

# **Surviving in the Netherlands**

A research about the coping strategies of rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen

## **Master thesis**

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## **Abstract**

Many asylum seekers choose to stay without papers in the Netherlands, after their asylum request got rejected, thereby being excluded from shelter and financial support given by the government. They need to use so-called 'coping strategies' to fulfil their basic human needs. In the academic literature four coping strategies stand out as being the most important and most frequently used, namely finding work, finding shelter, support from their social network, and support from institutional actors. In this research it is examined if and to what extent these four coping strategies are being used among rejected asylum seekers in the Dutch mid-size town Nijmegen. Through multiple in-depth interviews it could be concluded that especially the support of the social network and institutional actors is extremely important. Shelter and work were in most cases found through the own social network and with the support of institutional actors. Therefore, it can be questioned if work and shelter are real coping strategies or more basic human needs.

## Table of content

1. Introduction	5
2. Theoretical framework	8
2.1. Asylum procedure in the Netherlands	8
2.2. Theoretical concepts	11
2.3. Four strategies	14
2.4. Interaction	20
2.5. Coping strategies in the Dutch context	21
2.5.1. Work opportunities	21
2.5.2. Shelter	23
2.5.3. Social network	25
2.5.4. Institutional actors	27
3. Methodology	30
3.1. Research setting	30
3.2. Research design	31
3.3. Data collection	32
3.4. Data analysis	35
4. Findings	36
4.1. Work opportunities	36
4.2. Shelter	39
4.3. Social network	40
4.4. Institutional actors	42
4.5. Interaction	45
5. Conclusion	50
6. Limitations	53
7. Recommendations	55
8. Bibliography	58
9. Appendix 1: Topic list	63

## 1. Introduction

“The Netherlands to withdraw food and shelter from failed asylum seeker after just ‘a few weeks’” titles *Independent* in 2015 (Withnall 2015). In the same year thousands of refugees entered the European Union. Specifically, 37,268 people applied for asylum in the Netherlands (Vluchtelingenwerk 2016). 19.6% percent of all requests filed in 2015 were rejected meaning that these people could not get a valid residence permit (ibid.,). When an asylum request is rejected these people are stimulated by the Dutch government to return to their country of origin voluntarily. In case of refusal, the Dutch authorities will try to deport these rejected asylum seekers (Noll 1999, 268).

Despite this current Dutch policy, many rejected asylum seekers stay in the Netherlands. For this, two reasons can be identified. First, people do not want to leave because they feel that the political situation threatens their safety (Leerkes, Galloway and Kromhout 2011, 126). Second, people cannot leave the Netherlands due to lacking travel documents or unclear nationality (Noll 1999, 274). In addition, origin countries often try to profit from the return of these asylum seekers. They request compensation and if this is not granted they will not accept the asylum seeker back in this country (ibid., 274).

Since a large amount of rejected asylum seekers stays in the Netherlands, the Dutch government introduced the *Bed, Bad en Brood* policy in 2015. This agreement contains the idea that rejected asylum seekers need to work actively on their return otherwise they cannot stay in the shelters from the government and do not get any financial aid from the Dutch state. In addition, the government limited the number of shelters for rejected asylum seekers to five municipalities (Hess 2016, 9). Although policy stimulating rejected asylum seekers to return to their country of origin is not new, the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement appeared to be a substantial change in policy because it is targeting some basic human needs, such as shelter opportunities (ibid., 9). Even though this was controversial, the Dutch government decided to continue with the *Bed, Bad en Brood* policy in the new elected administration from 2017 (NOS 2017). The only substantive change in this administration will be the expansion of municipalities from five to eight (Back 2017).

Several municipalities resisted to this national *Bed, Bad en Brood* policy. Due to humanitarian or public-order reasoning, these municipalities kept their shelter open for rejected asylum seekers (Kos, Maussen and Doornik 2015, 12; Municipality of Nijmegen 2015). One example of such a municipality is Nijmegen, which is a middle sized city in the Netherlands with two asylum centres within its regional borders. The rejected asylum seekers who are expelled from these two local asylum centres mostly try to seek assistance in the

municipality of Nijmegen first. The rejected asylum seekers do so because even though the city was not chosen to be one of the five municipalities with a shelter for rejected asylum seekers they kept a small shelter open to rejected asylum seekers (SNOV 2017). On the one hand Nijmegen is a city which does provide support for rejected asylum seekers, but on the other hand is the number of available places in this shelter very limited. In addition, financial aid can be severely restricted in municipalities (Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 108). Therefore, many rejected asylum seekers face the task of covering their own basic human needs as shelter or food. These basic human needs are crucial for their survival and can be satisfied through using different coping strategies. In this study, the diversity of coping strategies is examined by use of the following research question: *What coping strategies do rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen use to fulfil their basic human needs while living without papers?*

By examining the research question, this study contributes to the scientific knowledge in threefold. First, a prominent part of academic literature examines coping strategies (Snel and Staring 2001; Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989). However, these scholars use different coping strategies as if they were exchangeable, and equal to each other. In this study, the concept coping strategies is developed further by examining not only if some coping strategies are used more often than others, but also by examining whether some coping strategies actually create other coping strategies. By doing so, a debate about what is and is not a coping strategy is initiated. Second, most studies about irregular migrants concern the Mexican-American border (De Genova 2002, 419). Less scholarly attention has been paid to other parts of the world as the Dutch context. Since the migration policy is different here, the motivations and rationale of the rejected asylum seekers could be different as well. Finally, migration issues are not only geographically dependent, but also change over time. Most studies about rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands were published in the beginning of the 2000s. Since that time, the migration policies in the Netherlands have changed several times and with it the life situation of rejected asylum seekers. Especially with the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement which had a drastic influence on the lives of rejected asylum seekers. Consequently, it is interesting to study how the situation of rejected asylum seekers is in 2017, two years after the implementation of the agreement.

This study is especially important now, since in 2017 a new parliament took office in the Netherlands. One of their plans is to adapt the current migration policy, thereby including the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement. By understanding the everyday problems of rejected asylum seekers, policy can be targeted to help, not harm these people, so that everybody's

basic human needs can be fulfilled. On a more general note, this study will provide useful insights that can be used in creating more awareness among Dutch citizens about the situation of rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Dutch citizens and rejected asylum seekers live side by side in the Netherlands but mostly rejected asylum seekers appear to be ‘invisible’ to most Dutch citizens. Therefore, providing more knowledge about the situation of rejected asylum seekers can be useful. Furthermore, this study could even contribute to policy considerations.

To answer the research question of this study, two research methods were used. First, the coping strategies of rejected asylum seekers are studied through literature research. This method was chosen because it leads to more insights in the theoretical debates concerning the coping strategies of rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Through searching and reading relevant literature online, a clear overview about the scientific debates can be given in the following. Second, fifteen in-depth interviews were held with rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. This method was chosen because it would allow the participant to tell his/her living experiences of how they manage to live without papers. Also, it allows the researcher to give the participants a voice.

The paper is structured as followed. First, a short introduction will be given about what influence a rejected asylum request has on somebody’s life. Here, information on the legal rights of rejected asylum seekers and difficulties that occur while living without papers will be mentioned. Afterwards three theoretical concepts that are part of the research question will be explained. Specifically the terms rejected asylum seekers, basic human needs and coping strategies will be conceptualized. This section is followed by a more detailed explanation of four specific coping strategies that are related to rejected asylum seekers by earlier studies. Also, several interactions between the different coping strategies are taken into consideration. Afterwards, these strategies will be applied to the Dutch context. Furthermore, an overview of the research methodology will be given, followed by the empirical findings that occurred from the interviews held with rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. Finally, a conclusion is presented that answers the research question, a critical reflection upon the limitations of this research is given and several recommendations to the institutional actors involved with rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen are suggested.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Asylum procedure in the Netherlands**

In the last decade more than 10.000 asylum requests were filed annually in the Netherlands (Vluchtelingenwerk 2017). The actual numbers were fluctuating drastically throughout the years standing at 31.000 people in 2016 (ibid.,). These refugees had various reasons why they left their country of origin and fled to the Netherlands such as conflicts, persecution, economic instability or discrimination (Rijksoverheid 2017a). Once arrived in the Netherlands the government evaluates the situation of every person individually and decides on accepting or rejecting their asylum request. Multiple factors could play a role in this decisions, the most important is when the government believes that an individual faces violence, torture or death in his country of origin (Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst 2017). In case of acceptance, people get a refugee status which contains a residence permit, whereas when the government decides that a person is safe in his home country they will reject the asylum request. In 2016 27, 9% of all asylum requests were rejected (Vluchtelingenwerk 2017). The people that were rejected the most came predominately from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, several Eastern European countries such as Albania or Serbia or African countries as Nigeria or Sudan (Vluchtelingenwerk 2016).

The reasons for the rejection of an asylum request can be quite divers. Two main reasons can be identified. First, the nationality of the people plays an important role (Rijksoverheid 2017b). The Dutch government established a so called ‘safe country list’. On the list countries without ongoing wars or armed conflicts can be found. In addition, countries are listed where there is no reason to believe that torture or inhumane treating take place. Examples of countries on this list are Germany or Belgium but also Albania and Serbia (ibid.,). When an asylum seeker comes from a country on that list, his asylum request is normally rejected. However, this is not the only reason to reject an asylum seeker, another reason is when the government does not believe that a person is personally in danger in his/her country, he/she will be rejected as well (Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst 2017).

If an asylum request is rejected, the rejected asylum seeker has to leave the Netherlands within 28 days. During this time voluntary return is stimulated by the Dutch government (Rijksoverheid 2017c). If the rejected asylum seeker is willing to and works actively on his return he/she still gets support from the government during the time of preparing his/her return. Support means that rejected asylum seekers have the right for shelter

in an asylum centre (AZC) and they can receive financial aid to buy food and clothing (Stichting LOS 2017). If the rejected asylum seeker is not willing to return voluntarily, the Dutch government will prepare his/her deportation and may impose several surveillance measurements to prevent the rejected asylum seeker to go into hiding (Rijksoverheid 2017c). These surveillance measurements could include a duty to report to the police regularly, but also that the government might take a persons' passport, place the rejected asylum seekers in a detention centre or impose a monetary fee that will be returned to the rejected asylum seekers if he/she leaves the Netherlands (ibid.,). In the meantime, the government will build a case to actively deport the rejected asylum seeker. However, to make this deportation happen the rejected asylum seeker needs to require some documents such as a passport and a visa from their country of origin. These documents will not always be provided by the country of origin (Rijksoverheid 2017d). If the Dutch government cannot deport people they can give a temporary residence permit instead.

To prevent deportation, many rejected asylum seekers go into hiding from the government and decide to live without papers in the Netherlands. Fear of their safety is a common reason why rejected asylum seekers do not want to return to their country of origin (Leerkes, Galloway and Kromhout 2011, 126). Rejected asylum seekers could feel that a life in the Netherlands, even without papers, holds fewer risks to them mostly because they fear for their safety in their country of origin. To avoid deportation, rejected asylum seekers will leave the AZC during these 28 days and search for an alternative shelter opportunity. The consequences of this departure are that they can be reported to the police and taken into detention even though living without papers is not a felony in the Netherlands (Stichting LOS 2018). This can be done because the government wants to limit the number of rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands and stimulate people to return to their country of origin (Rijksoverheid 2017c). In addition, rejected asylum seekers lose any support from the government, such as the right for shelter. Rejected asylum seekers are then themselves solely responsible to find a place to sleep, which can lead to homelessness if no shelter is found. Covering their own basic human needs can be a major challenge during a life without papers in the Netherlands. Still, many rejected asylum seekers see a life without papers as the only possibility to survive because they think of their country of origin as a greater risk to their lives.

Living without papers means that people get excluded from certain rights of which four are now distinguished. First of all, rejected asylum seekers lose the right for shelter given by the government (Stichting LOS 2017). Therefore, finding shelter forms a major challenge

for rejected asylum seekers to prevent homelessness. Second, rejected asylum seekers are forbidden to work (ibid.). They are also not allowed to follow an education program when they are older than 18 years. Third, rejected asylum seekers cannot receive any government aid (ibid.). This includes financial assistance for their children or money needed to rent a house. Finally, rejected asylum seekers are not in the possession of valid identity documents (ibid.). This prevents them from many services such as opening a bank account or getting a driving licence. Although not having valid identity documents is often not visible for outsiders but it limits rejected asylum seekers in certain contexts as for instance while applying to a job or on the housing market.

However, certain rights still apply to people without a residence permit. Most importantly, the universal Human Rights concern all human beings, therefore including irregular migrants (United Nations 2017). This means that irregular migrants have the right of for example freedom of discrimination, freedom of slavery and equality for the law. Next, in addition to these Human Rights, the Netherlands adjudged specific rights to people even when they have lost their papers (Stichting LOS 2017). These rights include the right of free medical care, the right of children to go to school until they are 18 years old and the right of legal assistance.

Which asylum requests are accepted and who is forced to live without papers is not only determined by factual situations, as the government suggests, but it is also defined by cultural, social and political motivations (Chavez 2007, 192). According to Chavez (2007), nation states have become more ethnically diverse over time. Due to this diversity, the populations of these states feels more insecure over time, Chavez then argues that this insecurity results in clear government rules about who can become a citizen of a particular nation state and who does not (ibid., 193). He frames this as 'illegality', which means: 'status resulting from political decisions made by the governmental representatives who could just as well have decided to allow migrants to enter under the sanction of law- as legal immigrants, legal workers, or legal guests of some type' (Chavez 2007, 192). In other words, 'labels' are given to all people within a territory based on the policies of the government. It is important to note here that this suggests that being a rejected asylum seeker is not only defined by factual information of the country of origin, but that alternative reasons play a role.

The possession of papers becomes only important in certain parts of a person's life. In many situation as for instance while engaging with other people rejected asylum seekers are not separable from people with papers (De Genova 2002, 422). However, this distinction does become important in certain contexts as for instance on the housing- and the labour market

(Bloch 2014, 1513). Therefore, the influence of the irregular status is not limited to government institutions but is also maintained by the private sector (Khosravi 2010, 96). Private landlords and employers are checking regularly for papers, thereby preventing access to certain goods and services for rejected asylum seekers. This can influence the life of rejected asylum seekers over and beyond the contact with the government.

One of the most important consequences of living without papers is that rejected asylum seekers fear deportation (Khosravi 2010, 99). Therefore, rejected asylum seekers may hide from the government which can create feelings of constant surveillance. These feelings work as discipline measures and rejected asylum seekers are trying to not attract attention by doing anything 'wrong' (ibid., 99). This is the case because making mistakes and getting attention from the police can have major consequences for rejected asylum seekers such as deportation. Furthermore, living with an irregular status means that rejected asylum seekers are expelled from the official labour market and most of the social security given by the state (ibid., 99). Consequently, rejected asylum seekers are forced into the informal economy or isolation (ibid.,). This expulsion can create stress and mental issues for rejected asylum seekers.

In conclusion, living without papers is a construct created by the government. This is partly done because of factual evidence but influenced by alternative motives. Living without papers can have a substantive effect on the lives of these migrants. First of all, rejected asylum seekers may need to deal with the threat of deportation. Therefore, many hide from the government. Furthermore, they are excluded from the official economy and large parts of the state given social security. Consequently, rejected asylum seekers need to find other ways to ensure their survival and the fulfilment of their basic human needs.

## **2.2. Theoretical concepts**

Before turning to the theoretical debate, the research question deserves further explanation. Therefore, three terms mentioned in the research question will be conceptualized. First, the term rejected asylum seeker will be explained. Second, a better understanding about the concept of basic human needs will be given. Finally, a conceptualization of the term coping strategies will be presented.

In the literature, a debate is going on how to name people who stay in a nation state without a regular permit. One term that is frequently used in migration research is the term of 'illegal migrant' since they do not have a legal residence permit. However, this term is highly

criticized. For instance, Koser argues that the term 'illegal migrant' implies that these people are criminals, which is not always the case. Furthermore, it overlooks that rejected asylum seekers are human beings with certain Human Rights (Koser 2005, 5). Consequently, the term 'illegal migrant' can give a negative impression about a person and could jeopardise their claims for seeking asylum (ibid., 5). Next, Paspalanova states that human beings cannot be seen as 'illegal' but that only certain actions can be considered illegal (Paspalanova 2008, 82). Due to this criticism, the United Nations officially agreed that the term 'illegal migrants' is an unacceptable term. They implemented the terms: 'non-documented migrants' or 'irregular migrants' (United Nations 1975). However, the term 'non-documented migrant' is also highly criticized. Various scholars argue that the term 'non-documented migrants' is incorrect since the migrants can be in possession of personal documents as for instance passports (Paspalanova 2008, 88; Koser 2005, 5). The other term namely 'irregular migrants' has a more or less neutral connotation term as is argued in the literature (Koser 2005, 5).

But how do people become irregular migrants? In the literature three different ways on how migrants can become irregular can be distinguished (Koser 2010, 183). The first group of irregular migrants are people who enter the country without legal documents. For instance people enter a country with the assistance of smugglers or are victims of human trafficking. The second group of irregular migrants are people who enter a country legally. Through overstaying their visa or residents permit they can become irregular. Finally, when asylum seekers enter a country it is still unclear whether their asylum procedure is accepted or not. In case of rejection and if people decide to stay in the country they become irregular migrants (Koser 2010, 183). This study focusses on the group of people who got a rejected asylum request. The definition for this group that will be used in this research is formulated by the UNHCR namely: 'people who after due consideration of their claims to asylum in fail procedures, are found not to qualify for refugee status, nor to be in need of international protection and who are not authorized to stay in the country concerned' (UNHCR/IOM 1997 cited in Noll 1999, 267, 268).

The second concept that will be explained in this paragraph is the term 'basic human needs'. In this study the definition from Streeten and colleagues will be used: 'terms of minimum specified quantities of such things as food, clothing, shelter, water, and sanitation that are necessary to prevent ill health, undernourishment, and the like' (Streeten et al. 1981, 25). This means that with basic human needs the focus will be on material necessities. Social necessities such as affection and friendship, although very important, will not be considered basic human needs in this study. This is done because according to various literature these

material needs are a requirement before any social needs can be fulfilled. This reasoning comes from the famous theory developed by Maslow that shows that only after satisfying these material human needs human beings can only turn to other aspects as the own safety or achieve feelings of personal accomplishment (Maslow 1943, McLeod 2014). Since rejected asylum seekers are excluded from most state given social security system they are mostly focussing of this first layer of Maslow's model. Therefore, extending this study to 'higher' needs would be redundant.

Finally, the term 'coping strategies' will be conceptualized here. Coping strategies are actions to deal with stress (Folkman 2013). Here, stress is defined as: 'a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised as personally significant and as taxing or acceding resources for coping' (Lazarus 1966, in Folkman 2013). This basically means that stress is a product of discrepancy between human needs and environmental resources. Related to this study stress emerges when the basic human needs cannot be fulfilled by the environment. Therefore, in this study coping strategies are actions to fulfil the basic human needs of a rejected asylum seeker. To deal with stress rejected asylum seekers use coping strategies (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989, 267). These coping strategies develop in three stages. First, these rejected asylum seekers realise that they find themselves exposed to stress. Second, to cope with this situation the asylum seekers try to come up with a useful way to respond. Finally, they take actions to eliminate the stress (ibid., 267). Important to note is that not every person manages to reach the third stage (ibid., 267). Some rejected asylum seekers refrain from going to the third stage, and are instead going back to the first stage. However, the only way to resolve stress is to address it. Therefore, the focus will be especially on the third stage.

In the theory a wide range of copings strategies can be underlined. In this study, the four most debated coping strategies are examined, being probably also the most prominent ones in the case of rejected asylum seekers. The first coping strategy in the literature is finding a job (Snel and Staring 2001, 13, Van der Leun 2014, 36, Engbersen et al. 2002, 100-101). The use of finding a job is to earn money, which is used to pay for basic human needs. Second, finding a place to sleep is often mentioned (Jennissen 2016, 310, Engbersen et al. 2002, 99). The main goal of finding shelter is to prevent homelessness. Next, establishing and using a social network can be an important coping strategy (Sigona 2012, 50, Engbersen et al. 2002, 100-101). Social networks can help people with basic human needs in various ways. The final frequently mentioned coping strategy is seeking and using the support offered by

institutional actors (Snel and Staring 2001, 15, Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011, 5). In the following all strategies will be explained in more detail.

### **2.3. Four strategies**

Previous research shows that there are various kinds of coping strategies and their use depends on the individual and the situation at hand (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011, 15). Within this diversity of coping strategies, four are explicitly mentioned to rejected asylum seekers (Engbersen et al. 2002; Van der Leun 2014; Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011). These four coping strategies will be explained first, then how they interact and finally they will be placed in the Dutch context.

One of the most frequently mentioned coping strategies regarding rejected asylum seekers is entry to the labour market (Van der Leun 2014; Engbersen et al. 2002). The main importance of finding work is to acquire income. This money can be used to fulfil their basic human needs such as buying food or clothes. For getting a job three types of economies can be distinguished: the formal, the informal and the gift economy.

The formal economy is the part of the market where official contracts between employers and employees are signed, where taxes are paid and registration with the government is required (Chen 2005, 6-7). Since, rejected asylum seekers are not in the possession of a working permission, which is required in the formal economy, employers break the law while hiring a rejected asylum seeker. This makes employment in the formal economy problematic to irregular migrants (Van der Leun 2014, 24).

The second option where rejected asylum seekers find work is the informal economy (Datta et al. 2007, 406-407). The informal economy is a part of the market where 'economic units and workers [...] remain outside the world of regulated economic activities and protected employment relationship' (Chen 2005, 1). This means that rejected asylum seekers do exchange labour for currency but do so without governmental registration or contract. The advantages for rejected asylum seekers are that this informal economy does offer work opportunities and the lack of contracts often make them, but also employer, feel safer. However, the lack of governmental registration and binding contracts also exposes the rejected asylum seeker to exploitation or abuse (Engbersen et al. 2002, 123-124).

Working in the informal economy can be either on monetary or non-monetary basis. On the one hand rejected asylum seekers can get money for their work. This kind of work in the informal economy takes place in companies (Leerkes et al. 2004, 76). On the other hand

rejected asylum seekers can work in exchange for goods as food or a place to sleep (Van der Leun 2003, 49). This work mostly takes place in private houses and therefore, it is almost impossible for the government to control and to prevent it.

The third part of the economy where rejected asylum seekers can earn money or goods is the gift economy. The gift economy contains the support of others who give free goods and services to rejected asylum seekers to help with their situation (Engbersen et al. 2002, 98-99). Hereby, the gift economy differs from the informal economy because here the rejected asylum seeker does not have to provide labour in return for the money and goods that he/she gets. The people that provide goods to rejected asylum seekers within the gift economy can be two different entities. First, individuals can provide gifts to the rejected asylum seekers. Mostly friends or family are willing to pitch in for the rejected asylum seeker. Second, many institutions offer their support as for instance charity organisations or faith-based organisations (ibid.,) Even though the gift economy does not ask for as much reciprocity as the informal economy, the support given by the gift economy is mostly not unlimited.

Finding shelter is the second coping strategy mentioned in the literature (Jennissen 2016, 310). Shelter offers protection to coldness and rain and it provides safety and a place to rest. In the coping strategy a major distinguishing can be made between the formal and the informal housing market. In the formal housing market there are a couple of possibilities for rejected asylum seekers. They can get shelter by the municipality or state, governmentally funded NGOs as the *Bad Bad en Brood* or they can find a place through the formal private housing market by renting or buying an apartment (Stichting LOS 2017). Legally speaking for rejected asylum seekers only the state funded NGOs (*Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter) is an option to consider since the other two require a residence permit. In addition, in the informal housing market a number of possibilities can be noted (Abilov 2017, 26). One option for rejected asylum seekers to find shelter is at an NGO or faith-based organisation. Some of these organisations have shelter explicitly for rejected asylum seekers. Getting shelter at the house of somebody you know is another shelter opportunity. The final possibility for rejected asylum seekers to find shelter is the informal housing market where people try to rent a house without registration from the government ('black housing market'). For rejected asylum seekers all these options are theoretically possible.

The third coping strategy is using the own social network to rely on support (Snel and Staring 2001, 13). This strategy is explained often in connection to the term social capital (Bourdieu 1986, 280). Bourdieu defines social capital as the financial, human and cultural capital of someone's network (ibid. 289). This social capital can be used to achieve goals for

in this case rejected asylum seekers to fulfil their basic human needs. In other words social capital are the resources and chances that people gain through their social network (Leerkes, Engbersen and San 2006, 225). Through their network rejected asylum seekers can get financial assistance by buying their food or giving them a place to sleep (financial capital). In addition, their network can provide certain skills like for instance home repairs, cleaning, cooking or gardening (human capital). Finally, rejected asylum seeker can get help through getting information how the cultural and legal system in the Netherlands (cultural capital). These forms of practical assistance are called instrumental support in the literature (Lin 1999, 31-32). Lin states that in addition to instrumental support there is also expressive support (ibid.). This support contains the emotional support given by the network that can increase the well-being of a person. This distinction of instrumental and expressive support aligns with the research of Carver, Scheier and Weintraub who differentiate between problem focused and emotional focused coping (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989, 267). Problem solving means to reduce or to eliminate the source that causes the threat and emotional focused focusses on managing emotional stress which comes connected to a stressful situation (ibid.). Rejected asylum seekers both need and use instrumental and expressive support. However, expressive support does not explicitly contribute to fulfilling the basic human needs of a person. Therefore, the main focus in this research is on the instrumental support given by the social network. Expressive support will only be taken into account if it has a direct influence on using instrumental support or not.

However, social networks are not always an asset for rejected asylum seekers but oppose several risks. Previous literature mentioned five predominant risks for rejected asylum seekers. First, the engagement with other people can be a risk for rejected asylum seekers (Sigona 2012, 53-54). For instance they face an increased chance to get reported to the police who can start a deportation process. Second, through interaction with others, rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands can face discrimination and stigmatization connected to their status as being 'illegal'. Third, through engaging with others they show a certain level of trust to the other person. For instance Khosravi (2010, 104) found rejected asylum seekers can be victims to high rents or are marginalised in their ethnic community. Another difficulty concerned the costs of building and maintaining a social network. They argue that it is very difficult to build and maintain a social network without economic resources, since an economic dependency on a person might harm their relationship. Finally, language barriers and communication problems can be obstacles in building and maintain a social network (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2015, 34-35).

Besides the risks there are also costs of building and maintaining a network. These costs are twofold. First, there are the so called searching costs (Boxman 1992). Rejected asylum seekers need to find a network. It costs time and effort to find people who are an asset to a rejected asylum seeker and who are willing to help rejected asylum seekers. In addition to these searching costs, there are maintaining costs (ibid.). These costs encapsulate the time and effort that is needed to preserve the relationship. To assure this, most the time some reciprocity is needed. Otherwise acquaintances and friends could lose their willingness to help and support the migrant. Important to note is that social networks change drastically over time (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2015, 34-35). With relationship to rejected asylum seekers the moment of arrival and the moment of release from detention a pivotal moments.

The final coping strategy is using the support of institutional actors. These actors can be for instance the state, local authorities or private organisations (Snel and Staring 2001, 13). In many Western countries, the state takes care of people with low income or those who find themselves in a marginalized position. However, this support from the state is limited to people with a residence permit, thereby excluding the rejected asylum seekers. This exclusion led to a growth in amount and support from the civil society (ibid., 15). With the civil society is meant a category of organisations which acts outside the influence of the state, thereby being non-governmental or non-state actors (Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 104). Examples of the civil society are NGOs, religious institutions and social movements. In this research attention mainly focussed on NGOs and faith based organisations.

Since, state actors give very limited support to rejected asylum seekers this research focusses especially on non-state actors. An exception to this is the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter which gets subsidies from the municipality. Since, this shelter exists against the permission of the national government it is seen as a special 'non-state actor' or also referred to as institutional actor in this research. Furthermore, Crawley, Hemmings and Price argue that most rejected asylum seekers turn specifically to non-state actors while searching for support (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2001, 9). Expressive support is given through functioning as a social meeting place for rejected asylum seekers (ibid., 36). This support is enhanced, when this non-state actor appeals to an emotional or religious side of the rejected asylum seeker, such as faith based organisations. By facilitating this expressive support, the bar of asking for instrumental support is lowered (Lin, Ye and Ensel 1999, 344). Furthermore, many organisations provide the instrumental support in fulfilling basic human needs of rejected asylum seekers that are normally given by the social security of the state. This is done by for instance providing shelter or food to rejected asylum seekers. However, organisations have

legal limitations that restrict them in facilitating some help. For instance it is impossible for them to give residence permits or legal work to rejected asylum seekers (Kox 2009, 162-163).

All in all, the most frequently used coping strategies in relation with rejected asylum seekers are: finding work, finding shelter, support from the social network and the support of institutional actors. These strategies can be used by rejected asylum seekers to fulfil their basic human needs. Although, in the literature these coping strategies are discussed independently from each other, one could theoretically argue that they are highly intertwined. Therefore, in the following paragraph possible interactions will be examined. Furthermore, the direct relationships between coping strategies and basic human needs can be questioned. One could argue that while shelter and a job directly relate to fulfil a person's basic human needs, the coping strategies of support of the social network and institutional actors do not. These two coping strategies actually help in finding work and shelter, which therefore not directly but indirectly fulfil a person's basic human needs. On the other hand one could argue that social network and the support of institutional actors could be seen as the 'real' coping strategies, whereas finding a job and finding shelter could be seen as basic human needs themselves. Since, this could be argued in two ways, this study sees all the four aspects as coping strategies, however this difference should be kept in mind throughout this paper. Figure 1 shows that classical hierarchy of coping strategies which is used in this study while Figure 2 shows a new model of the relationships between the coping strategies.

Figure 1:

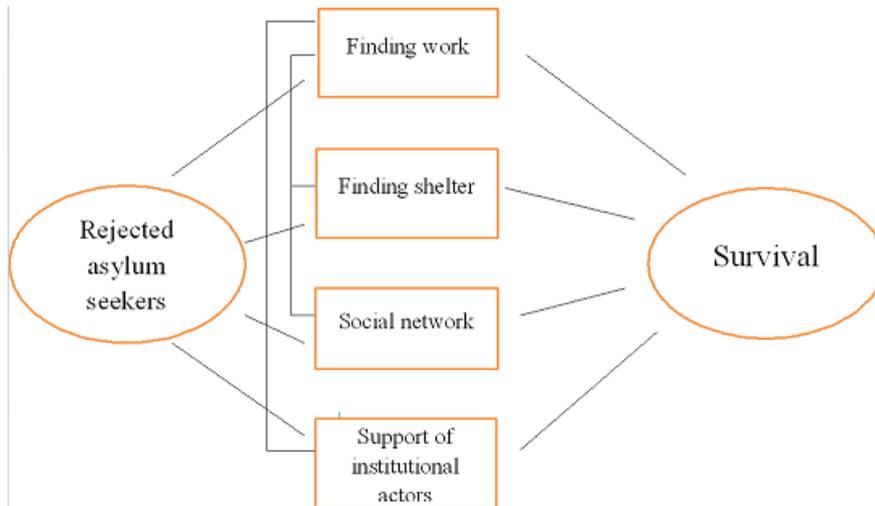
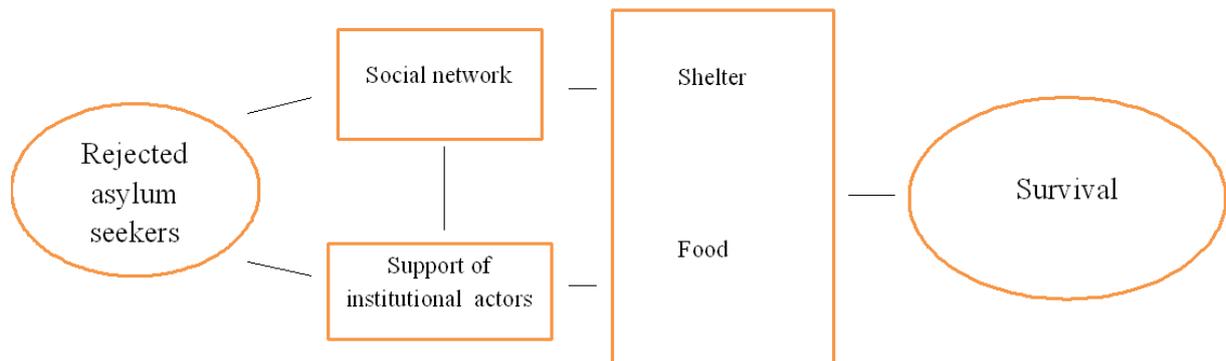


Figure 2:



## 2.4. Interaction

In the previous section four coping strategies are explained namely: finding work, finding shelter, the importance of a social network and the support of institutional actors. However, while previous literature mostly examined these strategies separately, some theoretical argumentation can be made how they interact.

The first interaction that will be addressed is the relationship between social networks and work. Rejected asylum seekers have no right of getting employed in the Netherlands (Stichting LOS 2017). Therefore, many decide to find work in the informal economy. In this case the social network can help finding a job for rejected asylum seekers since a job in the informal economy is mostly obtained through someone's informal network (Van der Leun 2003, 26, 56-57). One of the major benefits of getting a job through the informal network is that the level of trust between the individuals will be high. Since, employers who hire rejected asylum seekers violate the law and rejected asylum seekers fear deportation a certain level of trust is in the interest of both individuals. The level of trust is higher within the own ethnic community and therefore many rejected asylum seekers become employed through their own family or fellow countrymen (Jennissen 2011, 311, Van der Leun 2003, 26, 48-50). Van der Leun formulates this followed: a 'strong social network can facilitate entry to the labour market because they enable immigrants to obtain labour, capital, information and other resources on an informal basis (Van der Leun 2003, 26).

The second relationship mentioned in this paragraph is between social networks and shelter. Getting access to the formal or the informal housing economy can be a challenge for rejected asylum seekers because of their lack of papers. Therefore, many rely on their own network for finding places to stay (Kox 2009, 71). Empirical findings show that people with a larger social network can get access to the housing markets more easily (Leerkes, Engbersen and San 2006, 226). Similarly to finding a job, in finding shelter trust can play an important role. Since, rejected asylum seekers fear deportation, they may stay with friends and family to limit this risk. Empirical literature finds that many rejected asylum seekers live directly with family or other fellow countrymen which oppose, as mentioned before, less of a risk (Engbersen et al. 2002, 113). In addition, finding shelter within the ethnic community can have financial benefits (Kox 2009, 72). In many cases the shelter provided by the ethnic community has a time limit which means that the rejected asylum seeker needs to change shelter quite frequently (ibid.,).

Many institutional actors offer shelter to rejected asylum seekers (Sigona 2012, 60). Since, non- state actors are independent from the state it makes them easier to trust for many irregular migrants. Furthermore, these non-state actors can help in finding a job. This can be done by either using the network of the organisation for finding a job, or the non-state actor gives directly a monetary provision to the rejected asylum seeker (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2001, 32-33). Important to note, when getting monetary provision, only the financial benefits are met. Creating the own network and embedding in the society, which is supported by having a job is neglected in the situation. Besides facilitating work or shelter, institutional actors can also help in creating a social network. (ibid., 32). These institutional actors set up social events with the opportunities to meet others and to strengthen the network of a rejected asylum seeker. This can benefit the rejected asylum seekers due to people with a strong social network are often less dependent on the support of institutional actors (Engbersen et al., 2002, 100). These relations show the interactions between different coping strategies.

## **2.5. Coping strategies in the Dutch context**

### **2.5.1. Work opportunities**

The attractiveness and successfulness of coping strategies does not only depend on the coping strategy itself but also on the context. Therefore, the coping strategies addressed in this thesis will be explained in the Dutch context. For each strategy, both the policy situation as a more general setting are elaborated.

The first coping strategy is getting access to the labour market. Work opportunities for rejected asylum seekers are frequently discussed in Dutch politics already since the 1990s. Back then due to an increased influx of refugees the Dutch government decided to substantially reform their migration policies (Engbersen et al. 2002, 99). The government introduced social security numbers as a requirement for employment. The intention was to complicate the access to the labour market for rejected asylum seekers (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006, 61). The lack of work should stimulate irregular migrants to return to their country of origin. This migration policy managed to limit the number of irregular migrants on their formal labour market (Engbersen et al. 2002, 102). However, even though rejected asylum seekers are expelled from the formal labour market, they managed to find jobs in the informal economy (Datta et al. 2007, 406-407).

To counteract work in the informal economy, the Dutch government started controlling the high risk sectors (Van der Leun 2003, 38). Furthermore, the controls were even intensified after the new alien law in 2000. In addition, the Dutch alien law increased punishment for employers and employees when an irregular migrant is hired (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006, 61-62). Employers risk fines, losing their licence or even prison, while employees face deportation.

Due to this expulsion of rejected asylum seekers from the formal economy, rejected asylum seekers can only find jobs in the informal economy. The informal economy is approximately 13 to 17% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Netherlands (Schneider and Ernste 2000, 77). These numbers are similar to the size of the informal economy of Germany or France while in Belgium and Southern European countries even a bigger part of the economy consists of the informal economy (ibid., 104). However, the part of the informal economy that is embodied by rejected asylum seekers is unclear.

In general when irregular migrants are employed they have low paid jobs with long working hours (Sigona 2012, 56). Most of the work that rejected asylum seekers find in the informal economy are part of the agricultural, construction work or gastronomic sector. Other jobs can be found in low paid services as cleaning or taking care of children or elderly (ibid.). Sometimes rejected asylum seekers are also involved in criminal activities (Engbersen et al. 2002, 105). Jobs as drug dealing or prostitution offer them the possibility for a high income and a fast improvement of their financial situation. However, previous literature found very little criminal employment under rejected asylum seekers (ibid., 105). Furthermore, an increased trend in the personal services meaning that more rejected asylum seekers work for Dutch citizens as cleaner, babysitter, painter or gardener was observed (ibid.,).

For rejected asylum seekers it is easier to find a job in bigger cities like Amsterdam or Rotterdam (Jennissen 2011, 311). This is due to that the demand of cheap labour is bigger in the larger cities. However, the controls and requirements are stricter in the bigger cities (Van der Leun 2003, 38). Therefore rejected asylum seekers cannot do every job that is offered to them. For instance, it is impossible to start an own business without legal papers. Another challenge is that most work is limited in time and does not provide a long term income (Engbersen et al. 2002, 105). Therefore, rejected asylum seekers are in constant search for new working places (ibid.,).

In conclusion, the Dutch government excludes rejected asylum seekers from the formal labour market since the 1990s (Engbersen et al. 2002, 102). However, the stricter migration policies did not stop them from working but pushed them in the informal economy.

Furthermore, the chances for work are higher in the bigger cities in the Netherlands. Although, the bigger cities in the Netherlands have more demand, they also require stricter controls, thereby, still blocking rejected asylum seekers for a big part of the informal economy. When rejected asylum seekers find a job in the informal economy these jobs can be found in the agricultural, gastronomic or construction work sector. In addition, getting a job in personal services in the private sphere is on the rise.

### **2.5.2. Shelter**

The second coping strategy concerns the shelter opportunities for rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands. During the last decade, a discussion about providing shelter emerged in the Netherlands. Based on this discussion Dutch migration policy was adapted in the last years, as for instance in 2000 when the Dutch government implemented a new alien law (Kromhout 2000). This law contained that rejected asylum seekers would lose the right for shelter in an asylum centre after 28 days (Jennissen 2011, 193). The goal of this agreement was to accelerate the return procedures. Part of this law was that only a limited number of special shelters for rejected asylum seekers exist in the Netherland. In addition, rejected asylum seekers could only get shelter when they worked actively on the return to their country of origin. In 2015 another policy change took place, when the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement was implemented. Herein, the government decided to close the thirty existing regional shelters and replaced them with six national shelters for rejected asylum seekers (Hess 2016, 1-2).

The *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement occurred out of dissatisfaction from the Dutch government due to the large number of irregular migrants in the Netherlands. However, several political parties, municipalities and some prominent individuals spoke out against this *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement, arguing that this policy forced rejected asylum seekers into homelessness (Kos, Maussen and Doomernik 2015, 10, 13). According to these protesters, the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement excludes rejected asylum seekers from shelter, thereby violating their humanitarian rights (ibid.,). In addition, municipalities would be dealing with large numbers of homeless migrants which could threaten the public order. Many municipalities looked for alternative funding to keep their shelters open (Hess 2016, 9). Several municipalities still offer shelter to irregular migrants two years after the agreement (Stichting LOS 2017).

Due to the *Bed, Bad en Brood* policy rejected asylum seekers were actively banned from the official housing market (Leerkes, Engbersen and San 2006, 226). The lack of

identification papers pushes them out of the official housing market, forcing them to seek for shelter in the informal housing market, such as renting a place from fellow countrymen, organisations or with Dutch individuals (ibid.,). However, while the rent in the informal housing market is usually lower than in the official housing market, it might still be too high for most of the rejected asylum seekers (Engbersen et al. 2002, 113-1114). In addition, rejected asylum seekers might feel as a burden to their host, feel ashamed or the host does not want to offer shelter anymore (ibid.,). Consequently, many rejected asylum seekers need to rely on different shelter opportunities offered to them by the state or non-state actors.

Across the Netherlands, shelter opportunities for rejected asylum seekers differ between municipalities. In 2009, 60% of the municipalities did not provide any shelter to rejected asylum seekers, while 15% of the municipalities provided accommodation in the past but closed them since 2009 and 22% still offers shelter (Van der Welle and Odé 2009, 25). These results were supported by Leerkes, Galloway and Kromhout (2010, 126-127). Furthermore, the shelter opportunities for rejected asylum seekers decreased over the years (Van der Welle and Odé 2009, 11-12, 25). This is done because of two reasons. First, municipalities argue that there were not enough inhabitants using the full capacity of the shelter. When there was no demand, it was argued by the municipalities that there was no reason to keep them open. Second, by closing the shelters the municipality argued that the public order and safety is maintained. On the other hand, some municipalities kept their shelters open. For this mostly humanitarian reasons were given. They argues that the biggest group of people that is living in the shelter would be forced into homelessness if not for these shelters (ibid.,12).

Existing shelters for rejected asylum seekers are mainly located in bigger cities (Van der Welle and Odé 2009, 25, 13). Almost 75% of the municipalities with more than 100.000 inhabitants provided shelter in 2009. Moreover, shelters for rejected asylum seekers are mostly located in cities with an asylum centre within their regional borders. This is possibly because these municipalities have to deal with increased numbers of homeless rejected asylum seekers who had to leave the asylum centre (ibid.,).

To conclude it can be noticed that changes the migration policy over the last 20 years have had a major impact on the shelter situation of rejected asylum seekers. As a consequence rejected asylum seekers were pushed out of the official housing market and often cannot afford a place in the informal market. The assistance from the state became more limited and rejected asylum seekers needed to find different places to sleep.

### 2.5.3. Social network

The following coping strategy concerns the social network of rejected asylum seekers. Most rejected asylum seekers use the time during their asylum procedure and while living at the AZC to build their network. This is done before they even get rejected (Engbersen et al. 2002, 121). After their rejection and their departure from the AZC it is often a challenge for rejected asylum seekers to maintain relationships with their network. The social network can have major impact for rejected asylum seekers because contacts can offer instrumental and expressive support to them (Sigona 2012, 53). However, not every rejected asylum seeker in the Netherlands manages to build and maintain a social network (Engbersen et al. 2002, 121,136). For example in a study conducted in the city of Utrecht only 7% of the rejected asylum seekers did not have a social network to rely on for instrumental and expressive support in 2009 (Kox 2009, 142). The amount of rejected asylum seekers that do not have a social network in Nijmegen is unknown.

The social network of rejected asylum seekers consists predominantly out of four groups. First, ties with people of the own ethnic community is one of the major components of the network of rejected asylum seekers. Engbersen and van der Leun (2001, 62) argue that: ‘people feel called upon to help illegal compatriots who are confronted with setbacks and who they feel connected to’. The solidarity for people with a similar background is high in many communities. However, Engbersen et al. (2002, 118) argue that there are large differences between ethnic communities in the amount of support they give. There are multiple characteristics of the ethnic group that influence this support. One of the characteristic of an ethnic group that influences the support given to rejected asylum seekers is density. When the ethnic community is dense it is easier to get support because the mutual trust is higher (ibid., 136). In addition to density, willingness can play an important role. When the ethnic community is more willing to help, obviously more support is given. Finally, for an ethnic group to give support to rejected asylum seeker, this community needs to have resources to their disposal (ibid., 120). When an ethnic community does not have any resources, they can obviously not be used for support. In many communities it is common to give ‘bounded solidarity’. To those who find themselves in a difficult situation support is given but it is often clearly limited and/or refers only to incidental help like translating or connecting them to potential employers or lawyers (Engbersen and Van der Leun 2001, 63).

The importance of the ethnic community for rejected asylum seekers was larger in the past, since there were more static ethnic communities in the Netherlands (Ambrosini and Van

der Leun 2015, 107). Nowadays people arrive from different countries from which there is not an established ethnic community in the Netherlands yet. In the Netherlands the refugees that can rely on a strong ethnic community are originated from Afghanistan, Turkey and several African countries as for instance Somalia can rely on a strong ethnic communities in the Netherlands (Jenissen 2011, 310). The refugees from other countries of origin are therefore condemned to find other ways of support (Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 107).

Next to the ethnic community, the family is an important part of the social network of a rejected asylum seeker. This is even more so when family members live in the same destination country as the rejected asylum seeker him/herself. Engbersen and Van der Leun (2001, 62) point out that in some cultures it is common to provide communal sharing which means providing shelter and support to their relatives. Getting support from family members can be beneficial to rejected asylum seekers in many ways. First, the informal network of the family can be an important first introduction to Dutch society (Engbersen and Van der Leun 1998, 205). Second, the level of trust within families is usually rather high and the relationship is more likely based on non-monetary reciprocity. Since rejected asylum seekers mostly do not have much financial resources it can be an important source of support. Third, rejected asylum seekers are financially dependent on their family since they are not allowed to work in the Netherlands (Engbersen et al. 2002, 113). However, living with family relatives is not wide spread among rejected asylum seekers, since most relatives either do not live in the Netherlands or are living without papers as well (ibid., 136).

Another important group that takes part in the social network of a rejected asylum seekers are fellow refugees who they met in the asylum centre. Among refugees who share similar experiences through living in the Netherlands, the spirit of helping each other is widespread because of the mutual understanding of their situation (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2015, 37-38). Therefore, asylum seekers who got legal papers are often willing to share their resources with asylum seekers who got rejected. Accommodation, food, washing of clothes or money is often shared among asylum seekers. However, Sigona (2012, 54-55) argues that it can be challenging for irregular migrants to be with refugees who got status because they have different chances in the Netherlands. The constant contact with regular migrants can be confronting for rejected asylum seekers as they are constantly seeing things that they cannot have because of their lack of papers.

Finally, contacts with 'locals', meaning people growing up or living in the Netherlands for many years, can be part of the social network. Having contact with Dutch citizens is not always easy. Integration can be challenging because rejected asylum seekers avoid social

spaces like clubs or bars because at these places and especially during the night many police controls take place (Crawely, Hemmings and Price 2011, 35). In addition, the possible discrimination by locals due to residence status can make contact with Dutch people problematic (ibid.,). Furthermore, the language barrier can make it hard for them to connect outside their own language group (Sigona 2012, 53). This all, can make contact between locals and refugees challenging (ibid., 54).

In conclusion, social contacts are an important source to cope with life without papers because it can ensure the survival of rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands. However, not every rejected asylum seeker can rely on a social network. In the creation of a social network the most important moments in a life of a rejected asylum seekers are when they first arrive in the Netherlands and when they get released from detention. The network of rejected asylum seekers consists predominantly out of four groups: family, other refugees, the own ethnic community and 'locals'. These different groups can all give instrumental and expressive support.

#### **2.5.4. Institutional actors**

In the Netherlands, the migration policies have changed frequently during the last 20 years and shifted the attention of the civil society to rejected asylum seekers. Through the policy changes an unknown number of organisations that helps rejected asylum seekers to cover their basic human needs came into existence (Engbersen et al. 2002, 99). Van der Welle and Odé find that in 2009 17% of the municipalities underlined the existence on external organisations within their borders (Van der Welle and Odé 2009, 10). The idea is that when migration policies become stricter, it leads to an increase in demand of organisations that support migrants.

The civil society can have influence on the well-being of rejected asylum seekers. However, the capacities, and thereby the impact, of organisations within the civil society differ. For instance, some organisations are partly funded by municipalities (Kos, Maussen and Doornik 2015, 12). These municipalities ignore the strict migration policy of the government. Other organisations do not get support from the municipalities and therefore depend on donations and volunteers (Kox 2009, 159). These financial dependencies have influence on the financial capacities of the specific organisations. If the financial support is limited organisations often need to make strict selections on their services and their clients

(Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 108). Consequently, not all rejected asylum seekers can be supported (Kox 2009, 162-163).

The civil society fills in the gap left behind by the Dutch government (Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 105). Thereby, it is logical that the civil society focuses on topics that are according to them neglected by the Dutch government. The civil society works especially with specific marginalized target groups. These organisations address their support especially to the more vulnerable groups in the migration sector, such as asylum seekers and irregular migrants. By supporting these group they can have bigger impact on the life of these people (ibid.). These organisations are generally easier to trust for rejected asylum seekers because they are not controlled by the state and offer more personal contact to them (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011, 25).

This research focuses within the civil society predominantly on NGOs and faith based organisations. In general, NGOs offer a variety of services to rejected asylum seekers. Since the stricter migration policies by the Dutch government some NGOs offer shelter during the night, while others provide financial assistance, function as meeting places, provide access to medical care or give support during the legal procedures (Engbersen et al. 2002, 99). Most organisations are in this way trying to fulfil the basic human needs and improve the well-being of rejected asylum seekers. Next to NGOs, faith based organisations play a significant role in the Netherlands. Several churches and mosques offer support to rejected asylum seekers (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011, 32). In addition, faith based organisations provide practical help, moral support and function as social meeting places (Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 104). Religious institutions often cover the basic human needs of irregular migrants by giving instrumental support, by for instance providing meals to rejected asylum seekers. Furthermore, they are concerned with the expressive support, offer rejected asylum seekers possibilities for prayer and function as a safe meeting place (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011, 32).

Just after their rejection, many rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands are not informed about the existence of organisations that can help them to cope with their life without papers (Kox 2009, 160). The support of the government stopped and no more information is given to rejected asylum seekers about their stay in the Netherlands. However, through contact with others, rejected asylum seekers can get to know certain organisations. Only a few rejected asylum seekers stay uninformed about organisations in the Netherlands (ibid.). That does not mean that all informed rejected asylum seekers use the support of an organisation. The reliance on an organisation differs between individuals and is dependent on

a variety of factors such as other coping strategies used by the migrant and the capacities of the organisations.

All in all, the existence of different organisations can be helpful to rejected asylum seekers. The changes of the Dutch migration policies throughout the last years led to the emergence of different non-state organisations that try to counteract these policies and give support to rejected asylum seekers. Especially NGOs and faith based organisations offer expressive and instrumental support to rejected asylum seekers to cover their basic human needs and increase their well-being. Still, the reliance on an organisation differs individually and depends on other coping strategies used by the rejected asylum seeker and the capacity of the specific organisation.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research setting

This thesis project started in November 2016 when the researcher started an internship at the organisation *Stichting Gast* in Nijmegen. From this month on, the researcher was present every week at the organisation and participated in the work of *Stichting Gast*. Through this internship knowledge was gathered about rejected asylum seekers and contact was established with potential participants. Soon it became clear that rejected asylum seekers were rather sceptical towards participating in the research. For this thesis, a qualitative research approach with individual interviews was chosen. This was done to provide a personal and informal atmosphere that should help to overcome the sceptic attitude of the respondents. The first months of the internship were used to create familiarity between the researcher and the respondents. By creating trust, respondents might be willing to participate in an interview and share their personal experiences. In addition, by getting to know the respondents first, the research could empathize with the individual, lowering the psychological barrier, and get more in-depth information on specific topics. This trust was built between researcher and participants through regular appearance at *Stichting Gast*, informal talks and cooperative activities. Thereby, *Stichting Gast* functioned as a gate-keeper in laying contact with possible participants. By using the knowledge of experienced volunteers a first general choice of possible respondents was made in spring 2017. The personal situation of the rejected asylum seekers at that point and his/her language skills were discussed connected to the question if they could be interviewed for this research.

Since, the network of the internship is limited to the area of Nijmegen, this study focusses specifically on rejected asylum seekers in the same region. Furthermore, the focus on Nijmegen was chosen because little literature has been published about rejected asylum seekers living in smaller cities in the Netherlands. Studies aiming on the Dutch context limited their scope to the situation of rejected asylum seekers in bigger Dutch cities as Rotterdam or Utrecht (Van der Leun 2003, Kox 2009). A smaller city as Nijmegen might have different shelter and work opportunities than a larger municipality. In addition, the case of Nijmegen seemed interesting because Nijmegen is a middle-sized town with AZCs within its region. Therefore, many asylum seekers live in and around town. Moreover, within the municipality certain organisations exist that support rejected asylum seekers even if the city did not belong to the five municipalities that were chosen by the government for having a *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter. However, the capacities of these organisations are limited and

therefore they are not able to support everybody. In other words: rejected asylum seekers can receive assistance in a certain range in Nijmegen, but are still in the situation that they need to find ways of covering their basic human needs.

### **3.2. Research design**

Participating in the work of *Stichting Gast* showed that many rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen struggled with this fulfilment of their basic human needs. This observation led to the research question of this study. The search for adequate literature started on the Internet where data bases as Google Scholar and RU Quest were used. Handling searching terms as ‘rejected asylum seekers Netherlands’ and ‘uitgeprocedeerde asielzoekers’ led soon to the discovery of studies from frequently mentioned Dutch authors (e.g. Van der Leun 2003, Leerkes et al. 2004, or Engbersen 2002). This allowed a more specific search based on the names of the authors, other publications and references that these authors made. The reference lists in their articles led to the discovery of additional, important literature. All articles were read and important aspects were marked in the texts. From reading it became obvious that several aspects concerning the struggles of the fulfilment of basic human needs were mentioned frequently among the authors. Consequently, four important topics namely: the working and shelter situation of rejected asylum seekers, the value of their social network and the support of organisations were extracted. Studies like Engbersen et al. (2002), Van der Leun (2014), Sigona (2012), Khosravi (2011) and others dealt with these specific topics. This narrow focus led to an extended literature search on the internet. Additional articles related to one or more of these four aspects could be found by adding these topics to the search terms. With the found literature the theoretical part of this thesis, structured according to these four aspects, could be written.

As already mentioned, during the internship a qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews was chosen. This was done because of three reasons. First of all, this method gave room to topics that the participant considered to be important. Therefore, more detailed information about the life situation of the participants could be gathered. Second, as mentioned earlier, the potential respondents had a rather sceptic attitude towards ‘outsiders’. By first spending several months at *Stichting Gast*, to build trust, and then giving extra room in an individual interview, this research tried to circumvent these sceptical attitudes. Finally, prior research frequently used this design, when examining rejected asylum seekers. Several authors such as Engbersen et al. (2002), Sigona (2011), Khosravi (2010) or Crawley,

Hemmings and Price (2011) used similar methods. By choosing a similar approach, the results can be more comparable.

Although this study uses a similar approach as previous literature, some distinct methodological differences can be noted. Crawley, Hemmings and Price for instance used Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER) methods. This method focuses on creating trust between researcher and participants before conducting an interview. A similar approach was used by Khosravi, who followed his participants for a longer period (Crawley, Hemmings and Price 2011, Khosravi 2010, 96-97). In this research, there was prior contact between the researcher and the participant, similar to the PEER method, but was for a shorter time period. Next, the data collection was limited to a single interview, in contrast to the studies of Khosravi and Crawley, Hemmings and Price. Another difference in the methodology of this study is the sample size where earlier studies contained a larger sample size, mostly 50 to 100 respondents, while this research draws on 15 interviews. This small sample size is due to the limited timeframe of this study, Van der Leun (2014, 32) for instance spent several years on her data collection which was not possible for this thesis.. The limited sample size needs to be taken into account while studying the results of this research.

### **3.3. Data collection**

After choosing a suitable methodological approach and writing the theoretical part of this thesis, the empirical data collection started in April 2017. Until July 2017, 15 semi-structured interviews with rejected asylum seekers living in Nijmegen at that time were held. Since, the participants were found through *Stichting Gast*, these respondents were more or less connected to this organisation. This created a bias in the sample. Therefore, the results of this study should be interpreted with this sampling bias in mind. With the advice of experienced volunteers who knew the clients of *Stichting Gast* quite well, potential participants were approached for the research during the weekly ‘café’ of the organisation. By the time, the interviews were held, the participants were already familiar with the researcher due to an internship. The informal setting of the weekly ‘café’ at *Stichting Gast* allowed the researcher to approach people individually, give a short explanation about the research and people were asked consent to participate. Not all present rejected asylum seekers could be asked to participate due to language barriers. This could potentially bias the sample of the research. Furthermore, only respondents who had at least one rejected asylum request in the Netherlands and stayed in Nijmegen at that time were eligible for this research. Finally, to

get more complete information, the aim was to get a balanced sample with regard of ethnicity and gender. From the 15 participants in this research, 12 were male while only 3 female respondents gave consent to participate. All respondents were between 20 and 50 years old and arrived in the Netherlands between 2002 and 2015. Respondents came from various countries as for instance Iraq, Armenia or Sudan. Further information about the background of the participants can be found in table 1.

After interviewing fifteen rejected asylum seekers the given answers gave a clear picture about the used coping strategies and how rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen fulfil their basic human needs. In addition, since new information or supplements were not given anymore the saturation point was reached. Consequently, the number of interviews was considered to be adequate.

The fieldwork appeared to be more difficult than expected because appointments with the participants were made verbally. That led to major negligence of the appointments from several respondents. Over time reminding phone calls were given to the participants to prevent non appearances. Still, many appointments needed to be rescheduled several times which caused an extension of the data collection period. During that time, a volunteer of the local organisation told that two participants did not show up because they did not trust the purpose of the interview. After approaching the two respondents individually and providing more information about the purpose and the setting of the interview, both interviews took place. Still, both participants were very closed up, refused a record of the conversation and one even did not want that notes were taken. Through the lack of notes, less information could be used in the research.

Each of the 15 interviews took on average one hour and was in most cases held in the meeting room of *Stichting Gast* where the respondent got recruited. This place was chosen because it was familiar to the participants and offered a quiet and neutral setting for the interview. In two cases the interview took place at the participant's current sleeping place. This was done when the participant was not able to come to the organisation. During the interviews a topic list was used to keep the focus on the important topics. General questions about the experiences of living without papers but especially questions about their working and living situation, their network and their contact with organisations were asked. These topics result from the theoretical part of this research. During the interview, when a participant felt the need to talk about an issue that was not listed on the topic list, room was given to talk about this topic.

Before the interview, the research was explained to every respondent, their anonymity was guaranteed and consent was asked to participate in the research. In addition consent was asked to record the interview. In six of fifteen cases the participants gave consent for recording the conversation. When consent was not given to record, notes were taken in a small notebook. Almost all participants feared the exposal of their identity which could cause consequences from the government. Therefore, promises about identity protection through changed names and not publishing personal information were made. Some general information about the participants can be found in table 1 below. Nonetheless, the majority or the respondents still refused to let the interview be recorded.

Table 1: Background of the participants:

Name <sup>1</sup> :	Gender	Age:	Country of origin:	In the Netherlands since:
Feras	Male	41	Iraq	2003
Simon	Male	44	Armenia	2007
Arian	Male	29	Albania	2015
Omar	Male	50	Sudan	2002
Farouk	Male	22	Afghanistan	2015
Saalim	Male	48	Somalia	2007
Tariq	Male	34	Sudan	2014
Gayane	Female	50	Armenia	2009
Naser	Male	26	Iran	2015
Ismael	Male	31	Guinea	2002
Amir	Male	20	Iraq	2015
Suleiman	Male	48	Iraq	2008
Carmen	Female	43	Dominican republic	2007
Danial	Male	29	Iran	2011
Almaz	Female	28	Ethiopia	2011

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<sup>1</sup> Names were changed because of confidentiality reasons

### **3.4. Data analysis**

The recorded interviews were transcribed right after the interview was held. In case of refusal to record, a summary was made of the content and remarkable aspects of the interviews. Here, it needed to be mentioned that the summary is an interpretation of the interviews content as the researcher understood it. Also, striking quotes and short information about the setting that were written down in a note book during the interview were added to the summary. In this summary, the content of the interview was structured according to the mentioned coping strategies. The purpose of making a summary of every non recorded interview was to understand the essence of what the respondents told. Therefore, more focus was given to the content and the narrative than to the concrete formulations of the given answers.

In this research it was the absolute priority to respect the privacy and the identity of the participants because this was in the interest of the respondents. This is done by changing their names within the paper and only referring to their nationality and age in the transcripts and the notes. Also, the interview data remained strictly confidential. This meant that no transcripts and personal information could be published. All answers were structured in Microsoft Word according to the questions. Through developing a table where all the given answers could be collected and structured, a clear overview could be facilitated with the important aspects of the interviews. This table made it also possible to compare similar answers and to see how many people gave rather similar answers. During the analysis the transcripts were read and coded in Microsoft Word. These codes were used to compare answers of different respondents more easily. In addition of using the codes and the summaries, schemas, tables and rankings for the visualisation of the data were made by hand. The schemas made it possible to explore the relationships between the coping strategies. The previous mentioned data analysis was used to answer the research question.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Work opportunities**

Finding work, finding shelter, support of the social network and institutional actors were considered to be the most common coping strategies for rejected asylum seekers in the literature. But which strategies are actually used by rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen and how do rejected asylum seekers experience these strategies? In the following the most striking interview findings will be presented. Afterwards, several observed interactions between the strategies will be pointed out.

The first coping strategy experienced by the participants of this research was finding a job. Lacking money to take care of the own basic human needs was described as extremely difficult by different participants. In addition, many rejected asylum seekers considered this situation of having no income as a major source of stress in their lives. Asking people about why they did not have enough money, all participants showed reactions of surprise and confusion. Several people argued that they were not allowed to work without papers and that their status as a rejected asylum seeker made it impossible to get a job. These reactions and the given answers showed that working in the formal economy is not possible for rejected asylum seekers (Engbersen et al. 2002, 102). During the interviews only one participant who entered the Netherlands fifteen years ago had experience with working on the formal labour market in the past. Feras got a job at a gardening company where he worked for many years. His friendship with the owner of the company and false papers made this work possible. A couple of years ago he stopped working because of personal reasons and since then, he did not manage to work anymore. This example showed that the working situation for rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands changed over the years. Even if some people managed working on the formal labour market in the past, most people do not get access to the formal economy these days.

Even though the participants were not able to work on the formal labour market, many were still trying to find a job. The literature proposed that many rejected asylum seekers try to cope with the expulsion from the formal labour market through searching work in the informal economy (Datta et al. 2007, 406-407). The interviews confirmed that most participants tried to get a job exactly in this part of the economy. However, the jobs that the participants found in the informal economy were mostly temporary. Only three respondents had more or less long standing jobs. The first respondent who worked regularly in the informal economy was Arian. He did construction works and managed to build a group of

clients over the years. He told how he started working: *“I started here only 20 euros for one day, eight hours ten hours no problem, only twenty euro. For me it was difficult to take power. Slowly then I say I will see you later. I say to the guy where I was painting I told him. It does not mean that it was bad work, because I have learned to do these things. Why do you pay me only twenty euros? And I said that I will not do that anymore.”* (Interview 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2017). As mentioned, he started working long working hours with low payment but over time he could afford to ask for more or reject certain clients. He felt proud about his working situation and that he managed to take care of his own and his friends financially: *“nobody helps me but I think you have to help yourself. I can help them and give them food and money and job if I can”* (Interview 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2017). The story of Arian stood out because he was the only respondent who managed to have a more or less regular income. The income was not stable enough to pay for an apartment but he could take care of his own food and clothing. Therefore, he successfully coped with the problem of prohibition to work and managed to earn money to cover most of his basic human needs. The other two respondents who worked on a regular basis were Danial who took paper rounds and Gayane who was cleaning houses. Even though both found a job in the informal economy, both respondents did not earn enough to cover their basic human needs. Therefore, both relied on other sources of financial support.

Even, if the majority of the participants did not work regularly, most of them had temporary jobs or worked occasionally. The sectors where the respondents found these temporary jobs were the cleaning, gastronomic or construction-work sector. Gardening and paper rounds were other possibilities to earn some money. Previous literature supports that these are the main sectors of informal labour used by the respondents (Sigona 2012, 56). In addition, most participants found occasional work in the domestic sphere and through their own network. For instance, doing construction work or gardening at a friend’s house was an often mentioned working experience. Another opportunity to get a job as a rejected asylum seeker is through the support of institutional actors. Several respondents experienced that they could earn some money while working for an organisation. In addition employees from different organisations could give advice where the rejected asylum seekers could find work.

Even when all respondents without exception underlined that they would like to work, several reasons for (temporary) unemployment could be identified. Here, a difference can be made between personal and structural reasons. The first structural problem is that the controls by the state increased throughout the last years (Van der Leun 2003, 38). Consequently, getting and keeping a job became more difficult for rejected asylum seekers. For instance, Danial told that he used to work on the local market, but during the last years the police

controlled the licence of the sellers which made him give up that job. Fear of detention and deportation motivated this choice. Also, it explains why many participants work in the private sphere because the chances for controls are smaller in the domestic environment. The other structural reason for (temporary) unemployment is the major difference in the demand for labour between different regions in the Netherlands (Jennissen 2011, 311). The respondents confirmed this aspect in the interviews arguing that they observed labour differences between the bigger cities as Amsterdam and Rotterdam on the one hand and smaller cities like Nijmegen on the other hand. The chance of getting a job in Nijmegen is much smaller the participants argued. From these answers it can be argued that finding a job in the informal economy in a smaller Dutch city is a major challenge to those living without papers.

One personal reason for (temporary) unemployment among the participants was that several respondents pointed out that they did not have the energy to work because of their situation as an irregular migrant. Living without papers could have influence on their physical and mental health and many participants pointed out to be treated for these medical or psychological issues. Worries and stress about their future and the threat of deportation were seen by the participants as the main reasons for their problems. These circumstances made it impossible for several respondents to work. The other personal reason mentioned by the rejected asylum seekers was the focus on their asylum procedure. Here, many participants saw getting papers as their highest priority. This was especially the case with respondents who got financial support from the gift economy. It showed that the lack of alternative financial sources or the gift economy pushes irregular migrants in the informal economy to cover their basic human needs. One example that showed the personal reasons for unemployment was Feras case. He worked fulltime in the past in the formal economy, but his situation as an irregular migrants caused mental and physical problems and he needed to stop. Furthermore, he started a new asylum procedure where he wanted to focus on. This example showed that more than one reason can be responsible for (temporary) unemployment of rejected asylum seekers. In addition, a relationship between the gift economy and unemployment can be identified. On the one hand, unemployment made rejected asylum seekers dependent on other financial sources as the support of institutional actors or their own social network. On the other hand support from the gift economy can limit the necessity to work because the basic human needs are covered. Here, a double sided relationship between the finding work and the gift economy can be identified.

To sum up, a major source of stress while living without papers is the lack of a working permit. Work provides people with money which can be used to pay for the basic

necessities. In the last years the participants observed that they got excluded from the formal economy. The necessity of earning money makes rejected asylum seekers dependent on the gift economy or pushes them into the informal economy where most participants take temporary jobs. These jobs can be predominantly found in the domestic sphere where work can take place beyond the control of the state. Still, covering the own basic human needs is a major challenge because in addition to the prohibition to work, several structural and personal problems can cause (temporary) unemployment. On the one hand it can be argued that finding a job is a coping strategy that is experienced by the participant. Work made it possible to fulfil their basic human needs. Here, it is important to note that finding a job cannot be limited to the formal labour market anymore, but the informal economy takes an important stand as well. On the other hand finding a job is often the outcome of other coping strategies as it is found through the support of the own social network or institutional actors. Therefore, one could argue that finding a job is not only a coping strategy but also a basic human need that can be achieved through other coping strategies.

#### **4.2. Shelter**

The second coping strategy underlined in the literature was finding shelter. The most striking result from the interviews concerning this topic was that none of the interviewed respondents managed to rent his/her own place at the time of the interview. Furthermore, all participants pointed out that they were not able to rent a place of their own since they arrived in the Netherlands. That could be related to the fact that no respondent managed to earn enough money to be financially independent. Consequently, it was impossible for all interviewed rejected asylum seekers to get access to the formal and even the informal housing market in Nijmegen, because they could not afford the rent. This conclusion supports previous findings of Van der Leun (2003, 118), who argued that irregular migrants are excluded from the housing market.

To cope with the problem of homelessness, the participants needed to rely on other shelter opportunities. Mostly these shelter opportunities were connected to the own social network or institutional actors which showed a high level of interaction between these coping strategies. Consequently, more information about the shelter opportunities will be given in the following paragraph when several interactions between the strategies will be discussed. Still, it has to be noted at this point that getting and especially paying for shelter independently is an impossible task for rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. Moreover, shelter was mentioned

to be a basic human need in the definition by Streeten et al (1981, 25). In addition, this research has shown that shelter is in all cases found through the support of the own social network or institutional actors. Consequently, shelter is the outcome of other coping strategies. Therefore, the assumption could be made that shelter is more a basic human need than a coping strategy.

### **4.3. Social network**

The following coping strategy that was experienced by the participants was the support given by their own social network. The interviews have shown that the social network of all participants differed in range and constellation. Therefore, also the range and the sort of the instrumental support given by the network differed between the respondents.

Previous literature proposed four groups of people that are mainly part of the social network of rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands. The interviews showed that three of these four groups were actually part of the participants' networks. The literature proposed the family to be an important group of people that was part of the network of a rejected asylum seeker. In this research the family could not be seen as an important part of the network of rejected asylum seekers. The reason therefore was that only a few respondents had extended family in the Netherlands. Even though people had family in the Netherlands they did not rely on their support because they did not want to be a burden to them.

The first group of people with whom the participants interacted were 'locals' or in other words Dutch citizens that live in the Netherlands for many years. The participants who had contact with Dutch citizens met each other already when the rejected asylum seeker stayed at the AZC or through contact with the civil society. Mostly, these Dutch citizens worked at these NGOs or faith based organisations as volunteers. Only some of the younger participants, like Farouk or Arian, met Dutch people at parties. Mainly, Dutch citizens supported the participants by helping them to fulfil their basic human needs as providing shelter, food or money. In addition, instrumental support that was not directly connected to basic human needs was given as for instance helping with translations or introducing the migrants with Dutch customs and the society. Even though that several participants relied on instrumental support of Dutch friends, not every respondent had contact with 'locals'. Amir pointed out that he had no Dutch friends because he did not go to places where he could meet Dutch people.

Another group of people that provided instrumental support to some participants were their ethnic communities. This group played only an important role for some respondents. However, the interviews supported previous literature that stated that not every migration country had an extended ethnic community in the Netherlands (Engbersen et al. 2002, 113). Some participants underlined this aspect as for instance Carmen from the Dominican Republic who could not rely on a settled ethnic community in the Netherlands. Next to the precondition of having an ethnic community, another aspect appeared to be important for the engagement of rejected asylum seekers with their ethnic community. The personal affinity of the participant to engage with his/her fellow countrymen played an important role. Omar for instance had well established connections with his ethnic community in Nijmegen. He pointed out that his fellow countrymen provided instrumental support as he was eating with them several times per week. In addition, expressive support was given to him by his ethnic community. Meeting people, sharing the same cultural background and speaking the same language were extremely important for him. Another respondent who connected with his ethnic community was Suleiman. Especially instrumental support was given to him because he was not able to work based on his medical condition and he got shelter at the house of a fellow countryman. Remarkable is that Feras, who was from the same country, avoided any contact with his fellow countryman because he had bad experiences with other Iraqis in the past. Therefore, he decided not to connect with his ethnic community. Instead he chose to connect to Dutch citizens that could support him to fulfil his basic human needs. The different contacts of Feras and Suleiman with their ethnic community showed that the social network and the affinity to engage with certain people differed individually.

Finally, the third group of people that gave instrumental support to the participants were (former) asylum seekers. These migrants did not have necessarily the same nationality as the participants but were often willing to help. In many cases the contacts were built when the rejected asylum seeker and the (former) asylum seeker stayed together in the same AZC. Even after the rejected asylum seeker had to leave the AZC and moved to another city they stayed in touch with their former friends from the AZC. It seemed from the interviews that the loyalty and connection among (former) refugees is generally strong and therefore the AZC could be identified as an important meeting place. The kind of support given by (former) asylum seekers was diverse. Both expressive support and instrumental support as money or working opportunities were provided to the irregular migrants.

The AZC is not the only place for rejected asylum seekers to build their social network. Other possible meeting places were organisations that are predominantly part of the

civil society. These NGOs or faith based organisations often functioned as social meeting places and made it possible for the respondents to develop friendships with other rejected asylum seekers or volunteers. In addition, another meeting place that was often mentioned by the participants was the city centre. Feras for instance pointed out that he approached people on the street and started friendly conversations. He explained that an open attitude was usually enough to get in contact with people. Feras example is only one of many similar stories. In conclusion, most respondents pointed out that they can make contact easily and they have a diverse network.

This research focusses especially on the instrumental support that is used to fulfil a person's basic human needs. Still, many participants shared stories that showed that they got expressive support from their social network. This expressive support (and the personal relationship in general) had positive and negative influence on the participants. The positive impact was that the expressive support given by the social network improved the emotional state of the rejected asylum seeker and created a personal bond between the individuals. Consequently, the participants dared to ask for instrumental support quite easily since they felt comfortable approaching their friends. In addition, many respondents felt that their friends were easy to trust. However, many participants started to feel uncomfortable while relying on their friends, especially when the instrumental support concerned shelter or money. Tensioned occurred between the individuals because the respondents were dependent on the instrumental support and could not give anything back. Many felt as a burden to their friends and wanted to get instrumental support from another less personal source. Therefore, many people turned to the civil society as it will be explained in the following.

#### **4.4. Institutional actors**

The final coping strategy addressed in the interviews was the support from institutional actors. Nijmegen was not selected as a municipality with a shelter for rejected asylum seekers in 2015. Therefore, the Dutch government did not facilitate an official shelter that could support rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. However, the city decided to support irregular migrants anyways. Consequently, different organisations that are partly funded by the municipality are located in Nijmegen. The participants named three organisations which had the main goal of assisting rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. In addition they referred to support given by different faith based organisations. Even though, two of the three organisations received some

subsidies from the municipality of Nijmegen, they are seen as non-state actors in this research because they all act against the will of the national government.

The first organisation that several men referred to was the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter. This shelter offered 17 people the opportunity to stay for the night. Naser pointed out that the residents arrive every evening at the shelter where they get dinner. At 10 o' clock every morning, all people needed to leave and the shelter is closed for the day. All rejected asylum seekers had to spend their days somewhere else which Naser found rather difficult because he did not always have a place where he could go. From the interviews it became clear that four male respondents were currently getting instrumental support from this shelter and one respondent underlined that he got their support in the past.

The second organisation that was mentioned is called *Stichting Gast*. Respondents got in touch with this organisation mostly because they had to leave an AZC close to Nijmegen and volunteers recommended them to visit the organisation. Some participants also heard about it through friends or other rejected asylum seekers that were already clients at the organisation. Danial for instance brought Naser to the organisation when he heard that his asylum request was rejected. *Stichting Gast* is offering legal, medical and social support to rejected asylum seekers. In addition, they offer money and several rooms to their clients. The space and the capacities of this NGO are however limited, especially concerning shelter. Several respondents underlined this aspect while saying that they could not get shelter or support immediately but they needed to wait for it. The limited capacity of non-state actors was also one difficulty pointed out in the literature (Ambrosini and Van der Leun 2015, 108). The limited financial capacities of *Stichting Gast* led to a variety of support that was given to the respondents. Almaz for instance lived in a room rented by the organisation and received a certain amount of money every week. At the time of the interviews in total six participants got shelter and financial support from *Stichting Gast*. Other respondents received different kinds of support from the same organisation. Simon and his family for instance used the organisation as a post address and to declare costs for medications. In addition, *Stichting Gast* functioned as a social meeting place. Especially the residents of the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter came to *Stichting Gast* every Wednesday morning after leaving the shelter for the day. At *Stichting Gast* they could meet other rejected asylum seekers and volunteers and had a place to spend the day.

Carmen received instrumental support from the third organisation in Nijmegen which is the women shelter. Carmen lost her residence permit a couple of years ago and her asylum request was rejected. She did not know how to fulfil her basic human needs and seeked

support from her former supervisor from the municipality. The supervisor reached out to the women shelter where Carmen got accepted. At the organisation she was able to earn a little money, had a place to sleep and learned how to sew. This skill should help her to increase her chances of finding jobs. She appreciated a special organisation in Nijmegen that gave supported to female rejected asylum seekers. Carmen was the only participant that got assistance from this organisation.

Next to these three organisations, several respondents named different faith based organisations are additional sources of support. Saalim for instance went to the mosque regularly and Tariq was member of the Pentecostal church and was very much involved with the parish. Here, especially expressive support was given to its members: *“And the church allowed me to be with the ‘gemeente’ (parish). They helped me with the baptize, they pray for me and how I build my faith.” (Interview 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2017).* More importantly for this research, instrumental support was given by these faith based organisations. Tariq and Saalim both pointed out that they took part in some activities that were offered by the church or the mosque. Here, they could get food and extend their social network. In addition, the *Diaconie* which is part of the protestant church in Nijmegen is connected to the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter and supported their residents with a small amount of money every week.

All respondents were involved with one or several organisations. However, the range and kind of support depended on the individuals and the specific organisation where people asked for support. Even though, every organisation offered expressive support, the focus of the participants taking about the given assistance, laid on the instrumental support. Here, a major difference with the social network can be noted where the expressive support played a larger role. In most cases the instrumental support given by the organisations was connected to shelter or money and was crucial to the participants to fulfil their basic human needs. All respondents experienced an improvement of their’ life situation through engaging with an organisation. In conclusion, it can be argued that the support of institutional actors was an important coping strategy of the participants to cover their basic human needs.

#### 4.5. Interaction

As pointed out in the theoretical section, it is almost impossible to see these four coping strategies as static entities. All of them are intertwined and connected. In the interviews, some interactions specifically came to light. The first interaction that should be noted is between social network and work opportunities. Through their own social network many rejected asylum seekers managed to find temporary or occasional jobs. Tariq, for instance, cleaned tables at a restaurant once a month. This job was given to him by a Dutch woman who he met at the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter. On the question how he got that job he answered: “*by a ‘vrijwillig’ (volunteer) woman, she came by the shelter and picked me up. She is really kind, I know her husband and family [...] she comes to the shelter sometimes to bring food to the guys and talk to them and help them. She is really friendly person*” (Interview 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2017). The story of Tariq is only an example, several other respondents experienced similar situations where friends or acquaintances helped them to earn some money. These people were in many cases Dutch citizens or former refugees.

The second interaction that can be recognized from the interviews is between social network and shelter. Shelter was found in different ways: Naser for instance, managed to continue living ‘illegally’ at the AZC after his rejection and Gayane even got her own house through her social network that paid the rent for her. In this research three respondents in total lived directly with friends during the time of the interviews. A study about rejected asylum seekers in Utrecht showed a trend that more irregular migrants live with friends and family in the Netherlands (Kox 2009, 71). This conclusion cannot be completely confirmed from the interviews because no respondent lived with his or her family. The participants pointed out two main reasons for why they did not live with their family. First, most respondents did not have any family in the Netherlands, with whom they could live. This can be related to the outcome of Van der Leun and Kloosterman who argued that the migration countries changed over the years. Therefore, not everybody could rely on a settled family structure in the Netherlands (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006, 67). Second, the few participants who had extended family in the Netherlands decided not to live with them because they did not want to be dependent on them. Amir for instance came to the Netherlands because he had a cousin living here. When he arrived, his cousin picked him up and took him in but after a short time Amir felt uncomfortable to be with him and left his place. *‘It is not my mentality. I don’t want to ask him for money and be dependent on him. After three days I left to get my procedure*

*started.*<sup>2</sup> (Interview 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2017). In addition, this quote underlines the earlier made argument that personal relationships can have influence on accepting instrumental support.

Next, Kox (2009, 71) argued that many people live with friends. In this research three of the respondents lived with friends at the moment of the interview and six respondents lived with acquaintances in the past. Therefore, the social network is an important shelter opportunity for rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. Two of the three participants living with friends at the moment, lived with Dutch friends. In both cases they got to know their hosts during their asylum procedure. Simon and his family for instance lived with a befriended family. After leaving the family shelter from the government and without anywhere to go, Simon contacted this family and they took him and his family in. Some respondents stayed temporary such as Farouk, who lived with his Dutch girlfriend for three months, while others lived at a friend's place for a long time. Agreements about the time of their stay were made verbally between the rejected asylum seeker and their host which gave the participants an increased feeling of insecurity. For example, Farouk was extremely anxious that his host family would change their mind about his stay: "*you can't think about some person you know and you can't say in future what is going to happen in future. Just one person thinks about tomorrow the mind of these two persons will change and what can I do?*" (Interview 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2017). Suleiman was the only respondent who relied on this ethnic community and lived with a fellow countryman. Consequently, the ethnic community did not play a striking role in giving shelter opportunities in this research. However, the interaction between shelter and the social network in general turned out to be a very important connection, because for many participants living with acquaintances was the only option to prevent homelessness.

Another interaction could be observed between the support institutional actors and work opportunities. Especially, Carmen earned money through a project that was connected to the women shelter where she was staying. *Zij aan zij* is a project where the women get jobs like cleaning or housekeeping to make an income for themselves she told. In addition, one respondent, who slept in the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter, pointed out that he got the chance to work as a concierge at the shelter as paid labour. Even when the job was challenging because of the nightshifts he appreciated the chance of having a small income and the insurance of a bed. Moreover, work opportunities were given to respondents by volunteers from *Stichting Gast* or the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter. These volunteers mostly asked for help with gardening or construction work at their own or a friend's place.

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<sup>2</sup> Quote translated by the researcher

Another relationship that was pointed out by the respondents is the connection between institutional actors and shelter. Every organisation offered different shelter opportunities. For example, *Stichting Gast* provided separate rooms to its clients, while the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter had a shared dorm room for all residents. These accommodation possibilities led to several reactions from the respondents. Many residents from the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter such as Naser and Amir, argued that they were really thankful for having a place to sleep and underlined that they did not want to be critical about it. Still, the concept of having one dorm room for all residents was not seen to be ideal by all of its resident. Arian summarized the often mentioned feelings about their dorm room quite well: “*the Bed Bad and Brood, yea, you now for me, no problem, when I sleep with them, but the problem is that it is open, no room for yourself, with everything!*” Arian and other participants expressed that they missed privacy in the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter. This sentiment of non-existing privacy was shared with several other residents from the shelter. Another problem with the institutional actors was that people with different cultural backgrounds lived together which caused problems from time to time. Still, the participants expressed thankfulness for having a place to sleep. Many participants fulfilled their basic human need of having a place to sleep by turning to different institutional actors.

The lack of privacy in the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter and that its residents need to spend the days outside motivated several respondents to ask for a private room at *Stichting Gast*. One example is Tariq who got a bed at the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter after living on the streets for several months. First, he was happy for sleeping in a bed but after a while he asked for a room at *Stichting Gast*. The aspect of more privacy and freedom were reasons that he tried to find another shelter opportunity. When a room became available he was able to move. All respondents expressed happiness for having a sleeping place and the importance of all organisations supporting rejected asylum seekers was underlined several times. However, the residents of the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter did not see the shelter as a permanent solution. Every interviewed man wished to have his own space and therefore looked for a different shelter opportunity. Still, they preferred living in an organisation than living with friends because from their point of view the shelter gave them a more reliable sleeping place with less personal involvement. This can be seen as a crucial conclusion in this research.

One shelter alternative to the *Bed, Bad en Brood* shelter was *Stichting Gast*. In total six respondents (five men and one woman) lived in a room of organisation during the times of the interviews. All of these respondents expressed happiness about having their own space even if the situation was not considered to be ideal either. Outspoken advantages were privacy

and freedom. Still, living with housemates from different cultures and the need of making appointments about the common rooms were considered to be difficult for some participants. Therefore, almost all respondents wished to have their own house. How an own house increased the person's well-being became visible with Gayane. Before the interview which took place at her new house she proudly gave a tour through the house and underlined several times how happy she was living at her new place. This shelter opportunity was made possible through the network she built during her time at *Stichting Gast*.

Most respondents got shelter via an organisation in Nijmegen. That is however connected to the sampling method of this research because contact was made with the respondents through *Stichting Gast*. Still, it shows that shelter opportunities from organisations are actively used and needed by rejected asylum seekers. Through the contacts within and between the organisations many participants moved to a more comfortable sleeping place if it became available. Even though, the respondents expressed happiness and thankfulness for shelter, all showed aspirations for more private sleeping places.

The final connection that could be observed in this research was the interaction of institutional actors and the social network. This relationship is two sided. On the one hand contact and engagement with an organisation could help rejected asylum seekers to expand their network. That can lead to more work or shelter opportunities that help to improve the living situation. In other words, the interaction with an organisation gave many participants the chance to expand their network beyond their contacts from the AZC. They came in contact with other rejected asylum seekers and fellow countryman who got support from the same organisation. Omar for instance said that he was looking forward to every Wednesday when he met volunteers and other clients of *Stichting Gast* at the weekly café. There, he enjoyed the conversations and he felt like having 'a big family' with the all people coming to the café. Furthermore, volunteers can give practical support to fulfil the basic human needs of the participants through their expertise and their experience in this work field. For instance when Omar needed surgery he got in contact with a doctor who was a volunteer at *Stichting Gast* and who helped him with his condition.

On the other hand the own social network can help rejected asylum seekers to get in touch with institutional actors. In this research several participants argued that their friends and acquaintances often wanted to help them to get in touch with organisations. Therefore they accompanied and supervised the participants in their contact with different institutional actors. Many respondents pointed out that they did not know about any organisation until they heard about it through their social network.

To conclude, fifteen interviews were held with rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. It could be noted that rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen are excluded from the formal economy and the housing market since no respondent worked in the formal economy or was able to rent his/her own place. Work opportunities and shelter were mainly found through the own social network or institutional actors. Consequently, especially support from the own social network and institutional actors can be seen as important coping strategies that help to fulfil the basic human needs of rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the question of what coping strategies rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen use to fulfil their basic human needs. In 2015 the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement was implemented. Through this change of policy, an asylum seeker who becomes rejected keeps his/her basic legal, medical and human rights, but loses important social security given by the state, such as provision of shelter or opportunity to work. Consequently, rejected asylum seekers faced the problem of how they should cover their basic human needs as food or clothing. This research question is examined in the context of the municipality of Nijmegen. Nijmegen is a municipality in a special situation. On the one hand Nijmegen is one of the bigger municipalities in the Netherlands that has several AZCs within its regional borders. Therefore, many rejected asylum seekers are living in the area. On the other hand the Dutch government did not allow the municipality to provide shelter to rejected asylum seekers. Nijmegen resisted to this national policy and still supported rejected asylum seekers in a limited range. This specific situation made Nijmegen an interesting place for studying the coping strategies of rejected asylum seekers.

According to prior literature four coping strategies could be distinguished. Work opportunities, finding shelter, the support of the own social network and relying on the support of institutional actors are the most frequently mentioned coping strategies that could help rejected asylum seekers to fulfil their basic human needs (Snel and Staring 2001; Van der Leun 2003, 2012; Engbersen et al. 2002). Building upon this literature, this study comes with two major revisions. First, previous literature assumes that these coping strategies are more or less static entities which do not interact with each other. This study argues that this is not the case and that these coping strategies are highly intertwined. Second, it can be questioned whether shelter and work opportunities are coping strategies or whether they are basic human needs themselves.

Fifteen interviews with rejected asylum seekers living in Nijmegen were held. The participants were asked about how they deal with the daily problems of covering their basic human needs while living without papers. The questions focused predominantly on their former/actual sleeping places, their working situation, their social network and the support from institutional actors.

The findings pointed out that rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen fulfil their basic human needs by mainly using two of the four coping strategies, namely the support of their social network and institutional actors. The kind of instrumental support that is given by the

social network or the institutional actors could differ drastically depending on the type of organisation or characteristics of the social network. Moreover, the social network and institutional actors can be seen as more classical coping strategies that could provide shelter and work (Snel and Staring 2001, Engbersen et al. 2002). In addition, shelter and work seem to be more the goal itself than active strategies to fulfil the basic human needs of the rejected asylum seekers. This is a contradiction to previous literature that classified them as coping strategies (e.g. Snel and Staring 2001, Engbersen et al 2002, 98-100). Furthermore, it turned out that the interaction between the social network and shelter can become problematic. Many rejected asylum seekers experience feelings of dependence, fear or guilt while living with somebody from their social network. They feel as a burden to their host and live in constant fear that the host will change his mind about giving them a place to sleep. This feeling of burden and fear feels stronger when using own personal contact in comparison to more formal organisations. Therefore, many rejected asylum seekers first try to get their basic human needs fulfilled with the help of organisations nearby, before asking friends or family.

When considering getting shelter, rejected asylum seekers can use their social network as a coping strategy, but this was seen as a measure of last resort. Rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen try to get in touch with organisations and only if they cannot get a place, they seek help from their friends. This might indicate that although this study focussed on instrumental support, the provision of expressive support is crucial as well. This is in line with previous academic literature as for instance Whittaker et al. (2005, 182-184). This might be so important for rejected asylum seekers that they restrain themselves in asking instrumental support from their social network.

This research provides useful insight in what coping strategies rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen use to fulfil their basic human needs. It showed that it is necessary to take a closer look if all coping strategies are indeed real coping strategies or that they are actually basic human needs. In addition, how coping strategies relate to each other should be examined more carefully. Furthermore, the empirical findings showed that basic human needs can in most cases only be fulfilled with the existence of a social network and/or with the assistance of institutional actors. Their support is crucial to the survival of rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen. The support of rejected asylum seekers could even be improved when institutional actors facilitate more opportunities for rejected asylum seekers to expand the social network of rejected asylum seekers, as the interviews suggest. By doing so, organisations could relieve the pressure of organisations with limited capacity. Furthermore, it could lead to less pressure

on the network of rejected asylum seekers, since they could turn to more and to different people for help.

This study was conducted when the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement of 2015 was still in place. In 2018, the government decided to adapt these arrangements, although it is unclear how exactly. The findings of this study suggest that more attention and care should be given to rejected asylum seekers. The problems are severe and rather stable. To reach a minimum decent living for rejected asylum seekers, the government should consider drastic changes, since rejected asylum seekers have to many issues to face. Furthermore, one of the major findings in this study is the importance of non-state actors, who help rejected asylum seekers to attain basic human needs.

## 6. Limitations

In this research about how rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands fulfil their own basic human needs while living without papers, several limitations should be addressed. First, this study based its findings on a relatively small sample of fifteen interviews. This limited number of participants could influence the results, since it could be possible that information did not come forward. In other words, it might be possible that the saturation point was not reached. In future research the sample could be extended to examine this possible bias.

Second, the sampling method could have led to a biased group of participants. Since in this study contact with respondents was made through a single local organisation, rejected asylum seekers connected to this specific organisation could be reached. Rejected asylum seekers who did not get support of an organisation or who were not informed about the existence of organisations in Nijmegen were not interviewed. Furthermore, due to selection criteria of the organisations the diversity of the sample could be limited. Because of these selection criteria it could be the case that the findings could be less diverse than in a more randomized sample. Furthermore, the importance of institutional actors might be overstressed. For future research one could consider to use a different sampling method for getting a more diverse research population. In addition, people who did not speak Dutch, English or German were not asked for this research, since translators were not always available. However, for a following up research, hiring a translator could be considered to expand the research population.

Third, the research sample could be a possible limitation. In total 15 interviews with men and women were held. Unfortunately, only three women gave consent to participate in the research. Therefore, women were underrepresented in this research. In future research, more direct contact with women shelters could be laid to increase the amount of female participants. With a more balanced number of male and female participants, it would be interesting to study if there are differences in the used coping strategies between men and women.

Another possible limitation of this study could be the used research method. For this research semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held with every individual. Although this used research method gives very detailed directed information, the one directed setting of this method does not invite respondents to be open and relaxed. Especially because several participants had bad experiences with interviews in the past, they might have been less forthcoming in the interview. To resolve this issue one could consider including other qualitative research methods. Focus groups for instance would give a more informal character

since the discussion would be with other participants, creating a more egalitarian conversation. Another interesting method could be participant observation. Accompanying rejected asylum seekers in their daily life could give a more in-depth look in how they use coping strategies in their daily life.

Although the researcher aimed to be as objective as possible, the personal background could have influenced any interpretation in this thesis. The background as a politically left orientated student with a strongly pro-asylum opinion could influence both the follow-up questions in the interviews and the interpretation of the answers given by the participants. During the data collection the stories and situations of the informants had a personal impact. Stepping back and taking a neutral view to write a good thesis was a personal challenge. Furthermore, six months of internship at the same organisation that functioned as a starting point for this research had gone before the data collection. In this time much information was gained about the participants. Although this method created trust with the participants, it also made it more difficult to have a completely neutral way of looking at the participants.

Finally, the strict privacy and anonymity rules connected to the protection of the participants can be considered another limitation to this research. In most cases the participants refused the record of the interview. Even when the content of the interview was worked out right after the interview was held, it led to a less concrete representation of the given answers. It was not possible to analyse the specific way how people talked and formulated sentences. Furthermore, this made an objective representation of the interviews without a personal bias harder. In addition, certain information could not be used because it would expose the participants' identity too clearly. In the future, even more trust could be built through informal talks before the interview and a better explanation about the use of the record could be given to increase the chance to record the interview.

## 7. Recommendations

This research showed that rejected asylum seekers fulfil their basic human needs especially through using the support of their social network and institutional actors. With this conclusion in mind several recommendations to the Dutch state, Dutch municipalities, organisations that support rejected asylum seekers, other scholars and rejected asylum seekers themselves are given in this paragraph to improve the situation of rejected asylum seekers.

As shown before the position of rejected asylum seekers within the Dutch society is rather difficult also because the Dutch state implemented several policies to reduce the numbers of irregular migrants in the last decades. Their policies have been successful in the way that rejected asylum seekers are completely excluded from the official labour and housing market. However in 2017 many irregular migrants still live in the Netherlands and the Dutch state acts as they do not exist by preventing access to most basic provisions. The latest migration policy changes led to a worsening of the life situation of rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Especially the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement had a major impact in the life of these people. Based on this research it is recommended that the Dutch state reconsiders the *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement because it complicates the fulfilment of basic human needs for rejected asylum seekers and therefore threatens the survival of many human beings.

To counteract this agreement several municipalities allow shelters and non-state actors to help rejected asylum seekers to cope with their life without papers and with the fulfilment of their basic human needs. However, the capacities of those shelters and organisations are often limited. As a consequence many people do not receive help if they need it. They need to sleep on the streets and struggle to cover their basic human needs. These situations have negative impacts on a persons' well-being. That the capacity of many organisations is limited can be connected to their financial situation. Often these organisations want to be independent or get only little subsidies from the state or the municipality. The occurring financial problems limit the organisations' opportunities to help those in need. These financial policies from organisations on the one hand and municipalities on the other hand should be both reconsidered because that people are not able to get a proper meal or a place to sleep can be considered a violation of humanitarian rights.

Another recommendation to organisations that support rejected asylum seekers is connected to the kind of support they give. Currently, the focus is especially on emergency help as giving shelter or food. From this research, building a network where people can rely on appeared to be an important strategy to fulfil the personal basic human needs. As many rejected asylum seekers were in contact with one or several organisations, the focus of these

organisations could be extended to not only fulfil their needs but also helping rejected asylum seekers to build a stronger network. Laying contacts with potential employers, Dutch citizens that can help with daily problems or fellow countrymen who shared a similar experience in the past could be considered to take a more important stand in the agenda of certain organisations.

The assistance of organisations and municipalities can only work when the rejected asylum seeker is willing to work on his/her own future. Willingness to work on more independence from organisations is an important aspect that is recommended to rejected asylum seekers. Assistance should be a temporary state; therefore it is important that rejected asylum seekers work actively on new asylum procedures or their return. In addition, personal engagement in learning new skills that could increase the chances for earning own money is necessary. Living on the costs and the support of an organisation for a lifetime should not be the goal.

Finally, the literature showed that many scholars focus on the situation of rejected asylum seekers in bigger Dutch cities (Van der Leun 2003; Kox 2009). However, rejected asylum seekers live in almost every municipality in the country and their situation is often overlooked. Smaller municipalities often do not have organisations that can help these people which make their situation more complicated. It is therefore important to compare the situations of rejected asylum seekers in different parts of the country to see the differences. This could lead to more insight in the situation of rejected asylum seekers and a better assistance. Especially in the future when the new adapted *Bed, Bad en Brood* agreement will be implemented which limits the number of shelters to eight (which will probably be in the bigger municipalities), it is important to keep track with the rejected asylum seekers who are living in municipalities without a shelter. Not only a broader scope in terms of municipalities, but also in terms of basic human needs, could be useful for further research. One important aspect is the access to medical care. Health and staying healthy could be considered another basic human need. Even if rejected asylum seekers do have access to medical care in theory, the literature mentioned that it is not always possible for them to get an adjusted treatment (Stichting LOS 2017; Van der Leun 2014, 126). A third possible improvement for further research is to take a more historic perspective. Over the years the Dutch migration policies changed a lot and with it the situation and the coping strategies of rejected asylum seekers (Engbersen et al. 2002, 16). For a follow-up research it could be interesting to study the impact of different migration policies on the lives of rejected asylum seekers.

In conclusion it can be argued that the situation of rejected asylum seekers is still rather difficult. Therefore, it is important that all actors keep on working on the adaption of policies and a better emergency assistance for rejected asylum seekers.

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## **Appendix 1: Topic list**

### Introduction

- Introduce myself
- Thank them for coming and participating
- research about the coping strategies of rejected asylum seekers in Nijmegen
- I will not tell your name, everything you tell me is confidential, so nobody knows who you are and you will stay anonymous – also if I ask you question where you do not feel comfortable with, you don't have to answer
- It is important for my thesis but it is not a research for the government
- May I record the interview? The record is only for private use and will not be shared with others or become public

### **General questions:**

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where are you from?

When did you arrive in the Netherlands?

When did your asylum request got rejected?

When did you have to leave the AZC?

How did you come to Nijmegen?

Do you have a new asylum procedure? Or are you planning to have another asylum procedure?

### **Rejection**

*The following questions are concerned about the time when your asylum request was rejected.*

Can you tell me more about the asylum procedure that you started when you arrived?

How did you receive the message of your rejection?/ Who told you?

On what cause did they reject you?

How did you feel after you got this message?

Did you expect the rejection?

How did you react when they rejected you?

Where did you go after your rejection?

Did you think about going back to...?

No: Why not?

Yes: Why couldn't you go?

### **Bed, Bad en Brood Agreement**

*In 2015 the Dutch government decided on the so called Bed, Bad en Brood agreement and they adapted the migration policies. They decided that everybody whose asylum request got rejected and who did not work actively on their return has to live on the streets.*

Did you hear about this agreement?

Yes: how did you hear about it?, how do you feel about it?

How did the situation of people without documents changed after this agreement?

How did your life situation change after this agreement?

Do you think that there is increased police attention to people without documents after this new law?

Yes: How do you experience this police attention?

No: How did your life change since 2015?

### **Living situation**

*I would like to ask you a few more questions about your living situation:*

Where do you live at the moment?

Friends → How did you meet these friends?

organisation → How did you get to know the organisation/ Who told you about it?

How long are you living there already?

How did you get that place?

Where did you live before?

In the streets → How was life in the streets?

What was the hardest part?

Can you describe what you do on a normal day?

### **Work**

Do you have a job?

Yes: What do you do?

How did you get that job?

How often do you work?

How much money do you earn approximately every months?

No: Did you have a job in the past?

Why don't you have a job?

How do you earn money?

### **Social network**

*Now I would like you to ask some questions about your friends/social network*

Do you have friends in Nijmegen/ or elsewhere in the Netherlands?

Yes: How/Where did you meet your friends?

Where do your friends come from?

Do they have a residence permit?

Do they know that you don't have legal documents?

No: Would like it to have more friends?

What makes it difficult to make friends for you?

### **Institutional actors**

*I would like you some questions about the support you get from Stichting Gast and other organisations*

Do you get support from organisations in the Netherlands?

Yes: Which organisations support you?

How did you get to know these organisation(s)?

Which kind of support do they offer you?

Why did you approach them?

How does it make you feel that you receive their support?