



# UNLOCKING

# POTENTIALS



*Higher education for refugees under analysis*

Author: GIOVANA LUCY MILITÃO MEDEIROS

UNLOCKING POTENTIALS:  
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES UNDER ANALYSIS

A study of higher education experience for refugees in the Netherlands

GIOVANA Lucy Militão MEDEIROS

Student number: 4783190

*giovana.medeiros.7@gmail.com*



NIJMEGEN, 30 OF AUGUST 2018

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

NIJMEGEN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT

SPECIALIZATION: GLOBALISATION, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

THESIS SUPERVISOR: DR. RIANNE VAN MELIK

NOTE: The image reproduced on the front page is "Sky and Water II" (1938), a lithograph print by the Dutch artist Maurits Cornelis Escher. All M.C. Escher works © 2018 The M.C. Escher Company - the Netherlands. All rights reserved. Used by permission.  
[www.mcescher.com](http://www.mcescher.com)

## Dedication

*To my parents, Fátima and José, whose love has sustained me and inspired me during the journey of life.*

*To my husband, Davide, who believed in me from day one.*

*To my supervisor whose advices will remain on these lines and in between them.*

*To the participants who shared a little of their time and history with me.*

*I am truly thankful. I could not have done it without you.*

# INDEX

<b>INDEX .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 CONTEXT.....	6
1.2 CONCEPTS .....	7
1.3 MOTIVE .....	9
1.4 RELEVANCE.....	10
1.4.1 Academic Relevance.....	10
1.4.2 Societal Relevance.....	12
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	13
1.6 THESIS STRUCTURE .....	14
<b>2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	17
2.2 MACRO AND EXO ANALYSES – INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND NATION-STATES.....	19
2.2.1 Nation-state and Refugees.....	19
2.2.2 Sovereignty, Belongingness, Identity and Rights.....	24
2.2.3 Governance and Institutionalisation .....	26
2.2.4 Right to education .....	29
2.3 MESO – NETWORKS OF SUPPORT, LOCAL INITIATIVES, AND UNIVERSITIES .....	31
2.3.1 Civil Engagement, Third Mission and Solidarity .....	31
2.3.2 Networks of Support, the Netherlands and Integration .....	34
2.4 MICRO ANALYSIS – INDIVIDUALS.....	37
2.4.1 Benefits and Aspirations.....	38
2.4.2 Difficulties and Boundaries.....	41
2.5 CONCEPTUAL MODEL.....	47
<b>3. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>49</b>
3.1 MIXED METHODS .....	49
3.2 INTERNSHIP.....	51
3.3 PROS AND CONS .....	51
3.4 JUSTIFYING CHOICES.....	53
3.5 INTERVIEWS .....	54
<b>4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSES – HISTORICAL/POLITICAL ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>58</b>
4.1 INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.....	58
4.2 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS.....	63

4.3	<i>THE GENERATIONS APPROACH OF RIGHTS.....</i>	66
4.4	<i>REFUGEES, EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL LAW.....</i>	69
<b>5.</b>	<b>EMPIRICAL ANALYSES – INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>76</b>
5.1	REFUGEES’ EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....	76
5.1.1	<i>Motivation.....</i>	76
5.1.2	<i>Journey to education.....</i>	79
5.1.3	<i>Networks or support.....</i>	83
5.1.4	<i>UAF.....</i>	87
5.1.5	<i>Access to Education.....</i>	89
5.1.6	<i>Experiences in Class.....</i>	90
5.2	HOSPITALITY NETWORKS IN EDUCATION.....	108
5.2.1	<i>Inclusion.....</i>	109
5.2.2	<i>Asylum University - Nijmegen.....</i>	113
5.2.3	<i>Refugee Project Maastricht.....</i>	118
5.2.4	<i>Comparing Initiatives.....</i>	120
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS.....</b>	<b>123</b>
6.1	RESULTS AND CONCLUSION.....	123
6.2	FINAL REMARKS AND INDICATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	128
<b>7.</b>	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>131</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context

It is not new that people have been on the move from the beginning of history and that these movements of people can be voluntary or caused by external factors that force them to move. The novelty in the contemporary transit of people forced to move lies in the fact that it is constantly breaking records as the largest ever seen. According to UNHCR (2015) there are approximately 65,6 million people forcibly displaced in the world of which over 20 million are refugees, 38 million are internally displaced persons and two million are asylum seekers.

These numbers increase at a fast pace: on average, every three seconds one person is driven away from their homes according to UNHCR (2017). There are many different comparisons that can be made in order to facilitate getting a grasp of the real situation: one could say that the number of displaced persons is bigger than the population of the United Kingdom (UNHCR, 2017) or one could say that it overlaps the number of displaced persons than any time during the World War II (UNHCR 2015), which accounted for over 40 million people across Europe, or one could simply say that over the past five years the number of refugees has increased by millions every year (UNHCR, 2017). Using the words from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, “by any measure this is an unacceptable number” (UNHCR, 2017).

The forecast is that these numbers will remain at a high standard for the coming years. The war in Syria, which is the world’s biggest refugee’s origin, with 5.5 million people, (UNHCR, 2017), has been going on for seven years now. The Syrian war, however, is not the sole conflict that has been forcing people to be on the move. There are other conflicts in other regions forcing people look for refuge abroad, such as in Iraq, Yemen, Burundi, Mali, Afghanistan, Somalia,

Myanmar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan (UHNCR, 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2017b). Since the end of the Cold War, more than 50 armed conflicts have taken place, specially within countries (Sinclair, 2007). The effects of these conflicts are devastating to the population of these countries (Sinclair, 2007) and they contribute to the creation of more refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. While the latter is defined as a person who has had to move within their country of origin, the former two address those individuals who look for help across borders.

## 1.2 Concepts

According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion”, the Amnesty International (2016) adds to this definition by saying that a refugee “is a person who cannot return to their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights abuses there, or because of who they are or what they believe in. Because their own government cannot or will not protect them, they are forced to flee their country and seek international protection.”. An asylum seeker, in turn, is defined as an individual who is seeking international protection abroad but is yet to be recognised as a refugee. In this thesis, the line between asylum seeker and refugee is tenuous and there is no substantiate necessity to separate both groups. Thus, the term refugee will be used to interchangeably refer to refugees and asylum seekers. Should the necessity arise, distinctions will be made and indicated.

The nature of refugees is placed in the international ground from the beginning – nevertheless, refugees are highly dependent on nation-states to access basic rights. As Haddad (2010) affirms, refugees are both within and outside of nation-states. Internationally, the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the organisation “mandated with the physical, political, and social protection of refugees; with the delivery of humanitarian assistance, such as food, shelter, and water; and also with the provision of education” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p.474; Dryden-Peterson, 2017b, p.1015). UNHCR is a constituent body, which means it works under the United Nations system, which in turn works in coordination with member-states.

It goes without doubt that the panorama of refugees in the world today urges for action. As Aparna, Mahamed, Deenen, & Kramsch, (2017) say, the reality goes beyond being in favour or against refugees. Aid assumes a broad meaning, ranging from aid in transit to aid in integration. In all cases, the responses to ease the burden for refugees and to diminish the causes of forceful displacement need to be adjusted to the intense rhythm of displacement the world. First-necessity aid, such as food and shelter, is unquestionably important for people under refugee and asylum seeker conditions. However, support and aid for refugees should embrace a much broader range of necessities, such as social, political, emotional, educational, to name some. The impact of conflicts on education is translated in disruptions, loss of quality, insufficient funds (Sinclair, 2007), to mention a few. It is also important to mention that these global movements of people across frontiers, create challenges for nation-states to cope with the increasing diversity of its population (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

Education can be understood as a “set of human rights, conceptualized as rules for normative behaviour” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p.475) protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 Refugee Convention among other instruments. UNHCR (2018) highlights the fact that education “empowers by giving refugees the knowledge and skills to live productive, fulfilling and independent lives” adding that “education enlightens refugees, enabling them to learn about themselves and the world around them, while striving to rebuild their lives and communities”. Refugees join their voices in favour to education by saying “in order to survive as refugees, acquiring education is the only way.” (Geneviève, refugee in



Kenya apud UNHCR, 2018), “education will lead me to my dreams for the future” (Annette, refugee in Uganda apud Dryden-Peterson 2016) and “food, water and shelter can be taken away from you. But education no one can take from you” (Halima Aden, former refugee in Kenya as said in TED, 2018). This thesis will follow the higher education definition provided by Mangan and Winter (2017), according to which “higher level education meaning post-secondary education; including that delivered at universities, colleges and institutes of technology. This includes preparatory/access to HE [higher education] courses provided in such institutions.” (Mangan & Winter, 2007, p. 489).

### 1.3 Motive

Education becomes a top priority given the protracted nature of ongoing conflicts in the world (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Dryden-Peterson, 2015; 2017a). According to UNHCR and the Global Education Monitoring Report (2016), the duration of exile was an average of 25 years when considering 33 extended conflicts. This means that people will remain out of their countries of origin for a long period. This leads to the fact that “education planning has to go beyond short-term emergency provision and be sustained over several years articulating with development plans.” (UNHCR & Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016, p. 4). There is also research founded evidence that education has the potential to contribute to the well-being of refugees, as well as it contributes to their social and political participation, not only in the host countries, but also in their countries of origin (see Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

There has been some progress over the years regarding the aid for refugees. International agencies, as well as local initiatives, have been working towards solutions for refugees. In the political arena, one of the most recent documents elaborated under the seal of UNHCR is the

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). This document from 2016 states that it is necessary to include refugees in the communities from the very beginning. It also recognises that access to education and labour market can help on building skills and self-reliance. As Filippo Grandi affirms, “people in exile must be given every chance to keep growing” (UNHCR, 2018a). What’s more, the inclusion of refugees in education is in perfect alignment with the premise of “leave no one behind” from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This thesis should not overlook the fact that the primary root causes of conflict *must* be addressed by the international community (Zeus, 2011). However, the urge for actions directed to individuals affected to these conflicts remain, as sharply argued by Zeus:

“And yet, when these attempts fail, and people are coerced to leave their homes and find themselves in a foreign land with restricted freedoms, we cannot deny these civilians, who are generally the least responsible for the economic, political and structural reasons causing their flight, their right to develop to their fullest potential.” (Zeus, 2011, p. 273).

## 1.4 Relevance

### 1.4.1 Academic Relevance

Regarding the academic relevance, one can say that education for integration of refugees is a topic that has been debated for a while under many different approaches. Despite of what was said by Mangan and Winter (2017) that there is a lack of research on refugee and higher education, academia has been giving significant attention to it using many different approaches. There has been research on education for Syrian refugees (see Culbertson and Constant, 2015),

on integration for education and the experiences of refugees in the Netherlands (see Koehler, 2009), in Australia (see Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017), and on the intertwining of refugee education and globalisation (see Dryden-Peterson, 2016), to name some. But, what is new to the approach of this thesis is the conjugation of global institutionalism, the trajectory of debates around the individual within the international system, the nation-state paradox face to individuals and the higher education for refugees in this context. In this thesis, refugees and education are in the centre of analysis and the branching of these topics in both the international and local levels are analysed. The approach also brings to the academia the current and recent local initiatives that are working with refugees. The local networks of support will also be critically analysed under the light of existing theories.

The work from Dryden-Peterson (2016) is placed in the meeting point of global institutionalism and everyday practices of education for refugees. However, the approach to the historical analysis of Dryden-Peterson's article is different from the one presented in this thesis. The Dryden-Peterson focuses on the evolution of education under the UN agencies. In this thesis, in turn, besides presenting the evolution of the education legal framework, I also debate the evolution of individual rights as historical social constructed rights. The structures that support education can be divided under a multitude of categories, but in this thesis, I am taking two pathways. The first is the general and international support that comes from the international institutions. To delve into this scope, I will present a historical analysis that will detail the evolution of support for individuals which will eventually evolve in the protection of education for refugees as a human right. The second, I present the institutional support in a narrower perspective, I will present the support from the initiatives Asylum University, Inlcuusion and Refugee Meeting Point. Overall, the academic relevance is to debate the matter of higher education for refugees under the international political and historical development lenses, considering the role local initiatives and refugees' inputs.

#### 1.4.2 Societal Relevance

The social relevance for this thesis comes from different places. The most important of them is urge for immediate actions for the high number of refugees in the world (65,6 million, UNHCR, 2015) and the protracted average time people spend on the exile (25 years – UNHCR, 2016). These numbers call for actions that go beyond shelter and in conformity with the education strategy from the UNHCR, higher education for refugees must be a priority (UNHCR, 2015b). In this regard, the thesis contributes to endorsing the existing literature and putting light on refugee topics. Besides, the thesis is in conformity with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, in which they state that is imperative that different stakeholders act upon the refugee problematic, including the academia. Finally, the interviews will report the recent initiatives and it will listen to the population I am analysing in this thesis, i.e. the refugees. The emphasis on qualitative method to allow the voice of informants to be heard in ways which are non-exploitative or oppressive” (WGSg, 1997; Moss, 2001 apud Clifford, Cope, Gillespie, & French, 2016). The reponses from refugees, even if just for the part of interviews, serve to start the conversation of this debate through their voices ad points of view. This thesis is aimed to make recommendations to those who are engaged in higher education in the local level. Such initiatives represent an important endeavour of civil engagement and stresses the additional mission that accompany higher education institutions (Araos, 2017). Also, at the same time, this thesis stresses the necessity of developing the topic in the international arena. Higher education can serve as a response to a proacted crisis and a sustainable solution (Avery & Said, 2017). As expressed by Zeus (2011) higher education in prolonged refugee situation

“could exactly be a way towards refugee empowerment and towards turning the narrative upside down. It could be a way towards allowing ourselves to see refugees as

agents and allowing refugees to be agents of development in having positive impacts on their self-respect and shaping their own as well as their host communities' environment.” (Zeus, 2011, 273).

## 1.5 Research Question

Education for refugees is positioned in an imbroglio between the international legal framework, the nation-states sovereignty, and the lived experiences of refugees. That is where the research of this thesis is located. As asserted by Dryden-Peterson (2016) the situation of refugees and education is “caught between the global promise of universal human right, the definition of citizen rights within nations-states and the realisation of these sets of rights in everyday practices” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p.473). The nexus where these topics sit is complex and arouses questions that range from the international relations to the local policies and initiatives. The debate falls into the triad of said universalism of human rights in the core of global institutionalism, the actions nation-states and other players and the realisation of these rights in everyday practice, as exposed by Dryden-Peterson (2016, p.475) “this post national conceptualization legitimates the rights of individuals—in this case, the right to education—beyond a particular nation-state or set of institutions. [...] Yet, the implementation of these rights generally continues to be the domain of the nation-state”.

Dryden-Peterson (2010) adds that although there has been some increasing awareness regarding education for refugees, higher education “has remained largely outside of the global education movement, within which the focus has instead been on primary education (...) and secondary education”. This thesis will, then, focus on tertiary for refugees and the locale for this thesis is the Netherlands. The research question that will be articulated is: “How the international legal framework and the local initiatives regarding higher education are working

in order to integrate and include refugees and how are the educational experiences of said refugees in the Netherlands?”

To deal with this question, this thesis will analyse the historical and political evolution of the right to education for refugees, the tensions that surge from the interplay of international premises and nation-states; the local initiatives that have been dealing with higher education for refugees in the Netherlands; and the actual impact of these developments in refugees’ lives. I situate this question theoretically and empirically in the context of mass refugee migration across nation-state frontiers.

## 1.6 Thesis structure

The journey to answer the research question starts at setting the ground in the theoretical field for the themes that are approached in this thesis. To this end, chapter 2 will present the existing theoretical debate in which this thesis will be elaborated on, such as the tensions regarding the international premises and the rights to refugees; the nation-states and refugees; the networks of support that act for education support for refugees and education as an important tool for refugee’s life and integration. Chapter 3 will delineate the methodological choices in which this thesis was elaborated.

Chapter 4 and 5 will present the empirical work of this thesis. Chapter 4 focuses on the analysis of the international protection for refugees. The historical period chosen to be the starting point of this thesis is the first refugee mass migration which followed the World War I (Agamben, 1995). That moment has witnessed the first documents and international efforts to tackle a refugee situation. The historical-political analysis is focused on the developments of the international legal ground for individuals which allowed the contemporary universality of the refugee legal framework. It is important to present an historical-political perspective as

to acknowledge the evolution of the international law fabric that supports refugees. This fashion of conducting this thesis helps to understand that those rights are not natural and innate. They have an intrinsic historicity and they represent a human invention in a constant process of construction and reconstruction. Also, it is intended to make clear that advances in the international arena in relation to refugee rights take time to develop a universal ground. Besides the document analysis, in the historical-political analysis will also dialogue with some authors who presented the limitations inherent to the international system within the nation-states sovereignty.

Chapter 5 will present the results from the qualitative semi-structure interviews with 10 refugees and 3 leaders from education initiatives aiming higher education for refugees in the Netherlands, namely in Nijmegen, Maastricht, and Utrecht. Those will be presented along with the debates around refugees and education. Besides, three initiatives that are delivering higher education and integration for refugees in the Netherlands will be presented and analysed, connecting them to the debate of how to effectively deliver education for refugees. This analysis is focused on the examination of policy documents, existing literature and interviews with refugees and initiatives.

The last and concluding section, Chapter 6, will present the final remarks and thoughts that will bring together the elements in this research. Additionally, it will present the discussions that can influence future researchers. Finally, there are two annexes to this thesis. The first is the guide for the interviews, the second is the privacy statement for the interviews. The transcription of the interviews will be sent for the examination board, respecting the privacy of interviewees.





## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

In this part, the reader will be guided through the existing debates in the academia that concern refugees in connection to the topics of global institutionalism, education, and integration. Important to note that this thesis's arguments are based on previous knowledge that made the present discussions possible. This section will be divided in two major blocks, which in turn will be divided into subsections.

In order to organise the theoretical guidance for this thesis, I adopted and adapted the theory of ecological environment of human development, by the psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. This author recognises that wide-ranging influences act upon the behaviour of individuals. Originally, this theoretical approach served to analyse the human behaviour. This theory considers a myriad of nested structures, each inside the next, which influence the development of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As Darling (2007, p. 204) explains, “ecological systems theory is presented as a theory of human development in which everything is seen as interrelated and our knowledge of development is bounded by context, culture, and history.” in another words, there is no way of analysing the individual in isolated processes, as the development of a person is a result of all their experiences mixed together (Darling, 2007). Dryden-Peterson (2017b) first adapted this approach to analyse education regarding refugees. In the light of Dryden-Peterson's analysis, the ecological environment of human development considers the systems in the local and global level. This interpretation of Bronfenbrenner's theory by Dryden-Peterson will be the guide for my thesis.

According to this theory, individuals are placed in the centre of analysis and are circumscribed by four major systems that have influence in the development of people. The

four systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem represents the face to face interactions of individuals. Dryden-Peterson (2017b) contributes to this analysis stressing that these interactions can be locally or globally localised, which means individuals can have “one-to-one” relationships while being physically distant, mediated by the technology, for example.

The second level of analysis is the mesosystem. The mesosystem relates to the interconnections of the settings to which this person belongs to. In Bronfenbrenner’s analysis, *setting* is a specific local in which interactions take place, for example home or school. In the mesosystem, then, it is analysed how the interrelations of between two or more *settings* shape behaviours. Under Dryden-Peterson’s (2017b) light, the mesosystem could refer to different conceptions of educational system, in a hosting country and UNHCR, for example.

The third level of analysis, the exosystem, refers to institutions and practices over which the individual has no control and do not participate directly but, exert influence in their lives. In the global level, Dryden-Peterson exemplifies that Education governed by the UNHCR standards is an example of the exosystem.

Lastly, the fourth level of analysis, the macrosystem, refers to the big external conditions, the system conditions. According to Dryden-Peterson (2017b), this level is constituted by the global system of humanitarian aid or the education governed by UNHCR, for example.

Starting from this theoretical ground set by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Dryden-Peterson (2017b), I will analyse the international development of higher education for refugees using the macrosystem and the exosystem. And the mesosystem and microsystems perspectives will serve to guide the interviews. The mesosystem will be represented by the projects that aid refugees in higher education and the microsystem will be explored by the lived experiences of

refugees. Within the theoretical framework I will present other theories that serve to guide and fundament the arguments present in this thesis.

For the historical and political developments of international groundwork for higher education I will present arguments and authors that converge in the theories of global institutionalism (Dryden Peterson, 2016 and Gerrard 2006, for example) and constructivism (Piovesan, 2008, Bauman 2002, Agamben 1995, Haddad 2010, Dryden Peterson, 2017b). The choice for the global institutionalism is due to the perspective that institutions can shape people's and other institutions' behaviour. The constructivist lens, on the other hand, discuss the international relations as historical and socially constructed, which opposes to the idea of innate or natural events. Laying under the interview guide and the interview analysis, there are theories and authors that discuss the right to education (Koehler 2009, Dryden-Peterson 2016, O'Rourke 2014) and education as a pathway to integration (Koehler 2009, Dryden-Peterson 2017a, Zeus 2011, Sinclair 2007).

## 2.2 Macro and Exo Analyses - International Framework and Nation-States

### 2.2.1 Nation-state and Refugees

The relationship between refugees and nation-states is important and complex: at the same time refugees are a born from the establishment of nation-states (Bauman 2002, Haddad 2010, Agamben 1995, Arendt 1973), they are placed in a void space of statelessness (Bauman, 2002). In this respect, "The state became the uncontested political location for the realigning of power, place and population, and the problem of how to make all individuals fit into such exclusionary spaces was born." (Haddad, 2010, p.301). In the globalised discourses of today,

nation-states remain as a powerful player: globalisation is buttressed at the same time the national borders are gaining more fortification (Gerrard, 2016)

When it comes to the production of refugees, Bauman sharply writes that “the advent of the modern state coincided with the emergence of the ‘stateless person’” (Bauman, 2002, p.284). In other words, the setting of nation-states borders and territory is what allows people to be without a place. “The greater the emphasis put on all individuals belonging to a state, and the greater the importance given to boundaries and national identity, the greater were the chances of exclusion of unwanted individuals who threatened the identity of the nation-state” (Haddad, 2010, p.318). Once a refugee leaves their home country, they lose their ‘place’ and must live in this void until their situation gets arranged (Bauman, 2002 Haddad, 2010). One should not fail to mention that the very own idea of rights is inexorable to the idea of nation states (Bauman, 2002).

The definition of a refugee as a displaced person is only possible given the existence of nation-states divided into different territories. Haddad (2010), Arendt (1973) and Agamben (1995) are very assertive to point out nation-states as the cause for the existence of refugees. “Indeed, refugees do not fit into the citizen-state-territory trinity, but are forced, instead, into the gaps between nation-states.” (Haddad, 2010, p.297) Refugees, then, are attached to the existence of nation-states from the beginning of their existence. In the words of Haddad “Without the modern state there could be no refugees. It is a characteristic of sovereignty that the attempt to place all individuals within (homogeneous) territorial spaces will inevitably force some between the borders, into the gaps and spaces between states and thus outside the normal citizen-state-territory hierarchy.” (Haddad, 2010, p.297).

From the previous affirmatives, one could say that refugees are a collateral effect of the establishment of the modern states. (Haddad, 2010). Haddad (2010), however, goes beyond

and asserts that the existence of nation-states creates and reinforces the existence of refugees. “Indeed, they are the creation of separate sovereign states which have failed to enforce a system of substantive sovereignty that would ensure the protection of all their citizens” (Haddad, 2010, p.297).

One question that arises from this positioning of refugees is: ‘if refugees are the creation of modern nation-states, but at the same time they are outside of the nation-states, where do they belong?’ Haddad (2010) answers to this question by saying that refugees belong to the states system in the form of exclusion: refugees are the ones who are excluded from the system. In her words:

“she is part of the system whilst not being part of it, she is both inside and outside at the same time. (...) The refugee is at the threshold between inside and outside, in a “zone of indistinction”, in the ‘state of exception’ between ‘normal’ and ‘chaos’ (...) Thus the refugee blurs the clear lines that the concept of sovereignty would like to draw between inside and outside (...)”. (Haddad, 2010, p.312).

In this imbroglio and being at the same time inside and out of the modern nation-states system, refugees are displaced of a physical place and of a place of rights (Bauman, 2002). “The refugee is, by definition, between sovereigns, which situates her, ambiguously, both inside and outside the state. She is at once part of the system and not part of the system, necessary and not necessary.” (Haddad, 2010, p.322).

The sole existence of refugees are a challenge to the normativity of belonging in the modern nation-state, as Haddad (2010) accurately exposes. “They are anomalies in the international states system and challenge the assumption that all individuals belong to a territory.” (Haddad, 2010, p. 297). Aparna and Schapendonk (2018) join their voices seeing the asylum-seeker as a symbolic representation that challenges the normativity of the

traditional state-centric views. Haddad (2010) goes in the same direction and argues that “the very existence of refugees on the territory of another state is in some sense an infringement of not only the sovereignty of the host state but that of their home state as well. Refugees act to challenge the sacred sovereignty of the modern state” (Haddad, 2010, p.301). And continues saying

“Thus, by imagining the refugee as fluid and between categories she can be seen to constitute a threat to established boundaries. She is outside the model of the international states system which asserts that all individuals belong to a state. The refugee therefore upsets and brings into question the concepts of nation-state and national identity and asks us to reconsider the value of perceiving culture, society and community as ‘bounded, territorialized units’” (Haddad, 2010, p. 311)

The relationship of refugees and modern nation-states is complex. This complexity is translated into the policy alignments and solutions proposed by states. One solution that is recurrently proposed is the closure of borders. Nation-states close themselves in the space of sovereignty and, in theory, leave the unwanted people outside. This solution, however, is not a durable solution nor a decent one. As Bauman (2002;2018) asserts border control and strict entry procedures “do nothing to tame or weaken the forces that cause displacement and take humans into refugee”.

Gerrard (2016) points at the dangerous context of fortification of national borders. According to this author “There is a proliferation of non-citizen spaces and non-citizen practices. In particular, for refugees and asylum seekers there are a multitude of layers of non-citizenship status. In most cases, refugees do not have citizen rights such as education whilst they wait in refugee camps, or in other nation states, awaiting their claims for refuge to be processed.” (Gerrard, 2016, p.889).

Located in the in-between states, refugees need support that overreaches the traditional frontiers, but how to be a displaced with rights in a world of sovereigns? Refugees caught in between the nation-states become hopelessly vulnerable. In this respect, the role of an international community advocating for refugees is critical. There are series of rights, norms and documents from the international community that concern transnational matters – such as refugees. “The international states system can therefore be described not just as a way of organising political power but as a means of organising people” (Haddad, 2010, p.300). In theory, this post-national conceptualization legitimates the rights of individuals—in this case, the right to education—beyond a particular nation-state or set of institutions (Goodale, 2007). Yet, “the implementation of these rights generally continues to be the domain of the nation-state”. (Goodale, 2007, p 475). “Theoretically, in the sphere of international law, it had always been true that sovereignty is nowhere more absolute than in matters of "emigration, naturalization, nationality, and expulsion"; 23 (Preuss apud Arendt, 1973, p. 278).

The current international system heavily relies on nation-states. In this way, once again the debate falls into paradoxical corner in which “international protection relies on individual states, yet states retain the sovereign right to decide who may enter their territory and hence whom they will represent and protect.” (Haddad, 2010, p.297). Ultimately, nation-states will hold the final word on the pathways taken by the international system. Bauman (2002) cites Agamben and notes that there is not a powerful player capable of endorsing the humanity of humans.

“Exclusive sovereign claims of states continue to impede the implementation of any successful policy with regard to finding refugees a safe haven. Maintaining the status quo of the states system takes the upper hand even in the face of massive human suffering. Ever since the states system arose in its modern form, the state has retained the right to regulate and control entry to its territory as a fundamental concomitant of

sovereignty. The Refugee Convention accords the putative refugee the right to seek asylum; nowhere is the right to be granted asylum guaranteed.” (Haddad, 2010, p. 320).

Refugees are the outcome of sovereign states which have failed to enforce a system of substantive sovereignty that would ensure the protection of all their citizens. (Haddad, 2003, p.297). In the void between the statelessness and the international protection, the outcasts are in a fundamentally sensitive place for rights protection. As Gerrard (2016) argues the negotiation of rights in the modern nation state is still linked to the notions of citizenship and belonging. In a longer argument, “Citizenship remains the primary means to claim rights in the geo-political context of nation-state sovereignty, that has in many ways been buttressed, not supplanted, by globalisation.” (Gerrard, 2016 p. 889).

### *2.2.2 Sovereignty, Belongingness, Identity and Rights*

The traditional idea of sovereignty creates a myriad of dichotomies: value and non-value, legal and illegal, and the inside and outside the sovereignty jurisdiction (Haddad, 2010; Bauman, 2002), to name some. As Bauman (2002) stresses, sovereignty is intrinsically connected to the idea of territory, “sovereignty is unthinkable without an ‘outside’; it is inconceivable in any form but a localized entity”. So, for Bauman the triad sovereignty, nation and territory creates the environment that makes refugees and displaced people a reality. “The particularistic concept of the citizen with rights and membership in a state contrasts with the universal outsider who possesses rights only in the abstract and has no state to uphold them.” (Haddad, 2010, p.302). Another important aspect of the modern nation-state setting is that rights are attributed to those pertaining to a nation-state (Bauman, 2002; Agamben, 1995). If rights are directly linked to belonging to a nation-state, those in between are also in a complicated position for exercising and claiming rights – as rights are strictly connected to sovereign states belongingness and they do not *belong*.



Bauman cites Agamben to explain that states establish nativity or birth as the ground that serve to fundament the own state sovereignty, using Bauman's words:

“[O]ne is, so to speak, born into the ‘citizenship of the state’; this nakedness of the newly born child yet unwrapped in the legal/juridical trappings provides the site on which the sovereignty of the state power is constructed and perpetually rebuilt and serviced with the help of the inclusion/exclusion practices aimed at all other claimants of citizenship that fell into the reach of the state’s sovereignty.” (Bauman, 2002, p. 286).

Bauman (2002) recognises that refugees lack a great sense of belongingness to the place they arrive. “As to their new ‘permanently temporary’ location, the refugees are ‘*in it*, but not *of it*’. They do not truly belong to the country on which territory their Portakabins have been assembled and tents pitched.” (Bauman, 2002, p. 294). Bauman (2002) also discusses that separation from the rest of the country where refugees are hosted can be both physical (in a camp) and/or immaterial (as created by the feelings of resentment and suspicion).

“They are suspended in a spatial void in which time has ground to a halt. Neither have they settled, nor are they on the move; they are neither sedentary nor nomads. In habitual terms in which humans’ humanity is narrated, they are ineffable.” (Bauman, 2002, p. 294).

Bauman references to Foucault to indicate that refugees are in a “place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea” (Foucault 1986 apud Bauman, 2002, p.293). As Bauman (2002) says, refugees are expelled by force out of their native countries but refused entry in any other country. “They do not change places; they lose their place on earth, they are catapulted into a nowhere” (Bauman, 2010, p.112).

The state has power to influence the immigrant identity formation (Mountz, Wright, Miyares, & Bailey, 2002). Thus, border controls have reached the discourses on European and national identities (Synnøve & Bendixsen, 2016). States have impact in the individual and collective processes of identity formation, and this formation happens parallelly in multiple scales and locales (Mountz, Wright, Miyares, & Bailey, 2002).

“The refugee’s identity is forged precisely by her lack of belonging, her status as an ‘outsider’. Other foreigners, such as migrants and immigrants, may of course present a challenge to the identity or ethnic makeup of a community. Yet their transnational movement has been one of choice and they remain firmly rooted in the ‘normal’ citizen-state relationship.” (Haddad, 2010, p.298).

According to Balibar (2002) borders assume a polysemic character and they never appear in the same way for individuals belonging to different social groups. Balibar (2002) also mentions that borders can assume other meanings in the negotiations of the everyday life social life. Borders assume the role of “complex social institutions, which are marked by tensions between practices of border reinforcement and border crossings” (Mezzadra apud Synnøve & Bendixsen, 2016, p. 539).

### *2.2.3 Governance and Institutionalisation*

The efforts to organise the nation-states in an international community have constantly been seen throughout the XX and XXI centuries. “In the years leading up to World War II, attempts to solve the refugee problem were thought to be found inside states, consistent with a positive view of sovereignty. Post-1945 approaches to the refugee problem have shifted the

emphasis to ideas of negative sovereignty, with the solution said to be in relations between rather than within states.” (Haddad, 2010, p.299).

The arrangements fall into the concept of governance, which means a “broad concept that refers to mechanisms for steering systems towards their goals’, in which states are one of many competing sources of authority along with other multilateral actors” (Wenden, 2018, p. 230). The international system until now, though, have not presented strong institutionalisation (Bauman, 2002) with enough autonomy to work on their own; in other words, the international organisations and governance remain heavily dependent on nation-states.

Bauman (2002) and Arendt (1986) seem to agree that international protection of human rights lack enforcement, as the present instruments of enforcement are loose. They both also acknowledge that in this context humans are vulnerable, and for that they both cite Agamben “being nothing but human’ was humanity’s greatest danger”. Arendt (1973) discusses that rights enforcement has been a constant issue, and even when rights seem inalienable they lack enforceability once citizens are outside nation-states. “Even among signatories to the Convention, realisation of the right to education has depended on the laws, policies, and practices in place at different historical times and in each national context”. (Dryden Peterson. 20122, p.13). As Zeus (2011) highlights, there are power relations that shape the relationship and the access of refugees to higher education.

The solutions for refugee support, although they may (and should) involve diverse actors (Aparna and Schapendonk, 2018; Bauman, 2002), they heavily depend on solutions from nation-states. “International society divides the world into sovereign states. Sovereignty means authority: external autonomy and internal control. A sovereign government is therefore Janus-faced: it simultaneously faces outward at other states and inward at its population” (Haddad, 2010, pp.299-300).

It goes without doubt the important role of several parallel institutions and initiatives in building up a net of support for refugees. They act as an alternative to the hostilities and “slowness” of the responses from the States, especially when it comes to undocumented inhabitants of the city (Aparna and Schapendonk, 2018). But, as nation states are the main players and the only with authority over frontiers, the refugee needs nation-state assistance. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that the trinity of nation-state (territory, sovereignty, and nation), besides taking long periods to formulate regulations regarding refugees, has not sufficiently done enough for the refugees (Agamben, 1995; Bauman, 2002). “Further, the state was shown to have failed to uphold the guarantees of human life and liberty, protection that should be offered to all members of a political community”. (Haddad, 2010, p.318). However, the complete subversion of the trinity does not seem anywhere near in the future.

Another poignant argument posed by Bauman (2002) is aligned with the conceptions of the global institutionalism and constructivism. Bauman (2002) states that all communities are imagined and what helps them to become tangible is the institutionalisation that recognises and governs their own prerogatives – which is the case of nation-states in the modernity. Bauman attributes the lack of this institutionalism of a global community as the main driver of the “inhumanity called the refugees problem” (Bauman 2002). In other words, the author is calling for a stronger institutionalisation of the agencies that manage the refugee issue. “The proclamation of human rights was also meant to be a much-needed protection in the new era where individuals were no longer secure in the states to which they were born” (Arendt, 1973, p.291).

Aimé Césaire, as appears in Fernández (2018), exposes the false universalism present in human rights discourse, given that at the same time they proclaim ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, they leave behind a great part of humanity. Decolonialist authors like Fernández (2018) call for a resignification of human rights, given the fact that they were wrought inside

the Occident and, more specifically, in Europe, after the Holocaust. In this sense, the human rights as they are in the declaration from 1948 are part of a European experience.

#### 2.2.4 *Right to education*

Right to education is an important set of human rights, which can be translated as rules for normative behaviors treasured in international law instruments, (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). The concept of human rights consecrates the right of individuals beyond any particular nation-state or institution (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). “Yet, the implementation of these rights generally continues to be the domain of the nation-state” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p 475). Education is recognised as the “fourth pillar” of humanitarian response alongside food, shelter and health (Machel et al apud Zeus, 2011). However, the right to education is heavily dependent on the residency status, that is the belonging to a particular nation-state. Essomba (2017) reminds us that the mobile characteristic of refugees and asylum seekers are also a challenge to claiming the right to education

“Regarding the right to education, legal residency status plays a key role, and the right to education might not be fully recognised if the resident’s status is in flux. (...) According to the 1951 Geneva Conventions, this right to education is an essential part of refugee rights. However, the implementation of this right tends to be hampered by administrative obstacles. Legislation and administration do not go hand in hand in this particular case. Due to the above, the consequences for education are substantial: One’s legal status matters when claiming educational aid and support. Being an asylum seeker vs. refugee can make a difference. Legally, the situation becomes extremely fragile when asylum seekers’ applications are rejected.” (Essomba, 2017, p. 214).

The right to social benefits, health care, housing (outside asylum reception centers) and education (after the age eighteen) is made conditional on residency status. (Synnøve &

Bendixsen, 2016, p. 546). This is strictly related to the idea presented by Torres (2002) that education in modern times is situated within the nation-state. To counterpoint this idea, Zeus (2011) evokes Anderson (2006) to debate whether education can only exist within the imagined borders of a nation-state. The author adds that “The right to education, to all levels of education, is undeniable and must not be constrained by circumstances beyond the individual's control.” (Zeus, 2011, p. 273).

Moskal and North (2017) note that education in the international framework is usually more concerned with universalising the access to primary and secondary. Essomba (2017) argues that in this sense, the older one is the more scarce to enjoy the right to education. Higher education can be used as an important tool to renegotiate the narrative of refugees as agents of their own and their communities’ development (Zeus, 2011). “[A]s such act as a subversion of power structures from within, rather than adopting approaches that envisage imposing aid on refugees in order to empower them” (Zeus, 2011, p. 272). In this respect, education is an enabling right, which means it is a right that allows other rights to be achieved (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Sinclair, 2007). However, “the normative recognition of HE [higher education] as an inalienable right still needs to be translated into unconditional practice. (Zeus, 2011, p. 271) Universities, then, are places of creation and dissemination of knowledge, and act as a crucial resource for nation- states (Zeus, 2011), what’s more “universities help create, develop and sustain the nation-state” (Zeus, 2011, 265).

## 2.3 Meso - Networks of Support, Local Initiatives, and Universities

### 2.3.1 *Civil Engagement, Third Mission and Solidarity*

Dryden-Peterson & Giles (2010) point to the importance of all actors working together to tackle, challenge, and create opportunities for refugees. In this regard, one should look beyond the support of international organisations and include the players that act on both national and local level. It is also important to note that conventions and recommendations may not provide timely answers to current issues, which may surge with the new events such as the refugee great influx and ongoing wars. According to Jackson, “the Convention should not be blamed for failing to resolve problems with which it was never supposed to deal” (Jackson, 1991, p. 412).

As discussed before, the role of higher education in refugees’ life is transformative (Dryden-Peterson, 2011), and in this context, universities play a central role. “In our system of nation-states, refugees are particularly vulnerable without state protection; however, the discussion has shown that opportunities exist for HE [higher education] to take place beyond the imaginary borders of the nation-state. (Zeus, 2011, p. 272). Araos (2017) points to the social role of universities in promoting responses to societal issues. Traditionally, the two missions of universities are: teaching and research. (Zawdie, 2010). As Zawdie explains, the addition of the second mission to universities did not go smoothly: it happened during the 19th century and faced the criticism that engaging in research could affect both the quality and quantity of teaching. This serves to illustrate that the addition of a third mission to universities is also subject to a slow process of implementation.

The third mission of universities refers to the social, entrepreneurial, and innovative activities performed by universities that go on top of the traditional teach and research focus (Loi and Di Guardo, 2015). Through the third mission, universities overflow the role of passive

agents of knowledge creation, to become “power-houses of innovation, and hence strategic agents of sustainable development” (Zawdie, 2010, p.152). Although not new (Laredo, 2007) Loi and Di Guardo (2015) note that the pathway towards the institutionalisation of the third mission has not followed a smooth path and it differs from university to university. The third mission helps to promote the social and economic development of local communities (Loi and Di Guardo, 2015). What’s more, this mission serves to give active protagonism to the universities face to societal challenges. And as a societal issue, one can indicate the large number of displaced persons in the world today (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017).

Zawdie (2010) argues about the extent to which universities could cast off the established “ivory tower” image in order to pursue the third mission. The engagement of universities in the societal matters can assume different facets. The civic engagement can be expressed as the facilitation to university access (Araos, 2017). Araos (2017) investigated initiatives in Norway (Dugnad) and England (Sanctuary) that presented “special admission and pedagogical engagement as ways to support refugees, focusing on improving their chances of entering higher education” (Araos, 2017, p.87). The interaction with other students can as well be a representation of the university civic engagement. Despite the increasing importance of higher education followed by the large number of young refugees currently in Europe, higher education opportunities for refugees have been limited (Avery & Said, 2017). Morrice (2013) describes an important aspect of the inclusivity in universities “

“However, the subjective experiences of refugees in HE are inextricably linked to the wider political and economic framework and the objective social reality of global inequality. The political responses to migration and globalisation are framed through policy and public discourses about citizenship and asylum which are driven by an imperative to restrict the movement of certain migrants and curtail entitlement to citizenship. Higher education is not shielded from or immune to these political



imperatives: we see them played out in HE through economic discourses which compete for and welcome some migrants (international students paying overseas fees) as desirable and worthy subjects of support and attention, while ignoring and rendering invisible less desirable migrants: refugees.” (Morrice, 2013, p.667).

The engagement of universities in societal issues touches upon the concept of solidarity. Milani and Laniado (2007) translate solidarity as the character of social action and social relationships, for them:

“Solidarity within contemporary social movements outlines the fields of production of contestation and confrontation related to distribution and recognition (...) It works as a structuring unity of strategies for changing situations and contexts. (...) . In the complex arrangements of transnational collective action, the new solidarities are continuously levelled by protest and the desire for changes; they produce social bonds of reciprocity of short durability as related to the fluid and transitory relationships established through networks and occasional events.” (Milani & Laniado, 2007, p.19).

Moskal and North (2017) call for attention to solidarity in social sciences and political theory. For these authors, solidarity “remains a central dimension of cultural, institutional, and interactional life in contemporary societies” and could it be the major “inspiration for the way forward, providing a clear connection between educational equity and wider societal context” (Moskal & North, 2017, p. 107).

### 2.3.2 *Networks of Support, the Netherlands and Integration*

Formal and globally speaking, the support to higher education for refugees is exclusively through the DAFI Program (DAFI is the German acronym for the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), administered by UNHCR, and it reaches only a small number of refugees (Dryden-Peterson, 2010, pp.13-14). Since 1992 DAFI has enabled 13.500 refugees to access higher education (UNHCR, 2018). However, Dryden-Peterson (2010) affirms that this scholarship is limited and only allow the “most deserving ones”. The majority are denied opportunities that would help them strive (Dryden-Peterson & Peterson, 2010). It is even hard to measure the actual numbers of higher education for refugees in the world, as “no comprehensive data is available on rates of access to higher education for refugees, yet the numbers of refugees enrolled in higher education are certainly small.” (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010, p.4).

Local initiatives such as the Refugee Project in Maastricht, Inclusion in Utrecht and the Asylum University in Nijmegen contribute to what Aparna and Schapendonk (2018) call the “hospitality networks of asylum”, which is the local network of actors who work towards supporting the newcomers against the hostility and difficulties encountered. Besides, there is also support for financial and administrative support (Avery & Said, 2017), which in the Netherlands can be found through the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), for example. To invest and to support initiatives that take place in the local community – even outside the nation-state umbrella - is very important. As Aparna and Schapendonk (2018) stated “this can be attributed to the fact that the organisation supports people rejected by the state”. In some cases, the institutions that act for refugees are subverting, even in a small scale, the limits imposed by the nation-state sovereignty, as they can provide *also* for those refugees who are not yet documented.

Derrida's city of refuge concept has interesting implications. According to Derrida's concept, the cities rather than states are the places of where hospitality takes place, based on the practices of everyday (Derrida apud Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018). The 'city of refuge' concept highlights the active agency of local initiatives. These local agents challenge the state-centric imagery that the XX century has created by creating alternative spaces that act on the void of state reach. As Agamben (1995) and Bauman (2002) notice the trinity of nation-state, besides taking long periods to formulate regulations regarding refugees, has not sufficiently done enough for them. Derrida's concept can be borrowed to describe integration practices that overflow beyond the state domains. It means that it is not only proposed and promoted by different organisations and actors – other than the state-, but it also means that these practices can be expanded beyond the traditional borders (Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018).

The concept of "asylumscales" wrought by Aparna and Schapendonk (2018) refers to a dynamic process of refugee hospitality. This research could borrow this concept and convert it to talk about integration. According to this concept, the dynamics of receiving a displaced person challenges the traditional formal institutions and expands to multiple locations and fields, being shown in practices, processes and actions that emerge in the in-between of formal and informal (gestures and procedures) that are also stretched through time. Berry et al. (1987) define acculturation as the continuous process of interaction between two cultures. Although the author perceives that acculturation can occur in both group and individual level, the authors agree that at the individual level it refers to the psychological changes in an individual that will reflect equally in behaviour and internal characteristics (Berry et al. 1987).

In his analysis, van der Spek (2016) found out that education is an important factor that drives asylum seekers to seek refuge in the Netherlands. According to "De Leerplichtwet" law, education is compulsory and enforced by law from 5 to 16 years old in the Netherlands and it can be extended until 18 in case of necessity (Refugees in the Netherlands, 2017). This law is

also applicable to refugees in the Dutch territory; however, tertiary education is not equally enforced by Dutch laws. (Refugees in the Netherlands, 2017)

According to Koehler (2009) integration to Dutch society has a strong connection with norms and values. “Integration is when one develops a deep connection to Dutch society in terms of ‘duties and obligations’ (Declaration of The Hague 2002, section 14); in terms of ‘participation’ and ‘respect of values and customs’ (Dutch integration policy investigation 2004, 5); in terms of ‘living up to the unwritten rules’ (Franssen 2004, appendix 4, 2). (Koehler, 2009, p.162). As Koehler (2009) encounters a powerful relation of integration with norms and values, the author investigated the meaning behind the words norms and values. These two words can be translated in “freedom of speech; social cohesion; diversity; and lastly, the related values of self-sufficiency, autonomy and individualism” and she adds that “constitutional values such as ‘separation of church and state’, ‘freedom of religion’, ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘emancipation of women’ were frequently mentioned by interviewees and in the policy documents as important values for the newcomer.” (Koehler, 2009, p.164).

In the analysis of the Dutch integration policies, Koehler (2009) noted that education is important “in the integration process and the various methods of teaching and learning Dutch norms and values” and that “‘education is a key factor’ (The city of Rotterdam 2004, 42) in the integration process. As one policy document states, ‘It’s all about education’” (Koehler, 2009, p.163). The author also adds that “interviewees and policy documents overwhelming agreed that education is important in the integration process, specifically in teaching Dutch norms and values. Since assimilation into Dutch norms and values is considered paramount to successful integration, it follows that the role of education in the area of norms and values is one of ‘assimilation’.” (Koehler, 2009, p. 167) However, policies focused on assimilation fail to recognise and embrace the difference of refugees and can also fail in “making the role of

education into an aspiration in which all members of society are engaged, thus making ‘integration’ truly a ‘two-way street’. (Koehler, 2009, p.169).

## 2.4 Micro Analysis - Individuals

“We need a vision of mankind not as patients whose interests have to be looked after, but as agents who can do effective things-both individually and jointly” (Amartya Sen apud Zeus, 2011). This statement by Amartya Sen is suitable to illustrate the empowering agency higher education can provide refugees. But one should have in mind that experiences in higher education are diverse, as the individual perspective is mutative and personal (Morrice, 2013).

According to Morrice (2013) higher education is a key feature that helps refugees to re-establish their lives and to re-build professional identities. Likewise, Morrice (2013) cites Bourdieu to explain the concept of capital in the individual level. According to Bourdieu’s theory:

“the various forms of capital——cultural, social, symbolic and economic——are resources which individuals can draw upon to secure advantage in particular fields. Cultural capital exists in institutionalized states; for example, in the form of academic qualifications, which confer institutional recognition on the individual (...) Examples of embodied cultural capital include language skills, aspirations, having the right accent, being familiar with particular academic discourses. Social capital is the network of relations and acquaintances which can be drawn upon to access knowledge, information and other resources.” (Morrice, 2013, pp.654-655).

The next session will present the benefits of higher education alongside the difficulties that refugees encounter in this journey through and to tertiary education.

#### 2.4.1 *Benefits and Aspirations*

As Wilkinson (2002) recognises, for individuals in general to succeed in education is important for future professional success. When it comes to refugees, the importance for employability is definitely important (Zeus, 2011; Sinclair, 2007), but it is complemented by a multitude of benefits. O'Rourke (2014) adds to this debate stating that education provides the opportunity for refugees to rebuild their lives, while maximising their skills and giving them opportunities to improve overall living standards. In this respect, higher education can assist to expand human capabilities and lead to a freer and more worthwhile life (Zeus, 2011). Refugees have been found to hold strong aspirations for higher education as means to overcome the experiences of forced-migration and educational discontinuities (Mangan & Winter, 2017)

Dryden-Peterson (2017) adds that education is crucial for conflict prevention and future rebuilding of conflict zones. And education can contribute to personal growth, social development, and knowledge creation, application, and dissemination. (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010) as well as a source of hope (Sinclair, 2007). The refugees' education also represents a source of hope for their families and a possible contribution for the country of origin (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). Ignoring the development of higher education has negative long-term consequences both for individuals and society (Dryden-Peterson, 2010, p14).

Zeus cited in Dryden-Peterson and Giles (2010) argues that higher education for refugees empowers them from within and aids them to become agents of their stories – which helps to revert the idea of refugees as victims. Kabeer, cited in Dryden-Peterson & Giles (2010) defines power as “the ability to make choices”. Au contraire, not being able to make choices is disempowerment (Dryden-Peterson e Giles 2010). In this regard, giving refugees the choice of

engaging in education can provide recovery, healing and empowerment for the displaced people (Moskal and North, 2017).

Access to higher education can also mean obtaining capital that has a big value in the new country employment market, with potential to enable professional identities reconstructions and reclaim of social status (Morrice, 2013). Higher education, then, can mean not only an integration tool, but also a tool to help refugees to adapt to the new surroundings (Zeus, 2011). Zeus (2011) also complements her argument by saying that higher education can be a valuable asset in any of the durable solutions that surround refugees, namely voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement. Education can help in the process of integration in the host society as well as it prepares the refugee to make meaningful contributions to their origin countries, in case of return (O'Rourke, 2014). Moreover, education for refugees prevent the creation of a lost-generation of youth (Avery & Said, 2017).

“Higher Education has the potential to play a key role in bridging the gap between relief and development by building refugees' capacity and self-reliance and thereby increasing their ability to control and manage aid services. More than moving towards developmental efforts, the long-term nature of the refugee situation demands approaches that break out of the relief/development dichotomy and reinforce a holistic developmental approach by 'looking at the immediate in terms of the longer term' (Zeus, 2011, p. 263).

Education has impact in many different levels, as it can be seen as a ladder for a better future (individually) and better future of society (Sinclair, 2007) and a tool for communities reconstruction and peacebuilding (Zeus, 2011; Avery and Said, 2017). Schooling also amplifies the capabilities in negotiating change, possibilities and personal aspirations (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017; Avery & Said, 2017).

In urban areas, ‘integration’ usually means the use of the national language as well as physically being together in school with nationals of the country (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Koehler, 2009). In this context, education is the place where culture is introduced and learned. Education assumes an important role in the integration (Wilkinson 2002; Koehler, 2009; Zeus, 2011), as it can help in the pre-acculturation process that introduces the language, norms, value and history of the new culture. (Araos, 2017). It becomes an arena of contact and interaction between refugees and other members of the hosting society.

It is crucial to note that education and the institutions that orbit around education have a critical relevance for the process of easing the burden for refugees, especially regarding integration. Educational institutes also assume an important role, as Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, and Silvagni note “educational institutions are the settings in which many of the hopes of refugee youth materialize and can perform an important role in orientating them to the culture of the host country” (2009, p.83). In the study carried out by Krause et al. (2005), one important feature that is recognised is that policies and university approaches should take into consideration the multitude of students’ background to meet their “possibly unique experiences and needs”.

Dryden-Peterson (2010) argues that social capital can be globally situated and that it can come from relationships that emerge from the refugee situation – for instance, it can come from institutions that provide support for refugees and from the network of relationships refugees build between themselves. Dryden-Peterson (2010) affirms that education help to develop social capital which is “necessary for future reconstruction and economic development in countries or regions of origin”. Dryden- Peterson adds that “social capital is the value of relationships and trust among people that enables productive activity” (Dryden-Peterson, 2017a, p.1014). Adult and young refugees carry with them social capital (Essomba, 2017) that can contribute to the two-way process (Koehler, 2009) of interactions.



As Bond et al. (2007) discuss, the education is an important pathway to bringing better mental and emotional health for young refugee. Also Dryden-Peterson (2017) asserts that refugees that encounter support across the system (not only institutional, but a broad sense of support: social, cultural, interrelational) they tend to present better mental and physical health – which also can be translated as positive outcomes in education. Another benefit for education among refugees is that it is seen as an inheritance that parents give their children (Dryden-Peterson, 2010).

Social networks play a crucial role in refugee migration, settlement and survival. Moreover, the social network communities online in higher education can create a knowledge-sharing space (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017). In this sense, research has found that Facebook is a great tool to promote the interaction of social networks of refugees: “Technology is creating new and sometimes unexpected opportunities for pathways to education for refugees”. (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 285).

#### 2.4.2 *Difficulties and Boundaries*

One aspect that is evident, but nevertheless needs attention is that the trajectory of asylum seekers does not end after the application for asylum – or even after receiving the refugee status. After and during the asylum application, there are several obstacles and challenges for refugees; one of them is integration. Integration assumes a vast meaning, that can range from receiving the refugee permit, feeling like they belong or even having access to education opportunities. Dryden-Peterson affirms that “the trajectories of refugees do not fit neatly into the established policy categories of return, local integration, and resettlement. Instead, they are non-linear and complex permutations of migration, exile, and consistently re-imagined futures.” (Dryden-Peterson, 2017b, p.12).

Another important aspect is that once someone is forcibly displaced their identities may be partially lost. “Even the most comfortable, prestigious and coveted among old identities turn into handicaps: they cramp the search for new identities better fit to the new milieu, prevent coming to grips with new realities and delay the recognition of the permanence of the new condition” (Bauman, 2002, p. 296) and he adds another important observation: “Refugees from the bestiality of wars and despotisms or the savagery of famished and prospectless existence have knocked on other people’s doors since the beginnings of modern times. For people behind those doors, they were always – as they are now – strangers.” (Bauman, 2016, p.3).

Regardless of the recognized importance and the premises from the international law that point to education as an important asset, refugees face several challenges in pursuing education. “Despite the importance of education for refugees, as a group they are highly likely to face more educational obstacles (...) Often, once the families have relocated, there are language barriers, prejudice, and financial concerns that further impede access to education.” (O’Rourke, 2014, p. 717). Besides, when it comes to higher education, the obstacles increase, as the opportunities are limited. Dryden-Peterson & Giles (2010; see also Dryden-Peterson, 2010) recognise that when it comes to refugees’ access to higher education is more limited than to primary and secondary. Avery and Said (2017) also recognise that more attention is given to primary and secondary school levels. Higher education is perceived as a luxury for an elite few (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010).

Refugee’s background education is often devaluated or downgraded. Morrice (2013) recognizes that de-valuation and de-skilling is something that has been documented from previous research; so, the disqualification of previous education is also a barrier to access the university. Even for adults and young refugees with previous higher education experiences, it is difficult to find an employment opportunity that matches their skills (Essomba, 2017), so

they find in higher education a manner to be allocated in the job market of the new country. (Sinclair, 2007; Zeus, 2011)

Dryden-Peterson & Giles (2010) indicate that even when refugees meet the academic requisites for higher education, they face other issues such as costs and documentation, funds to cover education (Sinclair, 2007) and additional related costs (UNHCR and Global Monitoring, 2016) can also be an issue. Dryden-Peterson and Giles (2010) affirms that education is not always included in humanitarian responses. While O'Rourke recognizes that international law is currently unequipped to protect second-generation human rights in the context of extraordinary crisis (O'Rourke, 2014).

For refugees, the transition from one country to another often encompasses a series of discontinuities and changes in every aspect of daily life, such as loss of work status, (Joyce et al, 2009), disrupted schooling (Wrench et al, 2017; UNHCR and Global Monitoring, 2016). The challenges of cultural displacement (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017), geographical change (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Morrice identifies that refugee trajectory is one marked by "both belonging and recognition, deficit and exclusion." (Morrice, 2013, p.654).

Language is also a challenge. Language acquisition and proficiency is directly related to integration in school context (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017). Refugees present varying levels of English language proficiency (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017) and the refugees in the Netherlands have an additional challenge, as they are required to learn Dutch (Koehler, 2009).

Experiences of trauma (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017) entail a well-prepared university staff and docent body to deal with persons who carry distressful background stories (Sinclair, 2007). However, refugees often bump into an educational planning that is often done

*for* them, instead *with* them (Zeus, 2011). Without the appropriate mechanism of support, one might create an ‘exclusionary inclusion’ (Olagookun & White, 2017).

Another difficulty is that many refugees have fled their homes “without being able to bring evidence of their credentials, qualifications and diplomas. They do not have the luxury of collecting this kind of information as they flee sudden violence.” (Essomba, 2017, p.211). The application procedure can also be confusing (UNHCR and Global Monitoring, 2016) .” In many countries, asylum seekers have difficulties registering at universities due to legal and/or cost barriers and are often considered overseas students subject to higher fees” (UNHCR and Global Monitoring, 2016, p. 10)

Disconnection (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017) geographic change and social isolation (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017). The different background can also lead students to experience the feeling of alienation in the school context (Olagookun & White, 2017). What’s more, the knowledge gap that many refugees encounter can also represent a big challenge for refugees to overcome (Olagookun & White, 2017).

The experiences and struggles of refugees’ life on a daily basis should also be acknowledge as a challenge and as a source of additional stress (Avery & Said, 2017). It is important to consider the feelings and psychological distresses of refugees, such as familial loss and destabilisation (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017). Discrimination (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017) is another aspect that is related to the experiences of discrimination and the latent fear of finding oneself in a discriminatory situation (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2009). The recognition of the refugee as the *other* can also contribute to the lack of the sense of belongingness (Olagookun & White, 2017) while it also can lead to discrimination situations (Gerrard, 2016). The construction of the *other* can

represent a challenge to integration, as the construction of *other* usually comes soaked in pre-fabricated and intolerant ideas (Gerrard, 2016)

Internal boundaries that refugees encounter in every day's life (Synnøve & Bendixsen, 2016). "Each immigration status entails different openings, limitations and consequences for access to work, health care and public services, education and the eventual possibility of gaining citizenship." (Synnøve & Bendixsen, 2016, p. 549) This represents an even bigger challenge for the asylum seeker, who differently from the refugee which has legal status, the asylum seeker must await recognition, and is thus denied any claims to citizenship rights." (Gerrard, 2016. p.886).

Clearly, such boundary processes are not produced, implemented or created merely by state power, but also through various forms of differentiation, including cultural recognition, linguistic hierarchy and various forms of stereotyping that exclude (Balibar and Wallerstein 2011) as well as include differentially (Nyers 2015). It reminds us how boundaries may be invisible to some while recognized and experienced by others (Cohen 1985). (Bendixsen, 2016, p.549).

Habitus, in turn, is the embodiment of dispositions that are "expressed through ways of speaking, gesturing, standing, thinking and feeling" (Morrice, 2013, p.655). Morrice argues that the refugee habitus is marked by the distressful trajectory that the refugee has been pursuing.

*"Habitus*, as used by Bourdieu, describes the culturally and situationally embedded structures that shape the way an individual interacts with her/his world, cognitively, physically, emotionally. One's *habitus* develops out of experiences in particular "field structures," or environments. This concept is useful in explaining not only the practical but also the emancipatory impacts of lack of access to education for

refugee children and young people. In particular, it describes processes of socialization that align aspirations with the conditions in which refugee young people find themselves and adapt what they see as possible to the logic of their surroundings. (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010, p. 4)

The process of cultural transition has been defined as acculturation and the stress associated with it is the acculturative stress (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2009) Refugees tend to experience high levels of acculturative stress (Berry, Uichol, Minde , & Mok, 1987). “Acculturation is a term which has been defined as culture change which results from continuous, first hand contact between two distinct cultural groups” (Berry, Uichol, Minde , & Mok, 1987, p. 491). While higher education can be of great contribution to refugees, it also brings a few challenges “Being a refugee can be associated with high levels of stress and disadvantage in society and studying in HE can bring its own particular pressures too”. (Mangan & winter, 2017, p.487)

## 2.5 Conceptual Model

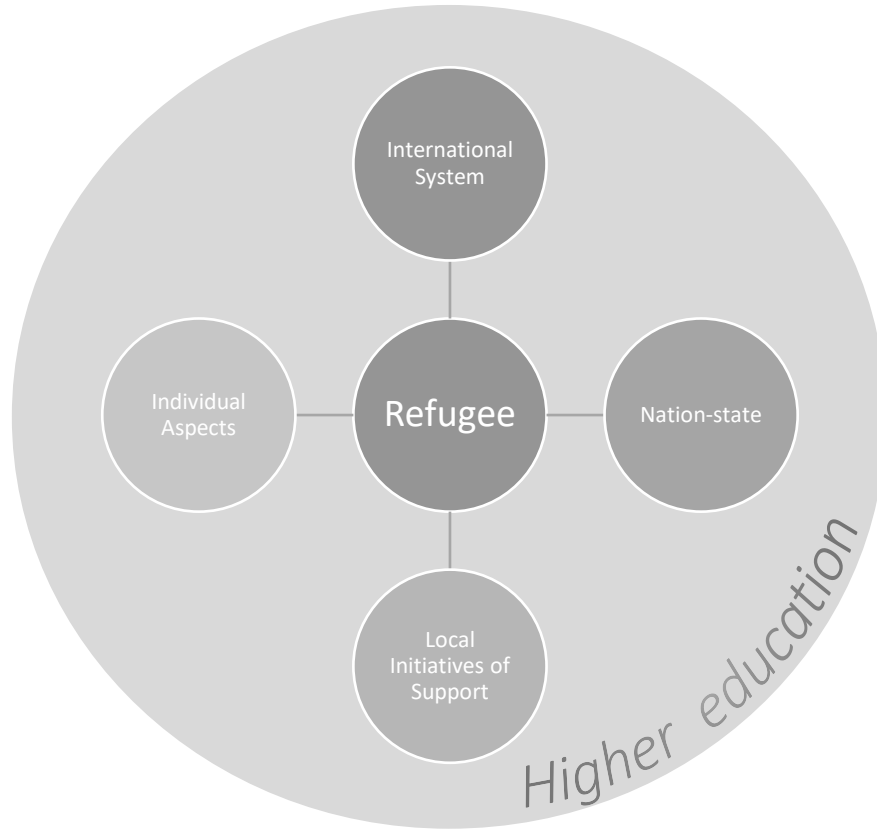


Figure 1 Conceptual model

The conceptual model for this research starts with a brief introduction of the context of the large numbers of displaced persons around the world, which involves refugees and asylum seekers. The refugee lies in the middle of the conceptual model because this is the focus of this thesis. The refugee is the starting point and all additional topics will orbit around the refugee. From the Figure 1 it is possible to identify four main topics that will be discussed in this thesis. The first one the international system framework will be presented as a historical and political analysis of regulations for education for refugees. The second topic, the nation-states

is strictly related to the first one, as the debate of the international framework touches upon topics such as the national sovereignty. The third topic, the local initiatives of support, will explore the role of these initiatives in assisting refugees through higher education. Lastly, the fourth topic is the experience of those refugees in the Netherlands. In the image it is possible to see that higher education is circumscribing all the topics as they will all be related to education.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Mixed Methods

In order to address the research question, this thesis will rely on mixed methods of analysis. The two methods used will be the historical-political analysis and the qualitative semi-structured interviews. Mixed methods can be used to maximise the understanding of a research question and they generate unique results (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie, & French, 2016). This thesis is strongly a transdisciplinary work, which helps to focus more on the problem than on the disciplines themselves. As cited in Joyce et al. (2009) Reis and Judd affirm that qualitative research produces a thematic content analysis that is succinct and reliable and could display the key themes in an easily communicated manner. The thesis will attempt to translate the impalpable international law in the experiences of refugees in higher education.

Concerning the first part of the thesis, I will present historical and policy analyses of the developments of international legal framework touching education for refugees. For this end, I will present a data set of existing literature, policy papers and documents from international organisations (n=18). The historical and political explanation will take an analytical perspective, which serves to provoke the debate of the global intuitionism within the system of nation-states (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Bauman, 2002). This is a transdisciplinary thesis, in other words, there is a variety of literature in terms of area of knowledge (ranging from Laws to Education studies). The multitude of disciplines was a deliberate choice to create multifaceted arguments, which provides a comprehensive approach for this thesis. Consequently, authors illustrated are from diverse academic background and origin, which serves to approach the topic in a multivocal manner.

Most of policy documents were extracted from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is a constituent agency to the United States and is the agency responsible for refugee affairs. I applied the historical analysis method proposed by Amenta (2009) in which attention is given to the timing, the sequence, and interpretations of historical events under the light of my research. The first policy document used in this analysis is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. The choice of this document as the first document to be analysed relies on the fact that it represented an important milestone for the individual rights and the universalism of rights in the international system.

Another important choice for this thesis is the starting date for the historical analysis and the geographical choice for it as well. The time frame where I start the analysis is the beginning of the XX century, with the end of World War I and the outcasts it has created. As explained by Agamben (1995, p.114) “the first appearance of refugees as a mass phenomenon occurred at the end of World War I, when the collapse of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires, and the new order created by the peace treaties, profoundly upset the demographic and territorial structure of Central and Eastern Europe.”. As from this time the nation-states were taking the first steps towards the creation of the international agency that would inspire the modern international system.

The second empirical part of the thesis consists of semi-structured interviews (combined with additional relevant literature). This method was chosen to present a comprehensive discussion relating to refugees that included refugees’ voices as well. This method of empirical analysis adds to the debate of what has been done and what has been found and helps to create a solid basis for the present work. I established two criteria for the interviewees of refugees: being from a refugee background and being involved or have been involved in higher education in the Netherlands. Higher education, as explained before, concerns post-secondary studies. I searched for and contacted the interviewees through social network (Facebook), as well as from

an event about higher education for refugees in Utrecht on 15 June 2018 (Inclusion Conference 2018). It also happened that one interviewee indicated another one, as in a snowballing process. For the leaders from the initiatives, the criterion was to be engaged with an initiative that promotes/facilitates higher education for refugees in the Netherlands. I could reach them from the initiatives websites, or from indication from my supervisor. For the analyses of interviews, I opted for using long pieces from the transcriptions in order to present their points of views using their words.

### 3.2 Internship

One important aspect that contributed to this research was the mandatory internship. The internship was doubtlessly one of the most challenging parts of the master's degree. I followed an internship at a company that worked closely with events in the European Parliament and other organisations based in Brussels. In that moment I came across several topics that were being intensely discussed by various groups. Refugees and education were in the panel of different organisations, and biases were diverse. In this regard, the internship helped me to perceive two things. First, that education to adults and young adults is an important feature of nowadays social fabric. Second, that the debates relating to refugees is an ongoing issue that needs to be analysed under different approaches. These different perspectives that were placed on these topics contributed to stimulate my curiosity. At certain point, I realised that as from the five months I attended those events I have not encountered both topics being conjugated together. So, I decided to investigate it myself.

### 3.3 Pros and Cons

On the one hand, there are a few disadvantages to the way I chose to conduct my thesis. Opting for a mixed methods analysis, for example, can lead to a broad investigation of topics

without truly delving into any of them. One way to neutralise this disadvantage is to be constantly referring to the research question and central topics. The second inconvenience is that conducting interviews is time consuming and might present findings that are of “more of the same”. This also includes the preparation required to deal with refugee background people who might have traumas from their distressful experiences (Morrice, 2013). In this regard, the questions had to be carefully chosen and the respondents respected in case they did not want to talk about distressing experiences from the past. This thesis has no intend to increase or to bring discomfort to the population analysed.

Another disadvantage of the choices for this thesis, is the target population. Although the number of refugees and displaced persons are considered to be high, the ones that are involved in higher education worldwide is equal 1% of the total of eligible refugees and displaces persons (UNHCR, 2018) and the statistics are not easy to gather (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, Introduction: Higher Education for Refugees, 2010). It means that it is a small population and it was not easy to identify them, given their dispersion in space and the limited resources available. Another limitation is that this research is euro-centric in the place of analysis and it overlooks parallel events that are occurring in other places of the world – with a brief exception to the presentation of the international context of conflicts. Lastly, using English as the communication language can turn out to be a disadvantage, as it is not my mother/native tongue, neither is it the mother/native tongue of the interviewees. It can lead to mistranslations and inaccuracy of meanings. Besides the choice of English language means that some groups are excluded (non-English speakers refugees) and other privileged in the research (English speakers refugees).

On the other hand, there are favourable aspects of my research. The mixed methods analysis is an important approach for this thesis as it has an interdisciplinary topic. The multivocal choice of authors also bring different colours to the topic, which enriches the debate. The

historical-political analysis provides the reader with background to understand the central argument of my thesis. The diversity of topics also leaves room for future research to stem on specific topics that are only slightly touched in this thesis. Finally, the presence of the voices of refugees in this research creates primary source material to complement the findings of the thesis. The voice of representatives from the initiatives such as Inclusion and Asylum University creates new material and helps to build an argument in favour to solutions that can be replicated in other parts of the world.

### 3.4 Justifying Choices

This research has the preoccupation of introducing the topic in a chronological order. It follows the aforementioned order proposed by Amenta (2009). This approach was particularly chosen as it helps to build the argument itself, since I will be talking about the developments of international legal framework in the XX century. In this case, it provides evidences that refugee international legislation has developed slowly throughout time. This thesis also includes several recent pieces of news. This helps to endorse the argument that this topic is relevant and current and needs to be included in the academia as well. The choice for analysing a group of refugees in higher education was partially motivated by the possibility to communicate in English. This is also a relevant work as it conjugates the complexity of the international juridical scope in face of the individual lived experiences.

Another choice for this thesis is the rights categorisation under the generations approach. Attoh (2011) presents several different categorisations for rights: moral, legal, positive, negative, generational, to name some. Each approach sheds a different kind of light in the field of rights, which has implications in both the political and practical outcomes (Attoh, 2011). In

this thesis, I opted for the generational division of rights for a few reasons. First, this approach has a chronological sense that makes it easier to place certain sets of rights under each generation. Second, the generational approach follows the developments that happened under the UN in terms of rights establishment. And finally, the generational approach was born under the UN umbrella in an UNESCO meeting.

### 3.5 Interviews

For the interviews, it was used a qualitative approach with semi-structured questionnaire, which can be found in the Annex 1. “Qualitative research lends itself to focusing on lived subjective experiences and the meanings drawn by participants” (Mangan & Winter, 2017, p. 488). In the questions for the interview I attempted to use the method proposed by Gehlbach & Maureen (2011) in which questions start from a general approach of the personal experience of the interviewees regarding certain construct followed by a direct investigation bringing up previous findings in existing literature. I interviewed refugees and leaders of local initiatives that are focused on the refugee topic. Before the interview, the interviewees were provided with the consent for research studies which can be found in Annex 2. To comply with the privacy and ethical regulations, the conversations were audio recorded and participants will be identified by initials only. The transcriptions of the interviews were sent to the examination board without any personal identification of the participants with a refugee background. This research is committed with the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Therefore, all the data collected will remain secure on a computer database that can be accessed by password only. All information provided will remain confidential and all participants will remain anonymous, unless they request otherwise. At the completion of this research, participants can request a summary of findings. In total, 13 interviews were conducted, being 10 of them with

refugee students and 3 with initiative representatives. For the interview with the refugees, at the beginning of the interview a series of demographic questions were asked to establish age, length of stay in the Netherlands and country of origin.

The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 23 and 63 minutes. The age range was 25 to 39. I interviewed 8 men and 2 women who have been in the Netherlands for a period between 6 months and 3 years and half. The level of higher education they are enrolled is bachelor and master's degree. The use of English as the communication language sometimes lead to misunderstandings and different interpretation of meanings, from both parts.

INTERVIEW DETAILS							
REFUGEE STUDENTS							
INITIALS	GENDER	AGE	UNIVERSITY	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	TIME IN THE NETHERLANDS	INTERVIEW DATE	INTERVIEW LENGTH
Y.H.	M	28	Radboud University	SYRIA	2 ½ YEARS	27/06/2018	(01:02:05)
M.S.	M	27	Radboud University	SYRIA (PALESTINIAN ORIGIN)	2 ½ YEARS	27/06/2018	(00:34:18)
M.A.J.	M	32	Utrecht University	SYRIA	2 ½ YEARS	20/07/2018	(00:23:47)
G.A.	F	28	Utrecht University	SYRIA	10 MONTHS	20/07/2018	(00:24:26)
A.H.J.	M	39	Utrecht University	YEMEN	6 MONTHS	25/07/2018	(00:29:07)
A.M.	M	27	Utrecht University	YEMEN	3 ½ YEARS	25/07/2018	(00:54:18)
B.A.J.	M	25	Leiden University	SYRIA	3 YEARS	31/07/2018	(00:44:09)
H.A.B.	F	29	Utrecht University	SYRIA (PALESTINIAN ORIGIN)	3 YEARS	31/07/2018	(00:51:12)
Y.F.M.	M	29	Utrecht University	BURUNDI	2 ½ YEARS	31/07/2018	(00:22:34)
M.D.A.	M	32	Utrecht University	YEMEN	3 ½ YEARS	31/07/2018	(00:41:42)

Figure 2 Details of Interviews with Refugee Students

Experiences of students in Utrecht represents the biggest share of this thesis. This is mainly due the fact that Inclusion hosted a conference in which I could network with refugees and

after that a few of them introduced me to an acquaintance. The interviews took place in bars and cafés around Utrecht Centraal Station.

For the interviews with leaders from projects related to refugees, I could arrange conversations with the initiative from Nijmegen and Maastricht and Utrecht. These interviews lasted around 60 minutes. These initiatives were chosen gradually as I discovered about them during my thesis research: Asylum University was an indication from my supervisor, Inclusion accidentally appeared on my Facebook suggestions and Refugee Program

INTERVIEW DETAILS					
INITIATIVES					
NAME	CITY	STARTING YEAR	MAIN OBJECTIVE	INTERVIEW DATE	INTERVIEW LENGTH
ASYLUM UNIVERSITY	Nijmegen	2015	Create spaces for conversation between university and refugees	04/07/2018	(00:49:00)
REFUGEE PROJECT MAASTRICHT	Maastricht	2015	Meaningful time of waiting	23/07/2018	(00:31:17)
INCLUSION	Utrecht	2016	Make Friends	06/08/2018	(00:44:08)

*Figure 3 Details of Interviews with Initiatives*

Maastricht was the result of internet research. I tried to communicate with other initiative but failed. Also, I tried to contact the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), but they do not accept requests for interviews. I will interpret the data collected in the interviews in the light of my research question, referring to the literature.

Following each interview, I wrote notes on the participant`s main ideas and my initial thinking about the conversation with the interviewee. This helped me to adapt and improve the interview guide and helped me shape my research design for my final conclusions. The choice for interviews allows this thesis to present original first data collection.

To analyse the data collected through the interview, I used a coding technique. I manually sorted out the topics that were approached in the conversations and grouped the perspectives under these topics. In other words, after the interviews I re-read the transcripts



and highlighted the similarities and differences between the answers from both the refugees and then from the initiatives.

## 4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSES - Historical/Political Analysis

### 4.1 International Community

One of the greatest innovations in International Law ever since the articulation of an international community, as observed by Alfred Verdross (apud Cançado Trindade, Peytrignet, & Santiago, 2004), is the protection of the individual. This kind of legal articulation goes back to the advent of human rights and their powerful impact for the protection of all persons. Verdross was accurate to point to the inclusion of individuals as objects in International Law but, for that to occur, it was necessary to articulate an organised international community. The first attempt to organise the international community was in 1919, after the end of the World War I. The League of Nations, as it came to be known, was one of the resolutions from the Peace Treaties. Its mission was the promotion of cooperation, peace and international security (Cançado Trindade, Peytrignet, & Santiago, 2004).

It was also in this period when the world saw the appearance of refugees as a mass phenomenon in Europe.

“The first appearance of refugees as a mass phenomenon occurred at the end of World War I, when the collapse of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires, and the new order created by the peace treaties, profoundly upset the demographic and territorial structure of Central and Eastern Europe. In a short time, a million and a half White Russians, seven hundred thousand Armenians, five hundred thousand Bulgarians, a million Greeks, and hundreds of thousands of Germans, Hungarian and Romanians left their countries and moved elsewhere. (...) A few years later, the racial laws in Germany and the Civil War in Spain disseminated a new and substantial contingent of refugees throughout Europe.” (Agamben, 1995, pp. 114-115)

The large number contributed to expose that rights were intrinsically connected to belonging to a nation-state. “The huge masses of refugees that could be found throughout Europe when the fighting ended in 1918, therefore, were victims of the new-style nation-states” (Haddad, 2010, p.316). Arendt (1973) draws poignant comments regarding the stateless and rightless traits of those displaced at that time:

“Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless. (...) Such visible exposures were the sufferings of more and more groups of people to whom suddenly the rules of the world around them had ceased to apply.” (Arendt, 1973, p. 267).

Another aspect that is relevant, notes Agamben (1995), is that after the World War I, different countries across Europe introduced laws that permitted their own citizens to be denaturalised and denationalised.

“The first was France, 1915 with regard to naturalised citizens of ‘enemy’ origins; in 1922, the example was followed by Belgium, which revoked the naturalisation of citizens who had committed ‘anti-national’ acts during the war; in 1926 the Fascist regime in Italy passed a similar law concerning citizens who had shown themselves to be ‘unworthy of Italian citizenship’; in 1933 it was Austria’s turn, and so forth, until in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws divided German citizens into full citizens and citizens without political rights. These laws – and the mass statelessness that resulted – mark a decisive turning point in the life of the modern nation-state and its definitive emancipation from the naïve notions of ‘people’ and ‘citizen’” (Agamben, 1995, p. 115).

Agamben recognises that rights are intrinsically tied to the idea of belonging to a nation-state/being a citizen. To illustrate this view the author says that before being sent to the extermination camps, the gypsies and the Jews had to go under a denationalization process (even those who had already lost the political rights). What is the novelty in this trinity equation is that there is a growing number of people who do not fall under this trinity equation – the refugees. The refugees, Agamben (1995) says, they call into question the principles of the nation-state.

As the first formal international community, the League of Nations made important advancements that would serve to lay the ground for the arrangements of the contemporary international community. The first progress brought by the League of Nations was the stretch of the sovereignty model. Historically, the relationship between States and citizens was restrained by the national frontiers; however, as the international community was outlined, the trusteeship of individuals was broadened to beyond the borders. “League of Nation was charged to safeguard the right of those who had been left without national states of their own” (Arendt, 1973, p. 272. This pioneer revision of sovereignty means, in other words, that State-members agreed to comply to rules from an outside body, accepting eventual penalties in case of nonconformity. “That king can do no wrong” was no longer a valid statement, as the Covenant of the League of Nations prescribed interventions for those State-members which failed to follow the prerogatives of the pact (Article 13 and 15 from the Covenant of the League of Nations)

The second important advancement was the humanitarian right proposed by the League of Nations. It is considered one of the first steps towards the process of internationalization of human rights. Humanitarian Right, as defined by Thomas Buergenthal (Claude & Weston apud Piovesan, 2008), is the human rights component of the law of war. It means it is applicable in case of war with the intention to limit the action of the State, it preconises the protection of

people in case of war. Pertinently, the existence of humanitarian law also reinforces the relativizing of the States' sovereignty (Piovesan, 2008). The two of these novelties were especially important for future human rights to achieve universality; inasmuch as human rights are a matter of international interest that overflow the traditional concept of sovereignty.

World War II brought light to the weaknesses of the League of Nations. The conflict represented a profound rupture with the organisation's prerogatives and attempts. In this regard, WWII produced a legacy of destruction, not only of places, but also of institutions and values (Arendt, 1973). Hence, after the World War II there was a strong need to rebuild: places, organisations and values were necessary for the foundation of a remoulded Europe. Both the elaboration and inauguration of the modern human rights are a post-war phenomenon. It was a response to the violations that happened during the war and the wide spread belief that part of the violations could have been avoided have a system for the international protection of human rights existed (Thomas Buerghenthal apud Piovesan, 2008). The atrocities of the war denied humans as sources of rights and their value as individuals, so the following advent of human rights tried to remediate that.

For International Law, the World War II represented an important milestone: from that moment onwards, there was the emergence of a new international order under the seal of the United Nations (UN) and its specialised organisations, and the formulation of the Bill of Rights<sup>1</sup>. Human Rights were included in the core of the new organisation that would dialogue with the international community: The United Nations. This historical moment pinpoints a new way of conducting the international relations, because now the focus was on three major topics: peace keeping and international security, the development of amicable relations between states, and the protection of human rights. "[T]he post-1945 period saw a shift to an international

---

<sup>1</sup> The UN Charter (1945), the UDHR (1948) and the Covenants from 1966 together are called the International Bill of Rights.

states system based on the idea of negative, procedural sovereignty. It had been seen that constitutional guarantees within states were no guarantee for the protection of citizens. Abuse of the power to make and unmake citizens was now understood to be a danger inherent in sovereignty.” (Haddad, 2010, p.319).

The Universal Declaration of rights from 1948 has an important implication for education, as noted by Dryden-Peterson: “In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized compulsory education as a universal entitlement.” (Dryden-Peterson, 2010, p. 10) In the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the article 13 is focused on education that everyone has the right to education. Not only there, but also a series of following conventions and recommendations recognise education as a tool for development, such as the Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974).

Another important juridical aspect of the 1948 declaration is its legal value. As defined by UNESCO (2018), as a rule, a declaration or a recommendation do not possess a legally binding obligation on the countries which have signed it. It means that these instruments are intended to declare certain aspirations, without implicating any retaliation in case of nonconformity. Declarations and recommendations cannot be ratified, for example. However, in some cases, declarations can assume the validity of a treaty in the generic sense, which was the case of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“Some instruments entitled 'declarations' were not originally intended to have binding force, but their provisions may have reflected customary international law or may have gained binding character as customary law at a later stage. Such was the case with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” (UNESCO, 2018).

The declaration, then, presented a set of international customs with binding value that should assume the role of a code of conduct for the States part of the international community. As per definition, an international custom depends on the “concordance” of a significative number of countries in relation to certain practice. (Piovesan, 2008).

#### 4.2 Social and Cultural Rights

The Declaration is the cornerstone for the endeavour of an international order based on the respect for the human dignity with basic universal values. The declaration consolidated the affirmation of a universal ethic and it consecrates universal values that should be pursued individually by each and every State. Despite the call for a universal ethics, the loose instruments of enforcement of the declaration can be translated as the different approaches to international events such as the refugee crisis. In essence, human rights are destined to all individuals despite any discriminatory precondition, as the human condition is the only requisite for it to be granted. This is a clear rupture with the Nazism regime which tied the rights to the belonging to certain requirements. Under the human rights logic, the individual goes from being an object of the law to a subject of law (Piovesan, 2008).

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” And continues in the Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity .... They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another with the spirit of brotherhood.” (UN General Assembly, 1948)

Regarding human rights under the umbrella of the UN, Karel Vasak (1977) recognises the task was three-fold: first it was fundamental to define the Human Rights Declaration;

second additional covenants were required to thoroughly include the facets of human rights; finally, it was necessary to establish additional bodies to regulate these rights. The panorama after the Charter is the creation and definition of a collection of norms to delineate human rights, the covenants, which were accomplished in 1966. It is important to note that the trajectory of human rights is one that is gradual and consistent, which means that it is still broadening until nowadays. Nowadays, all states from the international community participate in the declaration. (Cançado Trindade, Peytrignet, & Santiago, 2004).

It was 1948 when the recently created Human Rights Commission started to elaborate two projects that would serve to further describe the obligations of States regarding human rights. These projects were approved in 1966, namely the Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the two pacts came into force in the beginning of 1976. The time between the Human Rights Declaration and the commencement of the Covenants represents a gap of 18 years for the codification of human rights. This prolonged time gap provides an idea of the slow process behind the legal foundation of human rights. Only thereupon the international agenda started to conjugate the subject of human rights in the same level of importance as other topics such as security, development, and peace keeping.

It is not new that education is proposed as solution for many different social situations. Refugee is not an exception. Part of the goals for refugee population is to ensure that kids and younglings have access to education. In this work, it is discussed the high education.

“Among the benefits of [higher education] HE, according to the UNHCR, are that it ‘contributes to solutions and post-conflict reconstruction, promotes social, economic and gender equality and empowers refugee communities’ (UNHCR, 2015b,



p. 1). HE also presents a means of integrating into a new society and of increasing one's chances of gaining higher level employment." (Magan and Wintter, p 487).

Human rights have surged as the paradigm and ethical referential that would serve as north for the contemporary international order (Piovesan, 2008). Human Rights, then, shifts from being the preoccupation of national jurisdiction to becoming a preoccupation of the international law. The right to absent is now converted into the right to act with the emergency of human rights and social needs (Piovesan, 2008).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights demarks the moment in which human protection is widened beyond the sovereignty of Nation States (Froehlich & Vieira, 2009) The main purpose of the Declaration was to universally recognise the human rights and fundamental freedoms which the

Throughout the years other international conventions covering other important topics have been established. Convention against genocide (1948), convention against racial discrimination (1965), against torture (1984) are a few examples. Human Rights were branching out to embrace and offer lawful protection to all persons vulnerable under all circumstances (Froehlich & Vieira, 2009). To cite Hanna Arendt, as appeared in Bauman:

"the world is not humane just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse. We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human. The Greeks called this humanness which is achieved in the discourse of friendship philanthropia, 'love of man', since it manifests itself in a readiness to share the world with other men." (Hanna Arendt apud Zygmunt Bauman, 2002, pp.298-299).

For the most part, human rights can be categorised into two main groups. The first one is the Civil and Political rights and the second is the Social, Economic and Cultural rights. This division becomes clear in the two covenants that cover these rights and in the applicability of them: while Civil and political Rights have immediate applicability, Social, Economic and Cultural ones are progressively accomplished – as they are conditioned to a state action. Around 1980, the categorisation of rights gained a new presentation. The rights gained the seal of generations, which opened the space for new rights to join the classification. It is important to emphasise that none of the categorisations imply a rupture within the rights – they remain indivisible regardless the seal they are under. It will be discussed in the next section of this work.

#### 4.3 The Generations Approach of Rights

"There seems nothing inherently wrong in either changing concepts or expanding the list of human rights. As our societies technology, problems, attitudes, and expectations change, there is bound to be a corresponding change in the claims we view as basic, in the order of importance in which we rank these claims, and in the things we expect governments to do or not to do. Moreover, there is perhaps something to be said for an increase alone in the number and types of broadly humanitarian claims we are prepared to call human rights, since this will hopefully increase the pressures for their practical achievement!" (Bilder 1969 apud Alston 1982).

The idea to categorise human rights was first brought up by Karel Vasak in 1979, at the International Institute for Human Rights in Strasburg. The human rights under this

classification falls into three generations. The first generation is known as the negative rights, where there is certain tension amongst groups. There are prohibitions and freedom. Prohibitions to genocide, slavery, murder, torture, arbitrary detention. And freedom can be summarised as the political and civil rights: these include the right to vote, to participate in political groups, etc. To cope with them the state is required no immediate action.

“The first group embraces all those rights of freedom which were recognized by the liberal state constitutions of the 19th Century. Under these rights are found, among others, personal freedom, the freedom of belief and conscience, the freedom of assembly and association, the freedom of movement, and the freedom to seek asylum in other countries; thus, this group includes a list of rights which have as their substance non-interference by the state, because they concern individual freedoms into which the power of the state may not interfere.” (Verdross, 1979, p. 21).

The two other groups of rights, in contrast, are based on action from the State – it means that the State is obliged to act in order to provide people some rights. The second generation regulates the economic and cultural rights, these rights are to be credited against the State and international bodies (Alston, 1982). Rights from the second generation are known as the rights to equality.

“Unlike first-generation human rights, which are often referred to as “negative rights” because they “restrict the state from interfering in the individual’s participation in political and civil society,” second-generation human rights “are considered positive rights because they give individuals the right *to something*, as opposed to the right against something.” (O’Rourke, 2014, p. 729).

Finally, the rights from the third generation are the rights of solidarity. The first appearance of the idea of solidarity rights is unclear but, the main proponent of this idea was

Karel Vasak. As Alston (1982) describes, for these rights there is a level of solidarity required amongst groups: “born of the obvious brotherhood of men and of their indispensable solidarity; rights which would unite men in a finite world” (Alston, p. 310). The third generation of rights is broad and encompasses, for example, the right to development, to peace, to communicate, to be different, and right to humanitarian assistance.

“All human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent; equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of both civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights. (...) Profoundly convinced that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interrelated and indivisible.” (UN General Assembly, 1977, p. 150).

The generation approach does not undervalue existing rights, nor it discourages further improvement of existing ones. In fact, the distribution in generations puts some light on the dynamism of rights and on their constant evolution

“It would be short-sighted and counterproductive to underestimate the importance of adopting a dynamic approach to the development of human rights concepts (...) the vitality and enduring significance of the human rights tradition depends in large measure on the extent to which it can respond to new needs and can accommodate the concerns with which the majority of the peoples of the world are preoccupied” (Alston, 1982, p. 314).

It is true that for human rights to be relevant they must reflect the pressing issues of individuals and communities. This research so far has presented the change in the sovereignty concept, the evolution of rights, the advent of human rights and how these rights are

developing. Refugee-related legal arrangements are intertwined with all these topics and will be presented in the following section.

#### 4.4 Refugees, Education and International Law

"Let us grasp the idea that there are two commonwealths - the one, a vast and truly common state, which embraces alike gods and men, in which we look neither to this corner of earth nor to that, but measure the bounds of our citizenship by the path of the sun; the other, the one to which we have been assigned by the accident of birth." (Seneca Apud Verdross 1979 p. 5)

Humanity has always been on the move. The motives that lead one person to move are diverse. While some people willingly move to look for new opportunities in life, others see in displacement the only viable option, as the very own reasons for displacement are beyond their control. As stated by the UN General Assembly in 2016, the motives can be “to escape armed conflict, poverty, food insecurity, persecution, terrorism, or human rights violations and abuses. Still others do so in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters (...) or other environmental factors.”

The idea of fleeing one's country and finding shelter in another place is not new, as Malkki (1995) and Zetter (2007) stated the term ‘refugee’ has adopted a number of different understandings and meanings in different contexts, but it is essentially a legal designation. Both the definition of refugee and the legal regulation for refuge in the international system only started from the mid XX century. Refugee, as per definition, is a question born in the heart of the international relations. As to say, it has been international from the beginning, and with the

advent and consolidation of the United Nations, the matter of refugees gained the tutelage of an international body. “Large movements of refugees and migrants must have comprehensive policy support, assistance and protection, consistent with States’ obligations under international law” (United Nations General Assembly, 2016).

In the World War II, the matter of refugees was not centralised in any organisation. It is possible to identify different institutions exploring the topic, and specially countries taking actions *ad hoc* on their territories (Arendt, 1973). However, after WWII, more attention was given to the international community:

“The international refugee regime was to be a way of managing the problem of individuals who destabilise the system by acting between states, an international corrective mechanism to stop individuals existing between states. In other words, the solution in the post-war period was thought to be found outside the state. Hence refugee policy from the outset was clearly closely connected to the growing field of human rights legislation and the emerging principle of individual rights (...) With the new emphasis on negative, external sovereignty and the importance of relations *between* states, the refugee was given a more prominent place in the international community precisely because she was an international figure existing between states rather than within them. (...) Only once the displaced person left her country of origin and crossed an international border would she become a ward of international society. It was therefore shown to be in the interest of international society to uphold respect for human rights between states and offer protection to individuals outside their state of origin.” (Haddad, 2010, p.319).

The definition of refugee can be pointed to the 1936 session of the Institute of International Law in Brussels, which interpreted a refugee 'any person who, because of political

events arising in the State of which he is a national, has left or remains outside the territory of that State, and has not acquired another nationality and does not enjoy the protection of another State.' (Jackson, 1991, p. 405).

The beginning of the World War II in 1939 marks the failure of League of Nations' prerogatives. This world conflict produced unprecedented destruction and damage for humanity. Once again and stronger than ever before, international concern turned its eyes to the individuals as subjects of legal prepositions inter-nations. The post-war efforts resulted in displaced many people and made it an international concern.

The period after the WWII was also a moment of economic restructuration all around Europe. Sheltering non-nationals was perceived a delicate issue due to the fragile economies at that time. Born in that environment, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established, and it was crucial to protect the integrity of persons and to guarantee the right for asylum in a third country. One year after, in 1949, the General Assembly decided to create a High Commissioner's Office for Refugees. According to its statute the "work of the High Commissioner is humanitarian and social and of an entirely non-political character." (UNHCR, 1950).

The Geneva convention for the Statute of refugees in 1951, also known as the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is of extreme importance for refugee studies. This convention can be considered the Carta Magna of modern refugee legal framework: it determines the refugee condition, and it establishes the rights and duties of refugees. Along with the Protocol from 1967, these are the two most relevant documents relating to refugees nowadays. The importance of the 1951 convention lies in the universality of the refugee agenda. Before that, the conventions addressed specific groups of refugees, which means they

were conventions *ad hoc* for the situations that took place at a particular moment and circumstance.

When observing the evolution of the international definition of the legal standards for the treatment of refugees, it becomes apparent that the United Nations Refugee Convention in 1951 was the culmination of this process. It was the guide for the future of international protection for refugees in the coming years. Considering that the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have both affirmed the principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination.

However, the 1951 convention had some delimitations in time and place relating to the recent war. If these delimitations would remain, the convention would become ineffective, as it was clear to refer that it solely covered the events that took place before 12 January 1951. The Convention also had a geographical limitation, in which the coverage would only be applicable in case the events happened in Europe. This implied that refugees would only be considered as such if they were consequence of the events until that specific date and space. This implicated that the Convention had a utility tied to the world war II outcomes.

The limitations resulting from the convention 1951 proved to be a serious obstacle to the protection of refugees in various new refugee situations. In order to work around this issue, efforts initiated in 1960 led to the adoption of the additional Protocol in 1967 in which member states agreed to remove the 1951 delimitation. The Protocol from 1967 was established to extinguish these limitations and make the Declaration universal. The protocol recognised the limitations of the Convention and expanded the applicability of the Convention to all the persons who fall under the category of “refugee”, according to the description of the convention.



The convention from 1951 is an important instrument in the protection of refugees. It institutionalises the principle of non-refoulement. Non refoulement protects from devolution, which aims to avoid torture, inhuman or degrading penalties and other abuses. This principle is crucial to the question of refugees and it is a *Jus Cogens* norm, that is, non-revocable. According to this principle, no individual should be expelled or returned to the territory where there their life or liberty is menaced on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The Non-Refoulement, presented in the article 33 of the 1951 Convention Relating to Refugees.

In the beginning of XX century, refugee matter was pulverised in many different bodies and organisations. Nowadays, in the international arena it is centralised in the UNHCR. This organisation aims to provide international protection for refugees, as well as the prevention and the search for durable solutions for refugees. Since their creation, UNCHR has already helped 50 million refugees (UNHCR, 2018). Of course, the number of refugees surpasses those who have been helped. One must always recognise that in a world of limited capacities and conflicting interests, expectation will necessarily exceed accomplishment (Moussalli, 1991), and there is an ongoing conflict between the desirable and the attainable.

People forced to move represent an urgent human rights concern. Not only the trajectory of refugees, but also the violations refugees have encountered in their past have direct impact in the possibility of a life in liberty, safety and dignity (Moussalli, 1991). The past of refugees is usually maculated with severe scars, such “human rights violations, international armed conflict, serious internal disturbance or intolerable internal repression” (Moussalli, 1991, p. 607).

It is necessary to make some reflection upon the complex character of refugee and asylum challenges nowadays. The objective of the UN to secure peace has not been

successfully achieved and there are numerous conflicts all over the world. Although conflicts are the first emergency situation that are related to forced displacement, there are other hostile environments that force people to move out. There is need for solutions that seek to tackle down the issue on the short and on the long term, and support needs to go beyond shelter. The Convention from 1951 was unequivocally important to address the immediate actions for the issue. But what come after that is extremely important as well. In between the long and immediate solutions, lies the intermediate solutions. Emphasis is increasingly placed on the need for more flexible and intermediate solution. But at the same time there should be efforts put in addressing the causes of the refugee exodus and paving the way for voluntary repatriation. It should be recalled, however, that the aim of the Convention is to define certain basic human rights of refugees, for example, non-refoulement, and also to establish certain minimum standards for their treatment in the State where they have been granted asylum.

More than 20 years later after the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural rights that first preconised education for all; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989, reaffirmed the commitment with education. “Make higher education accessible to *all* on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;” After that, the Education For all Declaration, in 1990, reaffirmed the global commitment to achieve universal access to education and these were incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). The Sustainable Development goals from 2012 promoted that everyone should have access to quality education, while the UN New York declaration from 2016 presents a series of dispositions that should be adopted by state-members in order to secure quality and universal access to education by migrants and refugees.

The investigation through the developments of international regulations towards refugee and refuge shows that the trajectory of instruments in the international level take a long time to be completed. Not only this, the instruments have flaws and not always reflect

immediate action from member states. The efforts towards securing education for refugees have not always been on the agenda of the international dialogues, although it is an essential aspect for the life of young people in the condition of forced displacement. In sum, it is important to keep the debates on the international level as they give protagonism to topics that should be improved within nation-states.

## 5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSES - Interviews

### 5.1 Refugees' Experiences in Higher Education

In this section, the stories of refugees in higher education in the Netherlands are portrayed through their own narratives that were collected in the interviews. The interviews confirmed a few of the findings that were previously noted on literature research and added other dimensions that were not explored in the theoretical framework. To help with the fluidity of the text, the ten stories will be combined into a narrative that highlights the common aspects regarding different topics. At the same time the unique aspects will appear to counterbalance and to stress that stories are individual and may vary. The storyline of this chapter starts at the trajectory to higher education and the motivations that led to it. It develops to the networks of support surrounding the higher education trajectory and then to the experiences in higher education. Finally, the last part will present their views on the current landscape of higher education for refugees in the Netherlands and how education assisted them in integrating in the Dutch society.

#### 5.1.1 Motivation

Once refugees arrive to the Netherlands it is not clear which pathway they are going to take. “When I came to the Netherlands I didn’t know what to do exactly” (M.A.J.). But education comes as an option, for several different reasons “I wanted to do something with my degree which unfortunately I couldn’t practice a lot after graduation due to the circumstances in Syria.” (M.A.J.). The period of “not knowing what to do” in the new country can be very upsetting and the prospect of participation in higher education can bring positive feelings, as M.A.J. describes his situation before and after being accepted into Utrecht University “Before

I was like there was kind of depression, you know, with this situation. But now it's getting better." (M.A.J.).

The existing literature analysed in this thesis, Sinclair (2007), Zeus (2011) and Wilkinson (2002) noted that education assumes the role of a means to achieve professional success in the job market of the new country. Indeed, the standpoint that higher education can contribute to better job opportunities can be perceived in the discourse of half of the interviews (M.A.J., G.A., A.M., B.A.J. M.D.A.) and can be summarised by A.M.'s words "[It] is a key that opens a lot of locks". Correlated to this is the idea of starting a new life, as M.D.A. mentions that he must start from zero, as he left his job in Yemen. What's more, M.A.J. and H.A.B mention that higher education is important to refresh their knowledge, as they have been distanced from the academic environment for some time.

Notwithstanding, after the interviews it is possible to perceive that the motivations that push refugees towards higher education are manifold and go beyond those presented in the theoretical framework. For M.A.J., for instance, higher education plays a double-sided role: "it was kind of an unachieved dream that I wanted to do (...) And to get really good job opportunities" (M.A.J.). From M.A.J.'s words, it is possible to perceive that besides job opportunities, higher education also assumes the role of a personal aspiration. And it is perceived in the narrative of M.S. and Y.H. as well.

On the other hand, A.H.J. does not see a direct connection between higher education and his career "From the professional side which related to my job, I don't think it's very important.". Yet, he thinks that he can benefit from higher education in other ways "But from the other side I'm curious to know more and to be able to analyse things to develop my personal skills in research and I think it's very necessary." (A.H.J.). He also adds another interesting

feature: according to A.H.J.'s aspirations, through higher education he can contribute to the field of design for people who come after him.

Another motivator for pursuing higher education comes from the familiar environment. (A.M., B.A.J, H.A.B). "I come from a family where education is holy everyone should at least, minimum, finish the bachelor's degree" (A.M.). For A.M., the fact that he is progressing in higher education is also an important factor for his relationship with his siblings, as he serves as an inspiration for them "between my brothers and sisters I'm the first one who started the master's (...) and they feel a little bit jealous 'oh let's do like you, we'll start soon, and we will all have this'. So, this gives me a little bit of fuel to go on" (A.M.). B.A.J. in turn mentions that his parents exerted a sort of pressure to push him towards higher education "I don't have a university degree, (...) with some pressure from my parents like "without certificates you cannot do anything." (B.A.J.).

H.A.B. mentions that her motivations come from her origin and they are directly connected to her identity construction

"as a Palestinian, as a refugee in Syria, we don't have the rights the same as Syrians. So, our parents brought us up 'you don't have anything, you don't have the wealth, you don't have any preparative that could establish you in life or for the future. So, you don't have anything but your education, your knowledge" (H.A.B.).

On another note, H.A.B. who is studying conflict-related topics, says she is committed to investigating solutions for the conflict zones in her origin country: "This war shouldn't be repeated for other generations or as stateless, I don't want any of my grandchildren, for example, or any of the other people to suffer the same what we did." (H.A.B.). Similar to this motivation, Y.F.M. also wants to gather as much knowledge and skills as possible and to help to promote human rights in his origin country.

The multitude of answers regarding the motives to pursue higher education demonstrates that motivations are diverse and complex. Each respondent has contributed with different dimensions concerning the motivations to engage in education. While the job-related motivation is strong, other motivations such as family, personal ambitions and hope for a better future were also present. Yet, another aspect that came up during the conversations regarding motivation is the perception that there is a lack of motivation among refugees to pursue higher education (A.H.J., B.A.J.). And according to some of the interviewees, this is what prevents other refugees to join the university.

### 5.1.2 Journey to education

Comparable to the multifold shapes of motivation, the journey to take part in higher education is also diverse. The pathway to university has many different obstacles identified in the literature presented in this thesis. Firstly, during the displacement, many times the documents and credentials are left behind (Essomba, 2017) which can be an issue during the application process. Secondly, the application procedure itself can be an obstacle, as it can be confusing for the newcomers (UNHCR and Global Monitoring, 2016). Thirdly is the devaluation and de-skilling of previous experiences (Morrice, 2013; Essomba, 2017). Finally, financial matters can create a barrier for refugees willing to engage in higher education (Sinclair, 2007; UNHCR and Global Monitoring, 2016).

All the dimensions presented in the literature review could be related to the experiences of the interviewees. The first dimension, however, was not so prominent and the majority of respondents could bring their documents with them; as A.H.J. says “I was lucky to do so.”. H.A.B., otherwise, encountered a few issues with her application documents: she lacked a recommendation letter from her previous professors. “I really had a bad time looking for a recommendation (...) all my references were in Syria. And it was really catastrophic to contact

them” (H.A.B.). M.D.A., in turn, had copies of the original documents, but encountered some difficulty in getting the original documents from Yemen “There is no DHL, so you have to give it to somebody who will go by car to another country and then from that country they will send it via DHL. So it took a long time.” (M.D.A.).

The second aspect, the application procedure itself, was confusing for some interviewees. As H.A.B. describes “I didn’t know how to start because the information was overwhelming. (...) Because I’m not a citizen a Dutch citizen, and I’m not international. Also, I have the permit here. So which category will be? It was really confusing.” (H.A.B.). H.A.B. also mentions that the deadlines and the required steps for enrolling are complicated: at times she would follow the same requirements as for Dutch students and at other times she would follow the requirements for international students. Another interviewee, M.S., adds to this by saying that information regarding the access to refugees is not very clear “All information is not in one place, especially if it is for refugees maybe you ask people around if they would usually know, but in this specific case they do not.” (M.S.).

In fact, refugees find themselves in the in-between when it comes to application and enrollment requirements. And this changes from university to university. It can be illustrated using the application fee, as A.M. describes “[when] you’re an international [student] you’re asked to pay admission fees which is about one hundred euros more or less. I think all of the universities when I applied, I would tell them I’m a refugee [and ask] if I was exempt from paying the one hundred euros. So all universities were okay with that, in most cases.” In reality, this fee can be a defining factor for the application, A.M. says that in one university the fee was not waived “they would say like ‘no you have to pay the fee before we process your files’. And for that reason, I had the whole file with me, but I didn’t have the money to pay them, so I didn’t apply there.” (A.M.). The admission fee is related to the enrollment in the full-time programmes offered by the universities (such as bachelor’s and master’s degree).



The third point, the de-valuation and de-skilling of previous experiences came up in the conversations in subtle ways. M.A.J., for instance, perceives that the undervaluation of his previous experiences did not hinder his attempts to enter university. Conversely, it helped the programme coordinator to identify deficiency spots and to suggest a solution, which in the end makes M.A.J. happy:

“[T]hey were right about that. Because first of all the programme I’m applying to is not really the same track of what I studied. There are some changes. So, I studied some subjects that are irrelevant to this, so they don’t care about them. And also, they required me to have some basic requirements that I lack. The professor helped me by offering me some deficiency courses. To these courses I’m going to go to the Bachelor level and study them. There are two courses so far, but we might add actually one other course as well. So, it is not in a bad way actually. I think it’s for my own interest to success in this.” (M.A.J.).

On the other hand, M.S. had a different experience. Before submitting his application, he contacted the study advisor and explained his situation. He mentioned the disruption that he faced in his previous education and his current status: “And they found that the motivation that I had was good, that I’m working was good, but my certificate was not the good level. (...) My application was rejected because they said your certificate is not the same level as we would expect a pre-bachelor would be.” (M.S.). But M.S. consulted the student affairs and they reconsidered his application and admitted him into the programme. H.A.B., in turn, sees that the fact that some universities do not have a refugee-oriented programme facilitates the de-skilling of previous experiences

“I went to the university three times asking for such programs (...) [they] would say ‘we don’t have anything related to refugees, you have to apply as normal student’.

So, your bachelor is evaluated as minor than Bachelor, so you have to study once again all over again.” (H.A.B.).

A.M. faced devaluation under other circumstances. When he was applying to a master’s programme, he received several rejections from different universities.

“I started communicating with a lot of universities (...) unfortunately I got rejected by all (...) At some point I was feeling like ‘Oh my god, what should I do to be enrolled?’ I was really satisfied if I was going to do a pre-master’s. I think I discussed that with [one] university (...) ‘why am I not even eligible for a pre-master’s programme?’. So, in all cases, the reasons were like, ‘you don’t have a sufficient background study’, although I did a four-year study in my home country, in one the biggest universities in the country.” (A.M.).

Also, M.D.A tells that his previous practical experience in that specific field of expertise helped him not to be devaluated. “Maybe it would be equal to the applied universities, the HBO, but then I have to do the pre-master and okay. But in my case they accepted my bachelor mixed with the experience I had in this field and then I started directly in the master.” (M.D.A.).

In sum, in M.A.J.’s experience what we see is that the lack of skills did not prevent him from being admitted to the university – and the coordinator of the programme found a way to work around this issue. In M.S.’s experience, in turn, it is possible to see that the personal contact explaining his situation, motivation and qualification, helped him to be admitted to the university. These stories highlight that de-skilling is an issue; however, they show that there are ways make adjustments that do not jeopardize and delay the education trajectories of refugees.

The fourth and last aspect presented in the literature is the financial obstacle. It was already apparent in M.S.’s response regarding the admission fee, in which he states that

waiving this fee was crucial for his applications. Besides that, the tuition fee, travel expenses and books are also a concern for the new students. One interesting aspect that concerns all respondents currently following a degree is that the tuition fee that they had to pay was equal to the fee that is charged to the Dutch students – which is significantly smaller than the fee charged for international students.

### 5.1.3 Networks or support

The first steps towards education require support in a variety of aspects: financial, moral and the actual “know-how”. Support can come via organization or via personal connections. From example, in the case of refugees, financial support usually comes from UAF [Foundation for Refugee Students] and DUO [Ministry of Education]. However, in a few cases the financial support was provided by friends, especially in cases where DUO and UAF would not cover. Y.H and A.M. for instance tell that friends helped them to pay for the English proficiency exams:

“if you are client with UAF, UAF pays for you. But at that time, I was not. (...) I had this roommate who paid for my exams, because at that time I didn’t have any money. And he helped me. So, I took the TOEFL exam and the IELTS exam (...) he would pay for me and I would pay him back in small settlements. So that helped me a lot.” (A.M.).

Personal connections are important in a multitude of aspects other than the financial one. In the literature presented in this thesis, the dimension of the support from personal connections was not profoundly explored. Nevertheless, after the interviews, it became evident that the role played by personal connections before and during the educational journey is

extremely important (B.A.J., H.A.B., M.A.J., A.M., M.S., G.A., Y.F.M.). When asked about where the support came from, sometimes the answer would assertive:

“people yes, organizations not at all.” (B.A.J.) and “I did not meet organizations actually, I met people. So, beginning from the person who introduced me to the internship. And then after the internship I met actually a person here who (..) helped me with writing the motivation letter and the application, so she encouraged. And she was also like a student at the Utrecht University, so she knows the “how to apply” and the Studielink, and the procedure of application.” (M.A.J.).

In the period that precedes the engagement with education, personal connections can in fact make the bridge between refugees and education courses (M.S.) or learning experiences such as an internship (M.A.J.). The personal connections also provide information regarding the application procedure (M.A.J., Y.F.M.), and about the functioning of the university on the daily basis, such as the technologies used by the university (i.e. digital library, digital student system) (A.H.J., M.A.J., M.D.A.). Knowledge from other refugees is also important to help the newcomers: M.S. mentions that he joined a group in Facebook where other refugees would share their stories and point out the way to access higher education, as they had already been through that pathway before.

Family and friends can encourage refugees to continue studying as it appeared in the majority of interviews. Nevertheless, personal connections and family can also discourage the involvement in higher education. Some refugees mention that they face some criticism from their family members. These members often believe that dedicating oneself to a job would be a better way to invest their times. Such is the case for H.A.B., A.H.J. “As for my relatives, I don’t know because everyone has his/hers own aim here. Some find ‘okay you have to be more

practical, you have to aim to work and to gain money’, and this is important for them.” (H.A.B.).

The importance of personal connections from the university staff becomes clear in the narrative of M.A.J., M.S., H.A.B.. For example, M.A.J. mentions that when he first contacted the university he approached the programmed coordinators to explain his situation and understand the most suitable programme for him. It was through this contact that M.A.J. could develop a tailored solution for the knowledge gap, namely the extra courses from the bachelor’s programme. H.A.B. also highlights how important personal connections with university staff is; however, she noted that it is not always easy to establish this connection and to make one-on-one appointments “You can’t go there and directly meet somebody who could help you. So, I think human contact is better. Specially for students like us who really want to have this bond or tie between human” (H.A.B.). She adds that this could be improved in the way universities deal with refugees.

On the other hand, A.M. perceives that university staff is available – even if it is through e-mail – and that it is a positive aspect of Dutch universities “There is always someone you can talk to (...) Dutch people are very responsive. If you email anyone any university, even if they don’t know you, they would reply in a day or two.” (A.M.). Although their opinions may diverge in respect to the availability of personal contacts based on their own experiences, they both recognize it is an important aspect for the relationship of newcomers and universities.

It is also important to mention the role of initiatives in the access to university. G.A., A.H.J., H.A.B. and Y.F.M. had their first contact to the university via Inclusion project. HAB and YFM are currently enrolled in a full-time programme and they believe the support from Inclusion was crucial for their path

“Incluusion was very... I call it my cornerstone. It helped me with all of this. I couldn’t enroll in Utrecht, because as an Incluusion student you are enrolled as an official student. I cannot do that by myself. I have to do it through them. (...) to be more student, not like a visitor. You’re going to the university. Because UAF don’t help with that (...) would be impossible without Incluusion to be honest.” (H.A.B).

The first contact with Incluusion was either via personal connection “I heard about the programme from a friend. I wasn’t aware about it. And nobody told me about it during my asylum procedure journey” (A.H.J.; also Y.F.M., G.A. A.M., M.D.A) or by accident “I accidentally saw an advertisement for an event in Facebook about Incluusion. It was interesting, so I attended the last year conference as ‘I just want to see what this program is about’” (H.A.B.).” Which implies that the information regarding initiatives is still precarious.

After the application has been submitted and approved, a few respondents received a conditional acceptance from the universities. One condition that came up often was the English proficiency exam. To the majority the exam was not a problem in itself; however, several interviewees mentioned that the fact that they had to study Dutch at the same time they were preparing for the proficiency test was a big challenge (Y.H., M.A.J., H.A.B.). It is important to mention that Dutch is a requirement for the newcomers and it is also a condition to access the support provided by UAF. “I needed to do the IELTS and besides that I had to study Dutch, it is an obligation for us. So yeah, I tried to manage both, but it wasn’t very straight – I had ups and falls and up and falls, many ups and falls.” (M.A.J.).

#### 5.1.4 UAF

UAF (Foundation for Refugee Students) is an organization founded in 1948 which is devoted to assist refugees through higher education. According to their website, UAF “assists refugees with their studies in higher education and finding a job that matches their abilities.” (UAF, 2018). UAF, together with the DUO – the Ministry of Education – provide refugee students with funding for university tuition fee, English proficiency tests coverage, travel expenses and study material expenses. The financial support from such organizations was evident in all of the interviews.

The conditions to the access to the funding irrevocably involve studying the Dutch language. This condition sometimes represents an additional obstacle for refugees. Studying Dutch and English at the same time, due the requirements for UAF was a source of distress for some participants (H.A.B., Y.H., M.A.J.)

“I was admitted to the university but my sponsor, the UAF, did not allow me study because of their own requirement (...) To start studying with UAF you have to finish a certain level at Dutch language. And that is, at that time, it was B1. So, when I got the admission I was already in A2, as I remember, and I was starting B1 along with the master’s in September. But for them it was not acceptable. So, I had to first finish the B1 and then they would allow me to start the master’s. I was quite shocked and angry. Because I got Wageningen admission after I was turned down so many times and if I didn’t start in September it meant that I would have to wait a whole year. And for me this was a very long time. I’m not going to waste, or I didn’t want to waste.” (A.M.).

BAJ was initially rejected by UAF because he did not meet the Dutch language requirement

“they refuse to help me, they say (...) ‘you have to reach a B2 level before we can take you as a client’. (...) Even if you study in English you have to take the Dutch. They say that they want to make sure that you will find a job afterwards and you can pay them back” (B.A.J.).

In another example, the Dutch requirement is translated in extra workload for refugees applying to a university programme:

“[T]o be one the UAF students you have to accomplish like a high level in the Dutch language. On the other hand, my study is going to be in English. So, I spent a year of my life studying the Dutch language and that affected my English, and I have to stop it now and go back to studying English. So, I think that could be not necessary. If they know your plan, you’re going to study in English. So, we have to support this, not the Dutch language. I’m aware it is necessary to communicate with other people, but I think you can acquire it in time by using it.” (H.A.B.).

Despite all the critique, A.M. believes that Dutch is indeed important for his integration experience “UAF pushed me a lot to finish the Dutch language, which I also appreciate. So here in this company where I work, English is the official language however it is highly appreciated when you can speak Dutch for the small talks, about the day or the summer vacations. This is also is part of the integration we had.”. (A.M.).

On a different topic, age is an important aspect to access the loans. M.A.J. says that “Your age can be like a really magic factor for you”. As he is 32, he describes his story:

“The Ministry of Education [DUO] helps students to get study loans (...). If you’re under 30, you apply for this DUO and you get a loan. (...) They pay your tuition fee and they give you money to live. Then you stop getting your money form the



municipality, because you are now in the other programme. They give you also credit to travel in the OV-chipkaart and the books also, as a loan with very simple interest and you need to pay back... zero interest actually, in ten years after graduation. So, it's very flexible. If you are over 30, you can apply for DUO only for the tuition fees. So, you don't have books, you don't have money for your living costs and also you don't have travel costs. And you need to convince the municipality to keep paying you (...) So... here comes the role of UAF and other organisations. UAF supports people who are in this situation: they are over 30 and they want to study. So they help them with the costs for the books and the travel. But UAF isn't open for everyone like DUO, you need to make an application and be selected. There are selection criteria and selection process.” (M.A.J.).

#### 5.1.5 Access to Education

In general terms, the respondents believe that access to education is much more related to the university policy than to the Netherlands as a country itself (M.S., A.M.)

“I had also sat with people who are going to be student at different universities in the Netherlands and I've seen that different universities have their own different regulations. Some will be still very strict about this is what they want this is what they expect this is what you have to do, but some other universities no. they take into consideration that you're a refugee, that you're from another country, they look at your motivation and they decide based on this. So, this is per university, I don't think it's per country.” (M.S.)

Nonetheless, some respondents believe that the country provides a good environment for education for refugees (M.A.J., Y.H., G.A., A.H.J., H.A.B., M.D.A):

“In the Netherlands the fact that they have MBO and HBO and VO, that is the normal university that we know, or research university, is very important. So, it gives many Syrian people the opportunity to practice a professional, a vocational training or an applied universities (...) the fact that some of the master’s, many master’s actually, are English-taught so it is easier for us because (...) English is the second language actually in the education in Syria.” (M.A.J.)

The language appears as a barrier to the access to education according to many respondents. B.A.J. and M.A.J. seem to agree on that topic: “It is very hard when you don’t speak Dutch or English to learn it to the level that you can go to university and start immediately.” (B.A.J.) and “given the fact that the language barrier. If the language barrier is solved, the Netherlands is really helping and accepting refugees” (M.A.J.).

When asked about the flexibilizations to access university, M.A.J. sees the exemption to pay the application fee as a facilitation. M.A.J., Y.H. and B.A.J. also see that the fact that the tuition is equal to Dutch students as a flexibilization. Also, important to notice that access to education is marked by resilience to many refugees, as they had to apply several times before getting an acceptance (A.M., M.D.A., H.A.B.)

#### 5.1.6 Experiences in Class

The experiences in class although diverse, all seem to agree on two points: first that the education system in the Netherlands is much different from their previous experiences; second, the relationship with professors is also contrasting from their origin country. In conformity with the literature previously presented, language appeared as an obstacle (O’Rourke, 2014) for the great majority of interviewees (Y.H., G.A., A.H.J., B.A.J., H.A.B., Y.F.M., M.D.A.).

But the barriers imposed by language vary: the difficulty can be found in communicating in Dutch among native speakers (Y.H.), or reading academic material in short time (B.A.J., A.H.J., Y.F.M., H.A.B.) or writing assignments in academic English (G.A.) or getting used to the terms specific to a field of expertise in a new language (G.A.).

Language acquisition and proficiency is directly related to integration in school context (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017). While refugees present varying levels of English language proficiency (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017), refugees in the Netherlands have an additional challenge, as they are required to learn Dutch (Koehler, 2009). The literature also mentions the feeling of alienation as an issue for the refugees. Bauman (2002) notes that refugees can be seen as strangers to the receiving population and this recognition of the refugee as the *other* can contribute to the lack of the sense of belongingness (Olagookun & White, 2017). In fact, the construction of the *other* can represent a challenge to integration, as the construction of *other* usually comes soaked in pre-fabricated and intolerant ideas (Gerrard, 2016).

#### The differences

For all the respondents, the differences in the education system are palpable. It can be perceived in the relationship with professors, in the structure of the lectures, the expected behaviour from students inside the classroom and the workload, as well as “the way that teachers deal with students, the number of students in the class, the softwares that they are using” (A.H.J.). Also, M.A.J. adds “in the middle east, I will speak about my country, normally when you go to lecture it’s more like instruction based, the methodology, of the pedagogical in teaching is just one way from the instructor to the students but here it’s more research and

research focused groups and its more that discussions rather than instructions you know.” (M.A.J.).

Y.F.M. describe the challenges that he encountered compared to his previous experiences “To write an assignment, to get to write a paper using the articles. It is very hard for me. And in Burundi system you get everything from the teacher, so your teacher is *the* source of intelligence. You only have to be in class. You don’t have to read a lot of articles or books. Just go to school and listen to the teacher (...) They want you to be more critical, you don’t have to think the same as the teacher. Using your own knowledge, and sometimes you need articles to get supporting arguments” (Y.F.M.). Y.F.M. also mentions that English was a big challenge for him, as it was his fourth language and he could not speak it before coming to the Netherlands.

#### Professors

The relationship with professors was deemed positive in all the participants’ experiences. The level to which the participants engage in the classroom and with professors vary and it is much more related to personal inclinations and personality. While some like B.A.J. “try to avoid any communication”, others like A.M. act completely the opposite:

“I’m the type of student that likes to ask questions. I think being engaged with the teachers keeps me sharp.. (...) engaging, asking questions, if you have problems you just can talk to them. These things I didn’t even know when I started. Where I come from, teachers you just don’t talk to them. You listen to what they’re saying, you do the exam and then you go home. If you have trouble then you have to solve it own your own, however here... actually I faced some troubles in this first course I told you about, but because I was still in the mindset of Yemen, I didn’t ask for help and I tried to solve

it myself which cost me a lot of time and effort to do it. And I could've asked just for help and they would've helped me" (A.M.).

Regarding the participation in class it is also worth to mention that sometimes the knowledge gap will prevent students from fully engaging in lectures. This is the case for A.H.J., who narrates that in the beginning he would not feel comfortable sharing his point of views in class, but after a while – and after studying on his own – he felt he was able to engage more actively in class.

In general, all respondents feel that professors are available and open to dialogue. "I believe that professors are really kind persons, willing to help, to answer the questions. I ask professors in the break during the lecture and they are available. They answer no problem, they don't say I don't have time for it." (Y.H.). M.D.A. for example, highlights with enthusiasm the fact that the relationships with professors is much more informal in the Netherlands "You don't need to say 'professor bla-bla', just 'hi' and his name. they put this environment between students which is a nice thing." (M.D.A.). The informality and engagement outside the classroom was described in A.M.'s relationship with his professors: "They are very friendly whenever they have time. Sometimes we organize even some events, we went on a boat trip with them, so it's quite an engaging environment." (A.M.). H.A.B. describes she was shocked to see the proximity between students and professors "In Syria we have this formality in dealing with the teacher that was really shocking to me to see all the students eating or talking directly or calling the professor by name" (H.A.B.).

Overall, the previous relationships with professors were marked by a hierarchy gap between students and professors, in which the students participation in class was mostly passive: "there the professor is kind of in holy place, even we stand up when he/she enters." (B.A.J.). But it does not mean that the previous experiences were undervalued or invalid. B.A.J.

tells “I’m not talking about the Arabic system in a very bad way. There you learn stuff, but you learn differently. It’s like, this is the information, this is the book, and you have to know it by heart. Which is at the end of the day knowing, but I apparently like the European way/ Dutch way, way more.” (B.A.J.). B.A.J. also goes further and talks about the up-to-date study materials in the Netherlands, although they are very “European centralized”, in his words.

The new education system and the new relationship in classroom required the development of a new skillset “Here you have to be more analytic about it. You have to figure out how should you read. It’s your responsibility to read, to find a cause, effects and the result findings at the end. In Syria they don’t encourage this way. Just do what you have to read, memorise it and go to the exam. That’s it.” (H.A.B.).

From some experiences, the participants noticed that professors tend to be flexible with their needs (YH, MS, MAJ, MDA, GA, AHJ, BAJ, HAB). For example, Y.F.M. and H.A.B. describe that they encountered some difficulties in the assignments and many times had to use an extra time. They would ask for a deadline extension and professors would be willing to allow it. M.D.A. could use a dictionary during exams to deal with the language obstacle. H.A.B. also mentions that professors were understanding in respect to her language issues “I constructed the sentences in English, but with Dutch structure. So, I was kind of lost in between. But I think the teachers they were very flexible on this.” (H.A.B.).

Another important aspect is that a few participants feel that their relationship with professors is a two-way street (A.M., H.A.B., B.A.J.):

“I think here in the Netherlands teachers like interaction in the class. So it’s not only about them trying to feed you all these models and concepts. No, they want actually to discuss with you your points of view about it. I would say that teachers here

appreciate it, when you try to ask questions, or speak up your mind or have a comment about something that you see or think from a different point of view.” (A.M.).

They feel their points of view were welcome and taken into consideration. B.A.J. describes that although he does not enjoy actively participating in every class, whenever he feels that he can contribute with some information he will address the professor in the break to discuss his points of view. And this is welcomed by his professors.

H.A.B. is following conflict studies and she feels that her personal trajectory can add richness to the classroom “in such field I have the practical experience with conflicts and the other students they read a book. They read book, they know in theory but not how it is in real life. (...) And other times the teacher themselves they ask you about your opinion since you’ve been there, so you can contribute for this.” (H.A.B.). However, approaching background stories is not always easy “sometimes I prefer not to say it out loud. But I could understand because it’s more of an interactive course. But sometimes you’re not comfortable to speak it out loud.” (H.A.B.).

“Challenging” was the most used word to describe the study programme (Y.H., M.S., M.D.A.). “What I noticed from these courses I took is that the way you study here is a bit different than the way we study in Syria.” (M.S.) and also “It was more difficult than I expected, more intensive.” (Y.H.). Y.H. believes that some challenges are actually positive, such as the intensive rhythm of study. But since he was not used to it, in the beginning it was negative “Strict in positive way (...) [But] I was used to another way. So, it’s more difficult for me. (...) I could manage it. Somehow. But I’ve lost a lot of social contact. Because I need always to do homework, to study” (Y.H.).

A.H.J. describes that the study programme *per se* is not so difficult, but the difficulty increased for him: “I didn’t have much background. (...) so everything was like new for me.

All the things that they were talking and already took for granted, for me it wasn't existed yet.” (A.H.J.). B.A.J. found himself in a similar situation, where things discussed in class would be assumed to be general knowledge, when in fact they were not “There are many things that they mention, and they just assume that everyone knows, but it's not the case. So, in that I needed to go back and come back to reach. Also, the vocabulary and the terms in English. It took me a while to get, digest. Yes, challenging in a way that I think I do more effort than people because of the language and because of the way of learning I'm used to.” (B.A.J.).

### Colleagues

Colleagues are an important part of the education ecosystem. The relationship between the participants and the peer colleagues was also diverse. Sometimes, colleagues were the source of support for academic doubts “the papers which I need to write I struggled. My colleagues help me with some basic knowledge. It was like I didn't know how to use the citation correctly” (M.D.A.). M.D.A. mentions that it is important to build a good relationship with the other students, because this way one can help another with subject doubts that may appear.

Connecting with other students is not always simple. Y.H. describes that he feels some sort of alienation and that he does not know how to improve this situation. G.A. also mentions that during her experience in Utrecht University, she did not feel much included “Because it was the first time I was there, sometimes of course I feel some alienation. I feel I don't belong to this community... this feeling. But they were nice, they want to help you.” (G.A.). The alienation however, is not translated into hostile behaviour – au contraire, peer students are evaluated as “kind, polite and nice” (Y.H. G.A.).

The argument of “being new” to that environment to justify feeling left out, was present in the narratives of M.S., G.A., H.A.B. and A.H.J. “Because I think I was new and they know each other, and I was like the stranger between them.” (A.H.J.). Working in groups was



something new for a few of the interviewees. And it was also a challenge for them. (B.A.J. and A.M.). It corroborates with the literature regarding the other and belongingness as appears in Bauman (2002) and in Olagookun & White (2017).

M.D.A. and A.M. opted not to mention to their peer colleagues about their refugee background “I was advised by many people not to mention this. (...), ‘it’s better if you don’t mention it’. (...) I don’t know if it would be different if they knew, they didn’t ask me, and I didn’t tell them. (...) [They] said maybe you’ll find some racism or something and if there is one among the whole group maybe this will affect” (M.D.A.). This narrative is in conformity with the arguments from Gerrard (2016) in which the author mentions that the idea of the *other* can be drenched in pre-fabricated connotations. Thus, when M.D.A. avoids disclosing the information regarding his background he is avoiding the imagery of the *other*. The narrative from A.M. also includes not mentioning his background

“I’m not ashamed that I am refugee. I am talking to you know and I don’t really mind it at all. Because I didn’t do anything wrong, I just was in a country where a bad situation is happening. But why I’m not saying to my classmates is because of the looks of helplessness, so they would look at you in a way that you cannot do it. In a way that ‘let’s-help-him-this-poor-guy’. And I think I can make it on my own (...) So being look at as that ‘oh he needs help’ this is the worst, this is the reason why I don’t tell other students that I am a refugee. And the ones who know actually they are quite okay with it.” (A.M.).

## Extra challenges

One of the questions in the interview was about the challenges that refugees face that they believe that go on top of the challenges faced by other students. Age and feeling too mature appears again as a factor that disturbs some participants (M.A.J., B.A.J., H.A.B.) “the Syrian war has been going on for 8 years so I’m kind of late in studying for 8 years” (M.A.J.). Besides, the different education system is also cited as a difficulty for the newcomers “we have different approaches in teaching styles, and you know teaching methods” (M.A.J.). Language is also an additional challenge for those engaging higher education (M.D.A., M.A.J., Y.H., G.A., A.H.J., B.A.J., H.A.B., Y.F.M.).

Knowledge gap proves to be an aspect that demands extra effort from refugees. M.A.J., for example, will follow extra courses to cover the knowledge back. But other respondents, such as A.H.J. and H.A.B. and Y.F.M., describe that they had to work hard on their own in order to get up to speed in class “I had to study double than the others. So, I read a lot.” (H.A.B.) The fact that refugees have been away from the academic environment is also a challenge (H.A.B. and M.A.J.).

M.S. mentions that displacement is a big challenge that other students do not face “all I was not prepared to leave the country and then come to a new country. Even like non-refugee who come from a different country, they would say ‘okay, different culture, different language’ it is the same for them. But the part I was not prepared to leave the country this makes it a bit difficult. I’m here because I had to find a way to start something. It’s not that I wanted to, I had to” (M.S.).

The experiences and struggles of refugees’ daily life should also be acknowledge as a challenge and as a source of additional stress (Avery & Said, 2017). A.M. describes his experience living in a refugee reception centre:

“I lived in Arnhem while I studied in Utrecht. At that time, I was staying at the AZC and my AZC was in Arnhem. And I had to travel three hours a day both directions from university to home. And this was one of the most stressing things... and that was for the first three months. I spent a lot of time on trains, a lot of money as well, and I would still go home... well, camp, I still have to live with other 8 people in the same room fight over the tv that is loud, and the light that should be turned off at 23h o’clock, who cleaned, who didn’t. all these small details that actually you shouldn’t have.” (A.M.).

H.A.B. also shared her experiences in the centre as a challenge for her during her courses “You cannot stop them from talking or watching TV or listening to music because you’re studying.” (H.A.B.). Y.F.M. shares a similar experience in centres “you cannot tell them to shut up, because it’s not a library.” (Y.F.M.).

Another aspect was how the experiences of trauma influence the experiences of refugees in higher education (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017; Sinclair, 2007). It is important to consider feelings and psychological distresses of refugees, such as familial loss and destabilisation (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017). B.A.J. describes that he often finds himself affected by news from his country of origin

“[C]onditions that influences me and my stability of mind. For example, news. (...) specially being from Syria, there is a lot of news going on and you cannot avoid it. And sometimes it turns everything up and down. Yeah, for example, in the middle of the second block my cousin just died in Damascus because of some bombing, etc.” (B.A.J.).

The distance from family also affects some respondents (Y.H., M.S., B.A.J., H.A.B.). B.A.J. describes the inability to be with his parents as a big source of distress

“my parents live in Turkey and I cannot see them, and I applied four time for a Turkish visa and it gets denied. And the process when you apply for the whole thing and it gets denied... then it is four five days I really cannot function. Like I’m just depressed and ‘what’s going on’, ‘why am I here’, I don’t want to be here. So, there is a few days I literally cannot function. (...) It’s always in my mind, it’s always in me. Sometimes it’s very obvious that it stops me from doing things. Sometimes it’s just in the background and I’m okay.” (B.A.J.)

H.A.B. also faces some distress related to her background, and it was aggravated in a few classes where the conflicts were being discussed:

“It was full of documentaries, full of pictures from Syria itself. You never know, you are watching something okay maybe somebody will show up to become one of your networks and that place you lived in so... it was really harsh emotionally (...) I know it’s about the conflict itself but sometimes you get enough from watching this news. (...) maybe as an academic they will think ‘okay this is a weakness point, she can’t handle conflict itself, so why is she going to do this study?’. (...) I cannot ignore my feeling, but I could handle it. I understand that to be a research you have to be objective, so I tried my best.” (HAB).

In the same direction, Y.H. talks about his relationship with vacations and holidays

“I don’t like it when it comes vacation or holidays. Yeah, I don’t know how it is the way, what is the case for internationals. They can go back home, see their families, have some nice time. I can see my family, but it is not the way that it should be in holiday.” (Y.H.).

H.A.B. and G.A. mention that the digitalization of learning in the Netherlands was new and a challenge for them who were not used to these methods “[the other students] know how to read fast, how to type fast, we didn’t have this idea, or this virtual learning in Syria. So, it’s just you write, and you handle it by hand. So that was also a difficulty for me” (H.A.B.).

Also, it is important to note that some universities provide support beyond the academic one (B.A.J., A.M.). A.M. mentions the support from the student’s advisor “I had some private conversations with these people and I would just go out from these conversations feeling a lot positive about myself, my education and that I am doing good, although I had all these troubles around me. So, they gave me a good atmosphere to keep me moving.” (A.M.).

#### On the move

For refugees, the transition from one country to another often encompasses a series of discontinuities and changes in every aspect of daily life, such as loss of work status, (Joyce et al, 2009). During the interviews, I dedicated one question to investigate to what extent having to move from one country to another has had influence in their education pathway. To many participants, this has had impact on the age disparity between them and the peer colleagues inside the classroom (YH, MAJ, BAJ). In Y.H.’s words the age gap translate into “negative thoughts” and the difficulty to connected with other students “I’m very late, other colleagues of me are working right now and I have just started.” (Y.H.). M.A.J. and B.A.J. mention the age gap and add to this thought the perception that with age it became more difficult to study and to memorise new things.

Y.H. also mentions that there is some uncertainty surrounding the refugee status

“When I started I thought ‘if now I start studying and after one year they say you have to go back home. You’re not allowed to stay anymore’ so I had also those thoughts. Especially when you’re looking for news, how they make agreements, now it’s more hot, now It’s calm down a bit. So, all that news affects me, affected me.” (Y.H.).

Due to this inquietude, Y.H. arranged a meeting with a lawyer and asked about his situation

“she answered me ‘90% that they are not sending you back, but to say 100% is not guarantee. There’s still option. It can be. My advice for you is ‘just leave it’ you cannot change it.’ And that moment it was, it was difficult. But I followed her advice to just concentrate on what is coming and okay forgot the other bad possibility. For now. It may happen. But I cannot help it. But if I stay ... depressive of it, pessimistic, I will not be able to do anything, so those are the two options. So, I said ‘okay, I can start,’ (Y.H.).

Moving forcibly also influenced in another more obvious way: interrupting studies in the middle of the degree, such as was the case for M.S., Y.H. and B.A.J. Displacement affects the motivation to study in different ways. According to A.H.J.’s point of view.

“I’m more motivated to do something. I mean in the educational track. First to get like an extra weapon in this modern society. And also, I’m really thirsty to learn something (...) about my field. (...) I didn’t have a proper education in that field of design, because it wasn’t existing in Yemen at that time. So, I’m really thirsty to get some academic education in this field. I’m trying to do that.” (A.H.J.).

G.A. shares a little of this opinion, when she mentions it is an opportunity to get new information in her field of expertise. In the opposite direction, B.A.J. describes that

“Many, many times I felt like I don’t want to continue studying anymore. Like I thought I will just start working, I’m working now, I’ll continue working and that’s it. It’s very, very, very, very hard to come back to study again.” (B.A.J.).

The new environment, new lifestyle and new education system and the adaption that it requires from the newcomers also came up in the answers from M.S. and A.M.:

“then suddenly I had to be on my own and that has changed a lot of things in me. I don’t know if this is due to education, or to moving in general or to have different, or to be a refugee in another country but I would say that it has impacted a lot. I became more self-independent. I will do things on my own, I will try to depend on other people less. Sometimes if it is the other way (...) All these things changed the person who I am. It’s difficult to say what resulted in what, what thing lead to what results but yeah, they are all together mixed and changing a lot.” (A.M.).

Y.F.M. sees that being on the move has affected him in the way that it made him consider going back to higher education

“So, when I was here in the Netherlands there was nothing to do, opportunities were very limited. (...) I didn’t come here to study. And I realized the only think I can do here is to study. Go to school and learn new skills while I was waiting for the decision from the immigration service, just to keep active. When you’re used to work every day and you come to the Netherlands as a refugee there is nothing to do in the refugee camp. I tried to find something that can make me more like active to use my brain, to get new skills and knowledge.” (Y.F.M.).

The relationship of participants with the initiatives vary. While the respondents from Nijmegen had not heard about Asylum University, the ones from Utrecht had heard about Inclusion. However, not everyone has taken part in the initiatives. M.A.J. for example, only joined the English support sessions that help newcomers with the preparation for the English proficiency tests. M.D.A. and A.M. heard about Inclusion from friends that took part in the initiative, but they did not get involved with it. B.A.J. heard about Inclusion and although it sounded nice, he holds strong opinions regarding the initiative

“I felt it is not a real education. First of all because you don’t have credits, they don’t give you credits (...) without credits so it’s a bit loose and I wanted something more concrete. I want to study, *I want to study*. I don’t want to say I am studying, but it’s like you got one lecture you choose thing, you don’t have something recognized.”  
(B.A.J).

G.A., A.H.J., H.A.B. and Y.F.M. have attended Inclusion courses and their opinions is very positive about it. G.A., who heard about Inclusion from a friend, tells that an assistant from Inclusion helped her to get used to the education system in the Netherlands and they made her access to the university easier. H.A.B. accidentally found an Inclusion event on Facebook and decided to attend it. Then, she took three courses and she believes Inclusion was essential in her trajectory. Y.F.M. sees that Inclusion is a nice initiative that allows refugees to be part of the university. He followed ten courses through Inclusion.



## Integration

The last question of the interview was to put together integration and the experience in higher education. The answers were not homogeneous, and many interviewees found themselves doubting to which extent the two terms could be conjugated together. On the other hand, to a few of the participants it was clear how these two were related. In the literature framework, some authors indicate that higher education can serve as an integration tool and a tool to help to adapt to the new surroundings (Zeus, 2011). Other authors identify education as the arena in which pre-acculturation takes place, introducing the language, history, values and norms of the new culture (Araos, 2017). Literature, then, acknowledges that education has an important role in the integration (Wilkinson 2002; Koehler, 2009; Zeus, 2011).

The place of higher education in the integration process is often connected to the fact that the university environment allows contact with other people (M.A.J., M.D.A., G.A., A.M., A.H.J., H.A.B., Y.F.M.). M.A.J. adds to this that meeting people with shared interests and around the same age will be interesting for his integration process. Meeting Dutch people is also mentioned as an outcome that is good for integration (M.D.A., A.M., G.A.).

“I could learn more about the Dutch people and I know how they deal with each other more, because I was involved with them in teamwork in... we were working days together, we eat together, we go out together during the day, so to know more about their way of living” (M.D.A.).

It is also important to note that meeting people from the Arab community is also mentioned by two of the interviewees, B.A.J. and G.A.

These connections can turn out to be a future bridge to labour market, as a few respondents have indicated (G.A., A.M.). On the other hand, A.H.J. believes that integration is

a slow and long process and to create a link between integration and his study experience would be precocious. Moreover, A.H.J. tells that he did not manage to create a bond with his colleagues; however, accidental encounters in the city have taken place and he believes that these encounters could build something good “least there is one student that I’m meeting in like frequently by coincidence and you never know when you meet other students also by coincidence in the future and that also can create a good thing.” (A.H.J.).

B.A.J. describes the environment at the university as a nice environment that allows him to be in touch with many different people and areas. And Y.F.M. adds that being in higher education helps him to change his identity in the country. It can be related to what appears in Bauman (2002) that displacement can cause a loss of identity.

“You feel like they consider you as a student, so it makes like a new identity. You are proud to be a student. You don’t see yourself anymore as a refugee, you know. And you can participate in society, you can talk to people. You find social activity outside the university, you expand your network... not only to get knowledge, but also for social life you talk to people. In a refugee camp you only have to talk to people the same problems, they have the same frustrations. So, there’s nothing positive, you know.” (Y.F.M.).

In a nutshell

“I never thought I’d end up in the Netherlands. I thought yeah, ‘I’ll stay in Syria, I’ll finish my studies, and this is where I’ll work’. So, I think in a way I stopped thinking about the far future at some point because of the changes.” (M.S.).

This part of the thesis explored the experiences of refugees in higher education. From the motives that drive newcomers to higher education, to the experiences inside classroom and the integration outcomes: every aspect is diversiform. From the microsystem, the personal connection appeared to be a strong element in the refugees trajectory – all of them mentioned connection with other people (family, friends, assistants, coordinators) as a crucial part for their trajectories. When one moves to the next level, the meso level, the influence of initiatives is still strong, but not for all of the refugees. It is undeniable that the support from the initiatives represents an essential part of some interviewees personal experience. However, some other managed to access higher education without the support from said initiatives. The macro and exo level are more distant from the lived experiences of the participants. And the international, or even national, prerogatives are not tangible in their everyday lives.

The analyses from the literature were very important as a starting point to guide the interviews. However, the dimensions that compose the experiences of refugees overflows the literature covered in this thesis. Particularly when it comes to the essential participation of the personal connections in the refugee experience to higher education.

## 5.2 Hospitality Networks in Education

“We invite the private sector and civil society, including refugee and migrant organizations, to participate in multi-stakeholder alliances to support efforts to implement the commitments we are making today”.  
(UN, 2016).

The UN New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants calls for actions that embrace the biggest number of player. In this regard, the universities and the local initiatives play an important role of civic engagement. This locally positioned look helps to analyze the spaces of where the reach of nation-states do not reach. In order to analyse such topic, the next section will present a data collection regarding three initiatives happening in the Netherlands: in Utrecht, Nijmegen and Maastricht. The following data was collected from the initiatives' website, from events promoted by the initiatives and from interviews with the initiatives' leaders. The civic engagement can be seen as the engagement of universities in global challenges, which can also assume the shape of an internationalization process (Araos, 2017).

In this part, three initiatives will be discussed, namely Inclusion, Asylum University and Refugee Project Maastricht. The landscape for refugee driven initiatives in the Netherlands is hard to delineate. From research on the databases of My University Cares Too and Refugee Welcome Map, it is possible to say that there are several initiatives and projects linked to universities across the Netherlands that are dealing with refugees. These projects can be found in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Leiden, Wageningen, Nijmegen, Utrecht, Eindhoven,

Delft, Arnhem, Maastricht, to name a few. The objectives of each initiative vary. Even when they are directly connected to the universities they may deliver different things.

### 5.2.1 Inclusion

The Inclusion project started in 2016 as an idea to transform the time of refugees into something productive. The project is funded by a collaboration of partners, among which is the local municipality of Utrecht. Since 2016, the project has reached 88 students with refugee background, from 21 different nationalities (of those 44% are from Syria). The gender distribution is 69% males and 31% females of those 57% are refugee status holders and 43% are asylum seekers. The age average varies, but last year (2017-2018) it was around 36 years old. Inclusion project also facilitates the access to Summer School courses and reached roughly 200 people. In total, accounting the Summer School and regular courses, Inclusion reached 280 people.

One of the most important characteristics of this project is that it is flexible and simple. There are no fees for refugees and to apply for the project, individuals must have an academic background, must present a reasonable level of English (in order to be able to follow the courses), and must pass an individual intake. The project leader recognizes that the academic background requirement leaves certain individuals out. But as she added, academia *per se* is exclusionary.

Inclusion was born in the summer/spring of 2016 in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis in Europe. The idea was to give the opportunity for refugees to spend their times in a fruitful and useful way. Inclusion is designed for refugees and asylum seekers (those who have been previously screened by the Immigration & Naturalisation Service – IND), meaning

that undocumented migrants are not covered by Inclusion at the moment. Inclusion is a bottom-up grassroots movement that was started by two PhD students and Elena Valbusa, a regular staff at the university. Although the initiative started from the bottom-up, it has gained the support of the university from the start. The university embraced the project in order to respond to one of the points in their strategic plan that has diversity as a goal. Besides the University of Utrecht, the municipality is also an important partner of the Inclusion project and they support the initiative with funds.

The idea of the project could be translated into the idea of creating a space for “meaningful waiting”. In other terms, the refugees allocated in camps around Utrecht could get access to university courses while they were still in the camps. The applicants of Inclusion gain a temporary access to Utrecht University and in this way they can get acquainted with the Dutch education system and culture in a flexible way. “So, we give them a temporary status inside the university and they can attend courses (...) when they get admitted to a study programme, they already have this benefit that they know how it works, that they know education works in the Netherlands.” (Inclusion).

Inclusion and Asylum University work in the same fashion: the courses that are open are those which professors have agreed to welcome the refugee students, which means that courses are not tailor-made for refugee students. Inclusion, however, has a wider range of courses available. After the intake interview, Inclusion coordinator will try to find matching courses for that specific students. Then, professors will be approached and will assess whether the refugee students can or cannot join their course programme.

“the teachers. They are those who make the Inclusion program possible, because they allow students to attend their courses. Essentially what they do they say ‘yes, this person does meet the criteria. Here is the free spot for this student and he/she is welcome to

attend'. (...) we offer, I don't know I lost count, but I think more than 200 courses every year" (Incluusion).

Another important feature of Incluusion the Buddy project, in which Dutch and International students partner up with refugee and walk them through the University routine and also help refugees to engage in activities that are outside the study curriculum, social activities: "on one hand we try to say very focused on education, but at the same time we want to enhance participation and integration in the city. We want them to feel at home in Utrecht, so we try to organize these activities as well." (Incluusion).

As language is one of the main concerns of many refugee students, Incluusion has developed a project to help with English language. Born from inside Incluusion, Engluusion focuses on providing English language assistance for newcomers "so not only for those with an academic background who are attending courses with Incluusion but also for people who might not have an academic background but still wants to learn English." (Incluusion). As from the time of my conversation with the Incluusion representative, Engluusion was on the verge of becoming a foundation on its own, preserving the purpose of helping newcomers with English language. The board of the foundation will include Dutch, International and Refugee students.

It is important to look at the personal motivations that moved people to create Incluusion. As from my interviewee

"I think it's a sense of frustration that I feel whenever I think of the situation they found themselves in... these are people who had no reasons to leave their homelands, to leave their jobs, to leave their families, their networks... they had a status, some of them were rich, they were happy where they were. They had no reason to leave and yet external forces, like a war in the case of Syria, forced them to leave everything

behind. Then somehow that's something that touches me deeply (...) they are beautiful people with lots of potential and it frustrates me that they had to leave everything behind and then it frustrates me even more that they are put in a situation that they are not able to do much. (...) So with Inclusion we try to do what we can to involve them to let them feel at home and to make them participate in society as much as we can.” (Inclusion).

Inclusion helps students to get involved in a full-time programme in many different ways. Besides receiving a certificate (in case they achieve satisfactory grades in the evaluations), students get acquainted with the educational system in the Netherlands – which is valuable, having in mind that they come from diverse backgrounds. As one professor said, “they do get the knowledge, but they don’t have the skills” (Inclusion) Through Inclusion students can get insights on the academic writing; also, it helps students to get used to the highly digitalized education system in the Netherlands. Working in groups and in-class debates is also something that many refugees have never experienced in their academic trajectory. Critical thinking is also developed in this contact with a Dutch university.

In sum, the knowledge acquisition regarding the Inclusion project is much broader than the sole content of courses; it can be seen as a preparatory programme “if you start an official program without any support without knowing this, it gets a little bit difficult. so through Inclusion they have the opportunity to explore this new environment and get used to it” (Inclusion). On the other hand, Inclusion also enriches the environment inside the classroom, creating a two-way exchange between students “It has stimulated diversity and brought new perspectives into the classroom which have benefited students, teachers and Inclusion participants alike.” (Inclusion website).



Inclusion has only started to invest in marketing and communication from three months ago – before that they lacked funds for it. The advertisement of the initiative relied on the mouth to mouth communication. Inclusion was in the vanguard of initiatives designed to help refugees in higher education. They keep contact with the initiatives from Wageningen, Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Maastricht to exchange best practices and knowledge.

On a different note, professors are very enthusiastic about the initiative:

“enthusiastic responses that I get in terms of offering courses and a few times that I talked to them they are happy to be involved, they are happy to be able to do something. Especially because as you know teachers are very busy, they have a huge shortage of time. And... so through Inclusion they are able to do something, without too much effort, in terms of time and energy. Because the course is already taking place they organize it anyway. so the only thing they have to do is to make one or more spot available in the course to allow this people to attend. so I think they are... my experience, is that they are very happy to do it.” (Inclusion).

### 5.2.2 Asylum University - Nijmegen

After the respondent from Asylum University visited GAST, a foundation that helps refugees around Nijmegen, the first questionings started “going there was like crossing a border. Then you realize that the borders of Europe are not in the Mediterranean but its right here in the city and how much access to just daily life things” (Asylum University). This questioning is directly connected to Balibar’s (2002) theory on the re-significance of borders. However, just visiting was not enough “what are the welcome initiatives? But the solidarity

mean for the university? Can we also do initiatives on campus or are we just going to study other initiatives?”. (Asylum University).

The majority of initiatives dedicated to assist refugees were focused on first need necessities and material things. Nevertheless, this dynamic points to the direction of a unidirectional support where someone gives, and refugees receive. It serves to fortify the stereotype of refugees are mere receivers. First-necessity needs are unquestionably important, but after these needs are met, there was “nothing for your intellectual development or to engage a bit more with thinking and being an active citizen” (Asylum University) and that is a role that can be played by the university. And that is where Asylum University is located.

Asylum university is a network to bring refugees in contact with higher education (van den Broek, 2015). It acts on the creation of spaces for conversation, it creates bridges and establishes relationships between the university and refugees. Asylum University has a mutable character and the actors involved in it change frequently. In general, those involved in this initiative are those who see themselves as being affected by the asylum landscape.

It is important to note that Asylum University tries to overcome the power relation in the university context. It means that this initiative tries to go beyond the unidirectional meaning of giving: the relationships established in Asylum University are two-way. Given the limitations of the initiative and the people involved in the initiative, they try to establish multirelations. One example of what has been delivered through the initiative is that they have accomplished to include the participants as research partners in scientific publications. But the personal characteristic of the initiative makes the scale of it very limited. Asylum University does not receive any financial support from Radboud University to operate. In fact, Asylum University does not rely on any funding from anywhere (apart from a few laptop donations at the beginning of the initiative).

Besides creating these spaces of interaction, Asylum University also provides access to refugee students to a few courses and lectures happening in Radboud University. These are regular full-time courses running in the university programme whose lead-professors previously agreed to welcome refugee students. The students who engage in these programs via Asylum University do not have to pay fees for attending those courses. At the end of the course, the refugee is entitled a certificate of conclusion. Nevertheless, Asylum University still does not have the capacity to assist these students in engaging in full-time degrees.

The relationship between Asylum University and Radboud University is complex and can be divided in two different levels. At the formal level, the relationship is marked with distance – although there are points of contact between the two of them. For instance, information regarding Asylum University can be found in the official “website, in the department of geography planning, courses and It keeps getting updated” (Asylum University). Another example of the involved of RU in the AU is the temporary student access for the refugees following lectures at the university. At the informal level, the initiative gets a lot of support and approval, especially from the Geography department. A positive side of keeping the informality of the initiative is that it gives much more flexibility to it, since it can operate without much bureaucracy. Another positive aspect of the informality of the initiative is that it allows the access courses to remain gratuitous.

Clark as appears in Araos (2017) drives attention to the fact that universities are systems that allow the lower parts in the organizational structure to be autonomous. In other words, it means that professors have certain autonomy. Also citing Clark, Araos (2017) mentions that the knowledge is the main commodity of universities and by making knowledge available beyond their boundaries, universities are contributing to society.

Admission to the program is simple and does not follow a screening process. Those who feel interested about the available courses can simply join. And if the course does not match expectations or if the person does not feel inclined to follow the course any longer, she/he is free to stop attending those classes. The limited resources also make this “self-selection” the only viable way for the initiative to operate. Asylum University does not require “asylum” documents, which allows the “undocumented” to engage in the university as well.

One of the weaknesses of the initiative is the communication and promotion. Initially there used to be weekly visits to GAST and the camp in order to spread the information regarding Asylum University. Nowadays, the communication depends on the information on the university’s website and word of mouth. Also, Asylum University appears on the website of Inclusion (from Utrecht) and Wageningen University. Besides, Asylum University is listed on an initiative from Rotterdam University called “My University Cares Too”.

Regarding points for improvement, there are a few, but specially in respect to the content of the courses available, as they are mostly from the Geography department, with a shy participation of Philosophy and Cultural Studies.

The students from AU that engage in the classroom are able practice integration in multidirectional dynamic:

“And actually it’s also about integrating Dutch students or local students also to the world. Because sometimes you can be so disconnected to the world. So it’s not just integrating so-called refugees into the Dutch society, but also integrating people who have not been exposed to the world. Integrating where the Netherlands is in the world. Because it is not as isolated as we think it is. That’s why the whole so-called crisis has helped to transform some of those imaginations that here in Nijmegen we are not so far

away from the world and the world comes to us and we need to integrate to that world as well” (Asylum University).

In respect to the involvement of other professors, there is a lot of fear. Fear appears in the text of Best (2016) who analyses the work of Bauman. According to this author, fear plays an important role in creating an environment of uncertainty and instability and it has direct effect on the safety nets. (Best, 2016).

“Fear that people internalize about the rules and about what can you do, what can you not do (...) Emotions are very important, because people are driven by these emotions (...) there’s a lot of fear of breaking rules not following procedures, of keeping positions. Of course we all need to survive, nothing is free. But sometimes there’s unnecessary fear, I feel. We can do so many things without needing so much permission, but still people don’t want to. (...) That actually it is not the border police, or the immigration office which is mainly controlling. It’s actually these everyday relations that people have internalize that I can’t do it. (...) You just don’t do it and it stays in those limits. So it’s not so different the university space and other solidarity spaces. They are very similar in internalizing fear, in internalizing limits (...) nobody is really telling you, because it’s not clear anywhere. Actually, even the academic freedom is a big part of the constitution of the university (...) Locally you might have more freedom to do more and what you’re doing, but somehow I think the imagination... that’s why we also talk about imagining, imagining another Europe as well. Once you start imagining then you can do it. But now I think... (...) But it’s changing. It’s changing. It’s not so... hopeless.” (Asylum University).

The experiences and relationships, as well as the collaborations for publications, are created can be the translation of success.

“we are transforming this space of the university as well. Publishing is a large part of what university is, writing is a large part... classrooms is one thing, but what knowledge we produce? Because I think also there so much money being put on studying refugees. Millions of euros and it’s all reproducing the same thing. Go and study about them, write about them. So that we can make policy for them, but don’t let them write. Don’t let them tell you what to do. You know better than them. So there’s a lot of reproducing those epistemological divisions within research and knowledge production as well. And I think for me those are the spaces of hope. But predominantly it has been failures because yeah the university is a tough space to do solidarity work.” (Asylum University).

### 5.2.3 Refugee Project Maastricht

Refugee Project Maastricht (RPM) is a spontaneous project born in 2015 from the idea of two students Aurelia Streit and Arie de Fijter. The idea of the project was to build bridges between newcomers, students and Maastricht locals. RPM has the support from the Maastricht community, the University of Maastricht, the municipality, the InnBetween, and the Dutch state (Refugee Project Maastricht, 2018).

“So, our objective is to make friends (...) the refugee project Maastricht is a social entrepreneurship project. (...) when this idea was first developed it was one of the first waves of refugees that came to Utrecht. (...) there was this group of refugees introduced

to the Maastricht society living without getting to know each other from either part. So we want to help with the integration, from a social aspect. Not from the official aspect.” (Refugee Project Maastricht).

It is important to note here that there is an emphasis on the type of integration that is provided by the project. The official integration can be found in Koehler (2009) and is basically related to assimilation of norms and values and Dutch language acquisition.

The relationship of RPM and Maastricht University is very close. The University of Maastricht has embraced the project and provides funding, the access to university facilities and even secures a share of budget to pay monthly allowances for the volunteers engaged in the project. Besides RPM also receives funding from the municipality, from Orange Funds (from 2015-2018) and from “The Duck Race”, which is an event aimed to raise money for initiatives in the city of Maastricht. Other local actors are also engaged in the project, such as a hostel that opens its doors for the Taal Cafés (language exchange meetings).

Refugee Project Maastricht is divided into seven teams – Communications, Social Events, Sports, Music, Connect, Languages and Homework. “So each team has a specific objective, or it covers a specific need in the refugee community”. The RPM listens to the feedbacks from the refugee community and keeps open the possibility for expanding into new teams.

Regarding the assistance for higher education engagement, the RPM takes a different position from Asylum University and Inclusion. The support to higher education is indirect “through those friendships we support with the academic enrolment. So we support with the academic trajectory of refugees who are interested in pursuing an academic career. But as an organization we don’t take that role”. (Refugee Project Maastricht). However, lately refugees

have been approaching RPM asking for assistance to access higher education, so they are working to meet this demand.

The RPM does not have a screening process, consequently they do not keep track of the documentation status of refugees. Taking part in the project is also straight forward and do not have any requirements (unless for the language groups, which are exclusively for refugees). The communication of this project to refugees happens via a multitude of channels, from the digital medias to the traditional posters and flyers, word of mouth and personal communication

One of the biggest weaknesses of the project is the high dependence on personal connections of the project. In another words, the project is highly dependent on personal connections and those are materialized on the volunteers who take part in the project. But since the volunteers have a high rotativity rate, the knowledge, expertise, and personal connections get weakened. The alternative would be a deeper institutionalization of the project, but “then you lose the personal aspects which is the objective” (Refugee Project Maastricht).

In respect to integration, the project approaches the topic through many activities: “So what we are trying to do is that we take the awkwardness away by creating more events and then training more skills in the refugee community (...) And we think that helps interaction and interaction that will eventually leads to integration. (...) and slowly you work on the integration without working on the integration. Does that make sense?” (Refugee Project Maastricht).

#### 5.2.4 Comparing Initiatives

The three initiatives analysed in this theses are very contrasting. While AU and Inclusion deal directly with the engagement of students in the university environment, RPM



does not directly make the bridge between refugees and the university. All of the three initiatives were born in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis in Europe and the large influx of new comers to the cities. All of them were born from a bottom-up movement, meaning that they appeared as a reaction of individuals that were touched by the current refugee landscape.

AU operates without funds, which means that it does not receive any financial support from the university or the municipality. However, Radboud University provides temporary credentials for refugees to access the university study system. Besides, some professors, especially from the Geography department, support the initiative and open their classroom doors to the newcomers. On the other hand, Inclusion and RPM receive direct support from the university, of Utrecht and Maastricht respectively. Moreover, these two initiatives receive funding from the municipality. RPM also finds support from local business, such as hostels, that welcome meetings of the initiative in their venues.

AU and RPM do not require a prior screening to the participants. There are no admission requirements for these initiatives. Inclusion, on the other hand, requires a simple admission procedure, as well as they only accepted refugees and asylum seekers who have been previously screened by the IND. The institutionalization of Inclusion strengthens the functioning of the initiative. It is translated in the number of courses that are offered through the initiative and the support that it receives from professors. In AU, the functioning is highly dependent on a small group of people and added to this the inexistent funding support, some professors are afraid to take part in the initiative and to suffer retaliations of any kind. On the other hand, RPM receives financial support but functions on a high dependence of personal relations – which weakens and threatens the sustainability of the project in the long run.

One weakness that could be perceived in AU and Inclusion is the promotion of it to refugees. From the interview with refugees, it was possible to perceive that a few of them did not hear about the initiatives, while others only heard from other people who had been part of it in the past.

In sum, all of the three initiatives are working towards the integration of refugees in the new place that they find themselves. Inclusion allows refugees to take part in courses in the university as well as it promotes social events to help refugees feel at home in the city. AU tries to create spaces of exchange between the university and the newcomers, and it is translated in the participation of refugees in courses and in research projects. Lastly, RPM does not directly engage refugees in university courses, but they try to cover integration in other fashions, and they try to bring together refugees, university students and citizens from Maastricht. Through the analysis of the three initiatives it is possible to see that there are many different approaches to the refugee situation and that universities can contribute in a variety of forms.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS

### 6.1 Results and Conclusion

“People in exile must be given every chance to keep growing” (UNHCR, 2018a)

The unprecedented number of displaced people in the world today urges for actions. Although the traditional approach to the asylum-seeker is placed in the hands of the nation-state, the current events shifted the responsibility to a broader range of actors in the society. As it is recognised in the UN New York Declaration from 2016, all actors must work together to bring sustainable solutions for the so-called refugee crisis. In this context education, and more specifically higher education, assumes a role of great importance: it is an enabling instrument through which refugees can develop and unlock their potentials.

The role of education thus evokes a resignification of the space of universities and the actors that are involved in and around it. The resignification of the university space is related to engaging the university in bigger societal demands, as an active agent and not as an observer one. Through this involvement, the university is exerting the “third mission”, which calls upon the actions of the university beyond the traditional “teach” and “research”. Notwithstanding, universities are not the only ones called into action in this current landscape. There are initiatives and projects that conjugate university participation with marginalised groups such as refugees and asylum-seekers.

The initiatives presented in this thesis were born from bottom-up movements and their level of involvement with the university traditional purposes is not always straight-forward. In fact, these initiatives help to push the universities into the “third mission”. The refugees caught up in this complex situation should also have an opinion regarding the policies and projects

that are directed to them. In this thesis, I tried to bring into debate the international legal frameworks that serve as a beacon for the right to education for refugees. At the same time, I tried to include initiatives from three different universities in order to analyse the dynamic of involvement of these initiatives and how they connect refugees to the university ecosystem. The voices of refugees resonate all the topics that were explored through the thesis. They provide a clearer framework of the refugee negotiations through the journey of education in the Netherlands.

The first conclusion that can be drawn from this thesis is that refugees experiences in higher education are diverse and unique. Notwithstanding, there are common grounds. Language, both Dutch and English, appeared in many of the conversations. English, especially in the academic environment was an issue for the majority of respondents. The linguistics privilege of those who have had better opportunities to learn English, highlight the disadvantages of refugees (Morrice, 2013). Getting used to the Dutch education system also appeared as a challenge, it means getting used to the evaluation system, getting used to the workload, the relationship between professor and student inside the classroom, writing academic assignments. Despite the hard work, these challenges were perceived as positive. On the other hand, one challenge that is not perceived as valuable is the devaluation of previous knowledge. Refugees did not report experiencing this inside classrooms; however, in the admission process, this was an issue that made access to higher education more difficult. On another note, the treatment as a hybrid between Dutch/local and international student in the admission process was also a positive aspect perceived by many interviewees.

Dutch language was also an obstacle, especially when it was required in parallel of English language and as a requirement for university enrollment. And the debate of Dutch language as a requirement for accessing education loans via UAF was also present in many conversations, both with refugees and initiatives. The Dutch language debate also appeared

subtly in respect to the official integration - many respondents have mentioned alternatives ways of integration, face to the official one. Another obstacle was the age difference inside the classroom. This aspect brings certain discomfort for refugees, as they feel more mature than the rest of the class.

Integration was a big part of the conversations with refugees. What I perceived is that once refugees are in the higher education environment they *also* need to integrate to the university setting, besides integrating with the city itself. However, the university provides more ways of integrating, as it is a nice environment (B.A.J.). While refugees are getting a hold of the integration in the university environment, they can gather information about the Dutch society. Learning about the Dutch *way* came up in many of the interviews. Another aspect of integration that had a unanimous agreement was that higher education experiences allow the refugees to expand their networks: they can get to know people. And these people can turn out to be important in social bonding, in providing information regarding academic subjects, job contacts, teaching the way people live here. There are many positive outcomes that were mentioned by the respondents. However, there is a downside to it. If refugees do not feel integrated in the university context they can feel alienation and feel like they do not belong. Motivation also comes in forms of an inclusive school environment that makes refugees feel like they belong (Olagookun & White, 2017)

Integration, as mentioned in Inclusion interview, is a two-way process. As regards to it, refugees in the context of higher education also bring meaningful contributions to the other students. In the case of H.A.B. and B.A.J., the contributions that they make inside the classroom are invaluable to the enrichment of those lectures. This is because HAB and BAJ are engaged in programmes that touch upon topics in which they are familiar with through their life experiences. This exchange challenges the role of refugees as receivers. They become creators of knowledge, of spaces of interaction and exchange of experiences. There is a tendency in the

narrative to allocate the refugees in the role of the sole receiver of help and support, with little or no agency (Zeus, 2011). However, from the conversations with the refugees what I could notice is that their agency in higher education is strong and it becomes stronger as they increase their feeling of self-development.

Going back to the research question, “How the international legal framework and the local initiatives regarding higher education are working in order to integrate and include refugees and how are the educational experiences of said refugees in the Netherlands?”

To start answering this question one should not fail to address the importance of international instruments in debating topics, such as the education for refugees. After 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the rights are still far from being a reality for all persons. It will be long until – if ever – that the Declaration from 1948 can be put in the shelves of history. Contemporary times have showed us that conflicts and adversities are still afflicting people all across the globe and in moments like these every and each human right built over these years is as relevant as ever. The more attention drawn to these topics, be it in the international or national level, the more conversations are established. The recent years have seen a greater attention driven the topics of refugee and education in the international arena. UN and UNHCR are working together to elaborate international guidelines for desirable actions from all member-states.

However, what this research could find out is that the responses to address education for refugees have surged in the local level and they are not directly related to the international regulations. Initiatives such as Asylum University, Inclusion and Refugee Project Maastricht have been created in the core of so-called refugee crisis. It means that these initiatives have responded and tried to address to a local pressure and demand based on a global issue. Rather than being driven by any international regulation, these initiatives see their origins in the

local communities. Of course that from the moment these initiatives are created they are automatically in conformity with policies and goals established at the global level. But they are grassroots movements, that come from bottom-up responses to pressuring societal issues – they did not appear *because* of international regulations.

Since these movements have surged from individual actions starting from the academic staff or students, in other words bottom-up, they assume an interesting position inside the university. These initiatives create dynamism of the university's mission, as they conjugate the traditional university's mission with social engagement. They are transformative movements for universities. Although positioned in different levels of institutionalization, all the initiatives analysed in this thesis have a strong and close connection with the universities. I would not say they belong to the universities, but they occupy a space that was not occupied before. And they also allow refugees, volunteers, students and professors to occupy this space with them.

There are many possibilities for improving the refugees' experiences and the initiatives. It is crucial to listen to the demands from the actors involved, specially the refugees, in order to gather meaningful feedback of new activities that can be delivered. It is important to listen to the refugees in this process because it is crucial to change the relations of power and allow refugees to become agents of the policy making of their own situation (Zeus 2011).

In this way, the questioning refugees regarding “what they think” could be done to improve these relationships. It could be a conversation starter and food for thought that provoke the refugees to reflect upon their trajectory and propose better ways for these dynamics. From the interviews, there are a many topics that can be stressed as points for improvement. Access to tailored and intensive English classes is critical for most (Olagookun & White, 2017) Recognition of previous education background is recognised as one of the points that should be promoted for refugees and migrants (UN, 2016) Language acquisition and proficiency is

directly related to the integration in the school context (Wrench, Soong, Paige, & Garrett, 2017). Other actions that can have positive results are: improve the access to learning tools that will equate them to local students and social connectedness, (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012).

In a nutshell, the conversation with refugees and initiatives were fruitful and there are three aspects that can be highlighted from them. The first is the dependence on people. Both refugees and the initiatives are highly dependent on personal connections. From the refugees' side, the connections help before, during and after the journey to education, and they should not be overlooked, as they represent a strong pillar in the refugee trajectory. The second aspect is that there are differences between refugee trajectories and personalities that make them unique individuals that require different needs. Finally, together with the literature presented in this thesis, it is possible to perceive that education plays an important role in the life of the newcomers. In previous literature education is presented as the baggage that individuals can carry along even in case of a forced displacement. I would say that along the education that individuals can carry, individuals bring the potential to develop themselves, to create new knowledge, to create spaces of interaction, to change their environment. And that is where the power and importance of education lies: education helps to unlock potentials and to develop those potentials that every individuals brings along with them no matter where they go.

## 6.2 Final Remarks and Indication for Future Research

At the beginning of this project, the intention was to analyse the interrelations of the international framework and the actual impact these policies had on refugees' lives. However, as the development of the project moved forward, so did the elements of analysis. It proved of extreme necessity to include in the scope of study the local level – and this led to a closer look



into the initiatives taking place around the Netherlands. Notwithstanding, as I carried on with the research, and especially after the interviews, I noted that the level of analysis can be further narrowed down and the most interactions that support individual refugees through their paths to higher education lies on the networks and on the people. This leaves a great space for further investigation that can centre the level on analyses on the social networks and on the impacts that it has on the effective integration of refugees to higher education.

Integration is manifold. The topic of refugees and integration is far from being exhausted. There is place for research on the topic of refugees ahead. For example, there is room for analysis of other institutions that are supporting refugees in their integration process, such as UAF, especially in light of the debate of English and Dutch language and their relation to higher education and integration. There is room to analyse how refugees are enabled to put the knowledge they acquired in the Dutch university to use.

This thesis could be reproduced using a gender cohort in the population analysed. Second, there can be research concerning the educators that are directly involved with higher education refugees in the Netherlands. What's more, there is room for analyses of other refugee education initiatives, including in other countries which can lead to a comparative study and analyses of best practices. Also, future research can investigate the effectiveness of the global institutionalism outside the euro-centric axis. Besides, from a conversation with one the refugees I came across the topic of holidays and the meaning it had for him, as a refugee. This could lead to an interesting investigation of that feeling and experience. It is endless.

The pathway of refugees is not smooth. To investigate about and reflect upon refugees means to opens spaces for conversations that include difference points of view and knowledge. And these conversations can turn out to be durable and sustainable solutions. The benefits that education can provide to refugee's lives can be seen not only in the literature, but also in the

narratives from the refugees. Education is a great tool, key, or weapon, that allows refugees to develop, explore and unlock their utmost potentials.

## 7. REFERENCES

- Agamben, G. (1995). We Refugees. *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* , pp. 114-119.
- Alston, P. (1982). *A Third Generation of Solidarity Rights: Progressive Development or Obfuscation of International Human Rights Law?* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Amenta, E. (2009). Making the most of an historical case study: configuration, sequence, casing, and the US old-aged pension movement. In D. Byrne, & C. C. Ragin, *The Sage Handbook of case-based methods* (pp. 351-366). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Amnesty International. (2016). *Tackling the Global Refugee Crisis - From Shirking to Sharing Responsibility*. London. Retrieved June 10, 2018, from <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL4049052016ENGLISH.PDF>
- Aparna, K., & Schapendonk, J. (2018). Shifting itineraries of asylum hospitality: Towards a process geographical approach of guest-host relations.
- Aparna, K., Mahamed, Z., Deenen, I., & Kramsch, O. T. (2017). Lost Europe(s). *ETNOGRAFIA E RICERCA QUALITATIVA*, 415-432.
- Araos, A. (2017). University Civic Engagement in Forced Migration: A Comparative Case Study on University Support Programs for Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Norway and the UK. Oslo: Department of Education – Faculty of Educational Sciences - University of Oslo [Master Thesis].
- Arendt, H. (1973). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Florida: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- Attoh, K. A. (2011). What kind of right is the right to the city? *Progress in Human Geography*, pp. 669-685.
- Avery, H., & Said, S. (2017). Higher Education for Refugees: The Case of Syria. *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, pp. 104-125.
- Balibar, É. (2002). *Politics and the Other Scene*. London: Verso.
- Bauman, Z. (2002). The fate of humanity in the post-Trinitarian world. *Journal of Human Rights*, pp. 283-303. doi: 10.1080/14754830210156544
- Bauman, Z. (2010). Education in the World of Diasporas. *Policy Futures in Education*, pp. 398-407.

- Bauman, Z. (2018). Between separation and integration: Strategies of cohabitation in the era of diasporization and Internet. *Popular Communication - The International Journal of Media and Culture*, pp. 1-3.
- Bauman, Z. (2018b). Between Separation and Integration: Strategies of Cohabitation in the Era of Diasporization and Internet. *Popular Communication*, pp. 1-3.
- Berry, J. W., Uichol, K., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative Studies of Acculturative Stress. *The International Migration Review*, pp. 491-511.
- Best, S. (2016). Zygmunt Bauman: On What It Means to be Included. *Power and Education*.
- Bond, L., Giddens, A., Cosentino, A., Cook, M., Hoban, P., Haynes, A., . . . Glover, S. (2007). Changing cultures: enhancing mental health and wellbeing of refugee young people through education and training. *IUHPE - PROMOTION & EDUCATION*, XIV(3), 143-149.
- Broek, P. v. (2015). *Radboud as a true Welcome University*. Retrieved July 10, 2018, from VOX: <https://www.voxweb.nl/nieuws/radboud-als-echte-welcome-university>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of human development*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Cançado Trindade, A. A., Peytrignet, G., & Santiago, J. R. (2004). *The three dimensions of the international protection of individuals, Human Rights, Humanitarian Law and Refugee Law - As três vertentes da proteção internacional dos direitos da pessoa humana. Direitos Humanos, Direito Humanitário, Direito dos Refugiados*. San José da Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericano de Direitos Humanos, Comitê Internacional da Cruz Vermelha, Alto Comissariado das Nações Unidas para os Refugiados.
- Clifford, N., Cope, M., Gillespie, T., & French, S. (2016). *Key Methods in Geography*. London: SAGE.
- Council of Europe. (2018). Retrieved from The European Social Charter: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter>
- Crea, T. M. (2015). Refugee Higher Education: Contextual Challenges and Implications for Program Design, Delivery, and Accompaniment. *International Journal of Educational Development*, pp. 12-22.
- Crul, M., Keskiner, E., Schneider, J., Lelie, F., & Ghaemina, S. (2017). *No lost generation. Education for refugee children. A comparison between Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and Turkey*.

- European University Institute. Florence: The integration of migrants and refugees. EUI Forum on Migration, Citizenship and Demography in Florence.
- Culbertson, S., & Constant, L. (2015). *Education of Syrian Refugee Children - Managing the Crisis in Turkey Lebanon, and Jordan*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
- Dahya, N., & Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017). Tracing Pathways to Higher Education for Refugees: the Role of Virtual Support Networks and Mobile Phones for Women in Refugee Camps. *Comparative Education*, pp. 284-301.
- Dale, R., & Robertson, S. L. (2012). Toward a Critical Grammar of Education Policy Movements. *Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies*.
- Darling, N. (2007). Ecological Systems Theory: The Person in the Center of the Circles. *Research in Human Development*, pp. 203-217.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2010). The Politics of Higher Education for Refugees in a Global Movement for Primary Education. *Refuge - Canada's Journal on Refugees*, pp. 10-18.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2011). *Refugee Education*. UNHCR.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). Refugee Education in Countries of First Asylum: Breaking Open the Black Box of Pre-Resettlement Experiences. *Theory and Research in Education*.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2016). Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization. *Educational Research*, 45(9), pp. 473-482.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017a). Pathways to Educational Success Among Refugees: Connecting Locally and Globally Situated Resources. *American Educational Research Journal*, pp. 1011-1047.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017b). Refugee Education: Education for an Unknowable Future. *Curriculum Inquiry*, pp. 14-24.
- Dryden-Peterson, S., & Giles, W. (2010). Introduction: Higher Education for Refugees. *Refuge - Canada's Journal on Refugees*, pp. 3-9.
- Essomba, M. À. (2017). The right to education of children and youngsters from refugee families in Europe. *Intercultural Education*, pp. 206-218.
- Fernández, M. (2018). Um Olhar Decolonial sobre os Direitos Humanos. In C. Proner, H. Olasolo, C. Villán Durá, G. Ricobom, & C. Back, *70º Aniversário de la Declaración Universal de Derechos*

*Humanos - La Protección Internacional de los Derechos Humanos en Cuestión* (pp. 517-522).  
Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.) New York: Continuum.

Froehlich, C. A., & Vieira, G. O. (2009, January-June). Ética global e proteção internacional da pessoa humana: dilemas da transnacionalização - Global ethic and international protection of human person: Dilemmas of the transnationalization. *evista de Estudos Constitucionais, Hermenêutica e Teoria do Direito (RECHTD)*. doi: doi: 10.4013/rechtd.2009.11.03

Gehlbach, H., & Maureen, E. B. (2011). Measure Twice, Cut Down Error: A Process for Enhancing the Validity of Survey Scales. *Review of General Psychology*, pp. 380-387.

Gerrard, J. (2016). The Refugee Crisis, Non-citizens, Border Politics and Education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, pp. 880-891.

Haddad, E. (2010). The Refugee: The Individual between Sovereigns. *Global Society*, pp. 297-322.

Incluusion. (2018, June 15). Incluusion Conference . Utrecht.

Jackson, I. C. (1991). The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees: A Universal Basis for Protection. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 3(3), pp. 403-413.

Joyce, A., Earnest, J., De Mori, G., & Silvagni, G. (2009). The Experiences of Students from Refugee Backgrounds at Universities in Australia: Reflections on the Social, Emotional and Practical Challenges. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, pp. 82-97.

Koehler, M. (2009). The role of education in teaching norms and values to adult newcomers: an analysis of integration policy in the Netherlands, with emphasis on the city of Rotterdam. *Intercultural Education*, pp. 161-172.

Krause, K.-L., Hartley, R., James, R., & McInnis, C. (2005). *The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from a Decade of National Studies*. University of Melbourne, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Victoria.

Laredo, P. (2007). Revisiting the Third Mission of Universities: Toward a Renewed Categorization of University Activities? *Higher Education Policy*.

League of Nations. (1919). *Covenant of the League of Nations*. Retrieved April 10, 2018, from [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/leagcov.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)

- Loi, M., & Di Guardo, C. M. (2015). The third mission of universities: An investigation of the espoused values. *Science and Public Policy* .
- Mangan, D., & Winter, L. A. (2017). (In)validation and (mis)recognition in higher education: the experiences of students from refugee backgrounds. *International Journal of Lifelong education*, 36, pp. 486-502. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2017.1287131>
- Milani, C. R., & Laniado, R. N. (2007). Transnational Social Movements and the Globalization Agenda: A Methodological approach based on the analysis of the World Social Forum. *Brazilian Political Science Review*, pp. 10-40.
- Morrice, L. (2013). Refugees in higher education: boundaries of belonging and recognition, stigma and exclusion. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, pp. 652-668.
- Moskal, M., & North, A. (2017). Equity in Education for/with Refugees and Migrants—Toward a Solidarity Promoting Interculturalism. *European Education*, pp. 105-113.
- Mountz, A., Wright, R., Miyares, I., & Bailey, A. J. (2002). Lives in limbo: Temporary Protected Status and immigrant identities. In *Global Networks 2* (pp. 335-356). Blackwell Publishers Ltd & Global Networks Partnership.
- Moussalli, M. (1991, July 01). International Protection: The Road Ahead. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 3(3), pp. 606-616. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/3.3.606>
- Mundy, K., & Murphy, L. (2001). Transnational Advocacy, Global Civil Society? Emerging Evidence from the Field of Education. *Comparative Education Review*, pp. 85-126.
- My University Cares Too. (2018). *My University Cares Too*. Retrieved July 30, 2018, from <https://www.muctoo.org/>
- Nelles, J., & Vorley, T. (2010). From policy to practice: engaging and embedding the third mission in contemporary universities. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, pp. 341-353.
- Nicholson, C. (1989). Postmodernism, Feminism, and Education: The Need for Solidarity. *Educational Theory*, pp. 197-205.
- Olagookun, O., & White, J. (2017). Including Students from Refugee Backgrounds in Australian Schools. In V. Plows, & B. Whitburn, *Inclusive Education* (pp. 95-106). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Oomen, B. (2017). Beyond the Nation State? Glocal Citizenship and Its Consequences for Intergration. In R. Baubock, & M. Tripkovic, *The Integration of Migrants and Refugees - An EUI Forum on Migration, Citizenship and Demography* (pp. 57-61). European University Institute.

- O'Rourke, J. (2014). Education for Syrian Refugees: The Failure of Second-Generation Human Rights During Extraordinary Crises. *Albany Law Review*, pp. 711-738.
- Phan, T. A. (2018). When One Door Closes, Another Opens: Community Colleges as Gateways to Higher Education for Refugee Students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, pp. 564-568.
- Piovesan, F. (2008). *Direitos Humanos e o Direito Constitucional Internacional*. São Paulo: Saraiva.
- Refugee Project Maastricht. (2018). *Our Story*. Retrieved July 15, 2018, from Refugee Project Maastricht: <https://refugeeprojectmaastricht.nl/our-story/?lang=en>
- Refugees in the Netherlands. (2017). *Education*. Retrieved June 2018, 20, from Refugees in the Netherlands: <https://refugeesnetherlands.weebly.com/education.html>
- Refugees Welcome Map. (2018). Retrieved May 20, 2018, from <http://refugeeswelcomemap.eua.be/Editor/Visualizer/Index/48>
- Samoff, J. (2003). Institutionalizing International Influence. *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Comparative Studies*, pp. 1-35.
- Sinclair, M. (2007). Education in Emergencies. *Commonwealth Education Partnerships*, pp. 52-56.
- Slovic, P., Fetherstonhaugh, D., Johnson, S. M., & Friedrich, J. (2000). Insensitivity to the Value of a Human Life: A Study of Psychophysical Numbing. In P. Slovic, *The Perception of Risk* (pp. 372-390). New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Synnøve, K., & Bendixsen, N. (2016). The Refugee Crisis: Destabilizing and Restabilizing European Borders. *History and Anthropology*, pp. 536-554.
- Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting Refugee Students in Schools: What Constitutes Inclusive Education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, pp. 39-56.
- TED. (2018). Halima Aden Talk at TEDxKakumaCamp - Live Broadcast [Video File]. Retrieved June 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oj3P2iKpLqU&feature=youtu.be&t=16m56s>
- The World Bank. (1999). *What is Social Capital?* PovertyNet. Retrieved January 10, 2018, from <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm>
- Torres, C. A. (2002). Globalization, Education, and Citizenship: Solidarity Versus Markets? *American Educational Research Journal*, pp. 363-378.
- UAF. (2018). *Wat doe het UAF?* Retrieved July 30, 2018, from UAF: <https://www.uaf.nl/>



- UN General Assembly. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 217 A (III). Retrieved February 15, 2018, from <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
- UN General Assembly. (1951). *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*.
- UN General Assembly. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Retrieved June 10, 2018, from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36c0.html>
- UN General Assembly. (1977). *Alternative approaches and ways and means within the United Nations system for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms*, (p. A/RES/32/130).
- UN General Assembly. (2005). *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. Retrieved January 12, 2018, from [https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/larger\\_freedom\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/larger_freedom_exec_summary.pdf)
- UNESCO. (1979). *Commission on Human Rights*. Retrieved April 20, 2018, from Report of the Secretary-General: [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/6652/files/E\\_CN.4\\_1334-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/6652/files/E_CN.4_1334-EN.pdf)
- UNESCO. (1980). *The Rights of Solidarity: an Attempt at Conceptual Analysis*. Mexico.
- UNESCO. (n.d.). *International Migration - Learning to Live Together - Glossary*. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/declaration/>
- UNHCR. (2015). *Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase*. Retrieved May 05, 2018, from <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>
- UNHCR. (2015b). *Higher Education Considerations for Refugees in Counties Affected by the Syria and Iraq Crisis*. Geneva. Retrieved June 15, 2018, from <http://www.unhcr.org/568bc5279.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2018). *The Global Compact on Refugees - Zero Draft*. Retrieved May 12, 2018, from <http://www.unhcr.org/Zero-Draft.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2018a). *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*. Retrieved May 10, 2018, from <http://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>
- UNHCR. (2018b). *'We are part of the solution', say young refugees*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2018/5/5af314524/part-solution-say-young-refugees.html>

- UNHCR. (2018c). *DAFI Programme*. Retrieved June 10, 2018, from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: <http://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html>
- UNHCR and Global Monitoring. (2016). *No More Excuses: Provide Education to all Forcibly Displaced People*.
- United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations*. Retrieved April 5, 2018, from <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>
- United Nations Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*. Geneva. Retrieved May 29, 2018, from <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5943e8a34/global-trends-forced-displacement-2016.html>
- United Nations General Assembly. (2016). *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*. Retrieved April 20, 2018, from <http://www.unhcr.org/57e39d987>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). Retrieved June 10, 2018, from Forced displacement worldwide at its highest in decades: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/6/5941561f4/forced-displacement-worldwide-its-highest-decades.html>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). Retrieved June 05, 2018, from Tertiary Education: <http://www.unhcr.org/tertiary-education.html>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Global Education Monitoring Report. (2016). *No more excuses: Provide education to all forcibly displaced people*. Policy Paper.
- van den Broek, P. (2015). *Radboud as a true Welcome University*. Retrieved July 10, 2018, from VOX: <https://www.voxweb.nl/nieuws/radboud-als-echte-welcome-university>
- van der Spek, W. (2016). What Were They Thinking?! *Investigation of the effects of the way in which asylum seekers are sheltered on the image of the Netherlands as a destination country among asylum seekers*. Nijmegen: Radboud University - Law and Society [Master Thesis].
- Vasak, K. (1977). A 30-year Struggle: The Sustained Effort to Give Force of Law to the. *UNESCO Courier*, 29.
- Verdross, A. (1979). Fundamental Rights: The Journey of an Idea. *Human Rights*, 20-23.
- Webb, S., Hodge, S., Holford, J., Milana, M., & Waller, R. (2016). Refugee migration, lifelong education and forms of integration. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, pp. 213-215.

- Wenden, C. W. (2018). Migration, Citizenship and the Global Refugee Crisis. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, pp. 224-237.
- Wilkinson, L. (2002). Factors Influencing the Academic Success of Refugee Youth in Canada. *Journal of Youth Studies*, pp. 173-193.
- Wrench, A., Soong, H., Paige, K., & Garrett, R. (2017). Building Spaces of Hope with Refugee and Migrant Background Students. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.
- Zawdie, G. (2010). Knowledge Exchange and the Third Mission of Universities. *Industry & Higher Education*, pp. 151-155.
- Zeus, B. (2011). Exploring Barriers to Higher Education in Protracted Refugee Situations: The Case of Burmese in Thailand. *Refugee Studies*, pp. 256-276.