as well as the learning of the local language (Koelet & De Valk, 2016; Kunz, 1981). Besides, migration literature points out the consistency of strong ties based on shared identity or experiences or friendship in networks. Digital technology enables connections of the three forms of ties and provides platforms and hybrid networks to maintain strong and establish weak and latent ties (Komito, 2011; compare Appendix D).

Referring to this, Fiedler (2018) differentiates ways of accessing journey related information. She mentions the personal network feedback, which describes that potential refugees access information by contacting friends, colleagues or family members already living in Europe. In this regard, personal contacts are indispensable in order to gain trustful and reliable information. The analysis reinforced this assumption. Strong ties were of immense importance to access trustworthy information. Furthermore, digital technology plays a key role in providing access to information and other resources and enabling to organize the journey as independently as possible. In this regard, Facebook serves as a powerful tool in the journey process. The platform enables to access information provided by users and establish and activate strong and latent ties. Furthermore, social networks, implying interactions with friends and mutual friends, are of great importance in order to seek information and access to resources. Fiedler (2018) identifies this process as the narrowcast feedback (p. 8). Either personal or impersonal information are passed on in order to help the potential refugee. The interrelation of digital technology and the formation of social connections were essential for the journey process.

Different social connections are identified while analyzing the data. Most of the shared social connections are ones, which had active or passive impact on the refugees' journeys. For example, some social connections were temporarily established in order to remain sane and safe, therefore influenced the refugee's condition and further journey in a passive way. Incidents with home country officials were mentioned as interactions and encounters, which were not favored or intended, but a connection with either military representatives or governmental officials was established in the moment of being imprisoned or exposed to governmental arbitrariness, happening both in Eritrea and Syria. The police and military in both countries is stated as corrupt, the connection described as dangerous and unsafe and one of the reasons to escape the country. Hobfoll (2001) mentions the feeling of being

valuable to others and personal safety as important social resources, both were not given before and during the journey, and were pursued in the Netherlands.

"That was the thing, because if I left my wife back, they gonna put her in a prison and say, he should come." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

"And also I stayed in prison three, four times in Lebanon." (Male Syrian participant 3)

Another unsafe connection was established various times with smugglers. All of the participants, who crossed the borders illegally relied on and contacted a smuggler to ensure a border crossing without being caught. Many smugglers operate on face-to-face interactions, but others call and arrange meetings via the phone. These connections are terminated and related to particular parts of the journey. The Syrian participants used smugglers to leave Syria and cross to Turkey and then to Greece; the Eritrean participants needed smugglers throughout the African continent until they reached Italy. The routes along the African continent are not manageable without smugglers, since no participant was able to identify any organization, which helped on location. After arriving successfully in either Greece or Italy, the participants deleted or blocked the contact of the smuggler in order to avoid being related to him in any kind.

"No, because I don't know them and they also not good people. It's dangerous to have contact with them. And also, when I went with them, it's like a adventure, You don't know if they will do it or not. But no way, no other choice." (Male Syrian participant 3)

The dependence on smugglers and their connections got obvious, when one of the participants opened up about being analphabetic and therefore, unable to access any information not given to him orally. He had no chance of using digital technology or maps, and therefore relied on social connections and information passed on to him by people surrounding him.

"The only thing was, I was with people, who were going here and they have good communication, they have a good network. So they get everything, they communicate everything. When they say 'ey, tomorrow we are going', I just go with them. Because I cannot read or write, but of course for those people they communicate." (Male Eritrean participant 5)

Of great importance is the maintained contact with family and friends as a stable support and safety system. Regular interactions with close relatives or long-term friends help to open

and build new networks. At the same time, remaining members of the family create some form of dependency and are susceptible to blackmail by the government or military. Furthermore, participants talked about the difficulty of establishing a new life in Europe and maintaining the old, troubled, dangerous one via the family by hearing shooting sounds while calling or not being able to video call due to bombings and the damaged connections.

In this regard, Hobfoll's (2001) COR theory responds perfectly since it discusses the impact of war and disaster on individuals (Hobfoll et al., 2006). Traumatic resource loss responds to the loss of elementary resources like safety, calmness, attachment and hope (Hobfoll, 2014; Dekel & Hobofoll, 2007; Fiedler, 2018). The environment of the individual like families, organizations and societies enable the individual to obtain and maintain different kinds of resources when at their best. Furthermore, the loss of particular resources leads to the loss of other resources. Resources influence each other and the ability to obtain and maintain resources.

"My friends, I have so close friends. We studied together and we were also working together. I have so much contact with them, every two days, three days we speak. And the connections in Syria now is also difficult. Sometimes one week, two weeks he has no connections." (Male Syrian participant 3)

In this regard, family and close friends are used as information and network systems before participants begin their journey; the information is the most trusted and reliable one. Participants asked for help and advice, and reassured online information in order to organize and manage their journeys. One of the Eritrean participants fell sick, a sickness caused by stress and the lack of rest and good sleep and was in need of shelter and medicine. He therefore relied on a personal contact shared with him via Facebook, a mutual friend he was able to trust and rely on. At this point the only social resources listed by Hobfoll (2001) were mentioned and maintained by participants before, during and after the journey process. Loyalty and trust of family members and friends, and furthermore support from co-workers, who became friends during the time (compare Appendix D). Furthermore, the interrelation and ability to access resources via digital technology is obvious since the use of Facebook enabled to establish and access the social contact.

"Cause I organize it and this journey via a person, who was already in Germany. A friend of mine, who took the same way from Syria to Turkey helped me also to establish this contact and to go through the same way." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"My friends. Because you can't trust everybody, especially on the social media." (Male Syrian participant 3)

“So I told him 'yesterday I was talking to somebody and I need to leave'. I have the money, if I call you, you have to pay them and take care of my children.” (Male Eritrean participant 4)

Furthermore, maintaining contact with former colleagues from work or university is mentioned in order to exchange information (Fiedler, 2018, p. 3). Colleagues are more likely to help and share different kinds of information and access to work-related resources, such as contacts to a company or university.

“There are, I tried to have some contacts with my colleagues from the mobile telephone company. Establish contact with them, for some extent I helped them for one year, after I came here I tried to help them for some procedures and policies in the company. For writing an email if he has a problem, if he makes a presentation for his job or something like this.” (Male Syrian participant 1)

These social connections were established prior to the decision of leaving the country, and maintained to the best. During the journey mouth-to-mouth conversations with strangers, short and terminated connections, ended by the time refugees change places, related to language translations, help, support and, or safety reasons are established. Either the connections were established to exchange needed information and then terminated, or the connections were not meant to be terminated but due to constant change of phone numbers and new SIM cards, no further contact was possible. In addition, temporary connections helped by forming groups to move from one place to another and enabled a feeling of safety and protection from criminals (compare Appendix D).

“Yes, we stayed together to be just in groups in order to end up not be lost or to make anyone interfere in the group. Cause you know in a lot of way there would be thieves, there would be criminals. Some of the people got killed on the way, because they were alone. So we need to be in a group, even if you don't know them, even if you meet this contact for the first time. But it would be also easier to be with them, because of the thieves on the way or the criminals, or the highway men. Yes, at least it's a feeling of safety, it can protect you through your journey. In return I would help them or translate for them.” (Male Syrian participant 1)

“But I did not get the chance to take her mobile telephone number, but that contact was ended there. And every contact on my way, I could know some people from Syria, from Iraq,

and I could get their mobile telephone numbers, but when they get to Germany or The Netherlands, they have changed the numbers. So I could not keep this touch with them, this contact with them." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"But it's not, it's only temporary contact, it's not to be continued." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"Ah, strangers. Strangers, you sleep together, speak one language, speak together. It is different here." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

On the other hand, some refugee established "friendships" or closer connections with other refugees during their journey together. Most of them began by benefitting and helping each other, but got closer and familiar than other refugees' connections and interactions. Some of the connections endured till reaching each country of destination. Weak ties developed into strong ties, and were therefore of great importance during the journey in order to feel safe and sheltered.

"Some of them, but a little bit. Some of them. We came together, we came with three Syrian people, we came together here. We have contact, because we stayed in the camp for two weeks here, also together. Now we have contact, but a little bit. Because they are so far." (Male Syrian participant 3)

In this regard, establishing new social connections started off face-to-face and then were intensified by adding them to digital technology – for example exchange numbers, adding on Facebook. Participants drew different ways to establish social connections in their network map, mentioning the importance of knowing the person one is talking to (compare Appendix D).

"So you need sometimes to know the person face to face in order to establish this contact and after that you can keep this contact via WhatsApp or digital technology, Facebook or." (Male Syrian participant 1)

Another important factor while establishing social connections during the journey was to surround oneself with the own nationality in order to feel understood and comfortable. The same language, culture and almost the same experiences were shared and led to grouped parts of the journey, even though most of the participants began their journey on their own,

or were partly by themselves, most of them found connections with refugees within their own nationality.

"During the way, it's people- mostly refugees from Syria, from Iraq. You have your contact with them, we help each others and also choose. For example, I went to Holland. You choose people that also go to Holland. We came together, we help each other, just like this. But no, nothing else. Because I don't know anybody." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"I tried to connect only with Syrians, I felt maybe more common things in such an occasion. When you need someone, I could relate much more. I know the culture. It's better to be connected to my own people." (Male Syrian participant 9)

In addition, different journey parts lead to establishing relationships with officials, either with police officers or NGO representatives. Main goal was to get information about processes, border crossing and security. Some participants shared personal information about their journeys and needs with officials in order to decrease differences and relax the situation. From Greece onwards the exposure and confrontation with officials was greater since border polices secured the crossings and railways, and NGO's accompanied refugees.

"But you need to establish also contact with the police, with the security sometimes, with the Red Cross." (Male Syrian participant 1)

Furthermore, interactions with governmental representatives in charge of the registrations processes, asylum process and documents for family reunification were mentioned. Some participants needed to come in to be interviewed and therefore, established a connection with officials in order to settle in the Netherlands.

"Yes, when I get here asylum. Also, they ask you about your family and I have two children and wife. And within one year and eight months, my family comes here. Through airport." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

Few of the participants worked during their journeys and were therefore able to establish work relationships. Colleagues from a new and different work environment than back in their home country. Some established connections were reduced to work, some turned into friendships, which endured the journey to Europe. Financial stability and independence listed by Hobfoll (2001) as important social resources were lost during the journey, but tried to establish in each country of longer residence. Financial stability is one of the most mentioned

material resources among the male participants since some of them already have family on their own or did not want to rely on their families' money longer than necessary.

"I have relations with my colleagues. We have good connection, I find them through facebook." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

Furthermore, deeper and more intimate social connections were established while sharing apartments together in either Sudan or Lebanon. Some Eritrean and Syrian participants shared apartments within people from the same nationality in order to be able to afford the rent and found a living aside from being a displaced refugee.

"We move three different home, every home with new people. New different people, different mood, different thinking. All the same country, but thinking different. Take time to adjustment and understanding each others." (Male Syrian participant 7)

Most of the participants pointed out the importance and great help of establishing social connection by being able to speak English and Arabic and to read information in English and Arabic. Even without using digital technology, they were dependent on language and literacy.

"And also for me it was easier, because I can speak English, and sometimes you find people speak English. But for some refugees I saw them, they didn't speak English, it was for them so difficult." (Male Syrian participant 3)

In this regard, many social connections relied on the educational background of the participants. Especially, three Eritreans mentioned connections to professors or teachers and therefore shared perspective concerning studying and living in Europe as one of the important social connections established during their journey.

"A lot of professors from the US or the Netherlands. I had those people." (Male Eritrean participant 8)

In addition, mutual friends played a significant role in order to get information and extend the personal network. Most of them were established and accessible via WhatsApp and Facebook and included a constant exchange of needs and questions. Relying on personal connections was the easiest way to seek trustworthy information. Since personal interaction and exchange of information is understood as the most trusted compared to random browsed online information.

"I have my friend in Sweden, he is also new. We were together in Sudan, but he got maybe fifteen days before me. I come meet him through facebook and say I am now in France, but I don't know what to do. […] He was having his cousin, brother of his wife, living in Belgium. He told me, maybe this guy, ask him. I was sick at that time, I need shelter and medicine. […] I called that guy, he sent me his telephone number. He tells me that he is not in the city of Bruxelles, but there is somebody in Antwerp. Maybe you can go there. So I call that guy, and he is good guy, so I come Antwerp." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

All participants struggled in the beginning of the asylum process to find their place in the new society and establish social connections with locals or non-refugees. Their loss of social resources, the distance from family and close friends and a comfortable and well-known environment lead to weeks of online communication with family and friends spread all over the world and mostly back home, or communicating with refugees surrounding them and experiencing the same struggle. In this regard, George (2017) defines migration-based stressors as physical and psychological distress associated with refugees' experiences and the loss or shortage of resources. The ability to access and build resources enables refugees to establish future connections and resources, which furthermore leads to the aggregation of resources in a new environment and therefore, help in the process of integrating and regaining resources. The ability of refugees to invest in them and get access to resources might help to establish social interventions.

Resources beneficially impact refugees' experiences beneficially and are connected to decreasing levels of stress. As Hobfoll, Tracy and Galea (2006) explain, the minority status essentially impacts to the access of social and material resources. Phillimore, Humphris and Khan (2018) argue that refugees leave behind resources and give up on existing resources and support systems. This assumption cannot be confirmed after analyzing the data. Even though participants mentioned struggles and losses during their journeys, the ability to keep contact via digital technology and take part in the remaining life in the home country contradicts the conclusion of Phillimore et al. Social connections have a great value for refugees; they enable the decrease of stress and to share traumatic experiences. They may not be physical present, but are neither given up nor left behind (Phillimore, Humphris & Khan, 2018). Nowadays refugees are able to participate in the home community via digital technology without being physically present (Komito, 2012; Diminescu, 2008).

"And during this time I had nothing to do. And then I used to fill in my time in communicating with my friends and my family, because I am in a new country, I don't know anybody there, and before I had a normal social life and now it's not normal. I had to

compensate. I had lot of social contact, people were coming to me and asked for me to translate, because I speak English. There was lot of social contact." (Male Syrian participant 6)

"But socially and mentally I suffered, because normally it's not like a choice to be a refugee. It's like a kind of obligation; there are certain push factors that just brought me to come to the Netherlands. That really played a significant role in my life." (Male Eritrean participant 10)

Therefore, it is to say that social connections are formed and used benefitting the personal journey process and access to information and resources. Strong ties are essential before, during and after the journey since they provide information, give access to social and material resources and form a connection to refugees' former homes. In addition, temporary and weak ties are necessary and build on purpose to advance the journey process and benefit of the strength of a moving group. Information are accessed and exchanged among these groups.

4.2.1 Social Network

Social connections are often combined in a personal social network, linking each connection and relationship to a stable network system enabling refugees to access resources and information. Fiedler (2018) explains, that refugees build an "information highway", which describes the exchange of information of the ones, who successfully arrived at their destination, to the ones either already on their journey, or about to begin their journey (p. 10). Following up on the previous explanation of narrowcasting feedback, social networks enable to spread information available to the general public coming from personal contacts to be accessible via social media platforms. Furthermore, Fiedler (2018) introduces the induced broadcast feedback, which identifies new ways of establishing contact that refugees look for in order to access resources and information related to their journey. In this regard, the refugees' decision to leave is influenced by information and social connections accessed via an external network, which the refugees personally sought out.

"You have to have a good network." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

"When I was still sitting in camp, I expand my network via social media." (Male Eritrean participant 10)

Participants mentioned groups on social media, particular on Facebook, enabling the participant to gain insights on processes like renting a house or finding a job in a new country.

Likeminded share and access the same information and offer help. These groups are often in Arabic and include experienced stories. In this regard, participants tried to establish and maintain companionships, listed by Hobfoll (2001) as a social resource in order to stabilize the current life situation and share experiences.

"I looked for groups, for Syrians to help each others. Here in Holland the government helps with everything, but in other places no. So Syrians help each others. Online, in groups facebook. Also if you have a question you can go to the group." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"Also facebook groups for refugees or my country mates, groups with my previous campus mates, any group." (Male Eritrean participant 10)

Furthermore, social networking groups on communication services like WhatsApp or Viber relate personal and private contacts, most likely friends and family members and enable to access and share sensitive data in a trusted and safe environment. Some Syrian participant mentioned the danger of governmental surveillance on WhatsApp, but in Europe the use of WhatsApp is indispensable. Most of the groups link refugees of the same nationality and users provide information about the journey and routes, dangers and insights on contacting smugglers or adequate sleeping places. These groups enable to gain a lot of information in a short period of time, and easy access.

"I think, this groups provide a lot of information, useful information. This information come from people who did this journey. It's saves a lot of time. A lot of useful information in Arabic language." (Male Syrian participant 6)

Furthermore, groups related to work enable to grow the horizon and establish new professional ties. On the one side, support during applications, with translations or CV checks, are offered and on the other side participants talk about their own work on Facebook to gain greater influence and range.

"Yeah, so much, I use Facebook too much. I publish my poetry." (Male Syrian participant 3)

Information shared within groups that are accessed in the Netherlands are of great importance in order to gain fundamental information about the new country, culture and mannerisms. Refugees share experiences about their new circumstances and contribute to groups enabling access to linguistic resources like language workshops or free translation support to strengthen the access to the Dutch language. Other groups offer second-hand

articles or useful and affordable leisure time programs. The Syrian female participant is part of a group founded by Syrian women in Holland, sharing information particular for Syrian women.

"But on Facebook so much, for information here. Groups for Syrians too much. It's just Syrian women in Holland and also they share information." (Female Syrian participant 2)

Social networks highlight the interrelation of the formation of social connections and the use of digital technology. Most networks exist or connect on social media platforms or communication services and therefore, enable an exchange of information or access to social or material resources.

4.3 Use of Digital Technology

Digital technology transforms social connections between refugees and their strong ties in the home country and enables weak and latent ties to establish during the journey. Technology enables refugees to overcome distances virtually and no longer limits communication with their social connections (Komito, 2011). As Diminescu (2008) explains, refugees maintain and develop networks and ties that link them to their home country and host country, re-introducing mobility and digital proximity (p. 567).

Digital technology plays an important role in providing access to different kinds of resources needed before, during and after the flight experience. Factors like social capital can be accessible and attainable via social online networks. Refugees might be able to establish different resources during the process of the flight.

In this regard, Collyer (2010) argues that digital technologies have facilitated refugee movements by enabling instant money transfers along the route and cheap mobile communications. The present analysis did not confirm this assumption. Ten participants neither used online banking during their journeys, nor accessed any money online before successfully arriving in Europe. In addition, cheap mobile communications were mentioned by one Syrian participant, but only in comparison to prices and expanses in Syria. Coming from a limited budget, the constant change of SIM cards and WiFi codes purchases are still expensive, which distinguishes refugee groups enormously. Eritrean participants mentioned the need of using Internet cafés and therefore public computers in order to access digital information, smartphones are rare and not usable in Europe since they are fitted to the African continent.

Fiedler (2018) confirms the importance of social media platforms and smartphones for interpersonal communication before, during and after the journey process in particular with regard to information concerning special needs like routes, "safe" border crossings or sleeping places (p. 9). The main two reasons to use digital technology are to connect and to

contact: Hotels' Internet connections or WiFi hotspots during the journey are necessary and inevitable in order to connect to WhatsApp or Facebook, the two most mentioned and used social media communication services during the journey process. Eritrean and Syrian participants drew the relation of countries, formation of social connections and digital technology in their network map. The use of communication platforms was the greatest. Facebook is known among refugees and scientific literature categories it as an important and useful tool to access helpful information (Fiedler, 2018, p. 12; compare Appendix D). But refugees are aware of dangers on social media platforms, false information or fraud purposely-misleading moving refugees, especially people with an own agenda, most likely in relation to money, are not to be trusted on the Internet (Fiedler, 2018, p. 11).

Participants mentioned techniques and ways to verify online accessed and shared information. Great and trusted sources of information are close family members and friends. Apart from them, mutual friends are of importance since they are known by the refugee's network and can be held accountable. Information spread by impersonal and not known contacts is double-checked by refugees. Most of the participants compared information on various platforms and groups and sought to find out if the information was used and spread among different people. One Syrian participant mentioned an online platform "working like TripAdvisor", which is used by refugees to rate smugglers and share public places like cafés or restaurants for first contact. In order to verify this information, the participant checked each place carefully. Furthermore, time and location were of importance. New, updated and often shared or commented information were most likely considered as truthful.

"You have to be sure, because sometimes you go to death. You want to be sure. Sometimes when I get information from somebody, I try to be sure from another person about this information. You exchange information." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"I used to compare the stories and then come to conclusion. And time also, when I look at the date. Some of them, they posted their story from 2010 and before, then I knew this is old information. I was looking for new information, fresh information. It's like analyzing information and data." (Male Syrian participant 6)

But one of the most reliable information sources was the personal interaction during the journey process. Sometimes face-to-face exchange and spread of information among refugees was the only way to access information related to the journey process. Especially concerning Eritrean refugees on the African continent since digital technology could only be used little and fractured. In this regard, one Eritrean participant highlighted the dependence

on literacy. Digital technology like online platforms, websites or communication applications are only usable if one is able to read and write.

In addition, participants mentioned the need of regularly purchasing a new SIM card and other on-going expenses like purchasing WiFi codes. Especially the danger of losing the smartphone and therefore the connection to another world than the refugees' reality and the fear of being robbed did not allow refugees to use their smartphone all the time. Some brought two smartphones to their journey to be able to give one to the smugglers and to keep one for personal belongings. Three of four Eritrean participants mentioned the importance of Internet cafés and the access of social media platforms via public computers since they were robbed while crossing the sea or lost the charger or even the smartphone during the journey. The dependence on charging options and accessible hotspots in order to use digital technology, especially among Eritrean refugees, limits the access to online information and therefore less dependence on smugglers enormously.

"You need to buy a WiFi code in order to activate it and you will get Internet for one week or so. It's not so expensive. It was very cheap; in comparison to Syria it was very cheap." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"They force you to give your mobile telephone to them or switch it off. I switched off one and I gave them one. Another. Because I told them, I have only one mobile telephone, but I had two." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"Yes, but it was very little to use, because I don't have a charger to charge my mobile phone. So, now and then I needed to switch it off and use it for little short time to keep the battery. As long as possible." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"But when you are traveling on the way, when you are under control of that people, who are moving you, you cannot take your mobile phone, it is hard." (Male Eritrean participant 5)

4.3.1 Social Connections and Digital Technology

Syrian refugees organize parts of their journey via digital technology. Before leaving their home, they accessed online information and contacted family members or friends, who already successfully arrived in safe countries. In this regard, communication services like WhatsApp play a huge role in order to contact smugglers; numbers are used temporarily and only shared among close family members and well-known friends. All participants travelling partly with a smuggler deleted or blocked his number or contact information as soon as the services were acquired.

During the journey phone numbers, Facebook contacts and websites are exchanged in order to provide information. Online information shared by refugees are used and accessed, most likely in Arabic language, in order to rely on personal and already experienced information.

After the journey, the importance of digital technology and its use increases enormously among Syrian and Eritrean refugees, five participants needed to schedule and arrange their family reunification processes and update their wife and children about the events. All of the participants accessed several kinds of communication services in order to contact remaining parts of the family or friends in their home countries. Digital technology enabled the feeling of having control over own life since information and contact could be established and maintained on personal agenda and need. Hobfoll (2001) lists the feeling as a social resource important for one to ensure a self-determined life (compare Appendix D).

"We organized the whole process via WhatsApp, because I don't know the person personally, I did not also know the driver who will pick me up from my city to Hama." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"So much for me. It was my leader. From country to country before I go, I get so much information via technology. Google and friends. It's I think nowadays everything. You see this long journey, before you go you can't imagine this long journey. The information, you can see on Google. So it's everything." (Male Syrian participant 3)

In this regard, the smartphone and access to digital technology in general, via tablet use or Internet cafés spread a feeling of safety and independence. Smartphones can add to physical mobility with accessed information, and can become a trigger for mental stability as in the feeling of safety or the smartphone as a lifeline, more important than food or shelter (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017, p. 177; Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 11).

Especially the Syrian routes and journeys depend on accessible online information and connections, some parts of the journey were impossible without digital technology. One Syrian participant described digital technology as everything nowadays, another one as his leader. Smartphones are of great importance to refugees since they combine different kinds of tools and accesses. Shown in the network maps (Appendix D), the participants shared their personal contact and use of digital technology during their journey process. Using maps or geographical location setting, refugees are able to visualize the journey and its different sections. Accessing information about smugglers, other refugees' stories and experiences online helps to realize the dream of escaping the home country. In this regard, digital technology, as mentioned by participants, not only enabled to communicate with family and

friends, contact people or access phone numbers or contacts, crucial information affecting further decisions of the journey were accessed and provided online (compare Appendix D). Therefore, digital technology and the preparation of the journey are already interrelated and in need of social connections to access information and social and material resources.

In addition, two Eritrean participants were able to apply to universities and scholarship programs online, relying on university websites and online information to register overseas. Apart from the analphabetic Eritrean participant, all nine participants mentioned a positive impact of digital technology for their journey processes and benefits due to its use (compare Appendix D).

"But off the danger of this contact and despite of the difficulty of the contact, it would be impossible to go from Damascus to Turkey without digital technology, without WhatsApp, without any application." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"I think I couldn't do anything without technology, how can I have the contact with people. Especially when I am in Syria with war. So the technology, I think is everything nowadays. It's not just for the journey, for everything. Technology is everything nowadays. But in the journey it helped me to make everything fast." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"I am sure I will be in Sudan. It was fine to leave my country without any social media technology to Sudan. But from Sudan to here, it would be super difficult." (Male Eritrean participant 8)

All participants mentioned the use of digital technology to contact and mostly call family members in order to share their current situation, location and well-being. Especially the parents and wives were updated about the position and processes, siblings and friends were informed and experiences on the journey shared. Two Eritrean participants mentioned the importance of close and trusted friends to pay smugglers; no family member was involved in these transactions. Therefore, refugees actively use technology in favor of their particular needs, interests or emotions (Alencar, 2017; Leurs, 2017; Smets, 2017). In this regard, online media are used for social reasons, contacting family and friends or virtual refugee communities as trustworthy, reliable networks for approaching smugglers or obtaining information about different modes of transportation, routes and accommodation. Most refugees have access to digital technology and benefit from shared and collective use of online services, but therefore also rely on their digital connectivity (Gillespie et al., 2018). Digital navigation and communication platforms are crucial in order to access resources

(Gillespie et al., 2018). Information and communication resources enable migrants to develop strategies and ways to structure and plan their journeys to some extent (Dekker et al., 2018).

"I could use WhatsApp also there, because I need to contact the main smuggler, the main smuggler was in Turkey." (Male Syrian participant 1)

All Syrian participants listed several communication platforms and services used to reach family and friends in their network map, among them WhatsApp, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Skype, Viber and imo were mostly mentioned (compare Appendix D). In this regard, easy access and independence of place and time are greatly important in order to use digital technology. Therefore, nine participants used Facebook during their journey for communication and access to information at the same time. Usage and preferences of the applications relied on the country and the quality of the Internet connection. Not every country in the Middle East allows the use of WhatsApp, for example Jordan. Participants use different kinds of applications to contact family members and friends in the different countries in the Middle East as Internet access is restricted and controlled by regimes. The Internet connection depends on the situation of war and access to electricity. Of great importance and mentioned by Hobfoll (2001) is the feeling of being valuable to others, which is given as soon as refugees contact family and friends digitally, or are able to help with translations or other resources personally.

"I got there at maybe 7 o'clock, I opened my mobile telephone and I called my father, my wife." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"All of them. You don't have another resource to use, except the digital technology to contact them." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"If I want to contact somebody in Jordan, in Jordan my aunt lives there. I cannot call her through WhatsApp, because WhatsApp is not allowed there. So I have to use another platform, or only writing or voice message." (Male Syrian participant 6)

"There it's only application useful facebook and Twitter, only for connecting people, like tango, Viber, WhatsApp." (Male Syrian participant 7)

Contrary, the use and access to digital technology in Eritrea is different and more limited, not just due to governmental restrictions, but due to lacking infrastructure and familiarity with digital technology. Three participants explained that only a few websites and applications

work at low speed, for example Facebook and email services like Yahoo. Today the use of Viber or imo is possible when reaching someone in a big city in Eritrea or in Sudan.

"In my country I was having it, but just to like what we are doing now, to communicate with people. But the technology is also in our country is new, the only thing now which for long time is only facebook or emails or there was also before yahoo messenger. That was the only time legit, but you don't have it in your phone, you have to go to Internet café and you pay and maybe use one hour or something like that to find friends or you have someone outside the country." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

"The network is limited for Internet and even restricted. You cannot log in to things something, they close the facebook sometimes, close the calling function. You cannot log to every websites. Like problematic websites, before it was open, but later it was restricted. Everything is controlled." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

4.3.2 Resources accessed via Digital Technology

Two Eritrean participants mentioned the importance of university websites in order to apply for scholarships and find a legal way to Europe in order to study and enroll at a Dutch university. Only Eritrean participants explained the connections of Eritrean universities and scholarship programs with European, Asian and American universities, and differentiated themselves from Syrian participants concerning the ambition and reason to flee.

"I was getting a scholarship to England for my studies." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

Social networks are especially designed and advertised by refugees to share experiences and useful journey-related information. Syrian refugees began to install applications in Arabic, which could be downloaded and access from following Syrians and ensure a certain degree of reliability.

"On the way you use smartphone too much. Especially for us, because I came illegally to Europe. Because it's so dangerous and I went with the dangerous route and strange places for me, so I use the Google Maps and also WhatsApp with the connections with people to ask." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"Numbers via a contact, and also from Facebook, from the groups. You can ask now, especially refugees, they make the groups for everything to help each other, because their is no help." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"But I used an application, it was developed by Syrians. And in this application, there are lot of information about the journey and a lot of interesting information from previous people who had the same experience." (Male Syrian participant 6)

Syrian participants used route-planning services like Google Maps to orientate and to visualize upcoming ways. Google in general was utilized to look up alternative places for rest and food if refugee camps were full or did not seem suitable with regard to hygiene or personal space. (Gillespie et al., 2018; Dekker et al., 2018). Social media applications, instant messaging and translation websites changed the journeys' process and added a new infrastructure (Gillespie et al., 2018; compare Appendix D).

"From Turkey to Cyprus or to Greece, we used the Google Maps. One of my friends, who was with me there used Google Maps in order not to be lost in the sea." (Male Syrian participant 1)

Besides communication and navigation, applications and platforms were accessed for entertainment purposes to relax and get the head off the enduring journey and refugee situation. Youtube was accessed to watch clips or listen to domestic music, current global developments or entertainment.

"*And Youtube, a lot of Youtube."* (Male Syrian participant 7)

"Using Youtube, doing language, doing a lot of things. When you are bored, you can see films." (Male Eritrean participant 4)

During the journey none of the participants accessed or transferred money online. One of the reasons was that they did not have a valid bank account at that moment; they travelled with cash only. Another was that banks are not trusted according to participants. One Syrian participant experiences fraud back when he was still in Syria. He was desperately trying to get out of Syria, but could not stand the journey by foot or truck since he is disabled. His brother found someone on Facebook, who claimed to be in the position to get a visa to Europe for a compensation of 3000 dollars. The participant paid and transferred the money via Western Union to a guy in Europe and never heard from him again. Misuse of digital technology to rob money is common during times of human crisis. Cash was the only legitimate way to pay and have an overview about the expenses. All ten participants opened up new bank accounts including online banking in the Netherlands.

“But it was fraud, it was fake. He stole money from us. After some time he blocked us. After what happened, I decided to self manage my administration.” (Male Syrian participant 7)

Furthermore, all participants mentioned the use of applications and websites for transportation in the Netherlands in order to find their ways around the cities and the country. Especially the use of the application “9292” and the online service of the OV-Chipkaart are of importance.

“I was helping them with OV-Chipkaarts and something.” (Male Eritrean participant 4)

All participants tried to establish a new social network from the moment they left their home country for work-relate or private purposes. Each drawn network map showed an increased use of digital technology in order to maintain and expand the personal network (compare Appendix D). One Syrian participant talked about a dating application he used in Lebanon in order to get to know new people and new women.

“I tried to make establish. Look Lebanon is very dirty country, I tried to install a dating application in Lebanon to know people. But when you say there, I am from Syria. They immediately block you.” (Male Syrian participant 7)

Nevertheless, most websites and platforms provide information about the country of destination, its culture and language, information on the journey, the asylum process, the process of family reunification, the values of Syrian or Eritrean diplomas, documents and certificates, the ability to study or work or information about the integration process and requirements.

“I accessed information about the language, about the Dutch language, and about the history of The Netherlands through some websites that talk about the Dutch history or general information about that place or also when I need to get to a new place, I use Google Maps.” (Male Syrian participant 1)

Furthermore, applications to translate information or phrases are used to establish a new life in a new society and be able to communicate with people personally. The Syrian female participant was dependent on her husband’s ability to translate and several online applications until her Dutch was fluent.

"With the translation so much, the information. Because I don't speak English." (Female Syrian participant 2)

On top of that, digital techniques were used to save and file personal documents along the flight to be prepared anywhere at any time. Cloud services or looped email were applied to access scanned documents or download them on demand.

"I always scan it. I would scan it and would send it to myself. It's just saved." (Male Eritrean participant 8)

"Yes. I have an online version. I always keep the soft copy from my documents, because it's necessary for me, because I am traveling from one place to another and I, at that time, did not have a address for myself, so I had to keep my documents, because it is very necessary for when I want to apply for asylum or everything." (Male Syrian participant 6)

"When I was in Lebanon, I was having some photo in Google Drive." (Male Syrian participant 7)

All ten participants explained that digital technology is useful in addition with personal information and face-to-face conversations. Digital technology is known as a helpful tool to organize parts of the journey and establish and maintain contacts.

"Because they had to use the Google Maps or WhatsApp in order to get from one place to another in order to know the ways." (Male Syrian participant 1)

Depending on the spontaneous need, information were either searched for in Arabic - about the journey and journey experiences - or in English - for asylum process or requirements. As stated by a Syrian participant, many Arabic speaking refugees share the same or similar journeys, more information is provided and shared in Arabic. Many refugees do not speak English well enough before or during their journey to access important information in English and understand it completely. The expression is easier and more personal in the mother tongue.

"Mainly in Arabic. Because people who are sharing their experiences, they mostly came from Arabic countries. I used to google for stuff in English when I knew about the laws in this

country. The rights. What are my rights, the procedure. Then I used to search in English." (Male Syrian participant 6)

Two Syrian participants, both 28, used their smartphones to take photos during the journey and uploaded them to Facebook or Instagram to update their followers or update family members and friends. One participant mentioned an emotional feeling while moving towards Europe, a feeling of great change and a new beginning. The importance of seeing faces and hearing voices of close and loved ones was highlighted by all ten participants via videos or video chat.

"And during the journey most take photo, something special. You feel like you make change in your life, to make a photo for memory to show it later to friend or family." (Male Syrian participant 7)

All ten participants verified an increase in usage of digital technologies since living in the Netherlands. They are used on a daily base to contact friends and family who do not live close by and combine pleasure, leisure and entertainment purposes as well as access to communication and information tools.

"Here I am trying to build my network and I need to know more people here, but in Syria just to reconnect." (Male Syrian participant 1)

"In Holland everything is digital, I think. Also the information, also my studying the Dutch language. It was 90 percent digital." (Male Syrian participant 3)

"No I noticed that when I left Syria I used social media more. First, I want to see my relatives, who are still in Syria and my family and the situation in Syria. Also I started to post more. It was more use than before. Communication process increased." (Male Syrian participant 9)

4.3.3 Use of Hardcopy

As mentioned above the dependence on material infrastructure for digital technologies were quite high, participants used printed maps or a hardcopy of their passports, IDs or other documents. Their procedure was strengthened by their fear of loosing the smartphone or a GPS signal. Participants mentioned problems with Internet connections during the journey or trouble changing SIM.

“Just from Turkey, yes. I printed some maps. Because sometimes, you loose your telephone, or you didn't have charger, so you need sometimes.” (Male Syrian participant 3)

“No, in paper. If I lost them, nothing else.” (Male Syrian participant 3)

The only payment used during the journey was cash. All participants closed their bank accounts in either Syria or Eritrea before leaving as cash is more suitable during the journey to keep track of costs and remaining budget.

“Yes, cash. Because at that moment I didn't have even a account. And in Lebanon I couldn't have an account, because I didn't have the documents.” (Male Syrian participant 3)

“No, when I came to Netherlands I make here PayPal account, also my bank account. But in Syria, Lebanon no. Not famous. We pay cash. We don't have trust of banks there.” (Male Syrian participant 7)

Finally, every process related to governmental or embassy work was done in paper and printed versions. Interviews were held face-to-face and documents or papers were handed out printed. Only the fingerprints and later on the registration process for the country itself was digitalized.

“They had it online, but after that they printed it. For the borders at the airport. To give you permission to go.” (Female Syrian participant 2)

V. Conclusion and Discussion

An interrelation between the journey process, social connections and digital technology was identified within this analysis. Apart from personal face-to-face communication, digital technology is one of the most important resources to gain information and therefore, influences parts of the journey. Syrian participants relied on their smartphones and accessed digital technology in order to update family members and friends during their journeys and seek information related to social resources like an adequate sleeping place, places to eat or to meet smugglers. Eritrean participants added the importance of Internet access and security.

Eritrean and Syrian refugees experience different journey processes and differ in their use of digital technology. Nevertheless, the immense impact of digital technology was evaluated and the reliance on strong, weak and latent ties for different resources and information purposes was observed. Besides information along the journey, personal communication was of high importance. Different kinds of ties are important depending on the purpose: Weak ties are favored during the journey to feel comfortable and safe. A group of common purpose gives the feeling of solace and security, especially in situations such as crowded boats, crossing temporarily closed borders in Europe or being confronted with human suffering and pain. The analysis identified the need of connections in order to keep sane and calm during pressured times and share stories about the home country or traditions. Latent or professional ties with smugglers or representatives of a NGO passed on by family members, close friends or online platforms are inevitable to realize the journey. Strong ties as in families and close friends are of great importance in order to manage the journey and rely on a stable support system and trusted information network. During the journey Eritrean and Syrian participants informed and updated their families to share their well-being and talk about the situation in their home countries mainly using applications like Facebook and WhatsApp. Application like Google Maps enable refugees to plan and organize parts of their journey and visualize routes ahead. Besides that and especially for refugees interested in education access to university websites and online applications for scholarships program overseas are more effective. Even though the reasons to flee are mostly related to the political situation in the home countries, the analysis observed a great tendency and educational orientation towards Europe. Social connections have a great impact on the refugees' integration process since they enable to gather around a diverse group of likeminded students and teachers.

Digital technologies enable to establish and maintain various kinds of social connections to organize parts of the journey and access social resources and indicate an answer to the research question to what extent and how digital technologies influence the formation of social connections before, during and after the journey experience of Syrian and Eritrean

refugees. They are significant for communication and remembrance purposes and social relationships. Access to digital technology and its features can be seen as a factor serving as an organizational facilitator and relationship provider before, during and after the flight. Migration-based stressors, as introduced in 2.3, are decreased by the formation of social connections and access to digital technology. In this regard, the formation of social connections personally or digitally enables refugees to (re)access and (re)aggregate resources (see 2.3.1) during and after the journey process.

5.1 Implications for practice

Throughout the analysis the dependence on access to charging points, WiFi hotspots and SIM cards in order to be able to use smartphones or tablets was identified. Improving the digital infrastructure during refugee journeys would be necessary to avoid the dependence on smugglers or on information, which is personally passed but potentially unsuitable. The results show a need for an accessible and affordable use of digital technology in order to enable refugees to organize their journey, social connections and perspectives independently. The idea of platforms and applications tailored to the needs of refugees is reinforced and highlighted by the results. The UNHCR introduces various programs focusing on the primary and youth education, giving children access to digital technology and its features. Programs and educational services like these are essential and necessary for potential refugees, especially on the African continent, since they offer perspectives and give access to more resources. As Eritrean participants mentioned, the familiarity with digital technology is slowly increasing in African countries, they addressed the countries Eritrea, Sudan and Libya. Stakeholders like NGO's and policy makers may improve refugees' journeys and decrease danger and deaths during the journey process if trustworthy and truthful information were provided in various languages. In addition, applications and maps need to be reachable and understandable as they are essential during the journey process. As Fiedler (2018) explains, online information should be more diverse and come from independent and transparent sources. Refugees primarily take care of themselves and companions as NGO or representatives of governments are not involved, and only the United Nations assists and manages Syrian refugees' routes from Europe onwards. None of the Eritrean participants was able to identify or remember one NGO helping, assisting or influencing their journey process. The European Union tried to introduce ideas about building refugee centers in Libya, decreasing the dependence on smugglers and offering a secure way to Europe. Digital technology itself is able to decrease the dependence on the work of smugglers and human traitors. The power of smugglers is immense on the African continent since the familiarity and access to digital technology and therefore an independent way to organize the journey process are neither common nor available. In this regard, education and literacy play a significant role.

Furthermore, refugee camps, initially organized to give shelter and safety, can be in charge and used to provide access to digital technology. This would implement that the camps are a place to recover and feel safe, which was not confirmed by the Syrian or Eritrean participants of the sample. Following up on these personal, but spread experiences, refugee camps should be structured in ways to guarantee recovery, the formation of social connections, the exchange of needed information and access to digital technology. Places like this might advance the independence and ability to move self-determined. Participants discussed the issue of taking out or using smartphones in public due to thieves or smugglers and highlighted an important aspect of organizing and coordinating refugee camps.

Companies like Google or Facebook have deeper information than NGO's and governments concerning data and routes of refugees since Eritrean and Syrian refugee rely on privatized platforms during their journeys. Journey processes are potentially controllable and influenceable via these platforms since provided and accessed information and social connections impact the upcoming journey. Applying the arguments stated above, a conclusion is the need for an increase in the use and handling of online applications and digital technology during journey processes. Refugees might be more self-determined during their journey and independent from human traitors, or can access enough information to grow their expectations. Furthermore, refugees are able to choose information provided by different sources, digitally and personally, and therefore have access to more kinds of information. In this regard, the formation of social connections would not be dependent on face-to-face interactions; refugees would be able to get in touch with displaced contacts.

5.2 Strengths and Limitations

The present study generates new ideas and adds to migration literature addressing the influence of the formation of social connections and the use digital technology during journey processes. Furthermore, the link between the importance of social connections and digital technology is analyzed and conceptualized. One of the key strengths of the paper is the combined qualitative method. Drawing the network map enabled most of the participants to elaborate on their use of digital technology in relation to the formation of social connections. Participants were able to elaborate on their experiences and used the map to reconnect some questions to their drawings. Especially, when asked if they could have done their journeys without using or accessing digital technology, eight of ten participants looked at their maps and negated since all of them used and accessed online platforms in order to gain information or share contacts to access social resources.

Leading to one of the limitations, as Boeije (2010) explains, codes capture important properties of concepts. It is essential that different researchers agree when these properties appear in data and compare and exchange opinions about data and codes. Since only one researcher wrote and analyzed the present study, limitations of the process are taken into

account and addressed. According to Boeije (2010) multiple researchers are necessary to ensure valid codes. Therefore, a team of researchers would be more suitable in order to analyze the data.

Furthermore, time limitations and limitations concerning the diversification of the sample are already mentioned in the sampling design, but will be addressed once again. Since the topic of the present study is quite sensitive more time is needed in order to build relationships with potential interviewees and get comfortable in the environment of potential interviewees. In addition, a more diversified team of researchers might be necessary and suitable for the sensitive topic in order to ensure comfort and decrease the distance or power inequality between researcher and interviewees. A group of researchers, who are able to at least speak Dutch, English and maybe Arabic, would be more adequate.

In this regard, a bigger sample of participants is necessary in order to gain further insights and be able to draw more generalized conclusions. A diversified group of participants, including Syrian and Eritrean female participants would be great in order to represent different kinds of opinions and experiences of journey processes and lead to a better understanding of struggles confronting female refugees during their journeys and their use of social connections and digital technology, compared to male refugees.

5.3 Future Research

Future research should extend the present study and research the influence of digital technology on the formation of social connections of Syrian and Eritrean refugees more in-depth by conducting the research with a diversified and heterogenic sample of female and male participants. The introduction and theoretical framework emphasize gaps in existing literature and lacks of conceptualizations of current journey processes in relation to digital technology and the formation of social connections. Further insights into journey processes are needed in order to conceptualize refugee journeys in modern times especially in relation to the use of digital technology and differences that appear comparing two groups, routes and ways of using current media. The present study can give impulses to new lines of research in regard to research refugees' journeys and tools to facilitate these journey processes. The analysis highlighted an inevitable use of digital technology and social connections during the journey process of refugees, this interrelation of journey facilitators needs to be further explored and expanded. In this regard, the role and experience of female refugees during their journey process can be an approach to understand and observe differences in the use of digital technology and the formation of social connections. Future research should emphasize on female refugees and their journey process.

Furthermore, research tracking refugees during their journey would be of great interest in order to understand the impact of digital technology along the journey and the influence on the upcoming journey process. The present study identified reasons of fragmented journeys

adding to and contrasting previous studies. Fragmentation is caused by more factors than external restrictions; fragmentation is caused by internal, personal factors as highlighted in the analysis. Almost all participants experienced fragmented journeys, therefore, a further understanding and conceptualization of fragmentation can lead to new lines of research.

Eritrean participants mentioned the differences in use of digital technology on the African and European continent and Syrian participants explained the increasing use of digital technology on the European continent. Future research, which keeps track of the journey, might be able to identify differences and changes and add to a greater understanding of refugee journey processes.

Lastly, a focus on the influence and impact of education on the use of digital technology during the journey process of refugees and the ability to establish social connections could be of interest. Differences in educational backgrounds of Eritrean and Syrian participants were identified as well as differences in the use of digital technology. The impact on different parts of the journey is useful to analyze in order to understand education processes. Especially, the focus on Eritrean refugees should increase and expand in order draw a more diversified understanding and assumptions about African refugee journeys.

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VII. Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Preliminary topic guide to semi-structured interviews:

Introduction to the research:

First of all, thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my research and being part of my Master thesis. I appreciate your participation. I am Sophie Könnecke and currently studying Media, Culture and Society at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. My thesis focuses on the influence of digital technology on the journey process of refugees and establishing social connections before, during and after the journey. I would like to talk to you about your journey and social connections you established.

I would like to share the consent form with you and go through it, to give you an overview about what we will be talking about, how I am going to use the data and your rights as a participant of my research. Please sign it, if you agree with everything.

To summarize the consent form: I am aware of the sensitivity of the topic, therefore, at any time, you are able to refuse to answer and pause the interview. Furthermore, this interview will be used explicitly for my research project. Your personal data will remain absolutely anonymous if you like to and your answers will be treated with confidentiality. Also, the networking map you will be drawing will be handled strictly confidential and not shared.

Also, I am going to record the interview. If you agree to being recorded, shall we begin?

Demographics:

- How old are you?
- Where are you from?
- What is your current country of residency?
- How long have you been in the Netherlands?
- What is your current status in the Netherlands?
- Do you own a smartphone?
- Did you use digital technology during your journey to Europe?
- Are you part of any transnational, social networks online? For example, Facebook or any WhatsApp groups?

Journey:

- In what way did you use digital technology before and during your journey?

- In what way did social connections help you before and during your journey?
  → Did you know people on a journey to Europe or already residing in Europe before you left?
  → Did you contact them prior to your journey? If yes, did you use digital technology to contact them?
- In what way would you describe your journey? Would you mind telling me about your journey?
  → During your journey to Europe, did you need to stop at any places? How long did you stay? Could you explain, why you needed to stop in some countries?
  → In what way did the stops during your journey change the journey process?
  → In what way did the stops during the journey influence the process of establishing social connections?

Social Connections/Resources:

- What kinds of social connections did you establish during your journey?
- What kinds of social connections did you maintain during your journey?
  → What kinds of social connections were established via digital technology during the journey?
  → What kinds of social connections were maintained via digital technology during the journey?
- What was the impact of social networks during your journey?
- Would you describe the social connections? In what way did they help you during your journey?

→ Network maps: Please, draw the different kinds of relationship in relation to the destinations.

→ Rating the social connections: How important were the connections for the further journey? Or in what way were they dangerous?

Digital technology:

- In what way did you use digital technology during your journey?
- Did you connect with; access any kinds of resources via digital technology? → Money, social connections, health care
  → In what way did digital technology give you access to resources during your journey?
- In what way did social networks help you during your journey? Information access?
- How did digital media influence the different parts of your journey?

- In what way did you use digital technology during your asylum period in the Netherlands?

Appendix B

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Sophie Könnecke

Email:

Address: Priamsingel 51, 2909RE Capelle aan den IJssel

Telephone: +491733697003

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research on the influence of digital technology on establishing social connections during Eritrean refugees' journeys to Europe*.* The purpose of the study is to understand in what way Eritrean refugees establish or maintain social connections using technological devices during the journey process.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed and draw a networking map*.* In general terms,

- The questions of the interview will relate to the establishment of social connections before, during and after the journey, and the use of technological devices to access social resources.

- The observations of the interviewer will focus on the use of technological devices and online communities in relation to the establishment of social connections.

- The networking map is understood as an additional tool to express the journey and established social connections and related destinations or events.

- Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a tape recorder for the interview. You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

A. As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information not in

the study. If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by [measures that will be taken: pseudonym, general identification only mentioning age and gender, etc.].

B. I am aware that the possibility of identifying the people who participate in this study may involve risks for personal reputation, help, social relations, etc. For that reason—unless you prefer to be identified fully (first name, last name, etc.)—I will not keep any information that may lead to the identification of those involved in the study. I will only pseudonyms to identify participants.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take approximately 45-60 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish— Dr. Amanda Paz Alencar, e-mail: pazalencar@eshcc.eur.nl.

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name Signature Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name Signature Date

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix C

Coding Frame

Use of Digital Technology	- Little use → dependence on literacy → no charger → no Internet → need to purchase new SIM cards → on-going expenses → danger of loosing mobile phone or getting robbed or phone taken away by smugglers → in need of charging options, Internet access at Internet café or accessible hotspots in order to use - Organizing journey, parts of journey via digital media → contacting smugglers via WhatsApp → contacting friends already residing in EU to get information, share contact / phone numbers → contacting family members (reunification) to schedule and update → accessing online information shared by refugees themselves (in Arabic language) - Holding on to phone as feeling of safety and independence - Journey depending on digital technology and accessible information and connections → parts of journey impossible without digital technology → technology is everything nowadays → digital technology as a leader → making different parts of journey imaginable and real, enable to realize dreams of escaping home country → helpful to contact people, easy access to numbers, shelters → crucial information affecting decisions made during journey → digital technology enabling leaving a country (scholarship application) → good tool, good timing → positive impact - Use of mobile phone → calling family in order to share situation and well-being → informing, updating family, friends on journey and position → calling trusted friend to pay smuggler - Use of Internet → purchase of WiFi code - Easy access and independence of time and place is greatly important in use of applications like facebook - Use of applications especially designed and introduced by refugees in Arabic → sharing experiences, information - Use of applications like Google Maps to follow routes and orientation / Google in order to find places to eat and sleep - Use of applications to contact family and friends (Syria) → WhatsApp, facebook, facebook messenger, Skype, Viber, imo,

	tango, instagram, twitter, LinkedIn → adjusting use to governmental restrictions (surveillance) - Use of applications to contact family and friends (Eritrea) → facebook, emails or yahoo messenger, WhatsApp, Viber, imo - Use of applications and platforms for entertainment → Youtube - Use of applications and websites for payments → Paypal, online banking - Use of websites to apply for scholarships and universities overseas - Use of applications and websites for transportation → 9292, OV-Chipkaart - Establishing new connections → private / work-related in NL → new network → difficulty with dating Apps - Verifying online information by comparing and asking friends / a trusted person → false and misleading information, fraud, insecurities online → publication of stories important in order to get up to date information - Main reason: connecting and contacting - Website in order to access information: 1. Language, 2. Country of destination, 3. Routes, 4. Culture in EU-country, 5. Asylum process, 6. Family reunion, 7. Value of diploma and documents from home country, 8. Studying, 9. Integration process - Using applications to translate information - Using Email accounts to access information, tickets, sending documents to oneself in order to safe them - Accessing websites to gather information → information about flights - Usage in NL increased → pleasure, leisure and entertainment use (shopping, studying, watching movies, listening to music) → online payments - Digital technology useful in addition with personal information, face-to-face conversations → tool to help plan journey - Differences in use: 1. Eritrea: Internet not as useful as in NL, slow Internet connections, few websites and applications, which work; 2. Syria: surveillance of government, Internet connection depending on situation of war and access to electricity → Access to Internet depends on stability of connection → governmental restrictions and limitations

	- Saving documents online → Google Drive, Clouds, sending email to oneself in order to save important files and data → emotional importance of saving data online - Browsing for information related to need → information about journey and experiences in Arabic language → processes in NL in English language - Taking photos of journey and different steps → emotional feeling of change and new beginning → sending photos and videos → importance of seeing faces - Use of digital technology increasing → NL use in everyday life for everything
Social Networks	- Groups on social media → facebook → housing groups / likeminded access same information and help - Groups on communication services → WhatsApp → useful information in trusted environment – groups related to friends - Refugee Groups (Arabic language) → exchanging and providing information about the journey and the routes, dangers and insights helping following refugees → saving a lot of time, easy access - Groups related to work → exchange of information → uploading own work to groups - Groups related to and accessed in NL → Syrian women in Holland – sharing information about the life, situation → migration and refugee groups → Vluchtelingen group on facebook → Dutch language groups → second-hand market
Preparation of Journey	- Length of preparation → rushed - Way of leaving → illegal border crossing → leaving by oneself → not in consultation with family (danger) → gathering personal information → gathering online information / → leaving legally → in consultation with embassy and family and friends - Coordination of journey → smugglers → organizations → by oneself enabled by digital technology and personal networks - Transportation devices → leaving by car → walking by foot → using ship, boat → using a bus → using a train → using taxis → using the airplane - Difficulties of applying for visa with a Syrian passport → few countries left enabling refugees to enter without visa → dependence of refugees on governmental restrictions

Journey	- Use of smugglers → paying a lot of money → dependence on smugglers - Dependence on social connections during journey when analphabetic – no chance of using digital technology or maps - Status changes during journey → illegal journey, legal journey, illegal, but temporarily legal (scholarship, temporary documents) - Sleeping places → where smugglers take refugees to → independent booking of hotels – refugee camps as not safe or clean, looking for different places to rest → Use of refugee camps or centres / refugee camps as crowded and inaccessible → sleeping on the streets - Most difficulties in EU → refugee situation too out of hand - Route by foot: Syria – Turkey – Cyprus – Greece – Macedonia – Serbia – Belgrade – Croatia – Austria – Germany – Netherlands - Route by plane: Syria – Lebanon, Beirut, Turkey, Istanbul, NL, Amsterdam - Route by foot: Eritrea – Sudan – Libya – Italy – France – Belgium – NL - Fragmentation: 1. Dependence on weather, 2. Dependence on availability of and sufficient amount of money for smugglers, 3. Dependence on registration process and paper work (EU), 4. Waiting time in order to cross borders → borders close, 5. Papers necessary in each EU-country, 6. Loosing track of the right way, 7. Rest and "recharge" – health, 8. Waiting for documents (passports, travel visa → legal documents → imprisonment due to illegal situation, 9. Unawareness of need to flee to Europe → three refugees went country by country and hoped to settle and live in each - Organizations help during journey → Red Cross accompanying refugees in EU → managing journey / program of UNHCR helping refugees in special need to arrive safely in EU → selection of almost 100 refugees to enter EU by plane from Beirut - Stopping in countries to make a living, earn money, safe for upcoming journey
Social Connections → information	- Incidents with home country officials → corruption in police and military, danger of imprisonment, governments as dangerous or unsafe social connections and reasons to escape

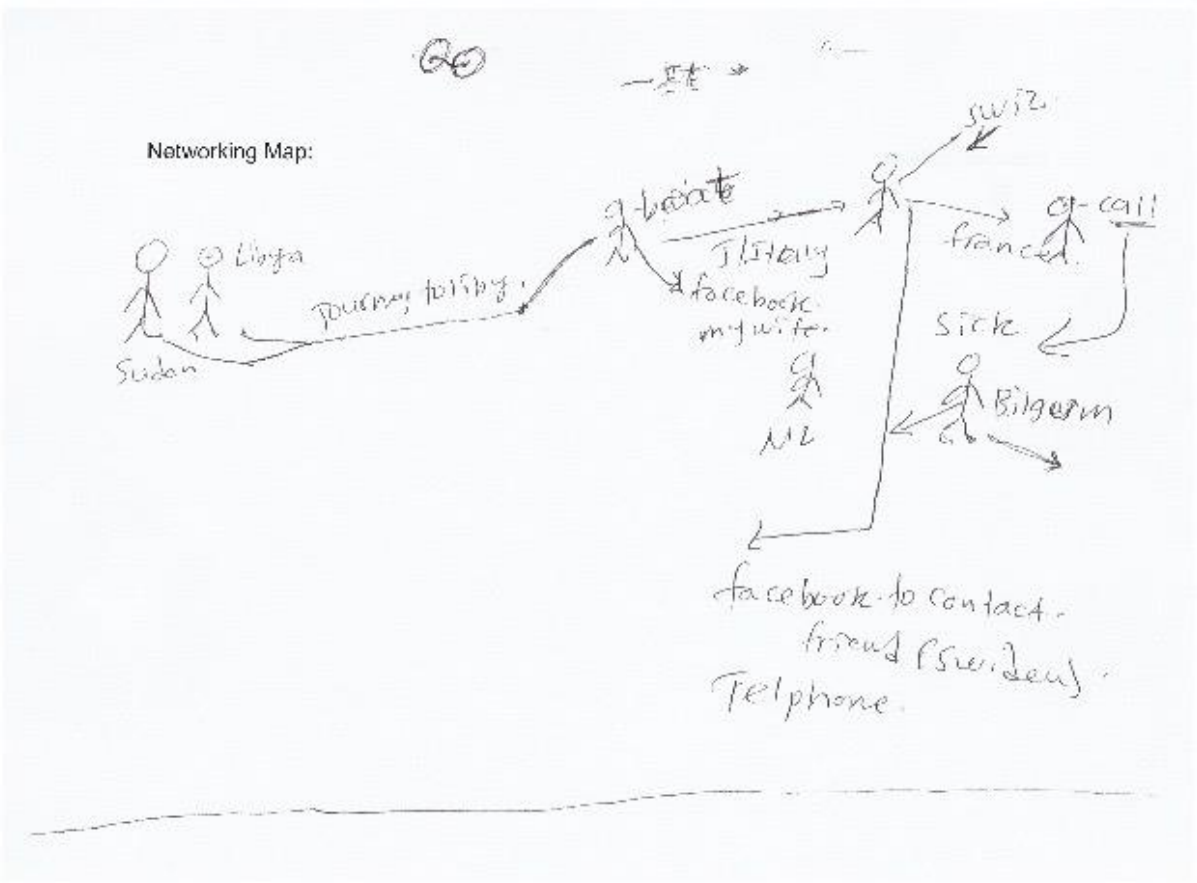
seeking	- Need and use of smugglers → personal interaction 1. Face to face, 2. Calling → terminated contact and relation → deleting, blocking number after successfully arriving - Maintaining contact with family and friends as stable support and safety system → but family as dependency and to be susceptible to blackmail by government or military → importance of trust → difficulty of establishing a new life in EU and maintaining the old, troubled, dangerous one via family / hearing shooting sound while calling - Using family and friends (already in EU) as information and network system → asking for help and advice, reassurance of online information → need of shelter and medicine - Maintaining contact with former colleagues from work or university → help, exchange of information, work-related exchange - Mouth-to-mouth conversation with strangers – short and terminated connections → translations, help, support, safety → exchange of needed information, constant change of numbers due to new SIM cards – no number exchange possible - Establishing "friendships" with refugees → benefitting and helping each other, but closer and familiar than other refugees → sometimes connections endure - Surrounding oneself with own nationality → feeling of safety and comfort, shareable experiences, culture, language - Establishing relationships with officials → getting information from police, security or organisations → exchanging information about refugees' journey and need → getting accompanied by organizations (Greece onwards) - Interactions with embassy and governmental representatives → documents for family reunification - Establishing temporary social connections → no exchange of numbers, ended by time refugees changed places → forming groups to move from one place to another (feeling of safety, sticking together, protection of criminals, talking) - Forming new social connection face-to-face then adding them to digital technology – exchange numbers, adding on facebook, etc. - Working relations → colleagues from work environment → some turn into friendship, others reduced to work

	- Living together in apartments → renting houses together (refugees only, own nationality) - Great help of forming connections due to English and Arabic (for Eritreans) language and ability to read and speak English and Arabic information → dependence on language and literacy - Professors, university officials enabling scholarships or giving perspectives concerning Europe - Friend of a friend to get information, personal network, established and accessible via WhatsApp and facebook, constant exchange of needs and questions, relying on personal connections - Personal interaction and exchange of information as more trusted compared to online information
Use of Hardcopy	- Use of printed maps → fear of loosing mobile phone, or orientation, problems with Internet use, SIM card change - Often hardcopy of passport, ID and other documents → no access to clouds - Use of cash money → no bank account, easier on the way, visualized limitations - Embassy processes paper work → mostly face-to-face interviews and printed documents and papers → fingerprints are online only

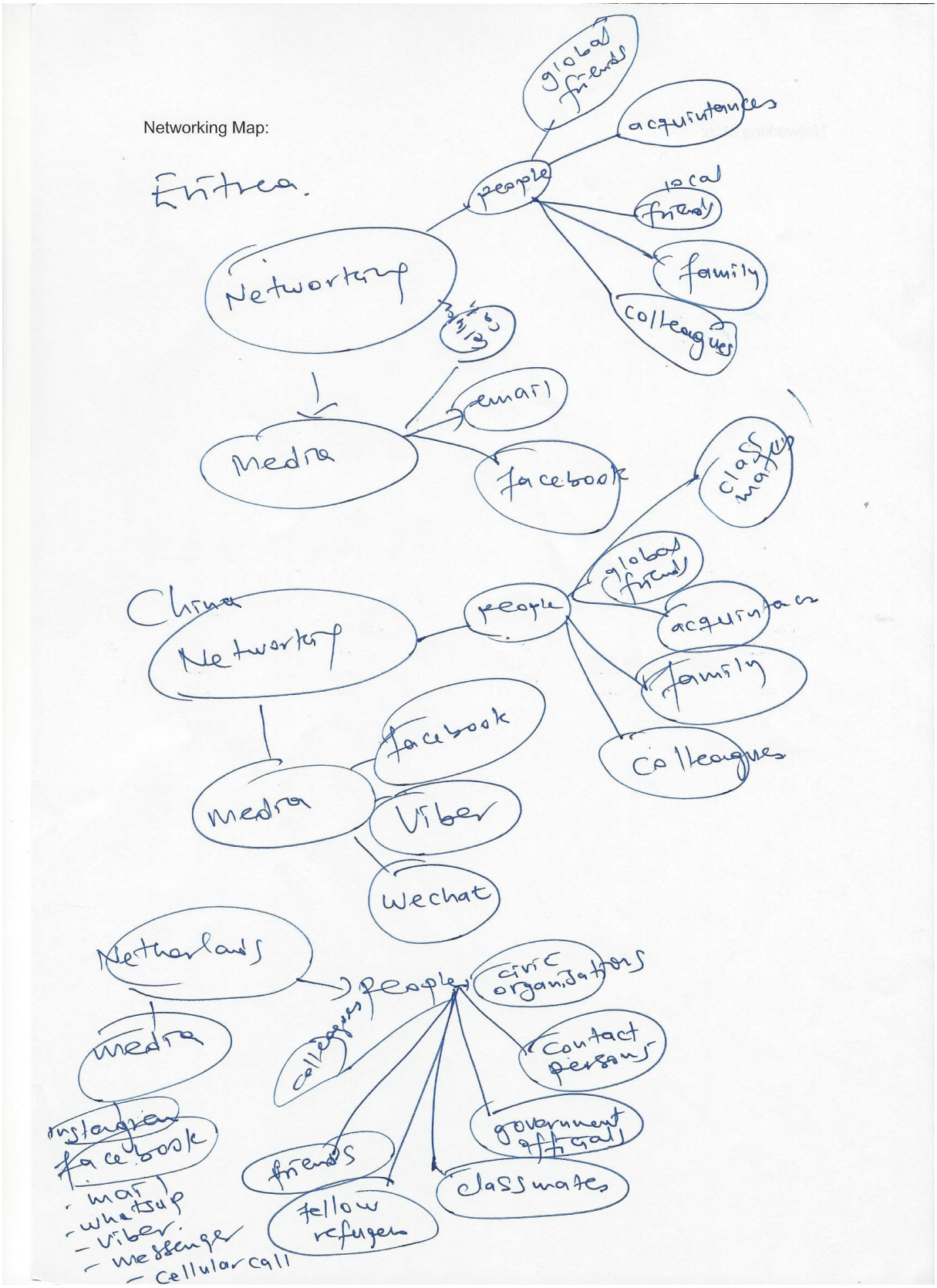
Appendix D

Refugees' Network Map

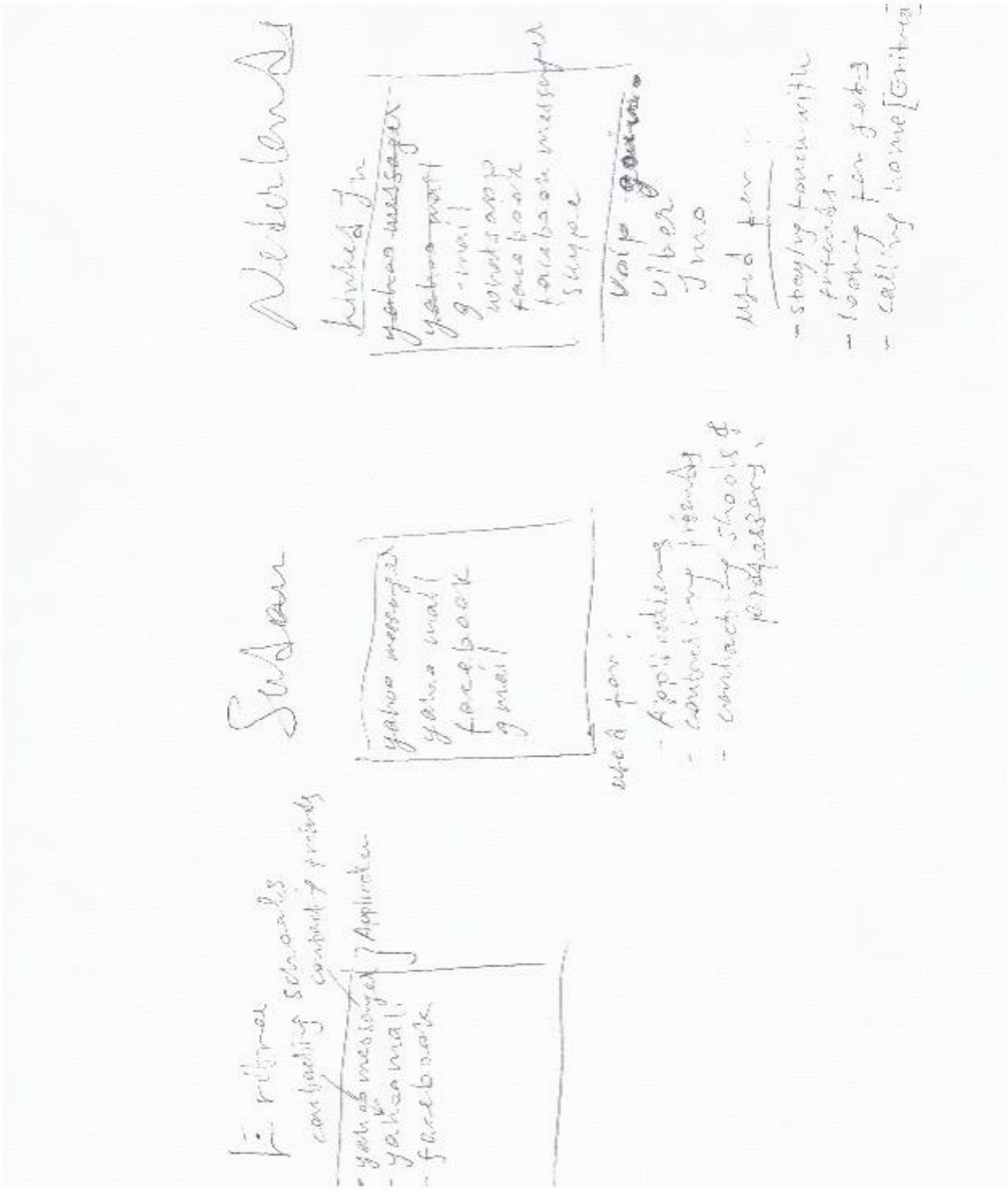
Eritrean Participant:



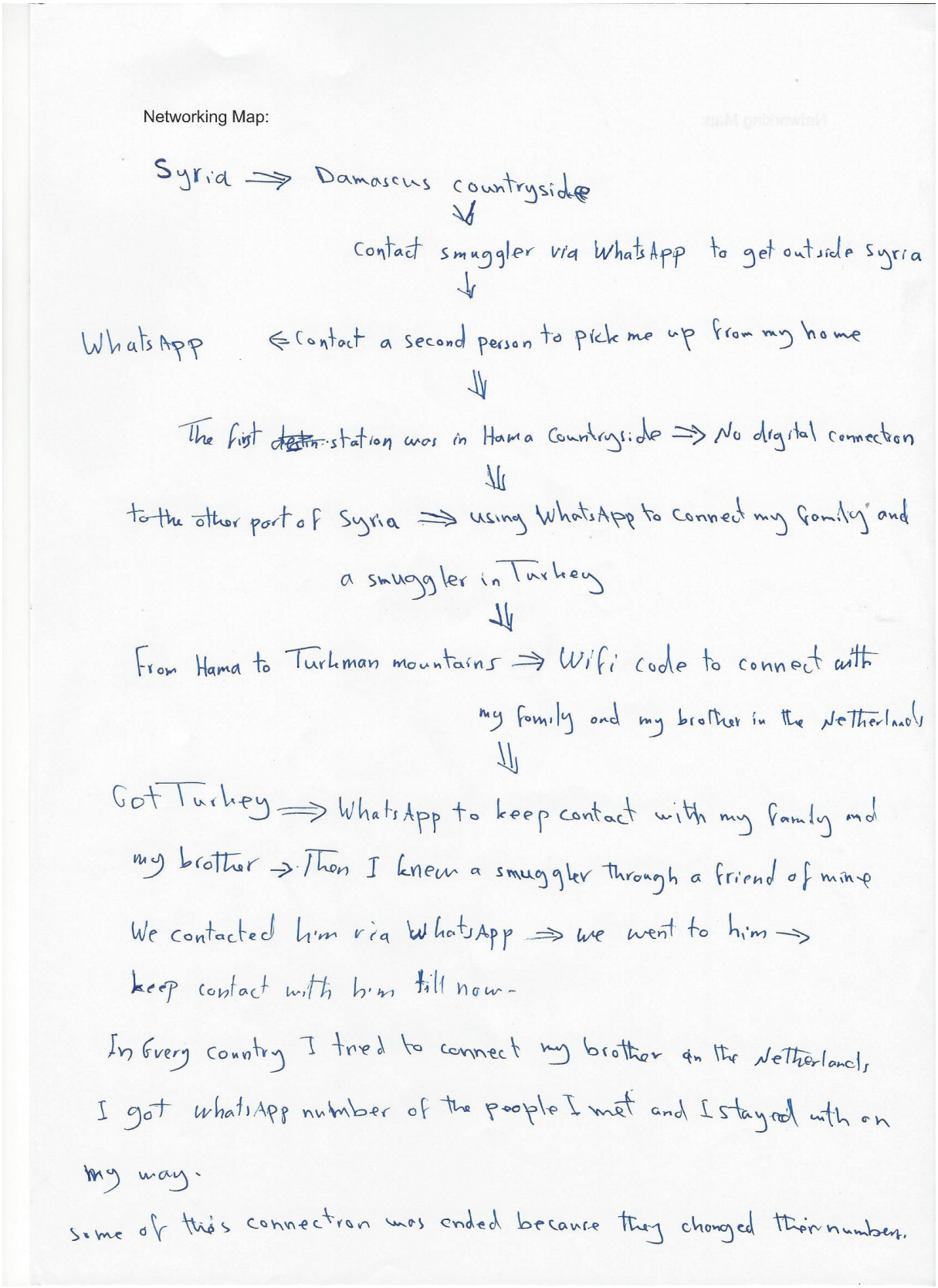
Eritrean Participant:



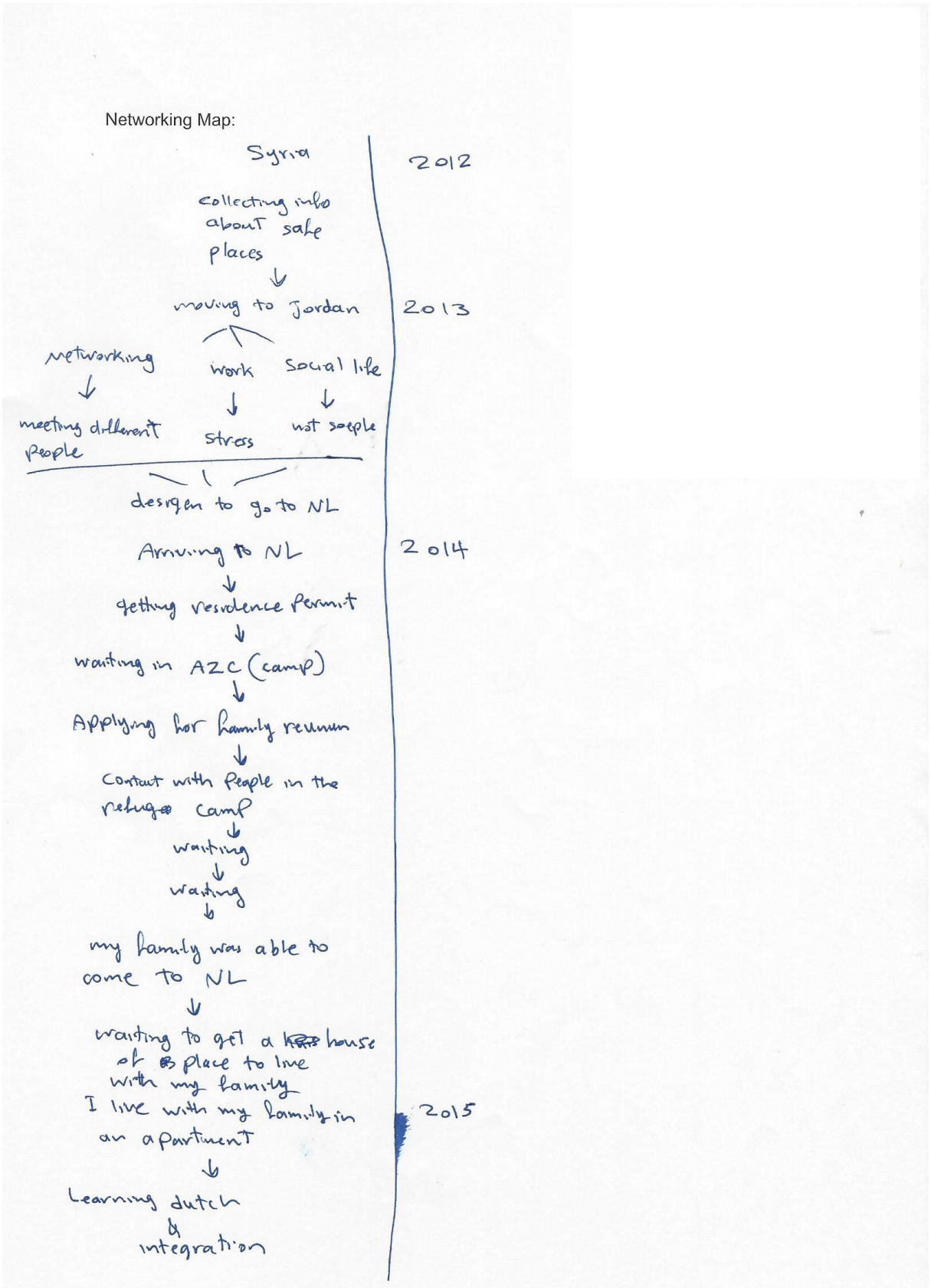
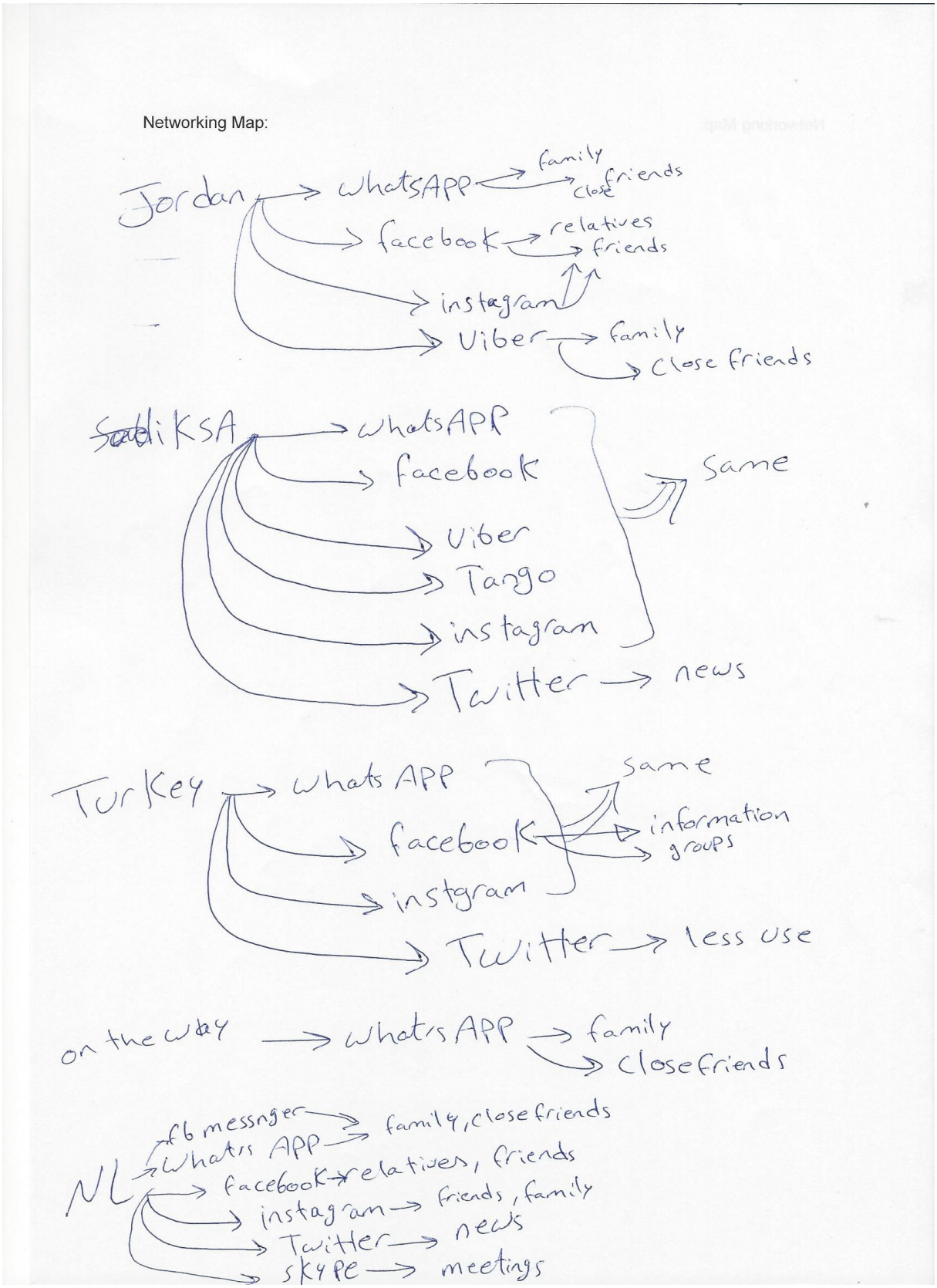
Eritrean participant:



Syrian participant:



Syrian participant:



Syrian participant: