

**DILEMMAS OF INTEGRATION:
TWO POLICY CONTEXTS AND REFUGEE STRATEGIES FOR
INTEGRATION**

Final Report of a comparative study of the integration experiences of refugees from
former Yugoslavia in Rome and Amsterdam

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by

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Executive Summary

This study examined, in a comparative way, the situation of refugees settled in Italy and the Netherlands. It was empirically focused on a close and in-depth analysis of how refugees themselves perceived their circumstances and conditions relating to the two contrasting 'models' of integration, how they define integration success and develop strategies to achieve their goals. Carried out at the Refugee Studies Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, the following Report's aim is to inform policy development by helping to develop a concept of integration which is sensitive to the experiences, concerns and cultural background of refugees themselves and yet capable of cross-cultural comparisons.

The study is qualitative in nature, based on in-depth interviews with 60 refugees from former Yugoslavia as well as semi-structured interviews with a number of government officials, non-governmental and community organisations' representatives conducted during extensive fieldwork research in Rome and Amsterdam. The author emphasises that despite limitations associated with this type of study and methods of research, the report offers a number of valuable indications of the problems refugees have integrating within these two policy contexts, both in terms of economic and social inclusion.

The report is divided in eight chapters outlining conceptual, methodological and policy frameworks of analysis, as well as examining different stages of migration cycle and aspects of integration. The report documents that integration, as it is perceived and desired by the refugees themselves, is about its functional aspects and social participation in the wider society.

The discussion has documented that the Dutch model of reception and integration of refugees is based on a number of measures and interventions by the state intended to meet the immediate needs of refugees and to facilitate gradually their further structural and institutional integration in Dutch society. These policies and resources are targeted at the instrumental level and essentially approach integration as a one way assisted process, which turns refugees into policy objects, rather than approaching them as a vital resource in the integration process. As it has been argued in this research, although these policy interventions address many of the requirements self-identified by refugees as important for integration to happen, they do not in themselves make refugees feel integrated as they do not provide a strategy for wider social

inclusion. Rather, they are experienced as the state measures that often do not correspond to their needs and integration goals, to which refugees, nonetheless, are required to conform because of the lack of power and 'voice' in the process of integration.

The study has also indicated considerable problems of the refugees in Italy, primarily in achieving a minimal financial security and in integrating in the labour market due to the lack of any integration policy. Nonetheless, the author argues that disadvantages involved in the lack of an organised programme of assistance for refugees in Rome, although profound, also entailed potential advantages because it permitted and enhanced personal *agency* of refugees *in reconstructing* their lives. The absence of reception and integration programmes meant that refugees did not have to confront the structural limitations inherent in the encounters between the helpers and recipients, based upon unequal power and authority.

The report also indicates that personal satisfaction and assessment of integration success goes beyond simple, measurable, indicators, such as individual occupational mobility and/or economic status, and includes indicators, such as quality and strength of social links with the established community.

The emphasis on the importance of providing refugees with a framework for an active reconstruction of life, as the author points out, should not be understood as an *apologia* for the absence of a strategy for integration. Rather, the argument is that a desirable and successful integration policy should provide refugees with a legal, financial and institutional framework within which they are given *space* for agency and the functional adjustment of their attitudes and skills necessary for entering the receiving society as social actors. Such a framework should also provide a certain degree of *flexibility* and allow for differentiated strategies for integration of refugees of different age, gender, and educational and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, successful policies and accompanying resources have also to address the issues of integration in community and promote a notion of social and individual belonging grounded in social interaction between refugees and the established community.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1. Background to the project

In the past decades, countries of the industrialised world have been struggling with the question how to facilitate settlement of the growing number of refugees and how to enhance their participation in new societies. Even the terms absorb, assimilate, incorporate or integrate refugees, used to describe this process suggest complexity, ambiguity, and contention surrounding the issue. The problem how to approach the settlement issues is both conceptual and practical. Not only researchers in the field define 'integration' differently, but also those who define and develop policies relating to refugee settlement approach the issue in different ways.

The reception and integration policies of European states vary widely, from the highly centralised state-sponsored programmes of the north European countries to the minimal social assistance provided by the countries of the southern Europe. Measures of integration commonly employed by governments of receiving societies include access to re-training and education to enhance employment opportunities, health and other social services and, in some cases, the ability to participate in local decision-making processes. The level and character of these forms of assistance depend on the character of welfare systems of receiving societies, which tend to influence policies of integration. Welfare states, such as Scandinavian or Dutch, provide welfare system of assistance to refugees. The south European countries, such as Italy, which have relatively underdeveloped welfare systems, tend to have underdeveloped and often *ad hoc* measures of assistance for individuals granted asylum.

It is not clear to what extent these policies help or hinder the settlement of refugees, particularly from the point of view of refugees themselves. Empirical studies about problems of refugee settlement have tended to adopt a 'top-down' approach to the concept of 'integration' and, therefore, to focus on structural and organisational aspects of the integration

‘system’, commonly in a single country. This lack of empirical research, and specifically of comparative research on the social conditions experienced by refugees in receiving societies, which focuses on the ‘voices’ of refugees themselves, rather than solely on structural and organisational aspects of integration, inspired this research project. It was conducted at the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC), University of Oxford, and funded by the Lisa Gilad Initiative and the European Commission through the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), as well as The British Council, The Heyter Travel Fund, and The Oppenheimer Fund.¹

1.1.1. Summary of the project and research aims

This study analyses the social conditions of refugees and explores their experiences of integration. By focusing on exile communities from former Yugoslavia in Italy and the Netherlands the research examines in a comparative way their social conditions in the two states. It analyses the two policy contexts and their relation to the needs and expectations of the studied population and explores the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of both the refugees and the receiving societies and how they affect the assessment of refugees concerning their situation in exile. Given that this research acknowledges that every phase in refugee experience is importantly gendered (Indra 1999), the analysis continuously focuses on the role gender plays in these processes.

Within this general framework, the research aims to clarify:

- ◆ the nature of choices available to refugees in the two country and policy contexts;
- ◆ the ideas of ‘successful integration’ desired by refugees themselves;

¹ The Lisa Gilad Initiative is a charitable trust, set up in 1998, to commemorate the life and work of the late Lisa Gilad, an anthropologist and founding member of Canada Immigration and Refugee Board.

- ◆ the limitations refugees experience in the two receiving societies.

These aims of the project provide a basis for determining the parameters of governmental settlement programmes that will acknowledge refugees as “social actors” (Miles, 1993). Hence, the objective of this project is to help develop a concept of integration which is sensitive to the experiences, concerns and cultural background of refugees themselves and yet capable of cross-national comparisons.

Italy and the Netherlands have been chosen for comparison, because of their different migration histories as well as because of their different policy contexts. With respect to the latter, the two countries represent contrasting ‘models’ of reception and integration. It was considered that an exploration of experiences of integration of a population from a single country of origin would provide an insight into the ways in which different policy contexts and broader country contexts influence how refugees develop their strategies for integration.

Refugees from former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, provide a recent example of mass forced migration of population in Europe. Even after peace agreements in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is unlikely that the majority of these refugees will return to their countries of origin. With the exception of refugees from former Yugoslavia in Germany, most of these people are not forced to repatriate, but have been granted permanent residence rights in the countries of their exile. It is, thus, important to assess social conditions of this mass population of refugees in Europe, as well as the inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms involved in the process of their settlement.

Given the focus on ‘refugee voices’, data for this study were gathered through qualitative interviewing and observation during several months of fieldwork in Rome and Amsterdam, the two study-sites with a considerable concentration of refugees from former Yugoslavia. During fieldwork every effort was made to assure, as far as possible, that the researcher lived amongst the refugees themselves.

Because of the use of qualitative methods in this research, the number of refugees contacted, observed and interviewed for this research is not large. This, however, does not undermine the relevance of the ‘voices’ of refugees in this study for researchers, practitioners and policy makers. The empirical relevance of this research, and the analysis of the situation of 60 refugees in exile in Italy and the Netherlands is enhanced by its comparative nature and its focus on the experiences of refugees from a single country of origin in two different country and policy contexts. The studied population in both contexts is of a similar background in terms of their social upbringing embedded in the shared socio-economic system of their country of origin, educational system, system of social values, and some elements of shared traditions and culture. Thus, refugees from former Yugoslavia bring to the receiving societies similar “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984). The ways in which this accumulated set of conditions of life position the refugee in particular relation to others depend to the large extent on the policy and country contexts of the receiving societies. Although this study acknowledges that integration is individualised, it also understands settlement to be contextual and culturally determined, as will be discussed later in this report. Hence, this exploration of the experiences of integration of a population from a single country of origin provides an empirically grounded insight into how different policy contexts, as well as broader country contexts influence the development of refugee strategies of integration.

1.2. Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the main methodological issues of the study, as well as of the process of the research. Issues of the time span concerning the process of integration, and the unit of analysis, are considered. It also addresses the issue of how theoretical considerations influenced the choice of research methods used in this study. Discussion of three sources of data is followed by an introduction of the group of refugees on whose

experiences the analysis in this study is based. Further, the Chapter describes the process used in organising data and analysing the experiences of the studied population.

Chapter 3 sets the conceptual and policy frameworks of the study. It offers an overview of the main conceptual considerations of the research and working definitions of the terms used in this report. It defines integration as relative and culturally determined, two-way process affecting both the refugees and the receiving society. Integration understood as a two-way process also implies that integration is not a singular, stage-sequential and regularly paced process. Rather, it consists of sets of overlapping processes related to different spheres of societal participation and have different pace and variable outcomes. The Chapter also provides a discussion of the Italian and Dutch policies pertaining to integration, as well as an overview of the numbers and legal status of refugees from former Yugoslavia in the two countries. It examines the way in which the histories of migration of the two countries and their social protection and welfare systems affect admission, reception and integration policies, and points to the main characteristics of the two contrasting 'models' of reception and integration.

Chapter 4 discusses the patterns of flight of the studied population, reasons for choosing their final destination, and addresses the problem of blurred boundaries between economic migrants and refugees. Data gathered in this study show that this longstanding division between the field of refugee studies and the study of migration no longer reflects the reality of patterns of migration. The report documents that while people may leave a place of their origin because of the conflict, their subsequent movement and destination is often determined by other kinds of motivation. Although the discussion in this Chapter attests to the increasing difficulty in distinguishing refugees from what was termed voluntary migrants, it also emphasises that some aspects of force involved in the movements of people in this research often made degrees of choice for them extremely limited. A distinct character and nature of

problems and needs of those forced to flee without any or very little preparation, and often without a possibility to return, is documented and discussed in the consecutive chapters.

Chapter 5 discusses the issues relating to incorporation of refugees into systems and structures of receiving societies. When receiving societies develop strategies to promote integration, the primary target of their policies is access to services such as language training/learning, re-training and/or recognition of prior skills and experience, opportunities for housing and other services until able to be self-sufficient, and access to employment. The extent to which the Italian and Dutch governments have intervened in these areas of integration are different. The Chapter examines how refugees themselves experienced these different 'modes' of assistance and discusses the quality of their functional integration via acquisition of language skills, housing, education and employment.

Chapter 6 examines the role of social networks in the process of integration and the issues of wider societal participation of refugees in the receiving society. By exploring the social relationships within their own ethnic group, as well as often neglected social links among refugee and indigenous and other established groups, the Chapter addresses the issue of inclusion in community, which should be at the core of the idea of integration understood as a two-way process. Comparison between the experiences of refugees from former Yugoslavia in the two different country contexts also opens up the space for discussion of the role of cultural compatibility in the process of integration and how it affects the assessment of refugees concerning their situation in exile. The Chapter discusses the character and importance of social networks of the studied population established within their own ethnic group, and their role in the process of integration. It also reveals the need for social communication with the established community of the receiving society and its centrality in shaping refugee notions of their integration success.

Chapter 7 discusses the question of return; the issue that has been equally intriguing for those forced to leave their countries of origin, for practitioners and governments of the receiving societies, as well as for researchers. The discussion in the Chapter reveals that the question of return involves a complex set of intervening variables and thus represents a *process* that can be very long or even never completed. It documents that the structural and organisational opportunities for integration, such as the presence or absence of developed integration programmes in the receiving society, do not play the central role in refugee attitudes towards return. The discussion indicates, however, that attitudes towards return affect the process of integration and the individual desire to participate in the wider society.

Chapter 8 concludes the report by way of a brief summary of the main findings and arguments throughout the study, as well as by outlining policy implications that can be drawn from the arguments made in the report.

Chapter 2 - Methodology and methods of research

This Chapter discusses the main methodological issues of the study, as well as of the process of the research. Issues of the time span concerning integration, and the unit of analysis, are considered. It also addresses the issue of how theoretical considerations influenced the choice of research methods used in this study. Discussion of three sources of data is followed by an introduction of the group of refugees on whose experiences the analysis in this study is based. Further, the Chapter describes the process used in organising data and analysing the experiences of the studied population.

2.1 Methodological considerations

For the purposes of carrying out this research study it was important to clarify the time span concerning the process of integration. Integration defined as a process implies a long and unspecified period of time during which individuals and groups interact and change. Often, the process can take as long as a lifetime. Consequently, it is vital for purposes of research about integration to specify the time span to be examined. This study, for the most part, examined the situation of refugees from the post-Yugoslav states who arrived in Italy and the Netherlands between 1991 and 1995. These years mark the beginning of the first war in the region and the end of the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, respectively. It was considered that after 6 to 10 years in exile, these people had been able to come to terms with some of their losses, to refine their perception of their situation in Italian/Dutch society, and to formulate their goals. The analysis included, however, discussion of the situation of a few refugees who fled to the Netherlands after 1995. This exception was made to

gather data about experiences of those who have been admitted in the country after the new, integration of newcomers policy had been introduced.

Although the process of integration involves adjustment of individuals and groups, this research primarily focused on individuals. The choice of the unit of analysis in this research is based on the approach that considers refugees to be agents. Consequently, the study seeks to clarify how individuals respond to various social mechanisms that either constrain or permit their participation in the receiving society. It was envisaged that the analysis of individual cases would point to the factors that facilitate or hinder inter-group interaction and its role in the process of settlement as defined by individual refugees who are not necessarily involved in refugee community organisations.

The choice of qualitative methods of research used in this study is centrally related to the objectives of the research project defined as a critique of a 'top-down' approach to integration. The refugee situation is generally framed, in Indra's words (1993: 763), by an asymmetry of power and voice between the state, on the one hand, and the refugees on the other. Qualitative interviewing is an important way of learning from refugees because it permits fuller expression of refugee experiences in their own terms. Further, as Robinson argues (1998: 122), "since integration is individualised, contested and contextual it requires qualitative methodologies which allow the voices of respondents to be heard in an unadulterated form." This study, therefore, did not aim to produce ambitious generalisations. Rather, it aimed to provide insights into the complexity of the process of integration based on a more intimate knowledge of a smaller 'slice' of reality. These close insights into the experiences of the studied population can reveal the complexities involved in the refugee settlement and the process of creating a meaningful social 'space' within the receiving societies. This in-

depth knowledge about the realities of lives of refugees involved in this research brings to the attention of researchers, policy makers and the wider public the opinions and ‘voices’ of those whose settlement has been ‘managed’ in different ways by governmental institutions, the NGO sector and other agencies.

This method of data gathering was appropriate for the research because of its acknowledgement of gendered dimensions of refugee settlement. Unequal gender relations of power in the family (the private domain) as well as in society and within the state (the public domain) have often silenced women’s voices. As Indra (1993: 763) argues, the asymmetry of power and voice between the state and the refugees is gender specific, since those who are both refugees and women may be subjected simultaneously to two overlapping silencing processes. One is embedded in the private and the other in the public domain.

Qualitative research methods were also valuable in the case of this research because they better address the problem of inequalities in power between the researcher and the respondents. Many researchers have been conscious of the exploitative tendency of unequal relations of power embedded in the research process. One of the ways to reduce the potential of treating refugee subjects as ‘data-generating objects’ is the use of qualitative interviewing to secure their active involvement in the construction of data about their lives.

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2.2 The three sources of data

This research is based on three sources of data gathered from individuals, the NGO sector, governmental and community organisations. Observation notes written immediately after each interview served as an important additional source of information for this study. Furthermore, a review of relevant literature and empirical

research about integration of refugees and other migrants provided a broader conceptual framework for this research.

Interviews with representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations provided information about the policy contexts in Italy and the Netherlands. The list of organisations contacted in the two countries is given in Appendix 1. Interviews with leaders of the community organisations in Rome and Amsterdam focused on formal community positions regarding the integration issues as well as on programs which assist refugees in their efforts to start new lives in Italy and the Netherlands. In-depth interviews with refugees provided information about socio-economic and migration-related data as well as data concerning specific needs, concerns and expectations of refugees, future plans, and their notions of 'home'. The list of community organisations contacted in Rome and Amsterdam, as well as the information about refugees interviewed for this research is given in Appendices 2 and 3, respectively.

2.3 Access to the refugee communities of nationals from the post-Yugoslav states in Rome and Amsterdam and selection of interviewees

In planning this research, it was envisaged that contacts with the NGO sector and community organisations in Italy and the Netherlands would assist in identifying refugees for interviewing. Given the differences between the two country and policy contexts, however, the way of getting access to refugee communities from the region of former Yugoslavia was somewhat different in the two study sites. In Rome, informal contacts of the researcher with members of refugee communities of nationals from former Yugoslavia were almost exclusively the source of information in identifying interviewees for this study. The research revealed that refugees from the

region have been clients of local NGOs and community organisations only in exceptional cases. In Amsterdam, given the well-developed NGO sector and their essential role in implementing integration policy and in assisting refugees during the first stages of their settlement, all interviewed have been clients of these organisations. Community organisations, the Bosnian Association in Amsterdam in particular, played an invaluable role in establishing first contacts with their members. Thus, access to refugee communities of nationals from the post-Yugoslav states in Amsterdam was gained through local NGOs, community organisations and informal contacts of the researcher.

Informal contacts of the researcher with the refugees in the two study sites, which facilitated the process of identifying subjects for this research, were an advantage because they enhanced the establishment of a relationship of trust between interviewees and the researcher for reasons explained by Moussa (1993). She notes that the experience of exile can make refugees intensely suspicious of institutions, government(s), and individuals representing these bodies, including researchers (Moussa 1993: 36). However, in developing a relationship of trust, the fact that the researcher is originally from the region, speaks the language of the interviewees, shares their cultural background as well as their experience of life a long way away from 'home', was crucial.² The fact that the researcher did not share the ethnic-national background with many of the interviewees proved not to be a problem among the population in this study.

Although the researcher's experience of 'voluntary' exile and of the loss of 'home' were important in developing a mutual understanding with the refugees, the life circumstances of the researcher and the refugees were substantially different.

These differences were aggravated in those cases in which socio-economic background and education between the researcher and the research subject were radically different. Edwards (1993: 18) argues that factors such as race, class and other social characteristics "place" both the researcher and the subject within the social structure and therefore are relevant to all social research. In order to reduce the problems in understanding that were embodied in these different locations, the researcher often repeated to the refugees, in her own words, what they had said during the interviews, to see if they agreed with the interpretation. This way, the effort was made to overcome barriers in understanding words of the interviewees because of a "lack of shared cultural norms for telling a story, making a point, [and] giving an explanation" (Kohler Riessman 1987: 173).

This procedure was also critical for interviewing refugees with whom the researcher did not share an ethnic-national background. The researcher's location and experience regarding the problems with ethnic-nationality in the context of a conflict involving ethnic division were radically different from the experiences of interviewees who were minority population in their places of origin. However, the research process revealed that the fact that the researcher and the research subjects shared, in a way, a system of values rooted in their social upbringing was important for the development of the mutual understanding during the interview process.

Initial contacts established during short, exploratory, visits to Italy and the Netherlands, in the summer and autumn of 1999 and the autumn of 2000, were gradually expanded through the 'snowball' sampling technique during fieldwork in Rome, from January to May 2000, and Amsterdam, from November 2000 to February 2001. The selection of actual interviewees in the two study sites was, however, based

² The researcher is Serb, born and brought up in Belgrade. She left Yugoslavia in 1992, went first to

on a 'strategy' of a "theoretical sampling", as described by Armstrong (1987). The primary concern of this type of sampling, according to Armstrong, is not representativeness, but rather identification of conceptually relevant cases that through a comparison can contribute to development of theory and concepts.

In introducing the research to refugees in Rome, the *practical* outcome of this study was emphasised at first. It was pointed out that although the study is an academic endeavor it also had a practical, policy oriented, side to it. The strong EU based NGO link of this research was stressed (i.e. ECRE), as well as the research's aim to contribute to NGO efforts in lobbying the governments of member states for better integration policies. The reactions to an introduction of the research stressing this aim were less than enthusiastic and people openly expressed their unwillingness to participate in the research on this basis. Refugees from former Yugoslavia in Rome were not at all interested in helping this kind of research because of a very critical attitude towards the NGO sector, in Italy and elsewhere. They felt that the majority of the work done by the NGO sector was a "waste of money", a kind of *ars gratia artis* approach that actually benefits those who work for such organisations and their governments, regardless of a seeming tension between the two. This bitterness, as the research revealed, was based on their experience in Italy where they were left to their own devices. Since the success of the fieldwork was seriously threatened, the way of introducing the research had to be altered. Its *academic* side was emphasised. The importance of documenting refugee voices was accentuated and the need for analyses of specific situations that could lead to influencing public opinion in favour of refugee issues. This change in emphasis did help in getting people to agree to meet.

England and later to Canada where she took Canadian citizenship.

In introducing the research to refugees in Amsterdam, the practical and academic aspects of research were equally emphasised, and people were agreeing to meet and participate in this research without any problem. Only a 19 year-old Bosnian Muslim woman who came to the Netherlands in her early teens, after witnessing killing of several family members in the war and after experiencing a very difficult flight, had decided to pull out of the research before the formal interview took place. She explained her decision as her need to protect herself from emotional distress that might have been caused by the interview in which she would have to talk about the reasons of her flight.

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2.4 Gathering data

Interviews with representatives of government and non-government organisations in Italy and the Netherlands were made during short field visits to the two countries. Interview notes as well as reports and publications concerning the work of these organisations provide the core information about the policy contexts presented in this report.

During the fieldwork in Rome and Amsterdam, around 180 informal contacts with refugees from former Yugoslavia were established (around 120 and 60 informal contacts respectively). These contacts were useful for collecting general information about their situation in exile and the people they knew. These gatherings were usually not one-to-one contacts and, therefore, not suitable for collecting more personal data and accounts of their life in exile. For these reasons, 40 individuals in Rome and 20 in Amsterdam were chosen for formal, in-depth, interviewing. These interviews were taped, and were each approximately 80 minutes long. Each interview situation, however, lasted approximately three hours, taking into account the time to get the

conversation going and to wrap-up the interview. The interviews were first edited and then transcribed and translated into English. Additionally, data were collected during several meetings in Rome, with three children between eight and 12 years of age, and with a girl of 16 years of age. Notes were made after each of the informal meetings. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and assured that the names of places and institutions that could identify them in either of the contexts (i.e., the place of origin or Rome/Amsterdam) would be omitted. Therefore, the names that appear in the study are pseudonyms.

2.5 Characteristics of the sample

The principal concern in selecting interviewees for this study was to ensure they come from different social networks in order to cover a variety of refugee situations. Further, a special attention was given to interviewing refugees of different age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, parental status, education, region and place of residence before flight. However, the actual profile of the group of people interviewed depended on the characteristics of the refugee population from former Yugoslavia in the two cities. Consequently, the group of 40 refugees interviewed in Rome, consisted overwhelmingly of relatively young (80 percent of interviewed were between 20 and 40 years of age), urban, and well-educated individuals, predominantly single or cohabiting, without children, overwhelmingly from Bosnia-Herzegovina (63 percent). Table 1 shows the social characteristics and legal status of the group.

Table 1: Social characteristics and legal status of the interviewees in Rome

Characteristics	N	%
<u>Age</u>		
20 to 30	15	37.5
31 to 40	17	42.5
41 to 50	7	17.5
over 50	1	2.5

Total	40	100

<u>Gender</u>		
Female	21	52.5
Male	19	47.5

Total	40	100

<u>Marital status</u>		
Single	19	47.5
Married	10	25.0
To Italians	4	
To their compatriots	6	
Cohabiting	10	25.0
With Italians	2	
With their compatriots	8	
Divorced	1	2.5
From Italians	0	
From their compatriots	1	

Total	40	100

<u>Parental status</u>		
Single with children	0	
Married with children	6	
Cohabiting with children	0	
Divorced with children	1	

Total	7 out of 40	or 17.5 out of 100

<u>Educational level acquired in the home country</u>		
Elementary level	0	0
High or Secondary level	7	17.5
University degree	16	40.0
Interrupted by war	17	42.5
Education continued or vocational training taken	13	
Did not continue	4	

Total	40	100

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Table 1: Social characteristics and legal status of the interviewees in Rome (continued)

Characteristics	N	%
<u>Time of arrival</u>		
1991	9	22.5
1992	17	42.5
1993	12	30.0
1994	0	0
1995	2	5.0
Total	40	100
<u>Legal status</u>		
Humanitarian status	22	55.0
Work permit	13	32.5
Italian citizenship or permit to stay for family reasons	5	12.5
Total	40	100
<u>Current labour market status</u>		
Employed	28	70
Work and study	7	17.5
Only study	5	12.5
Unemployed	0	0
Total	40	100

The group of 20 refugees interviewed in Amsterdam comprised of a high percentage of younger individuals (60 percent of interviewed were between 20 and 40 years of age) as well as of older and elderly individuals (40 percent of interviewed were 41 years of age or older). Over half of the group were married individuals with children from urban areas. Approximately 50 percent of the interviewed were from semi-urban settlements. In terms of education, interviewees in Amsterdam were well-educated, with 35 percent of those with a university degree, and with an equally high percentage of individuals with a secondary or high school degree. The group consisted almost

exclusively of individuals from Bosnia-Herzegovina (95 percent). Table 2 shows the social characteristics and legal status of the group.

Table 2: *Social characteristics and legal status of the interviewees in Amsterdam*

Characteristics	N	%
<u>Age</u>		
20 to 30	6	30
31 to 40	6	30
41 to 50	4	20
over 50	4	20
Total	20	100
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	9	45
Male	11	55
Total	20	100
<u>Marital status</u>		
Single	6	30
Married	11	55
To Dutch	0	
To their compatriots	11	
Cohabiting	0	
Divorced	3	15
From Dutch	0	
From their compatriots	3	
Total	20	100
<u>Parental status</u>		
Single with children	0	
Married with children	11	
Cohabiting with children	0	
Divorced with children	3	
Total	14 out of 20	or 70 out of 100
<u>Educational level acquired in the home country</u>		
Elementary level	0	0
High or Secondary level	7	35
University degree	7	35
Interrupted by war	6	30
Education continued or vocational training taken	6	
Did not continue	0	
Total	20	100

Table 2: *Social characteristics and legal status of the interviewees in Amsterdam (continued)*

Characteristics	N	%
<u>Time of arrival</u>		
1991	1	5
1992	3	15
1993	7	35
1994	3	15
1996	3	15
1997	0	0
1998	3	15

Total	20	100

<u>Legal status</u>		
Convention ('A') status	0	0
Humanitarian ('C') status	2	10
Provisional permit to stay ('F' status)	1	5
Dutch citizenship	17	85

Total	20	100

<u>Current labour market status</u>		
Employed	8	40
Casual contracts	2	10
Study	5	25
Unemployed	5	25

Total	20	100

Tables 1 and 2 do not include information of ethnic background of the refugees in this research. It is important to note here that the country of origin, i.e., citizenship, of nationals from the post-Yugoslav states does not necessarily indicate their ethnic background. For example, the ethnic background of a citizen of Bosnia-Herzegovina can be Bosniak, Croat or Serb, as well as numerous combinations of mixed ethnic backgrounds.³ Tables 3 and 4 show the ethnic background of interviewees in Rome and Amsterdam.

³ The use of term *Bosniak* refers to Bosnian-Muslim. This is the official term used by the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Table 3: *Ethnic background of the interviewees in Rome*

Bosnia-Herzegovina	N	%
Bosniaks	7	28
Croats	1	4
Serbs	4	16
Mixed background	13	52
Total from B-H	25	100
Croatia	N	%
Croats	2	25
Serbs	5	62.5
Mixed background	1	12.5
Total from Croatia	8	100
FR Yugoslavia		
Montenegrins	1	14.3
Serbs	5	71.4
Mixed background	1	14.3
Total from FRY	7	100
Total no. of interviewees	40	

Table 4: *Ethnic background of the interviewees in Amsterdam*

Bosnia-Herzegovina	N	%
Bosniaks	7	36.8
Croats	0	
Serbs	5	26.4
Mixed background	7	36.8
Total from B-H	19	100
Croatia		
Croats	0	
Serbs	1	100
Mixed background	0	
Total from Croatia	1	100
FR Yugoslavia		None
Total number of interviewees	20	

Of the 40 refugees interviewed in Rome, 95 percent fled their homes between 1991 and 1993 and 43 percent after experiencing the armed conflict in their hometowns for up to two years. Over one-third of the people who fled the territories directly affected by the war had a close family member or a relative killed or seriously wounded in the recent conflict. Among the interviewed, two men had themselves been subjected to severe physical suffering and torture either at the front or in one of the concentration camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Immediate or close family members of 30 percent of the interviewed were refugees in one of the post-Yugoslav states or in one of the EU states. Over one-third of people who fled the territories directly affected by the arm conflict had their houses or apartments destroyed or taken by internally displaced persons or refugees in the region.

Of the 20 refugees interviewed in Amsterdam, 55 percent fled their homes between 1991 and 1993 and 60 percent fled their homes after experiencing the armed conflict in their hometowns for up to 3 years. Over two-third of the people had a close family member or a relative killed or seriously wounded in the recent conflict. Among the interviewed, two men and two women had themselves been subjected to severe physical suffering or were wounded at the places they lived before flight. Immediate or close family members of almost all of the interviewed were also refugees in the Netherlands. Over half of interviewed had their houses or apartments destroyed or taken by internally displaced persons or refugees in the region.

As the characteristics of the people interviewed show, the interviewees in Amsterdam were older, of moderately lower educational level than those interviewed in Rome. Most importantly, however, practically all refugees in Rome were earning their income, except for a few young adults still living with their parents. Furthermore, refugees in Rome were overwhelmingly single or cohabiting, without

children, and without immediate or close family members in Italy. In Amsterdam, parents or siblings of the overwhelming majority of those who were single, were also refugees in the Netherlands. Additionally, while intermarriage or cohabitation with natives was present in Rome, it did not exist among the refugees interviewed in Amsterdam. Finally, the overwhelming majority of interviewees in Amsterdam had Dutch citizenship, while the majority of those interviewed in Rome still had temporary, humanitarian, refugee status.

2.6 Data preparation and analysis

The first step towards data analysis was their preparation and identification as well as coding of "bibbits" used later in the analysis. Kirby and McKenna (1989) define a "bibbit" as:

a passage from a transcript, a piece of conversation recorded on a scrap of paper that can stand on its own but, when necessary, can be relocated in its original context. (1989: 135)

The process of identifying bibbits by reviewing and re-reading the interview transcripts made data not just manageable, but also 'understandable' in a sense that it allowed the beginning of the process of making comparisons and understanding the relationships between groups of data. Kirby and McKenna (1989) emphasise that:

To do analysis, the data must be divided into portions that are manageable. The continuous process of comparison and linking of bibbits helps researchers to understand the specific and overall properties, patterns and relationships between data and between groups of data. (1989: 135)

During the process of organising data, bibbits that were similar to each other were picked out from the transcripts. It seemed most appropriate to classify the data into categories or themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Using different coloured markers related themes were highlighted in the same colour. For example, phrases

such as: “becoming a refugee”, “notions of home”, “attitudes towards receiving society”, “political participation”, and “meanings of membership in receiving society” were helpful in defining some of the categories. This long process of comparing bibbits that seemed to pertain to similar phenomena helped in identifying categories emerging from the interview data.

Once the categories were identified, it was possible to go back to the data filed on computer, and to remove bibbits or parts of bibbits from the transcribed material and put them in separate files under the appropriate category headings. This document consisted of lists of category headings and related bibbit bits. In order to keep the size of the document manageable only key phrases were included or a small part of the bibbit as a reminder about its content. This was the document used in this study to identify the links between categories. Coding scheme was used to locate the actual interview and the context out of which the category and the bibbit arose.

Kirby and McKenna (1989) describe the process of conceptualising such links as “hurricane thinking”. In this research, the process started by identifying categories that seemed to be dominant in the data. One of the themes referred to a more general category of victimisation and loss, such as violence, harassment, mistreatment, the control, lack of choice, which stems from the experiences of refugees with the conflict, flight and exile. A second prevailing theme refers to the way in which such phenomena are confronted on an individual level, concerning the process of formulating short-term and longer-term plans and strategies in exile. A third dominant theme refers to the way in which these individualised responses to victimisation, loss, and control are transformed into social action of the interviewed refugees in their effort to tackle structural and other barriers in the receiving society and realise their

plans. Further analysis in this report aims to articulate adequately a way of explaining these clearly linked themes and phases of the experience of exile and integration.

Chapter 3 - Conceptual and policy frameworks

This Chapter offers an overview of the conceptual framework of the research and working definitions of the terms used in this report. It defines integration as a relative and culturally determined, two-way process affecting both the refugees and the receiving society. The Chapter also provides a discussion of the main characteristics of the Italian and Dutch histories of migration and policy contexts, as well as an overview of the numbers and legal status of refugees from former Yugoslavia in the two countries.

3.1 Conceptual considerations

Research and policies on integration are based on a set of assumptions and concepts that are multi-layered and complex, and often lack explicit definition of the term 'integration'. As Robinson (1998: 118) suggests, integration is a vague and "chaotic" concept. The two main theoretical frameworks within which 'integration' has been conceptualised and examined are race relations and minorities literature, and that of the refugee studies.

In the first context, 'integration' is used to describe the process of change that occurs when two groups of different cultures are in some way forced to co-exist in one society. Researchers in the field agree that the process by which migrant groups adjust to different cultures, termed *acculturation*, is multidimensional. They understand integration as a process by which individuals and groups of newcomers maintain their cultural identity while actively participating in the larger societal framework. Hence, research about integration within this body of literature is concerned with issues such as identity, belonging, recognition and self-respect (e.g. Berry 1997, Phinney 1996, Roger *et al.*, 1991).

In the second context, 'integration' is primarily concerned with practical or functional aspects of settlement. This is embedded in the fact that 'refugee' as a category of newcomers implies the right to *special protection*. This right extends to provision of *social* protection and access to social services to facilitate integration of refugees. Assistance in housing, language training, education and re-training, and access to the labour market have become areas of government concern with regard to *managing* refugee settlement in the receiving societies. Research about integration of refugees tends to follow this concern and is primarily centred on the exploration of practical aspects of settlement, with an emphasis on the labour market participation and social mobility, as well as rights and access to social services (e.g. Bloch, 2000; Brink, 1997; Robinson, 1993). These functional aspects of integration have been to a lesser extent linked and explored in relation to other aspects of social integration, such as wider societal interaction and participation in socio-cultural and civil/political spheres.

In order to bridge the gap between these two different approaches to integration, and consider integration as a complex process of structural and social adjustments and relationships, this study is based on the understanding that refugee settlement and adjustment are relative and culturally determined (Kuhlman, 1991). Consequently, integration has to be examined and assessed relative to the situation in the receiving society, as well as relative to the culture of refugees and of the established community. It impacts upon both the refugees and the established community and, thus, requires the willingness of both groups to adjust. This, however, does not imply that 'integration' is abandonment of roots and native cultures, rather it is a process of building bridges and shaping identities to accommodate the transnational realities of the modern world. The suggested meaning

of the concept of integration is becoming increasingly important in a world in which transnational mobility is continuously growing and creating a situation that throws into question previous political, cultural and ethnic boundaries.

In understanding integration as a two-way process that is affecting both the newcomers and the receiving society it is important to remember, as Baubock (1996) and Van Hear (1998) remind us, that this process of mutual adaptation is interdependent. Van Hear (1998: 55) further argues that the process of adaptation is not symmetric because “[n]ewcomers’ choices [in the process of seeking ways to recompose their lives and become active members of the new society] are more constrained than the range of options for the established community, but the latter are by no means free to choose who they accommodate.” He further states that many of the populations accommodating refugees are in a sense “forced accommodators” of migrants (Van Hear 1998: 56). Following these considerations Van Hear points to the related problem of terminology. The term “host” community or society is debatable, as he notes, because “it suggests a welcome that is not always present” (Van Hear 1998: 55). To avoid this terminology problem, he adopts Bach’s term “established” community (Bach 1993). These terminology clarifications are important in helping understand the complexities of the encounters between refugees and the receiving society examined in this research.

Integration understood as a two-way process, also implies that integration is not a singular, stage-sequential and regularly paced process (Castles *et al.* 2001: 25). Rather, as Castles and associates (Castles *et al.* 2001: 25) argue, integration should be recognised as an umbrella term suggesting a set of possible and overlapping processes and shapes. These processes in particular spheres, as the authors go on to suggest, entail different velocities as well as variable outcomes (Castles *et al.* 2001: 25).

Conceptual problems relating to ‘integration’ go beyond these theoretical considerations and extend to the questions of who is defining the term. In the current EU context, refugees are not given a ‘voice’ in the process that determines their well-being and life choices. The problem of power and voice relating to the process of defining ‘integration’ is apparent in disagreements between governments of the receiving societies, on the one hand, and refugees, practitioners and researchers, on the other, about the effect of the asylum process on the process of integration. The former usually support approaches and policies that deny integration programmes during the determination procedure, while the latter advocate access to such programmes immediately after the asylum claim had been made. It is argued in this study that the process of integration/settlement and asylum are intrinsically linked, both conceptually and practically, because if the refugee is excluded from ‘integration services’ during often lengthy determination procedure, this has a highly detrimental effect on long-term settlement/integration.

The suggested meaning of integration implies that the refugees are understood to be *agents*, who have a range of skills and choices, albeit restricted, in finding ways of becoming members of the receiving society. As McSpadden (1999: 244) points out, refugee situations and choices are typically shaped and constrained by governmental policies and cultural norms of the receiving society. The current policy contexts and structures of the receiving societies constrain agency of refugees in different ways. The disadvantages of their position and the limitations they face in the process of settlement are related, first, to a general tendency of the European Union states to move further towards policies and practices of exclusion (Muus 1997). Second, they are connected to different reception systems and integration policies in the EU states (ECRE 1998) and therefore to different life opportunities and choices

available to refugees. Third, the social and cultural aspects of their disadvantaged position in the receiving societies are related to the gender dimension of migration because the refugee experience in all its phases is importantly gendered (McSpadden and Moussa 1993, Indra ed. 1999). This research examines the Italian and Dutch policy contexts and explores how and to what extent they constrain or permit agency of refugees.

‘Refugee’ is also a legal construct that affects the lives and well-being of refugees settled in the EU states in fundamental ways, because different types of ‘refugee’ in legal terms, imply different sets of rights. These differentiated rights affect important aspects of refugee settlement ranging from legality and duration of residence, access to assistance, services and the labour market, to possibilities for family reunification. In order to examine different mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion experienced by refugees this research defines them in a broad sense. It targets different legal categories of forced migrants, those with convention and humanitarian status. This differentiated approach to the category ‘refugee’ helps reveal how these legal constructs affect integration, because each legal status implies different life choices and opportunities for individual refugees. The issue of definition of the term ‘refugee’ is particularly important for research focusing on displaced people from the post-Yugoslav states, because the majority of them have been initially granted temporary, humanitarian, refugee status in the EU.

3.2 Policy contexts

How a state formulates its admission, reception and integration policies is influenced by its history of migration as well as its social protection and welfare systems. The following sections outline the main characteristics of the Italian and Dutch reception systems and the policies pertaining to integration, as well as the specific situation of refugees from former Yugoslavia who have been granted asylum in the two countries.

3.2.1 The history of migration and social welfare system in Italy - consequences for the policy context

Italy has long considered itself as a country of emigration and as a *transit* country. Traditionally a country of emigration with a continued massive outflow of emigrants that ended only in the 1970s (Delle Donne 1997), Italy became a country of transit where refugees were received temporarily whilst awaiting resettlement in a third country. From 1952 until 1990, UNHCR assisted refugees from countries outside Europe, whom Italy refused to recognise citing a geographical restriction clause the country adopted when signing the Convention in 1954. The geographical restriction meant that only refugees fleeing Europe, that is, Eastern Europe, were recognised in Italy. This restriction remained valid until 1990, when a new immigration law was adopted. The only exception to this rule was the protection given to Vietnamese refugees who were picked up by the Italian navy in the Yellow Sea in the 1978-1979. Approximately 1,000 Vietnamese refugees, after family reunification totalling 3,000 persons, were dispersed in northern Italy, Venice and Parma for example, and the Caritas organisation was made responsible for assisting them.

It is only recently that the Italian authorities have acknowledged the change in migration patterns resulting in a rapid transformation of Italy into a country of immigration. As Pittau (1999) documents, during the 1970s the foreign presence in Italy was as low as 300,000 persons. In 1990, when the so-called Martelli Law went into effect, named after the then Minister of Justice who drafted it, there were 780,000 foreigners in Italy. The “Martelli Law” introduced a policy of planned immigration and the provision of yearly immigration quotas. The quotas were to be established by governmental decree after reviewing a variety of social and economic factors. 1990 can therefore be considered the year when Italy declared itself as being an immigration country *in principle*. However, as Hein (1998: 36) points out, “the policy was never really implemented up to now and the quotas tended to be at zero level, since it was felt that a major effort first had to be made to recognise and integrate those foreigners who were already present on the territory.”

This research indicates that how a state ‘imagines’ itself, that is, either as a country of emigration or a country of immigration, affects how the legal and institutional frameworks for immigrants and asylum migrants are developed. Recent social and institutional memory about its history that has made Italy into a transit country has led to insufficient legal and institutional provisions to meet needs of asylum migration in the country. Moreover, how the state treats its citizens, that is, the established population, shapes its approach to the protection of those seeking or granted asylum. Italy spends less than the EU average on social protection and welfare system, and does not have a developed public housing or welfare system for its citizens. In Italian society informal networks and church organisations are the key providers of basic social assistance services for vulnerable individuals.

The underdeveloped social protection and welfare systems in the country have led to a corresponding approach to assistance for asylum seekers and refugees: the assistance is minimal and commonly does not cover even basic needs such as the provision of shelter and food. It is assumed that those in need will be assisted primarily through self-help systems established within refugee and migrant communities, which encourage them to become self-sufficient and independent (obtaining shelter and employment that provides enough for rent and a modest diet) in a short period. Such an approach to reception and integration reflects the surviving perception that Italy is not a country of permanent settlement regardless of its declaration 1990 that it has become a country of immigration.

The lack of any integration strategy at the national level, supported by a corresponding financial and institutional structure, means that NGOs involved in refugee work in Italy continually deal with emergencies and try to meet at least some of the basic needs of the recently arrived. In such circumstances, their often innovative integration initiatives aimed at employment and/or educational needs of refugees in Italy, for example, remain only small projects that are inadequate to meet the needs of a growing refugee population in the country.

3.2.2 Italian policy context – numbers, status, and assistance provided by the government and the NGO sector

By the end of 1998, there were 1,250 241 foreigners in Italy, making it the fourth country within the EU by the number of resident foreigners, after Germany, France and the UK (Pittau, 1999). It is not surprising, therefore, that a new Immigration Law in Italy was enacted in 1998. However, the new Immigration Law has not yet been followed by corresponding legislation regarding asylum and

temporary protection status.⁴ In absence of an organic legislative framework that corresponds to a global social plan the legal status of asylum seekers is currently defined by a number of decrees.

For example, decree No. 136 of March 1990 still regulates the refugee determination process. Asylum seekers have the right to present their cases to the Central Commission for the Recognition of Refugee Status (Eligibility Commission), which is an inter-ministerial body responsible for making the first decisions in the determination process. The law foresees no legal assistance before the Commission, and thus it is not possible for asylum seekers to be assisted or represented by a lawyer before the Commission. A significant number of asylum applicants never appear at their hearing because many apply for asylum at the first *Questura* (the local police headquarters) which they reach upon their arrival in Italy, but then move elsewhere and information about the hearing never reaches them.⁵ If the applicant does not appear at the hearing, the decision is based solely on the police report made when the asylum application was submitted. In such cases, the decision is usually negative. Under the 1998 Immigration Law, in a case where asylum cannot be granted under the Geneva Convention and the asylum seeker cannot return to his/her country of origin, the Eligibility Commission recommends to the local police authorities to issue a permit on humanitarian grounds, *temporary* status. However, this has no binding effect and the local police could refrain from issuing or renewing the permit to stay at their discretion.

⁴ The Draft Law on asylum and humanitarian protection, covering convention as well as humanitarian status has been published by the government and is pending in Parliament. It is difficult to foresee, however, when it will be adopted. Given the results of the latest regional elections, in April 2000, there is a fear among interviewed government and NGO representatives that the law will ever be adopted.

⁵ The interview with the UNHCR representative in Rome.

The Italian Ministry of Interior granted 77,000 humanitarian permits to stay to persons fleeing former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1997. Those arriving after July 1997 could no longer be considered displaced persons and consequently could not be granted a permit to stay on humanitarian grounds. Those with such a permit, however, were allowed to remain in Italy after 1997. Their humanitarian permits to stay have been either renewed on yearly basis or changed into regular work permits valid for one or two years, provided the holder had proof of regular employment. This research, however, indicates that application of this legal provision depends on the way the local police headquarters interpret it. In other words, among the population in this research many had regular work and still hold humanitarian permits because the local police headquarters was not willing to issue them work permits to stay in the country.

This large number of *de facto* refugees from former Yugoslavia in Italy seemingly contradicts the fact that Italy has a relatively small number of asylum seekers. The number of asylum seekers and convention refugees in Italy in the past decade has been on average 2,000 persons per year with a percentage of recognised cases under 10 percent.⁶ The above mentioned regulations concerning the refugee determination process explain the small percentage of recognised cases in the country.

Regardless of these relatively small numbers of asylum seekers and recognised refugees, the real scope of the problem relating to the need of a systematic protection system in Italy becomes transparent considering that the country does not judicially recognise *de facto* refugees, but refers solely to the Geneva Convention. Consequently, the numbers mentioned above refer only to persons who applied for convention status. Populations fleeing the general violence and armed conflicts of the 1990s, for example Albania and former Yugoslavia, were granted *temporary* resident

⁶ Data provided by the Ministry of Interior during exploratory research visit in September 1999.

permits, so-called humanitarian permits to stay, based on specific government decrees, and their numbers are not included in the category of asylum seekers. This temporary status was usually granted without any lengthy determination procedure and was generally renewable on a yearly basis, with the right to work and study. For those fleeing former Yugoslavia, for example, it was usually sufficient to prove that they came from one of the former republics of the war-torn country in order to obtain a temporary right to stay, work and/or study in Italy.

Asylum seekers and convention refugees in Italy receive limited support by the government. Although the immigration law of 1998 states that asylum seekers are to be accommodated at the government-run reception centres, few such centres were established at the time of this research, two years after the law was enacted. Asylum seekers not accommodated at reception centres are entitled to financial assistance provided by the government in a form of a modest daily allowance for a period of 45 days. During the determination procedure, asylum seekers do not have the right to work. Considering that the legal procedure lasts between one and two years on average, the scope of the problem of asylum seekers in Italy becomes clear. The fortunate ones get shelter provided by one of the church organisations or NGOs, usually available for up to three months. Church organisations also offer free meals (one per day) to the destitute in general. They also provide language courses for refugees and immigrants. All these types of assistance offered by church organisation and the NGO sector are scarce, particularly accommodation, which contributes to the fact that asylum seekers are often forced to sleep on the streets of the towns and cities where they wish to settle.

Convention refugees are entitled to financial assistance during the first 90 days after their status acknowledgement in the form of a modest daily allowance, as well as to

financial assistance for those who would like to start small family run businesses. This research documents that even this limited assistance is very hard to obtain because of the bureaucratic procedure for applying and decision-making. Consequently, it is common for resources allocated by the government for this type of assistance to remain unspent at the end of a fiscal year.

The vast majority of the 77,000 persons from former Yugoslavia granted temporary permit to stay in Italy have received no assistance and were left to find their own way into Italian society. The government did establish 15 reception centres for those fleeing the region, primarily in the north of Italy; the first opened in November 1991 following the beginning of armed conflict in Croatia. Their gradual closure began at the end of 1995 when the government declared that the need for assistance had declined. At the time of this research, all of the 15 centres were closed.⁷

The centres could accommodate up to 2,000 persons at a time. The exact number of those accommodated at these centres was not available. Research initiated by the International Organisation for Migration office in Rome indicates, however, that over 30 percent of people accommodated at these reception centres stayed for over two years, what indicates that there was no significant fluctuation of population accommodated at the centres (Losi, 1994). Therefore, it can be safely argued that the number of persons assisted in these centres was not significant when compared with the total number of refugees from former Yugoslavia in Italy.

Canna's (1997) research documents that assistance consisted of shelter and food and no money. Although refugees had freedom of movement, most remained confined in the camps because they had no knowledge of the language and no money for public transport and so forth (Canna 1997). According to Losi's (1994) research

⁷ All data provided by the Ministry of Interior during exploratory research visit in September 1999.

mentioned above, the vast majority of those accommodated at the centres were from Bosnia-Herzegovina, from rural areas or small towns, predominantly single-parent families headed by women.

The assistance offered to refugees from former Yugoslavia in Italy, characterised as emergency-assistance based on *ad hoc* measures set by the government, is not specific only for this particular refugee population, as the above discussion reveals. This approach adopted by the government has its roots and causes in the Italian history of migration as well in underdeveloped social security and welfare systems in the country. The above discussion outlined the context of integration in which only the most resourceful individuals may be able to find their way into Italian society.

3.2.3 The history of migration and the development of integration policies in the Netherlands

Unlike Italy, the Netherlands has a long history of immigration, as well as developed social protection and welfare systems for its citizens. These historic and socio-economic characteristics of Dutch society have influenced a different approach to integration of refugees and other immigrants in the country.

The first wave of immigrants after WWII came in early 1950s from the former Dutch East Indies (present day Indonesia) following its independence. This group of immigrants mostly consisted of people of mixed Dutch-Indonesian decent, and was offered only a basic scheme for reception and accommodation (Muus, 1998). The group that came as the second wave of immigrants, in the 1960s, consisted of so-called “guest workers” from the south of Europe, Turkey and Morocco. These immigrants were regarded as ‘temporary settlers’ and, therefore, no integration policy was developed for them (Muus, 1998). In the mid 1970s, however, when the

recruitment of foreign workers ceased due to the oil crisis, it became clear that these immigrants were there to stay, and to bring their families to the Netherlands, too. In 1975, the country experienced an additional and sudden influx of immigrants from Surinam, following its independence. It was only after these migration flows that the Dutch government acknowledged that the Netherlands is a country of immigration. Consequently, as Lechner (2000) and Muus (1998) argue, despite its relatively long history of recent immigration, the Dutch integration policy started late, at the beginning of the 1980s. The relatively late acknowledgement that the Netherlands is a country of immigration was followed by the *Ethnic Minority Policy* introduced in 1983, and by the *Integration of Newcomers Act* enacted in 1998.

The introduction of the Ethnic Minority Policy intended to improve the social position of immigrants in the fields of labour, income, education and housing. The main aim was to incorporate immigrants via emancipation understood as diminishing social disadvantage (Lechner 2000). It advocated the creation of a tolerant multiethnic society in which immigrants have considerable legal and political rights as well as organisational rights relating to their religious and cultural backgrounds. The policy was successful in areas in which the Dutch government has a decisive influence, such as social security, housing and education (Pennix 1996). However, it was rather ineffective in decreasing high unemployment rates among immigrants because the Dutch government has only marginal power in directing labour market developments. It was also not effective in providing efficient Dutch language training for newcomers, because it was organised on a voluntary basis and provided by volunteers. Therefore, a number of first-generation immigrants developed poor language skills and when rising unemployment hit they were first to lose their jobs without a real chance of regaining employment. Yet another weakness of this policy,

according to Muus (1998), relates to its focus on immigrants as members of targeted ethnic groups and not as individuals. The problem with such a focus, as he argues, is that it presupposes an internal group structure that is hard to define clearly and, consequently, the policy resulted in numerous subsidised immigrant activities without any indication as to whether immigrant associations represent anything more than a few members (Muus 1998). Consequently, the position of immigrants had not improved greatly, and social isolation had become a greater threat. These problems with the Ethnic Minorities Policy, compounded by rapid changes in the composition of the immigrant population led to a development of the Integration of Newcomers Act, enacted in 1998.

This policy represents a shift from the previous one because it stresses the importance of the responsibility of the *individual* immigrant as regards to integration. The main goal of the new integration policy, aiming to realise “activating citizenship” (Lechner, 2000) on the part of individual immigrants, is to enhance individual immigrants to exercise responsibility involved in membership/citizenship in Dutch society. The new integration policy is based on a contractual relationship between the newcomer, that is, refugee and/or immigrant, and the government/municipality. The contract guarantees the rights and obligations of both parties. The government/municipality is obliged to: i) organise the integration program; ii) maintain a sufficient supply of language courses and vocational courses; iii) start the program within four months, on the basis of an interview with the immigrant. The newcomer has a right to such services and is obliged to: i) apply at the local/municipal office for an interview within six months of status acknowledgement; ii) enrol in an educational institution; iii) follow the program actively, including 500 hours of Dutch language courses; iv) to take a Dutch language test within a year after starting the

program; v) to complete the program within six weeks after the test is completed. If the newcomer fails to meet these requirements, the government may reduce his/her social security benefits or fine those who receive income from other sources. Also, the established population is expected to support the implementation of a law requiring ethnically conscious proportional hiring by private employers and, more generally, to accept the multicultural society (Lechner 2000).

The government's intention to emphasise the responsibility of individual newcomers concerning integration is a sound solution to the problems experienced with the Ethnic Minorities Policy. However, there is a problem with this policy concerning the opportunities it can open for women. The policy is *gender-blind* because it does not guarantee provisions/services to accommodate the different needs and situations of newcomers concerning their culturally and socially constructed gender roles. A lack of provision of childcare services leaves women, whose roles are primarily defined in terms of care-giving and care-taking, with unequal opportunities of integrating into Dutch society. The unavailability of childcare services may force women to postpone their enrolment into language and orientation courses. This may result in a lack of language skills and information that facilitate the process of integration.

The way in which the Dutch government approached integration issues is related to the characteristics of the welfare system in the Netherlands. The country has a well-established and developed social protection and welfare system for its citizens and consequently, the Dutch policy of integration of refugees and immigrants builds on this system providing a considerable level of social protection services for them. However, the need to protect such a welfare system urged the government to

introduce restrictive admission and reception policies, which has affected the process of integration of newcomers.

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3.2.4 Dutch policy context – numbers, status, and assistance provided by the government and the NGO sector

The number of asylum applications in the Netherlands started to increase significantly at the end of 1980s and reached its peak in 1994 with around 52,000 asylum requests (Doomerik *et al.*, 1997:31). According to data provided by the Ministry of Justice, from 1995 to 1997 the number of asylum seekers in the Netherlands decreased to 30,000 persons seeking asylum per year. Doomerik and associates (1997:33) argue that this is due to a number of restrictive measures introduced by the Dutch government rather than to reduced migration pressure. Between 1992 and 1999 the percentage of approved asylum requests was roughly 40 percent and since 1999 it has decreased to between 20 and 30 percent.

Until 1985, as Muus (1998) reports, there was no government-organised reception for spontaneous asylum seekers, but only for refugees invited to resettle in the Netherlands. The reception policy for the latter was centralised and implemented in reception centres under the assumption that the duration of stay in these reception centres would be six to nine months. Between the late 1970s and 1981, the Dutch Refugee Council gave assistance to invited refugees with the financial support of the government. In 1981, due to the increased number of invited refugees, the responsibility for the implementation of the reception policy for these refugees was passed on to the then Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (now the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports). The maximum length of stay in reception centres was intended to be three months, after which period as it was anticipated, refugees would be accommodated in private housing in municipalities when the local

authorities would become responsible for the continuation of the reception policy, that is, integration.

Spontaneous asylum seekers were commonly lodged in boarding houses, often in poor condition, and were entitled to apply for a social security benefit. An increase in numbers of asylum seekers dependent on social security benefits, which began in 1985 with the arrival of Tamil refugees, led to the introduction of a new “Regulation on the Reception of Asylum Seekers” (ROA) in 1987. The aim of the regulation was to provide accommodation for asylum seekers in municipalities in so-called ROA-houses and to limit access to welfare payments. Consequently, the ROA no longer gave access to such payments. Instead, municipalities were granted government funds, based on the number of asylum seekers they accommodated, for housing costs, social and cultural activities, as well as for a modest allowance (DFL 445 monthly or approximately 200EUR) for personal expenses including food and clothing of asylum seekers. ROA had no provisions directed at integration into Dutch society. Asylum seekers were offered only Dutch language courses and recreational facilities and were not allowed to work or to enter public education during the legal procedure. Muus (1998) argues that ROA was introduced not only because of growing housing and financial problems, but also with the intention of preventing the Netherlands from becoming an attractive reception country.

The increased number of asylum seekers in the 1990s, consisting primarily of populations fleeing war and general unrest in their country of origin, prompted the government to introduce new measures. Under the arrangements valid at the time of my research in the Netherlands, that is to January 2001, the admission and reception model is based on an obligatory stay of all asylum seekers in an investigation centre (OC) in order to determine the nature of their asylum claim. Those with apparently

well-founded requests for convention or humanitarian status are housed in asylum centres (AZCs) until a decision has been taken on their cases. Such a decision can take several months, with appeals included a final decision can take several years. Those with apparently unfounded requests are to stay in the investigation centres (OC), with the right to appeal a decision and if refused, they have to leave the Netherlands. All asylum seekers have the right to legal advice and an interpreter. Those with accepted applications for asylum are provided language training and orientation in Dutch society at asylum centres (AZCs), but their right to work is limited to up to 12 weeks of seasonal work in one year, for example in agriculture. If the decision on an application is positive, the asylum seeker is given assistance in finding subsidised public housing, with the obligation to continue language and orientation courses in the municipality of his/her residence. The responsibility for admission and initial reception is accorded to the Ministry of Justice. The responsibility for the continuation of the reception policy, that is, implementation of the Integration of Newcomers Act, is accorded to the Ministry of Interior.

Asylum seekers who are accepted can be granted one of three statuses: i) 'A' or convention refugees status with no time limit attached; ii) 'C' or humanitarian status for individuals whose claim does not meet the convention criteria but who cannot be expected to return to his/her country of origin. The main difference between this and 'A' status is that it gives a limited right to family unification, condition to the required income level including reasonable housing (measured by Dutch standards); iii) 'F' status or *provisional* permit to stay, for people fleeing more generalised forms of violence or insecurity in the country of origin who on an individual basis are not judged to fall into one of the previous categories. The latter status is valid for one year, can be extended twice for further one-year periods, and is particularly employed

for people coming from select countries, including Bosnia-Herzegovina. After three years, if return to the country of origin is impossible, this status cannot be extended but changed into unconditional humanitarian status. The 'F' status is particularly important for this study because it judicially recognises temporary protection, originally created to regulate the influx of spontaneous arrivals from former Yugoslavia due to the conflict.

According to the Aliens Act, as revised in 1994, a person cannot apply for 'F' status; rather, it is one of the options for the decision-maker that can result from the asylum application. Those considered "displaced persons", for example those fleeing Bosnia-Herzegovina and therefore eligible for 'F' status, are interviewed briefly to ascertain proof of nationality and that a safe third country was not transited, and then 'F' status is granted instantly. The status implies a fixed program of integration, including DFL 410 (approximately 190EUR) per month exclusive of housing.

During the first year of status acknowledgement persons with such a status have access to language and orientation courses as well as basic education, but access to other types of education, including vocational training is limited. Although the original legal document did not attach a right to employment to this status in the first year, legal provisions were made in April 1995 allowing 12 weeks of employment. In the second year, access is given to vocational education, together with permission for temporary employment. If the permit is not withdrawn within a period of three years, due to the changes in the country of origin creating a possibility for return, a full humanitarian, 'C', status is granted. Only after receipt of a full resident permit, implied in 'C' status, full social assistance is permitted.

By providing a gradual increase in the rights of persons granted temporary residence permit, the government intended to facilitate a *phased integration* of a

considerable number of newcomers in the Netherlands. This intention has been criticised by Dutch NGOs, which would like the persons with 'F' status to have the full Convention rights for a limited period.⁸ Although the NGOs involved in refugee work in the Netherlands have had little impact on creation of this policy, they are very much involved in its implementation, that is, in organising and providing programs of care and counselling. The scope of the concern regarding the notion of phased integration of individuals granted 'F' status becomes transparent considering the number of persons granted such a status continues to raise even after 1995 when the crisis with the refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Netherlands was over. According to data provided by the Ministry of Justice, their number in 1994 was approximately 3,500, almost 4,500 in 1995 and approximately 7,500 in 1996. Therefore, representatives of the Dutch Refugee Council expressed their concern that the government is becoming rather restrictive in applying the law concerning convention or humanitarian status, largely aiming to limit the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a destination for asylum seekers.

The first massive arrivals of refugees from former Yugoslavia in 1992 were met by the adoption of an *ad hoc* regulation allowing for the admission and reception of persons fleeing the war-torn region who were permitted to remain in the Netherlands on temporary basis. This program of protection, known as TROO – Temporary Arrangement for the Reception of Displaced Persons - provided recipients a place in a reception centre or funding for their hosts if they were staying with relatives and friends. Until April 1993 this initial scheme was opened for the temporary protection of people fleeing all the republics of former Yugoslavia. With the new Aliens Act of 1994, which introduced a legal basis for temporary status in the

⁸ Interviews with representatives of the Dutch NGO sector.

Netherlands, people from Bosnia-Herzegovina who arrived after April 1993 would still be covered by the TROO program, while all others fleeing the region had to enter the regular procedures. All those who entered the Netherlands during 1992 and before 14 April 1993, and applied for asylum, were granted 'A' status.

Persons from Bosnia-Herzegovina with 'F' status were commonly accommodated in houses provided by municipalities, rather than in large reception centres. According to Van Selm-Thoburn, this measure intended, among other things, to prevent possible tensions that can arise between different national groups, as some are perceived to have a greater chance of achieving recognition of their refugeehood than others (Van Selm-Thoburn 2000: 438).

There is evidence that the admission of persons fleeing conflict in former Yugoslavia was not particularly restrictive, especially in the case of those fleeing Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to data provided by "Lize", the Umbrella Organisation for South Europeans in the Netherlands, there were 13,500 asylum requests from persons from former Yugoslavia in 1993. Two-thirds of these asylum seekers were from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and most of them were granted 'A' status. Approximately 80 percent of the originally rejected cases, that is the first decision, eventually did get 'A' status, and others were granted asylum on humanitarian grounds, or 'C' status (Sittrop 1996). Doornik and associates (Doornik *et al.* 1997:36) indicate, that "the highest proportion receiving recognition among the people who nowadays submit applications for asylum is found with those from the former Yugoslavia, especially from Bosnia-Herzegovina." Van Selm-Thoburn reports that among persons from Bosnia-Herzegovina who applied for asylum in 1994, almost a half received convention, 'A', status and only one-third were granted temporary, 'F', status (Van Selm-Thoburn 2000: 431). According to the estimates provided by

the Ministry of Interior, approximately 25,000 persons from former Yugoslavia have been granted legal resident permits to stay in the Netherlands since the beginning of the conflict in the region. Of those, over two-thirds are from Bosnia-Herzegovina, comprising of almost 70 percent of Bosniaks (Snel *et al.* 2000).

This discussion of the Dutch policy context pertaining to asylum migration and to integration in particular given in this report outlines a framework for the integration of refugees very different from the Italian one. The Dutch attempt to integrate newcomers is well-developed in legal, institutional and organisational terms. The problem is, however, that the admission system is very slow, because of the numbers of asylum seekers, but also because of elaborate legal procedures. This causes delays in the implementation of integration programmes, which can be delayed for several years. Asylum seekers often stay in asylum-seeking centres for two or more years by which time their potential employment capacity may be seriously diminished and their psycho-social condition degraded. The adjustment and active participation of such persons may be very difficult when they are finally granted refugee status. Yet another potential problem is that the Dutch welfare system of assistance to refugees creates dependence among its recipients leaving them unable or unmotivated to actively seek job opportunities and establish social contacts beyond their ethnic group or volunteers and social workers assigned to provide assistance and help.

The following chapters examine the effects of these two policy and broader country contexts, on decisions of refugees to seek asylum in Italy and/or the Netherlands, on the strategies of integration, and their decisions to stay or to return to their countries of origin.

Chapter 4 - Patterns of flight and reasons for choosing a final destination

This Chapter discusses the patterns of flight of the studied population, reasons for choosing their final destination, and addresses the problem of blurred boundaries between economic migrants and refugees. Data gathered in this study show that this longstanding division between the field of refugee studies and the study of migration no longer reflects the reality of patterns of migration. The report documents that while people may leave a place of their origin because of the conflict, their subsequent movement and destination is often determined by other kinds of motivation.

◆ Experiences of refugees fleeing to Italy

I lost my job because I was Serb, at that time Serbian houses in our hometown were blown up every night. My wife, who is a Croat, and my children, were threatened every day. So we fled to Serbia in the summer of 1991. Very soon after our arrival we were on our feet again. The financial situation wasn't great, but that's the way it was for all not only for us, refugees. In the winter of 1993, I was called up to fight in Bosnia. Within 24 hours after receiving the call-up papers, we decided to go to Italy. Italy was the only solution because we didn't want to go far. I have a mother and both of my wife's parents live in Croatia we didn't want to be far from them. So Italy was the only solution. A friend of mine from Croatia was already in Rome, so that was helpful.

[**Misa**, a 42-year-old man from Croatia, in Rome since February 1993; Serb]

At the place where I lived after we [his family] fled to Croatia they were hostile towards us [refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina] and they didn't like us much. That was the time of the wars [in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia]. There were very many refugees and lots of hatred. That is why my father decided to move the family to Rome. We joined my sister who fled here in 1992.

[**Mirsad**, a 25-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Rome since the summer of 1993; Bosniak]

I first fled to Croatia. When I got there I realised that the situation in Croatia wasn't much better than in Bosnia, there was no fighting but the misery was the same. I had to find another solution. The only thing I could afford was a trip to Italy. I came to Ancona in March 1995. I'd paid to be smuggled on a ship, I felt like a criminal. The only contact I'd had was a girl from Bosnia-Herzegovina who was here in Rome. I didn't even call her - I just came.

[**Nermin**, a 31-year-old army dodger from Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bosniak]

I was totally devastated by the war. I knew when the war started in Croatia, that it would continue in Bosnia and that there was no future there. They [the government authorities] kept sending me call-up papers to go to the front. Italy

was the only country I could enter and also the country where I had contacts through a friend from my hometown.

[**Dragan**, a 38-year-old man from Serbia, in Rome since March 1992; Serb]

I left Bosnia in March 1992, just before the war broke out. I went to Germany where my aunt is a guest worker. I started working but I didn't have any papers, even a tourist visa was impossible to get because the war in Bosnia had just started. My stay was illegal. In June 92, my boyfriend managed to come to Italy [from Bosnia-Herzegovina] where he'd got a tourist visa and then he invited me to join him.

[**Goca**, a 31-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina; Serb]

I came to Rome in the winter of 1991 from Bosnia, fearing the escalation of the war in Croatia. I came here because I have close family friends here, Italians. I also came here because this is a Mediterranean country, the closest to us.

[**Senad**, a 42-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bosniak]

◆ Experiences of refugees feeling to the Netherlands

I'd managed to flee my hometown and escape a massacre [the mass killing of Bosniaks by the Serbian paramilitary forces] that happened just two hours after we [his wife and he] fled. We didn't have much choice, so we went to the town that was under the Muslim control [the forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina] and stayed with a friend. At first, I signed up to join the local military forces, but I soon realised that it wasn't for me, I was too old. I, then, joined a Muslim humanitarian organisation operating in the town and through them I gradually obtained all necessary documents to leave Bosnia and via Croatia to go abroad. My motivation to leave Bosnia was to get reunited with our son who went to the Netherlands a couple of months before the beginning of the war in Bosnia. He had a girlfriend there, a girlfriend then and the wife now, a Bosnian whose parents emigrated to the Netherlands in the late 60s. He went to visit and had stayed because of the war. So, after we arrived in Croatia, my son's in-laws came to pick us up and took us to Amsterdam. Although my son was there, I was going to an unknown land. I didn't know anything about the country, I only knew about the Netherlands through their football team, because I used to watch them play on TV.

[**Nadan**, a 59 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since October 1992, Dutch citizen since 1998. He fled his hometown in the spring of 1992 and found a refuge in a Bosnian town where he stayed until September 1992; Bosniak]

I fled Bosnia in April 1993, and after six weeks in 'transit' I arrived in the Netherlands. The first three weeks I spent in Croatia, trying to get papers to go to England. I have a relative there and I've been in London before, so I'd thought that might not be a bad place to live. However, we [his wife and he] were rejected, and so we'd decided to go to Germany where we had friends who sent us a letter of guarantee. Although our friends were willing and able to help us to get up on our feet again [find work, accommodation etc.], we didn't want to stay in Germany because we didn't feel good there. At that time, all other, so-called

rational reasons were in support of the stay, but we'd decided to follow our instincts. From there, we went to the Netherlands to be closer to England and to wait for the opportunity to get there. We heard from an acquaintance from Croatia, who lived in Amsterdam, that Bosnians are well received in the Netherlands. We had his phone number, so we phoned him up from Germany, and he invited us to come and stay with him until we figure out what to do next.

[Sinisa, a 40 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since May 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998. He fled his hometown in April 1993; Serb)

In the summer of 1995 my mother and I fled Bosnia because I was nearly 18 years old and I was frightened that I may be called up in the army. On our route we passed through Serbia, went to Hungary using passports of our Serbian friends who kind of looked like us. My sister, who lived in Germany, organised for us transfer to Germany on forged passports she bought through a Slovak connection. That is how we reached Germany and my sister, but we didn't stay there because my sister's in-laws, at the time refugees in the Netherlands, advised my sister to 'send' us there immediately because of a good prospect to get permanent residence in the Netherlands.

[Kemo, a 23 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since the autumn 1995, Dutch citizen since 2000. He fled his hometown in the summer 1995; Bosniak)

I fled Bosnia in November 1992. My sister and mother were already in Croatia. I'd thought that I'd stay in Croatia, although unconsciously I was aware that I could fit neither side, because I am from a mixed marriage, my father is a Serb and my mother Croat. Then, my sister went to the Netherlands because she could no longer bear nationalism there. When the tensions increased in Croatia [due to the war] my sister applied for family reunification and so, I arrived in July 1993, my air ticket was paid for, I was met at the airport by some officials, and by November I was granted 'A' status.

(Nikica, a 34 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since July 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998, ethnically mixed background)

We decided to leave [Bosnia-Herzegovina] after experiencing almost two years of war in our hometown. The decision to come to the Netherlands was circumstantial. We had friends in Austria and Germany who told us that there wasn't a chance to get our diplomas recognised and to continue with our professions there. In the Dutch Embassy in Belgrade we were told that we'd be able to have our diplomas recognised in the Netherlands.

(Cica, a 34 year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994, Dutch citizen since 1998. She fled her hometown in December 1993 and after passing through Serbia, Hungary and Germany she arrived in the Netherlands; ethnically mixed background)

I was a refugee in Croatia. We [her mother and brother] came here in April 1995 to visit our relatives and we'd stayed. We didn't have anything to loose, because we didn't have any prospect of a normal life in Croatia where we had refugee status. We'd lost the accommodation in the place where we settled, there wasn't any financial assistance, it was difficult to think about continuation of education because it was hard to find any work and even harder to work and study. My

mother couldn't find any work, and the situation in Bosnia was the same, no money no work. When we came here we saw that our relatives had managed to have some kind of normal life here. They had social benefit, which is pretty good here in the Netherlands. That was more than we could dream off, and we'd decided to apply for asylum.

[**Silva**, a 25 year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1995, Dutch citizen since 2000. She fled her hometown in the mid 1994; ethnically mixed background)

The difficulty in making a clear distinction between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' migration flows becomes transparent in the analysis of narratives of people fleeing the region of former Yugoslavia. Although over 70 percent of the interviewees in Rome fled the war zones, it is still difficult to distinguish between those who came to Italy fleeing from individual persecution and/or threats to their lives and those wanting to escape poverty and social injustice. It is evident that conflicts causing mass exodus of people in the past decade go hand in hand with destruction of vital economic means of support of populations caught in these conflicts. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between elements of force and choice involved in individuals' decisions to leave their homes and countries.

Approximately half of the interviewed in Rome, first fled to one of the post-Yugoslav states or in some cases to other EU countries, such as Denmark, Germany or the Netherlands, and then came to Italy. In all but one of these cases, they came to Italy because they were not able to obtain legal status in other EU countries or because of the political and economic situation in the post-Yugoslav states. Those who first fled to one of the post-Yugoslav states obtained the right to remain in the places of their first asylum and consequently could have been considered *protected* and safe. Only one young woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina was granted convention refugee status in Denmark before deciding to move to Italy.

The people interviewed came to Italy because, in many cases, that was the only country they could reach, as it was nearby and because Italy was one of the last EU states to introduce a visa regime for nationals from the post-Yugoslav states. Additionally, the research indicates that one of the factors that played a role in decisions of refugees to flee to Italy was their perception of this Mediterranean country as in some way similar to their countries of origin. Most importantly, however, all of the interviewed mention the importance of social networks they had in Italy for making their decision to settle there. They knew at least one person in Rome, in most cases these were people from former Yugoslavia, usually acquaintances or friends with whom they had long lost touch. Some came to join their siblings who were already refugees in Rome. In a few cases they had Italian friends in Rome, people with whom they had personal or family contacts long before the war.

These networks were an important source of information about entry requirements and asylum procedures, as well as housing and employment issues. Moreover, they were a crucially important source of psychosocial support during the first days and weeks of exile. Through such contacts and further networking people from former Yugoslavia in Rome organised a 'self-reception system'.

Almost all of the refugees interviewed in Amsterdam fled their homes in fear for their lives. Narratives of the refugees in this research document, however, the complexity of factors and intervening variables that influence decisions of refugee to choose their final destination. Of the group in Amsterdam, half first fled to Croatia or Germany before applying for asylum in the Netherlands. In almost all such cases, their decision to leave the places of their first asylum can be described as their desire to improve their situation and find more security and opportunities for recomposing their lives.

The most prominent reason for choosing the Netherlands as the destination was to join family members (50 percent of interviewed). Of those, 30 percent were granted asylum for the reasons of family reunification, while the remaining 20 percent came because they had relatives or close family members in the country, but they applied for asylum independently. Another important factor influencing decisions to settle in the Netherlands, as this research documents, was the Dutch relatively relaxed determination procedure towards refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, discussed in Chapter 3, as well as their welfare model of assistance to refugees.

Given the geographical distance between the Netherlands and the post-Yugoslav states and restrictive entry measures adopted by the EU states, many of those wanting to reach the country were forced to turn to illegal means. Illegal methods range from forged passports and concealing all the details of the route of flight to concealing citizenship status for those Bosnians who had obtained Croatian citizenship (based on their ethnic background) before they applied for asylum in the Netherlands. The latter illegal mode of entry revealed in this research, that is, a bogus claim for asylum based on the alleged lack of any legal status, is clearly the consequence of the absence of immigration policies in Europe. Restrictions to immigrate to the EU have contributed to the creation of asylum migration as almost the only opportunity for migration from less developed countries.

In all the stages of balancing between the elements of force and choice in making their decisions about where to flee and how to reach the destination, informal contacts and transnational social networks played an important role. The reasons for choosing Italy and/or the Netherlands as the destination of refugees from former Yugoslavia discussed in this Chapter, reveal a complexity of parameters that shape individual decisions about the final destination of a refugee journey and, by the same

token, which influence international migration flows. It supports Crisp's (Crisp 1999: 4) argument that people fleeing an immediate danger commonly have clear preferences in relation to their ultimate destination, and their migration is often facilitated by means of transnational social networks. It also confirms Van Hear's (1998: 50-51) argument that "one type of migration can – and often does – transmute into another, sometimes as a matter of strategy, sometimes by chance or circumstances."

Although the discussion in this Chapter attests to the increasing difficulty in distinguishing refugees from what was termed *voluntary* migrants, it needs to be emphasised that some aspects of force involved in the movements of people in this research often made degrees of choice for them extremely limited. Escape from immediate life threatening situations involves also a set of psychological problems, which tend to have long lasting effects and often affect individual capabilities and willingness to adjust to new social environments. Researchers agree that both refugees and other migrants have some needs and characteristics in common, because they are newcomers, but they also contend that refugees have additional, distinctive needs. Due to the fact that most refugees have no choice in deciding to leave their country of origin, little opportunity to pre-plan their departure, and no immediate prospects of returning, their situation is in many ways unique. Moreover, since their flight is often associated with psychological stress and physical hardship their needs are usually extremely pressing.

Discussion in the following chapters supports the above arguments and emphasises a distinct character and nature of problems faced by those forced to flee without any or very little preparation. It documents that although many interviewees were refugees in legal-administrative sense, they did not perceive themselves as such.

However, they all made a clear distinction between their situation and the situation of their compatriots who emigrated to Italy or the Netherlands before the conflict in former Yugoslavia. As discussion in consecutive chapters indicates, this perception of their situation affects both their attitudes towards communities of 'old' migrants in the places of their exile, as well as their attitudes towards integration and participation in Italian and Dutch society.

Chapter 5 - Functional integration – language, education, and employment

This Chapter discusses the issues relating to incorporation of refugees into systems and structures of receiving societies. Factors such as information and knowledge about entitlements and rights, language training/learning, re-training and/or recognition of prior skills and experience; opportunities for housing and other services until able to be self-sufficient, and access to employment are examined. When receiving societies develop strategies to promote integration, these elements are the primary target of their policies, involving differentiated types and access to services, and legislative frameworks. The extent to which the Italian and Dutch governments have intervened in these areas of integration are different. Hence, the examination of the socio-economic conditions of the studied population in Rome and Amsterdam provides a good case study for analysis of the outcomes of the two different ‘models’ of assistance to refugees concerning their functional integration.

5.1. The reception system, integration policies and their consequences for the quality of functional integration of refugees in Rome and Amsterdam

Italy and the Netherlands have fundamentally different reception systems and approaches to integration of refugees, as discussed in Chapter 3. Additionally, since refugees from former Yugoslavia in Italy were admitted on humanitarian grounds, their temporary permits to stay, including the right to work and study, were issued on the basis of a special government decree what did not involve any lengthy determination procedure. They, however, were not offered any kind of assistance and had to find their own way of earning their keep. In the Netherlands, 60 percent of the refugees in this research experienced a two-stage admission and reception procedure involving an up to 48 hour-stay in an investigation centre (OC), and a several month-

long stay in an asylum centre (AZC). For some, in cases when a provisional permit to stay ('F' status) was granted, the reception procedure involved a third stage. The 'F' status holders were accommodated in so-called ROA houses. This stage usually lasted up to three years and involved provision of housing and a modest allowance, but no provision directed at integration into Dutch society. The narratives in the following sections outline how refugees themselves experienced these two opposing 'models' of reception and integration, and their effect on the acquisition of language skills, employment and housing, as well as on diploma recognition, re-training and continuation of education.

5.1.1 Housing, language, and employment

◆ Experiences of refugees in Rome

As soon as I arrived here, it became clear to me that I can't expect any help from this state. Now I'm very satisfied that I didn't get any help, I don't feel that I owe anything to anyone here.

[**Milena**, a 33-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina with a university degree, in Rome since November 1992. During her first year in exile she was employed as a live-in housekeeper, since then she has been waitress in a bar; holds a humanitarian residence permit]

It would perhaps have been easier to bear hardships of exile somewhere else [in some other country] because here we were without any kind of assistance and we were forced to do all kinds of things just to survive. To come to a foreign country, fleeing war, without anything at all and to be left in the streets, that's a major blow.

[**Jusuf**, a 42-year-old man who escaped from a concentration camp in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Rome since December 1993. During his first months in exile he did various manual jobs, until he found employment in a restaurant where he was still working at the time of research; holds a work residence permit since the end of 1994]

It was a struggle in the beginning and it is the same struggle now - to have a place to sleep, to have something to eat. There's no security here, I work an awful lot and it's a vicious circle from which there's no way out. I don't see that any of us has settled down so that she/he can say that she/he's satisfied.

[**Rada**, a 32-year-old woman from Serbia with a technical school degree, single, employed as a sales person in a retail shop, in Rome since November 1993, holds a work residence permit since 1996].

I'd spent a year in a family [as a live-in housekeeper] and then I found another job. It was an exhausting job. I'd be working all day long. I knew very little about money matters in Italy - they were paying me 300 thousand liras a month and soon I'd realised that it was very little here.

[*Vera*, a 34-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegivina with a university degree, in Rome since the summer of 1993. At the time of the research, she was a student]

I found my first job through people I knew [through the refugee networks] and I got to carry bags of cement to the third floor, and I didn't get paid in the end. In such a situation you don't know how to react. Your language is poor; you have no one to protect you. So, that first period, in which you are supposed to earn some money to have something to start from, proved to be very disappointing. All we [the men with whom he shared lodgings] could afford to eat was pasta bianca [plain pasta] sprinkled with either sugar or salt. This went on for a long period of time, about one year, when all we could do with our tiny incomes was to pay the rent.

[*Srdjan*, a 32-year-old man from Serbia, FR Yugoslavia, with a university degree, in Rome since the autumn of 1993. At the time of the research, he was married to an Italian and had a contract job with an NGO]

When I had that illegal job in the hospital [as a nurse] I was paid 900 thousand liras a month and my Italian colleagues were paid over 2 million for the same job. However, I had to shut up because I needed that work so badly because we [she and her husband] had to support a family of four.

[*Silva*, a 41-year-old woman from Croatia with a secondary school degree, in Rome since the summer of 1993. At the time of the research, she had a secretarial job]

◆ Experiences of refugees in Amsterdam

I felt terrible there [at the investigation centre], because for the first time in my life I was surrounded by the police. I was photographed as if I was a criminal, my fingerprints were taken, I was strip-searched, people in uniforms were escorting me back and forth, I was questioned in a foreign language I could not understand, and I was separated from my son who was 18 years old then. At the other centre [the asylum centre] I was constantly crying at the beginning, and I wanted to go back regardless of what could've happened to me there. No one told us when all the interrogation and questioning will stop, and when we'll be allowed to live normally. All we were told was wait.

[*Smilja*, a 48-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since May 1995, Dutch citizen since 2000. A secondary school degree, still attends a Dutch language course, not employed]

We [her husband and she] had to wait for the first decision on our status ['F' status] for over a year. At moments it was psychologically much more difficult than during the two years of war in our hometown. It was that uncertainty, just waiting for days to pass by, no plans whatsoever and no privacy. We were sharing a room with other people. It was a depressing and paranoid atmosphere. Is someone tapping on us, what is the story we should tell? How much longer have

we to wait? It was only after we got refugee status ['A' status], after more than two years, that things started to move gradually forward. It was only after that that we could start planning our lives and learning the language properly. There was a language course at the centre [asylum centre], though, to which I went at first, but I gave it up soon. It was a relatively big class consisting of people of different age and educational level. We would spend days repeating one word, on and on, because many people could not follow. So, I gave up, because I realised that I couldn't learn the language that way.

[**Cica**, a 34-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994, Dutch citizen since 1999. A secondary school degree, re-training course in accounting from April 1999 to May 2000, employed since July of the same year]

We [his wife and he] were in a big camp [the asylum centre] of approximately 1,200 refugees. We were satisfied at first, because we were alive, not hungry or cold. There were four families in one big room, each 'living' in one corner. But as the time went by, it started to be more and more difficult. I started to feel a bit better and more normal, so to speak, only in 1994, after we left the centre and moved into a flat. I have decided to live peacefully what is left of my life here. I don't feel any urge to earn much and owe this or that. I can't get a real job, I can only work as a volunteer, and I don't want to do that. It's hard for me to live on social benefit, but I am not ashamed because of it. I am not here because I wanted to come. It was someone's politics that brought me here, and it's someone's politics to accept me and keep me here.

[**Nadan**, a 59-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since October 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998. A technical school degree, still attends a Dutch language course]

I think that our [his wife's and his] adjustment would have been much easier if we'd been given a chance to learn the language properly immediately after our arrival. But we were not persuaded to learn it, because of the way we were received here [at the asylum centre]. We were 'taught' how to turn on the light and use the lavatory, instead of being given a good language course appropriate to our skills and needs. That caused a certain level of resistance to this country, our homeland now. We haven't been able to get any documents [concerning their status or diploma recognition] here without enormous difficulties and that's also why we formed some sort of negative attitude towards this society.

[**Boris**, a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994, Dutch citizen since 1999. A university degree, from September 1998 to September 2000 took additional courses and training for his diploma recognition, employed since October 2000]

We [his wife and he] came here in May 1993 and in June of the same year we were granted humanitarian status ['C' status]. We were lucky to get in touch with a local NGO called "We for Peace", founded in Amsterdam soon after the first wave of refugees from former Yugoslavia had arrived. It was local, civic, initiative of a couple of people here to help these refugees, because at that time none of the legal procedures for them weren't set for their reception and assistance. We arrived just in time to submit our applications to the local police through that organisation. At the beginning we were not given any social assistance and I did

all kinds of manual jobs. I also immediately started to learn Dutch, because I wanted and needed to achieve some kind of security here and that is impossible without learning the language. It was a pretty good summer course. In the autumn, we started getting social assistance and we continued with language courses throughout that year, because we had more time given that we didn't have to work. Meanwhile, we heard from friends about a very good, intense, language course at the university. We enrolled, and attended classes every day, for six months. By the end of 1994, we successfully passed the exam of language competence at the highest level. Since we had day-to-day communication with native speaking people, our neighbours and at local shops, bank etc., and not only during the language classes, we'd started to avoid using English and started practising Dutch, in the summer of 1994. That was helpful for learning the spoken language. In early 1995, I read an ad in the newspaper about a training course in business consulting and planning, I applied and was accepted. After very intense training of seven months, I got my diploma in late 1995. It took four months to find a job, and I am in this firm since May 1996.

[Sinisa, a 40-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since May 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998. A university degree]

Because of the lack of any organised assistance to refugees and the housing problem in Italy, asylum seekers and refugees are usually forced to seek assistance and help from their already established compatriots. Most of the interviewees in Rome, both men and women, had relatively good rental accommodation in the city at the time of the research (measured by Roman standards). Single people, but sometimes also couples, often lived in shared accommodation. Some could afford to live on their own, which was not the case for years after their arrival. When they arrived, most found their first shelter in apartments of known and unknown refugees from the region. Shared accommodation with other people from the region, immigrants from other countries, or at a later stage with Italians they happened to meet early in their stay became a housing model for many. There were some, of course, who spent their first nights at Termini train station, and others who could not think of any other solution but to spend their first nights and their last money in inexpensive hotels. Only two found their first shelter in the dormitories of one of the church organisations or NGOs in Rome.

In the Netherlands, the reception system offers well-developed system of housing refugees, dating back before the introduction of asylum centres and the new Integration of Newcomers Act. As Muus (1998) remarks, the Dutch system of reception and integration had put much emphasis on the housing of refugees and there was a point in time when all 'integration' efforts were about accommodating refugees. Under the current system, refugees can benefit from subsidised housing arrangements with municipalities after status acknowledgement. Only those among interviewed in Amsterdam, who came before the stay in the reception centres was obligatory, had to make their housing arrangements. For most of them, the pattern of solving the problem of accommodation during the first months of their stay was similar to that among the refugees in Rome. However, in cases when they did not have any relatives in the Netherlands or contacts with former compatriots or Dutch friends, they were not forced to sleep on the streets of Amsterdam. Rather, they found a refuge in one of the squats of the city. At the time of the research, they all had good accommodation (measured by Amsterdam standards of public housing) and well-equipped flats.

One of the issues centrally related to the functional and wider social integration of refugees is the problem of language skills. In Italy, most of the refugees involved in this research did not know any Italian at the time of their arrival. Now they all speak Italian fluently, in most cases without the benefit of language courses. They say that it took between three to six months to begin to understand and up to one year to feel comfortable speaking. When they now speak their mother tongue it often has a characteristic Italian touch to it. Those who are not students at one of the universities in Rome describe their Italian as good for day-to-day communication and work but not for anything more sophisticated. Some speak Italian with a characteristic *Romanacio* dialect and proudly say that Italians often cannot tell if they are genuine

Romans or not. Those who were children, or in their teens, said that they learned the language quickly and without much difficulty. If they have siblings, they often speak Italian among themselves. Those who were younger understand their mother tongue, but often have difficulties in speaking and/or do not speak it well.

Learning Dutch proved to be one of the main obstacles to a more rapid integration of refugees from former Yugoslavia. Only those who came as young children or in their teens, as their parents reported, did not have difficulties learning the language. The problem in learning Dutch was primarily due to two factors. First, because of the way the language training system is organised and linked to the phased system of rights and obligations associated with various legal statuses. While awaiting the decision on their asylum claim, language courses are not compulsory. They are organised at the asylum centres and taught by volunteers. These courses are not geared towards specific age or literacy/educational level of refugees; hence, they are not effective, particularly for younger and better-educated students. Also, the social isolation of refugees from the society and local communities created by their often long stay in asylum centres contributes to the lack of opportunity to practice and improve the language. Only after convention, 'A', or humanitarian, 'C', status is granted, language training becomes obligatory, it is taught by professionals, and offers a variety of modes concerning their intensity, age and educational level of students. Given that determination procedure was usually very long, as already indicated in this report, many refugees started learning the language after twelve and often more months in the Netherlands. Second, according to interviewees, Dutch language has been difficult language to learn, and many found its accent much more difficult to master than that of many other European languages.

Additionally, for many younger, well-educated refugees, English was the language they tended to use in day-to-day communication with natives for many months after their arrival, because it was easier and also because, unlike Italians, Dutch speak it well. Also, the group of refugees in Amsterdam consisted of a relatively high percentage of older and less educated individuals, some from semi-urban areas, who did not know any foreign languages prior to their flight and were not used and motivated to learning them.

Employment represents one of the core components of successful incorporation of newcomers in the receiving society. It is the central issue in the process of integration of refugees, both from the point of view of the receiving society and of the refugees themselves. Employment is also one of the most difficult problems to tackle because of a complex set of parameters ranging from the situation in the labour market of the receiving society, policies that progressively exclude newcomers from formal labour markets or their specific niches, to the newcomers' language and professional skills.

In Italy, convention and *de facto* refugees have the same rights to employment, including self-employment, as Italian citizens. The only exception to this principle is access to employment in the public sector. This research indicates that the restrictions on seeking work in the public sector for non-citizens makes the continuation of careers of highly educated newcomers in certain professions such as medical doctors and nurses, extremely difficult.

Regardless of legal equality concerning employment, most of refugees find work in low-paid sectors, such as agriculture (in the south of Italy), tourism, manufacturing plants in northern Italy or domestic services. Many are self-employed in small businesses (i.e., cooperatives or small family-run businesses). A relatively

high level of unemployment in Italy also contributes to the problem of the high concentration of refugees in low-paid job sectors. Moreover, there is often a problem with the professional qualifications of new arrivals. Either qualifications do not match the labour market demands because there is no demand for their type of occupation and skills, or when there is a demand, their diplomas might not be recognised. In addition, in Italy work is sought primarily through informal contacts such as family networks. Refugees lack such contacts and networks, and are thus disadvantaged. Newly arrived refugees also have poor language skills, and because of the absence of assistance for refugees in Italy they are forced to earn their keep immediately after their arrival. Consequently, they do not have time for language courses and usually learn the language on their own.

For all these reasons, refugees in most cases find work in the “black” market, despite having the right to employment in Italy. This research reveals that this is primarily the result of the situation in the Italian labour market where the underground economy is widespread. According to some sources, it is one of the most extensive underground economies of the industrialised world (ECRE, 1998). Consequently, both Italian citizens (i.e., the established community) and newcomers (i.e., refugees and other immigrants) often work in the black market. In addition, highly educated refugees who commonly have problems with the recognition of their university diplomas in Italy are forced to work illegally if they want to find work corresponding to their education.

The Dutch attempt to integrate newcomers is well-developed in legal, institutional and organisational terms, as discussed in Chapter 3. In the Netherlands, refugees with convention, ‘A’, and humanitarian, ‘C’, status have the same rights to employment, including self-employment, as Dutch citizens. There is evidence,

however, that the reception system and the staged approach to integration adopted by the Dutch government create problems regarding the participation of refugee in the labour market.

The problem of active penetration into Dutch society is apparent on the level of employment and re-training. It is estimated that somewhere between 52 and 62 percent of refugees were unemployed in 1988 (Brink 1997). Brink indicates that for those who lived in the Netherlands for less than three years the unemployment rate was even higher and is estimated at 79 to 83 percent (Brink 1997). Her research about the labour market integration of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, Iran and Somalia, conducted between 1994 and 1996, gives an insight into the situation of refugees as regards to their labour market integration during their first years of residence in the Netherlands. Although not representative at the national level, it indicates the main problems concerning the functional integration of refugees. The research points to the importance of securing an appropriate level of educational training and opportunities in order to reduce unemployment and dependence among well-qualified newcomers.

Refugees in Brink's research were educated, with more than two-thirds of the respondents (69 percent) with an educational level at least equivalent to a Dutch higher secondary school degree, and with 29 percent of them with a university degree. There was almost no difference in the educational level between men and women, although a slightly higher percentage of women had a university degree (Brink 1997: 189-190). Most of the working respondents found employment through channels other than the employment office, which should be a first step towards the labour market in the Netherlands. They found jobs either through commercial employment agencies or their community networks. Only a few respondents in her research, all

young and male, entered vocational college or university, which can give them a fair chance of employment in the Netherlands. Brink argues that the lack of short-term high-level vocational courses renders many well-qualified refugees unproductive and dependent (Brink 1997:202.)

Brink's research was conducted at the time when the Dutch economy was in relative decline. Currently, however, the unemployment rate among Dutch population of working age, that is, the established community, is as low as 3 percent while unemployment rate among refugees is as high as 35 percent. These data, provided by *Emplooi* - an organisation which provides help to refugees in finding employment, clearly indicate structural problems concerning the labour market participation, the barriers to employment erected by inadequate re-training programmes, and consequently, the level of dependency problem among refugees in the Netherlands. The problem of dependency and low levels of employment is also suggested to be a cause of a rising criminality among young migrants from former Yugoslavia in the country (Snel *et al.* 2000). Although Snel's research targets migrants from former Yugoslavia in general, it indicates that a high level of unemployment among this population is due to a difficulty of the newly arrived refugees to find employment and/or to continue education in the Netherlands. The authors conclude that a low level of participation in the labour market and the lack of prospects for social promotion within the receiving society create difficulties in the social integration of migrants and is a likely cause of their involvement in criminal gangs and activities (Snel *et. al* 2000).

At the time of the research in Rome, the majority of those employed worked six days a week, occasionally seven, depending on their line of work. Their working day was often longer than 10 hours, and they earned approximately 1, 2 million liras

per month (approximately 600EUR). A number of both women and men worked in restaurants or cafes waiting tables or as bartenders. Some, mostly men, worked as kitchen helpers, assistants to chefs, or chefs in restaurants. Some, mostly women, attended to the elderly. Others worked as sales personnel in retail shops or as cleaners in hotels or family houses. Some men still worked as manual and unskilled workers: house painters, tennis court keepers, builders, gardeners, and so forth. The lucky ones found secretarial jobs or were able to continue careers interrupted by the war and flight. A couple of people interviewed took courses in computer programming, which led to work in small computer firms.

Of the 40 people interviewed in Rome, 87 percent were employed. Of those working, 20 percent worked and studied, and of those who only worked 39 percent had jobs appropriate to their education. Those who did not work were young adults, living with their parents and working occasionally, when their school or university commitments permitted. Most of those working did not acquire legal employment for years, regardless of the fact that their permit to stay in Italy gives them such a right, and many still work illegally. Moreover, even in cases where employers agree to register these people as employees, they often do so only for a limited number of working hours.

On arrival, a general pattern of finding jobs emerged. Most of the younger women would find work within a matter of days as live-in housekeepers or nannies. This was due to the situation in the labour market in Rome that offers opportunities in domestic services, but it was also related to the kinds of social networks the women from the region had in the city. During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of young women, predominantly from Dalmatia, Croatia, and Herzegovina, the southeastern part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, used to come to Rome for six months or a year to work

as live-in housekeepers. They would earn some money, learn the language, and return home. Many of the women interviewed had, prior to their flight, direct or indirect contacts with women from the region who did this kind of work. Through these contacts they gathered information about the best ways to search for this kind of work. Nuns of the Croatian Catholic Church in Rome were also helpful in assisting women who arrived with the first waves of refugees. Italian families in need of domestic help and/or childcare would usually contact the nuns in search of reliable help. After the first refugee women found work, these served as a source of information and contact for those who arrived later. It should be mentioned here that the nuns of the Croatian Catholic Church helped women from the region irrespective of their ethnic background.

A live-in housekeeper's job would not only secure a modest salary, but also accommodation, food and an environment to learn Italian. After six months or a year, the women would learn enough Italian and save enough money to quit the job, find shared accommodation, and look for some other type of work. All the women interviewed described their experience of work as live-in housekeepers as a "prison-like" experience. The main problem they faced was a lack of control over their time, and a feeling of isolation from the outside world. The change of employment was an important step forward for these women, even when they stayed in the cleaning business, because it meant freedom. However, the excitement of the feelings of freedom after leaving the families they worked for would not last long. For the overwhelming majority the change meant only a possibility to make their own housing arrangements, but how they earned their living did not change much. These women are educated, often with a university degree, and so have much higher expectations for their lives and careers than cleaning houses or waiting tables.

The situation for men finding their first jobs was particularly difficult because of the characteristics of the labour market in Rome. In most cases, the first work men found, commonly through contacts refugee women developed with Italian families they worked for, were manual, unskilled jobs such as building, painting, gardening, and so forth. The problem with this kind of work is not only that it is poorly paid, but that it also may be not paid at all. Employers would often pay less than negotiated or would not pay at all. These were black market jobs, and refugees from former Yugoslavia were not yet aware of the possibility of taking legal action against their employers. Hence their first months, even years in some cases, depended on sheer luck in finding a trustworthy boss. Unlike many women whose jobs although low paid were paid regularly, men often had to work hard and long hours for little or no pay. This situation made the lives of many miserable, because the vast majority had no savings and thus no means to sustain themselves. The fact that men had not only to find jobs immediately, but also affordable accommodation compounded the problem.

Families with children faced significantly more difficulties in ensuring minimal economic security than couples without children or single people. Because of the lack of a reception system and assistance for refugees with children, it was not unusual for children in their early teens had to work and contribute to inadequate family budgets during their first year in Rome.

Of the 20 people interviewed in Amsterdam, 40 percent were employed, 10 percent had casual contracts, 25 percent studied, and 25 percent were unemployed. Of those working, the majority worked full-time earning on average 3,500 Dutch guilders per month (approximately 1,600EUR), two in their professions while others were employed after completing re-training courses or education interrupted by the war and subsequent flight. On average, it took up to five years for those who started their exile

in the Netherlands in asylum centres, to learn the language, re-train or recognise their professional skills to be able to find work. It took less time to do the same, for those of similar age and educational level, who had family members in the country and were allowed to join them without spending time at asylum centres. The situation was the same for those who managed to avoid the official reception procedure involving a compulsory stay in an asylum centre, yet granted access to social services and social benefit relatively soon upon arrival. On arrival, they worked illegally to earn their keep. These were low paying jobs, such as babysitting, housecleaning, and waiting tables, done mostly by women, or a variety of manual jobs, done mostly by men. For both groups, it took on average three years to learn the language and find employment in their professions or adequate to their newly acquired skills.

Of those studying none worked and one was taking additional courses and training in order to recognise his diploma. Unemployed received 1,800 Dutch guilders (approximately 820EUR) in social benefits, if living with a spouse, or 1,250 Dutch guilders (approximately 570EUR), if single. Unemployed were in late 40s or older, less educated, slightly more male than female. This research indicates that older women whose skills were not in demand on the labour market or who could not find employment in their professions because of their age, were more likely than men to take jobs that pay the same or slightly better than social benefit. In most cases, their spouses would spend most of their days in their local immigrant community organisation, either working as volunteers or socialising, playing chess and billiards or watching cable TV programme from their country of origin. In such cases, women were speaking Dutch better than men and were more in contact with the world outside their ethnic group and households.

The difference in attitudes between men and women concerning employment revealed in this research is linked to the issue of how men and women develop survival strategies in exile. Friere's (1995) psychodynamic assessment of exile experiences of Latin Americans in Canada indicates that, given comparable time in a new country and similar post-resettlement experiences, "gender seems to protect women better than men" (p. 20). She argues that exile experience leads to a state of psycho-emotional disorganisation and critically tests individual sense of identity. Friere argues that women tend to reconstruct their core sense of identity more successfully than men, because of the way in which their gender role is socially and culturally constructed. In most societies and cultures, she claims, "work only adds an additional, secondary role to their core identity as mothers and wives" (p. 21). Hence, Friere concludes, they are more likely to achieve a sense of a continuity of meaningful vital tasks in exile than men. Friere reminds us that unlike women, men's core identity is work-related and supported by a number of traditional socioculturally established roles of 'authoritative figure', 'provider' and 'protector' within the family and community (p. 23). In exile, men become painfully aware that their occupational status, sources of power, and agendas are non-existent or meaningless in the receiving society (ibid.). Friere points out that for these reasons men often "redirect their energy into political and solidarity activities as a way of maintaining meaning in their lives, and in the hope of 'going home' within a short time" (ibid.).

Most of the interviewed in Amsterdam came to the Netherlands with children or became parents after some years in exile. Those who came with small children or had children relatively soon after their status acknowledgement did have difficulties in securing day-care service for them in order to attend better and more intense language courses or re-training. In such cases, it was women who postponed their

language and other training or fought with local social service providers to secure a place in a day-care for their children. All parents, however, prized the educational opportunities that were open to their children in the Netherlands.

5.1.2 Diploma recognition and continuation of education

Achieving recognition of school diplomas makes the process of integration difficult. Most of the refugees do not have the required documents, such as transcripts of diplomas, and for many it is very difficult to obtain them. Moreover, most receiving countries have very few bilateral agreements with other countries on diploma recognition. For the most part university diplomas are not recognised unless additional exams are passed. Consequently, even those with a sufficient level of education and professional skills that could generally be needed on the labour market have to postpone or abandon the idea of continuing their education and search for shorter routes to employment and self-sufficiency.

◆ Experiences of refugees in Rome

I started inquiring about how to recognise my diploma soon after I completed my language courses [in the winter of 1993]. However, I wasn't successful in obtaining the right information until March 1995, when I started taking care of a woman who was the wife of a former Italian ambassador. Her daughter worked in the Italian Foreign Ministry and she helped my husband and I by providing information and with the documents needed for recognising our diplomas. Italian bureaucracy is a total mess. You get all kinds of contradictory information, so it was practically impossible to find out what was needed without connections. In May 95 we were informed that we were to pass seven exams and submit a thesis. After we'd passed the final exam, we still had problems. There's a medical association here and you have to be a member in order to be able to work. They refused to register us because there was supposedly a law that you cannot be a member unless you are an Italian citizen. We then filed a complaint in a court. The only way of doing it was to hire an eminent lawyer. As you can imagine, neither did we know any lawyers in Rome nor could we afford one, let alone an eminent lawyer. Thanks to the nuns [the Croatian Catholic Church nuns], we were lucky to get in touch with a very good lawyer whom we didn't have to pay. So we won in the end and then, after a year and a half, the medical association had to grant us membership, retroactively. However, the damage was already done,

because we couldn't work as doctors until we were registered as members of the association.

[**Spomenka**, a 38-year-old medical doctor from Serbia, FR Yugoslavia, in Rome since April 1993. Before her diploma was recognised she worked as a cleaning person, and later had short-term contracts with several private clinics]

Since I started my studies here [in the autumn of 1997], I've learned a lot. By now I should have almost graduated but with my job that's impossible. I only managed to pass five exams to date, with high grades though, because I lack the time and concentration for studying. When you work until three in the morning [at a bar], you wake up at 10-11, you need time to pull yourself together, to sit and study, make lunch. So I have very little time for studying.

[**Mirsad**, a 25-year old student whose high school education was interrupted by the war and subsequent flight of his family from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia where he completed high school before their flight to Italy. In Rome since the summer of 1993]

◆ Experiences of refugees in Amsterdam

I started the procedure concerning my diploma recognition the day after I obtained 'A' status, that was in December 1996, when I sent my documents to the Ministry of Health. Although they were obliged to respond within 60 days, it took over a year. In January 1998, I was informed that I wouldn't be able to work without undertaking additional training and exams. I was given time until May to apply to a university. It was only at the end of June, after applying that I was told how many exams I had to pass and how long that would take. It took two years. In the meantime, I learned through a friend, not through any of numerous organisation and individuals involved in refugee work here, about the University Assistance Fund [UHF], a privately funded organisation assisting asylum seekers and refugees in continuing their university education. I had two interviews there, one of which was about my reasons to come here and about my legal status and difficulties I had in obtaining a permanent residence permit. That interview was more detailed and serious than those I had during the determination procedure. After these interviews, I was accepted as their client and they agreed to pay my additional professional training. I was paid the university fees, most of the course books, and some of the travel expenses.

[**Boris**, a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994, Dutch citizen since 1999. Employed since October 2000]

I started, or to be precise, I continued my interrupted university education in September 1994. I got a fellowship from the UHF, what helped tremendously. My studies went well, and I graduated in two years although it was a four-year programme. It wasn't because I was very smart or over ambitious, but because I had no more time to waste. I was already much older than my fellow colleagues, I was 24 when I started.

[**Mira**, a 30-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998; self-employed]

For all refugees in exile in Rome, it was equally hard or impossible to find the time and money necessary for diploma recognition given that there is practically no financial assistance for refugees. They had to work long hours to earn their income and many educated people were forced to accept the first job they were offered, which usually took them to an inadequate and low-paid niche of the labour market from which it was difficult to move upward. Even those with a sufficient level of education and professional skills that could generally be needed in the Italian labour market can rarely apply for jobs appropriate to their education. This is clearly a considerable loss for refugees and for the Italian society because the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984) that newcomers bring to the receiving society remains unrecognised and unused.

Among the refugees in Rome, for example, out of 16 persons with university diplomas only three managed to have their degrees recognised and two were not required to undergo the formal procedure because of the character of their skills. It would commonly take years of struggling with the bureaucracy, a considerable amount of money for translating documents, and in some cases, much time to prepare for and pass exams to reach that goal. In all cases the entire undertaking would not have been successful without the “right connections” in the Italian bureaucracy.

The problem concerning the recognition of school diplomas was significant not only for the refugee population in this research whose educational qualifications were high. According to data collected by the Danish Refugee Council on the level of education of 1,449 asylum seekers in Italy whose applications were examined in 1997, 216 had university degrees, 507 had high school diplomas, 468 had secondary school certificates or the equivalent, 141 had technical school certificates, only 74 had primary school certificates, and 43 had no educational certificate (Johansen, 1998: 84). In other words, almost 50 percent of the asylum seekers whose cases were

examined in 1997 had a high school education at least, which attests to the fact that in general persons seeking asylum in Italy are well-qualified. There is also evidence that those seeking asylum in EU states today are better educated than labour migrants of the 1960s and 1970s.

In Amsterdam, the problem of recognition of diplomas for highly educated also proved difficult. Most of those highly educated were in early 30s when they arrived in the Netherlands and thus were over the age when they would be eligible to obtain financial assistance for their studies. Given that for many the process of diploma recognition involved additional studies, most find it difficult or impossible task. For a very few who managed to undergo the process, the assistance provided by a Dutch privately funded organisation, the University Assistance Fund, was instrumental in securing the financial assistance necessary for continuation of professional careers. Of the group interviewed in Amsterdam, two individuals had their diplomas recognised through the support of this organisation, and one person was still undergoing the process. Others considered themselves either too old for such an undertaking or regarded time required for the process too long relative to their need and desire to become independent and self-sufficient, and thus not worth spending. This research indicates that privately funded organisations for helping refugees and other immigrants settle in the receiving societies in a meaningful way can be regarded as a good practice, particularly in the areas of integration in which government funding is insufficient or non-existent. On average, it took the same amount of time for refugees in Amsterdam to recognise their professional qualifications, as for those interviewed in Rome.

The problem with diploma recognition is paramount not only for well-qualified people who wish to find employment appropriate to their qualifications, but

also for those who wish to continue their interrupted education. The conflict interrupted the education of 42 percent of the refugees in Rome. Of these, 76 percent succeeded in continuing their interrupted education or in completing short-term courses and finding employment in these new professions. It took between three to five years either to continue their education or to enrol in vocational courses. During those years they struggled to earn enough for rent and food. Others did not wish to or could not afford to continue their university education and decided instead to enrol in courses and training for computer software specialists, chefs, or bartenders.

The situation of younger refugees in Amsterdam concerning continuation of their education interrupted by war was less traumatic than for those in Rome. It took less time for them to enroll in universities and because they were eligible for financial assistance to continue their university education they did not have to work and study.

The discussion thus far mapped out the situation of the studied population in Rome and Amsterdam concerning their functional integration via language skills, the labour market and education. Differences between the Italian and Dutch policy contexts not only affect the quality of functional integration of refugees in these two societies, but also how they achieve self-sufficiency and independence, and how they achieve wider societal participation. The effects of different integration ‘systems’ on the “social world of refugees” (Marx, 1990) understood as the sum of all their relationships and of the forces impinging on them at any moment of their exile experience (p. 189), are the focus of the analysis in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 - Social networks and wider societal participation and integration of refugees

This Chapter examines the role of social networks in the process of integration and the issues of wider societal participation of refugees in the receiving society. By exploring the social relationships within their own ethnic group, as well as often neglected social links among refugee and indigenous and other established groups, the Chapter addresses the issue of inclusion in community, which should be at the core of the idea of integration understood as a two-way process. Comparison between the experiences of refugees from former Yugoslavia in the two different country contexts also opens up the space for discussion of the role of cultural compatibility in the process of integration and how it affects the assessment of refugees concerning their situation in exile.

6.1 Social networks of refugees from former Yugoslavia in Rome and Amsterdam

The importance of networks to the process of migration and migrant communities has been long recognised in the field of migration studies. These networks are understood as sets of interpersonal ties based on kinship, friendship and shared national, ethnic and cultural origin that connect migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas (Massey et al., 1993). As such, they represent an important source of social capital, which refers to an individual's ability to mobilise resources on demand (Portes, 1995: 12), or to a dynamic process that facilitates access to benefits and resources controlled by the dominant group of society (Fernandez-Kelly, 1995) that best suit the goals of specific immigrant groups.

Literature on the importance of social networks for the process of migration focuses on three main areas of migration experience. It examines the role of social

networks in the migration decision-making process (Hugo, 1981; Ritchey, 1976); in the choice of destination (Massey et al., 1987); and in the adaptation of migrants in host societies (Caces, 1987). Koser (1997) defines these three areas of migration experiences as the three stages of asylum cycle - pre-flight, flight, and exile. This section considers the role of social networks in the adaptation stage of asylum cycle of the population for former Yugoslavia in Rome and Amsterdam.

◆ Experiences of refugees in Rome

During the first years [in Rome] the refugees from ex-Yugoslavia were the circle I used to socialise with. We were pretty united in these years, we stuck together, those who would and could help each other. Later, as people managed to attain some economic security, we started growing apart. So when I met an Italian girl, I definitely parted with most of our people. My present friends are mostly Italians. [Mirsad, a 25-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Rome since the summer of 1993; Bosniak]

Our comunita is small, most got here in 91-92 and 93, at the beginning of the war. Those that were here before [old immigrants] just couldn't fit in with those who came during this war. Their attitude [of old immigrants] towards Italy was different as well as the attitude towards the people who were fleeing the war [in former Yugoslavia]. We weren't people looking for jobs and a better life. The situations we were faced with here were extreme, no regular papers in the beginning, no job, war in our country, so those strong ties were made among those who fled the war.

[Mirza, a 36-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Rome since the winter of 1992; ethnically mixed background]

Each of us had our own opinions about politics. We'd have disputes over that, but despite the political discussions, we'd help each other whenever we could, regardless of where we were from and what our political views were.

[Milena, a 33-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Rome since November 1992; ethnically mixed background]

◆ Experiences of refugees in Amsterdam

Those who came here by early 1993 were helping each other. There was nothing here [no organised assistance to those fleeing former Yugoslavia] so we were exchanging any bit of information we had, we helped each other with finding shelter for the newly arrived. I had a couple from Croatia, for example, for almost five months, although I'd never seen them before. It was a very tense period in terms of politics and war, and I remember arguments and tensions between some of the people I used to socialise with. But we were all in the same boat then, and I can't recall any serious problems or people who wouldn't help each other.

[**Zenaida**, a 30-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since January 1992; Bosniak]

The situation at the centre [the asylum centre] was difficult because we didn't have information about how long the procedure was going to last, we had nothing to do, we just sat there and waited, and we became paranoid about what we could say to people and who we could trust. There were people from all nationalities [of former Yugoslavia] there and tensions were inevitable because we just sat and talked about what had happened back home and why did we had to leave. After a while, there was nothing left to talk about, only tension and hatred were left.

[**Boris**, a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994; ethnically mixed background]

I consider myself lucky because my family came here before I arrived, and I didn't have to stay in an asylum centre. I heard terrible stories about the situation in these centres, about ethnic tensions and 'wars' fought there. I am happy that I was spared that experience.

[**Sasa**, a 63-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since February 1994; Serb].

I am very disappointed because our people [from former Yugoslavia] are more divided here than they are back home where they fought war. I went to all three associations [Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian] and I feel like a stranger there. These people care more about their ethnic background than anything else. I find that hard to accept.

[**Ivana**, a 47-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since 1997; Serb]

The importance of assistance to asylum seekers and refugees provided through migrant networks in Western Europe has long been documented. In the Italian context, where asylum seekers and refugees are particularly disadvantaged because of the lack of social security systems, these networks literally mean *survival*. However, because of the characteristics of the immigrant population in Italy and in Rome specifically, networks of 'old' immigrants from former Yugoslavia were underdeveloped, and so social networks that were almost exclusively *refugee networks* assisted those who fled the region and came to Rome. These refugee networks served as an *alternative* 'self-reception' system for disseminating information, resolving housing problems, and finding work. Only in exceptional cases were some of the interviewed helped through contacts with old migrant networks in

Rome. Almost all of the interviewees were sceptical about these networks and community organisations and assessed their activities as *political* rather than *humanitarian* or keen on helping refugees. The research indicates, however, that in many cases the community organisations of nationals from the post-Yugoslav states in Rome were an important factor in establishing initial social contacts among refugees from the region. Nonetheless, the organisations' programs and activities were of very little or no interest to them.

This research indicates that a similar pattern of networking emerged among refugees from former Yugoslavia who arrived in Amsterdam before legal and other procedures for their protection and reception were set for them. Although, unlike Italy, networks of old immigrants from the region existed in the city, not many of those who arrived early had any closer contacts with them. They all felt that most of these people came to the Netherlands for different reasons and under different circumstances, that is, as 'guest-workers', rather than as people forced to move because of war. Additionally, most of the refugees pointed to the difference in educational background between those that arrived in the country in the late 60s and themselves what, they felt, created problems in communication and mutual understanding.

Van Hear (1998) reminds us that although diaspora communities may assist and support their members, they may also be characterised by division, exploitation, and in some cases political violence. Some studies of refugee populations from former Yugoslavia in EU states other than Italy attest to problems with ethnic tension among these migrant communities. Eastmond's (1998) analysis of the situation of Bosnian Muslim refugees in Sweden shows, for example, that in the town studied, "boundaries between Muslims, Serbs and Croats are strictly maintained." (p.173). In explaining

the complex set of factors contributing to this ethnic division and/or distance among exiles from former Yugoslavia, she points to the policy context of the receiving society. In Sweden the policy context promotes and funds establishment of immigrant/refugee community organisations with an expectation that these will fulfil the function of orientating newcomers. As Eastmond states, although these organisations fulfil this function, “they also provide an important link to the institutions of the home country[...]These associations constitute the major arena for the articulation and affirmation of a national identity.” (p.164). In the case of populations fleeing war in the post-Yugoslav states, however, the issues concerning national identity were often problematic because national identities were intrinsically related to the identity politics of the war (Korac, 1999). Eastmond’s (1998) analysis of the cross-ethnic relations among refugees and other migrants from former Yugoslavia in Sweden is to a great extent applicable to the situation in the Netherlands.

The research among refugees in Rome reveals, however, that the refugee networks were composed of people of all ethnic origins and from different parts of former Yugoslavia and that the vast majority of refugees have contacts across ethnic boundaries. This is not to argue though that these refugee communities are free from ethnic tension resulting from the conflict in the region. Rather, it is to indicate that the policy context of the receiving country influences how refugees cope with experiences of ethnic persecution caused by the conflict they fled. The intensive contacts across ethnic boundaries revealed in this research resulted from the specific circumstances in which they took place. They happened primarily because of the *absence* of an organised reception and assistance system. Consequently, for many of the refugees, contacts across ethnic boundaries were literally a matter of physical survival during their first years in Rome. It can be argued, therefore, that the

characteristics of the policy context concerning refugees in Italy have created a situation in which people fleeing the deeply divided and war-torn region had to *recreate* links and coexistence destroyed by war.

This cross-ethnic networking was facilitated by two contributing factors: one relating to the absence of developed networks of old migrants, the other embedded in the characteristics of the refugee population from former Yugoslavia in Rome. The lack of established community organisations supported by the Italian authorities or by the governments of the post-Yugoslav states created a need for spontaneous self-organising by the newly arrived refugees. These networks enabled them to cope better with their day-to-day problems in fulfilling their immediate needs, which proved to be common to all regardless of their ethnic background. This spontaneity largely freed this population from political disputes about the conflict, the causes of their flight, and other highly politically charged issues. These cross-ethnic networks were also successful because most of the refugees from former Yugoslavia in Rome are young, educated and come from multiethnic urban areas, and are often themselves of ethnically mixed backgrounds. They themselves had no other experience but that of peaceful multiethnic coexistence and friendships before the conflict. It can be argued that when reception and assistance systems for refugees fleeing wars involving ethnic conflict are set up so that cross-ethnic coexistence is not required, ethnic tension and divisions tend to be carried over and transplanted into the new context. Hence they remain central to the exile experience. This is intensified even more when these systems accommodate essentialized notions of national identities and ethnic divisions created by the conflict. As Eastmond (1998: 178-179) argues,

[C]ulturalist policies of receiving societies concerned with the consequences of people 'uprooted' from their native countries and reflecting essentialized notions of identity and culture may then rather be seen as expressions of the

same nationalist logic of a 'natural' relation between a people, a place and a culture.

The analysis so far documented how the absence of a developed system of services and government funding to help refugees settle in Italy forced them to establish and rely on their own networks as an essential survival mechanism during their first years of exile. Social networks among refugees in the Netherlands were of different character. They were primarily networks based on family or kinship ties or established along ethnic lines. The former was due to their legal status, the right to family reunification, and the socio-economic conditions in the country that were favourable to people feeling with their families. The latter was the result of three interrelated factors. First, many of the interviewed came from parts of Bosnia heavily affected by war and were themselves victims of physical violence because of their ethnic origin. Secondly, they found themselves in the country with relatively large and well-established immigrant population from former Yugoslavia, which had already been bitterly divided along ethnic lines. Moreover, links with immigrant/ethnic associations are encouraged in Dutch multi-cultural society and funded by the government. These circumstances have become a fruitful ground for maintaining or deepening divisions and tensions caused by the conflict. Thirdly, in the Dutch context, the ethnic coexistence among newly arrived was not necessary for their survival or successful settlement. The system has been leading them stage-by-stage through the 'integration' process, leaving no need for intense networking and search for alternative routes into the system.

6.2 Social interaction between refugees from former Yugoslavia and the established communities in Rome and Amsterdam

This section examines the importance of social contacts with the established community, perceptions of cultural distance, and negotiation of identity among the studied population. Within this framework, the analysis is centred on the effects of the specific policy and broader country context, which in conjunction with the characteristics of the study population influence how refugees develop their strategies for integration and assess their overall situation in exile.

◆ Experiences of refugees in Rome

I'd thought that socialising with our people [refugees from former Yugoslavia] and talking about our problems and politics would only give me a headache. It's better to be with Italians, especially if they're such wonderful people such as the ones we know [he and his family].

[**Milan**, a 47-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina with a university degree, married with two children, in Rome since August 1992, employed as a clerical worker, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

We're here and we must learn how to live with Italians. We must find what we have in common with them, although we're different(...)I don't know how to explain that difference - I'd say that it's nothing major. For example, they're very nice to people, but I'd say that's rather superficial - before you know it they'll promise you something and then never do it. But many Italians managed to learn something from us, too. They can't believe how easily we absorb foreign languages, and we do adapt easily, I'm not the only one. They manage to learn a great deal from us, too, especially those who work with our people. We are more precise, for example, we're some kind of 'Germans' to Italians. Perhaps we've changed them a bit, too.

[**Vera**, a 34-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina with a university degree, in Rome since the summer of 1993, holds a humanitarian residence permit. At the time of the research, she was a student]

The only way to become integrated somewhere is to be in contact with local people. That means stepping out of a kind of 'national scheme'. Limiting yourself to what you see as your own identity prevents you from accepting whatever may be outside it. Some of us, for example, speak perfect Italian, even the Romancio dialect, so there's no way you can recognise them as foreigners, they're very well adapted. However, there's still a difference, which isn't bad at all. From what I've seen it's not a disadvantage and I'd like to keep that distinctive quality.

[**Dragan**, a 38-year-old man from Serbia, FR Yugoslavia, with a high school degree, employed as an assistant to chef in a bar-restaurant, in Rome since March 1992, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

I appreciate Italy for 1001 reasons. A lot of Italians live abroad, so people here don't reject foreigners as Germans do, for example. Italians don't treat you as a nonentity if you are white - it's not easy for the coloured people here, though. Psychologically, it's not hard for us ex-Yugoslavs to be immigrants here.

[**Vesna**, a 33-year-old woman from Croatia, in Rome since the November 1992. The war and subsequent flight interrupted her university education. After completing a training in Rome, she became an IT specialist. At the time of the research, she had a job in a small computer firm]

If I went somewhere north [northern Europe] where you have cloudy skies for months, where there's no sun, even with all the good things you get there, I don't think it's all there is to being happy. We were born on the Mediterranean, and this is a Mediterranean country, the closest to us [people from former Yugoslavia]. We're used to eating a fig here and there, to cheat someone a little here and there, and then to be kind and helpful to total strangers that's the Mediterranean atmosphere.

[**Senad**, a 42-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina with a university degree, single, in Rome since November 1992, works illegally in his profession, and holds a work residence permit since 1997]

It was good in Denmark [while she was refugee in Denmark], the Danes readily accepted me because I'd integrated as much as possible. I started living as they did, socialising as they did. The Danes don't have the spontaneity as Italians, they just work and work and go out only on Fridays and Saturdays. Even love is programmed for weekends. My brief visit to Rome in the summer of 1998 was something fantastic - it felt like coming home, like the returning of a part of me that I'd lost in Denmark. Danish people have their qualities, but I wasn't happy there, I felt kind of 'programmed'. And so, I'd decided to come here to study. I know that if I'd stayed in Denmark, I'd certainly have more money and I wouldn't have to work to be able to study, but I wouldn't have the pleasures that I have here. I feel good here.

[**Tanja**, a 22-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina who fled to Denmark in March 1993 where she and her mother were granted convention refugee status. Since 1998 she has been living on her own and studying in Rome]

◆ Experiences of refugees in Amsterdam

I am employed in a Dutch medical firm, I speak Dutch language well, my child goes to a Dutch school and soon he'll speak Dutch better than his mother tongue, but we live here a parallel existence, because we don't have a real contact with Dutch society. We are neither accepted nor rejected. The biggest problem is that we don't have any friends among the Dutch here. We are here left to ourselves. I have a flat in Amsterdam, I live here, but I don't have any ties with Dutch people. I do what I am told to do, and everything is going according to a routine set of 'integration' rules that we 'refugees' have to follow. We didn't have to integrate really, you see, we just had to do what we were told.

[**Boris**, a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994, Dutch citizen since 1999. A university degree, since September 2000 his diploma has been recognised, employed since October 2000]

I feel part of this society in many ways. I never felt marginalised. But this is an individualistic society, very different from ours [the former Yugoslav society]. The Dutch are pretty 'cold' and unsociable, that's why it's still difficult for me here.

[**Zenaida**, a 30-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since January 1992; Dutch citizen since 1997. A university degree before the flight and an additional university degree from a Dutch university, self employed]

If I had any choice in deciding where to go I wouldn't have chosen to come here, despite all the economic advantages this country offers. I would've chosen a country where I would feel better with people and would waive all the rights and benefits I am entitled to here. The problem is in the constant, 24-hour, adjustment required from all newcomers here. Each and everyone of us has to adjust the way they see fit, that is, you have to accept their standards, regardless of whether you like them or not. It is particularly difficult for some foreigners, not so much so for Americans, Japanese or Canadians, for example. It's a kind of indirect pressure to adjust, but it's all-embracing, it's present at the professional and personal level. That's an enormous pressure. Although I am free to go somewhere else now, I just don't have the energy left to start my life from scratch again.

[**Kajo**, a 37-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since July 1992; Dutch citizen since 1997. A university degree, at the time of the research at the final stages of the studies for his diploma recognition]

Everything was well organised here. We were assigned a Dutch volunteer to help us settle in our new flat and neighbourhood, so we were not left to our own devices. But we from Bosnia are used to close contacts with our neighbours. We're used to pop into our neighbour's house for a cup of coffee, not for the sake of coffee, but for the sake of contact, of a friendly chat. The Dutch don't live like that, even within the family. Here, children don't visit their parents for several months. I did try in my neighbourhood to break the ice and make friendships. The first Christmas after I moved in, in '94, I dropped a card to all my new neighbours. They seemed to like it, because I got cards from them next year, for Christmas. By the third year, they learned that I was a Muslim, and sent me cards for the New Year. They are nice people, I can't say, but our communication doesn't go much further than that.

[**Emir**, a 51-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since the summer of 1993; Dutch citizen since 1997. A technical school degree, unemployed]

Although many would say that I am well integrated, because I speak the language, I work for a Dutch firm, and I try to socialise with the Dutch as much as possible, it isn't really so. I have a great desire to integrate, to the extent that is possible for someone who isn't Dutch. I want my life to be normal. I want to be accepted by the Dutch, because I want to stay here and I want to feel pleasant in their company. But no matter how much I try, I feel invisible among my colleagues at work, for example. They are perfectly correct work wise, but when it comes to some kind of socialising at work or after working hours, they behave as if I am not there. Then I feel excluded.

[**Miro**, a 27-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since January 1997; holds humanitarian, 'C', status. A university student and an intern in a Dutch firm.]

I hardly have any closer contacts with the Dutch, although I can't say that I had any bad experiences in my limited communication with them. They were kind of nice to me, but it didn't go much further than that. It is easier, though, to be a foreigner in Amsterdam, I think, because many people who live here aren't Dutch. In a way, the Dutch in Amsterdam can be considered 'foreign'.

[**Jelena**, a 26-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since 1997; holds a humanitarian, 'C', status; a student]

This research indicates that the establishment of social ties with the established community is an important element in how refugees assess their situation in exile and in how they define successful integration. Narratives of refugees involved in this research document their need to become part of the social fabric of life of the receiving societies through informal contacts and communication with the established community. They also show their conscious effort to establish such contacts, and different levels of success among the studied population in Rome and Amsterdam, in achieving this important goal of integration.

Refugee communities of nationals from former Yugoslavia in Rome, as this research documents, are not closed and isolated. The importance of refugee networks among the studied population in Rome significantly decreased with an increase in the level of their economic security. This process allowed space for the establishment of closer ties with the established community of the receiving society. In Amsterdam,

most of the refugees are isolated, but not because they deliberately confined themselves to the boundaries of their families or ethnic communities. Most found difficult or impossible to interact and socialise with the Dutch. For a few, the need to communicate outside the group of their compatriots was alleviated by the fact that Amsterdam is a multiethnic city and, therefore, it is easier to cope with the feeling of not being one of 'them'. Only among the elderly, the less educated, those from semi-urban settings, who established close ties with their ethnic community organisations, has there been less or hardly any effort or desire to become more ingrained in Dutch society.

Valtonen (1999) defines participation in the social sphere as "lived relationships" within which we can consider both direction of linkage, that is, intra-group and extra-group, and the nature of the relationships or ties of reciprocity and responsibility. Communication inside the ethnic group(s) of the studied population in Rome, that is, intra-group communication, was characterised by weak ties and did not result in their isolation from the established community. Gurak and Caces argue that weak ties among migrant networks are important, because they unite diverse networks and increase the resources available to network members (Gurak and Caces, 1992).

Factors influencing the establishment of this type of social ties within refugee networks in Rome are twofold. First, these networks were not based on family or kinship links, and second, the refugees in this research may be characterised as "events-alienated" forced migrants (Kunz, 1981). According to Kunz's (p. 43) typology of the type of social relationships of refugees to the population of the home country, events-alienated refugees are ambivalent or embittered in their attitudes to their former compatriots because of events immediately preceding their flight, or because of past discrimination. He explains the common denominator among this,

otherwise diverse group as their shared knowledge that “events have irrevocably alienated them from their fellow citizens of the past” (p. 43). Although the complexity of divisions among citizens of former Yugoslavia, both among those who fled and those who stayed in their places of origin cannot be entirely captured by Kunz’s typology, many of the refugees in this research can be best described as events-alienated group of forced migrants. As such, many seldom entertained the hope, and only rarely the wish, to return to live among their former compatriots what, according to Kunz (1981: 43), is typical characteristic of this category of refugees. Chapter 7 discusses the question of return and gives a fuller insight in the complexity of the process of negotiation involved in individual decisions to remain in exile or return to the country of origin. At this point, however, it is important to emphasise that the attitudes of refugees from the post-Yugoslav states in Rome towards return influenced their motivation to engage in and nourish social contacts with the established community.

Almost all of the interviewees in Rome have gradually developed friendships with Italians. The main obstacle in making closer social contacts with Italians during their first years in Rome was the lack of opportunity to be acquainted with people who are of similar educational and social backgrounds as the refugees were. During their first years they were almost exclusively in touch with the Italians with whom they worked. Given that these jobs were inadequate to their education, Italians of different interests and life aspirations overwhelmingly made-up their social milieu. As one of the interviewees put it: “during the first years, it was almost impossible to meet Italians who knew that Spain is neither the capital of Argentina nor vice versa.” During their first years in Rome, men were more disadvantaged than women were in making closer social contacts with Italians. Given that during that period women were

primarily employed in domestic services, contacts with their employers (i.e., Italian families) often developed into friendships not only with the family they worked for, but also with some of their relatives and friends.

At the time of the research approximately half of the interviewees had more contacts with Italians than with people from the region. These contacts were predominantly described as “good friendships” involving regular outings, home visits, and joint vacations. The other half of the interviewees did not express a tendency to isolate themselves from Italians or society at large, but they preferred to socialise with “their own folk”. This preference, as they explained, stemmed from their feeling that they understand each other better because they still lead more “extreme” lives than Italians do. Additionally, this group perceives Italian friendships as “interest oriented” and, therefore, different from the kind of friendships they are used to. As Knusden (1991) points out, the lack of social contacts with the established community may be less important if those concerned have a sense of belonging to refugee networks based upon shared experiences that can provide emotional support.

Many of the interviewed in Amsterdam expressed a need to develop closer social ties with the established community. This attitude was often associated with social action on the part of individual refugees in order to initiate informal social communication with the wider society. Most of them, however, reported difficulties in achieving this goal. This experience was almost equally shared by highly educated who speak the language and have employment and those of a lower educational level, with poor language skills and no work. None of the interviewees regarded their experience as instances of an open racism or xenophobia in the Netherlands. Rather they considered it the consequence of the characteristics of ‘culture’ and ‘lifestyle’ of the Dutch. While they prized social tolerance and enjoyed high standard of living and

fine public amenities, it was clear that the majority does not feel at 'home' in the Netherlands even though it became their new homeland by the virtue of relaxed naturalisation policies. The main reason for these feelings of detachment was a shared feeling of social isolation from the established community.

As Lechner (2000: 16) points out, the Netherlands possesses a relatively continuous and distinctive public culture, which shapes the relationship of individuals to the collective and of groups to each other. The main feature of this public culture is tolerance, embedded in the Dutch history of the distinct organisational structures of mutually tolerant but segmented cultural communities, the old *zuilen* (pillars), (Lechner, 2000: 18). He argues that although the pillarised version of tolerance has lost ground, its spirit remains alive in the public sphere and rhetoric of multiculturalism. He points out that tolerance, however, does not mean actual recognition. Rather, it often has meant keeping the other at a distance (Lechner, 2000: 18).

The narratives of refugees collected in this research document a complex process of negotiation within refugee discourse concerning the reorganisation of attitudes and behaviours required for meeting personal needs and expectations in exile. This reorganisation, among almost all interviewed in Rome, resulted in a realistic and constructive approach to the problems of exile in Italy, the one that seeks an integrated accommodation with the receiving society, which is consistent both with their past and present situation and identities. In other words, their approach to integration did not entail a desire to reshape their identities in order to make them more congruent with Italian attitudes as well as social and cultural customs. Rather, a clear desire to retain a notion of difference was central to the process of negotiation of identity. This, however, did not imply a need for "entrenching a symbolic boundary"

(Baubock, 1996) between the collectives. For almost all of the interviewees this notion of difference was considered as an advantage both for the newcomers as well as for the established community. The process of negotiation of boundaries and identity was understood as a mutual process of learning and shifting within which both communities can gain. It occurred in many spontaneous, informal, social contacts and communication between the refugees and Italians.

In Amsterdam, the refugees themselves expressed the same need to retain a notion of difference, but their settlement in the Netherlands did not involve the experience of a two-way process of communication and mutual adjustment of both newcomers and the established community. Rather, their desire to become part of the social fabric of life in Dutch society was often accompanied with feelings of pressure to reshape their identities and system of values according to Dutch standards in order to be accepted by the Dutch. These findings may seem surprising in the society that is proud of its tolerance and within the state that put a genuine effort to build a multicultural society through its policies. The question is not only of the meaning of the Dutch tolerance that is unsettled (Lechner, 2000: 19), but also of whether multiculturalism is about coexistence between minorities and majority or is it about their interaction. If the latter, as most of the refugees involved in this research argue, then it is important to consider whether such a model of multicultural society can be achieved primarily through the state intervention and their policies towards inclusion of newcomers.

As discussion in this report documented, the lack of a state-organised attempt to meet the group needs of refugees in Rome forced them to rely on their personal capabilities in finding their way into Italian society. Their contacts with the established community were not mediated through professional social service

providers who, as Knudsen (1991: 28) points out, are often key guides to the receiving societies. Rather, the encounters with the new environment were spontaneous and individualised which in turn allowed space for expressing, if not always fulfilling, refugees' individual and constantly changing needs and hopes.

These spontaneous social contacts were facilitated by the fact that refugees as a group were not spatially segregated in the city. Their neighbours were Italian, and often their flat-mates who although Italian were also newcomers in the city. These spontaneous and individualised social encounters helped avoiding the development of a perception that the differences between Italian and non-Italian identity and behaviour are hierarchical in which the former is understood to be superior. Knudsen (1991: 31) points to the problems associated with assistance programmes that tend to treat refugees as having "immature social identities" who have to be re-educated in order to be integrated. He argues that settlement programmes are often "founded upon unequal power and authority rather than on integration and equal worth" (Knudsen, 1991: 31). The perception that the native and the new culture are not set in opposition strengthened the adaptability of refugees in Rome to the new environment, because it encouraged their openness to differences between the cultures and people.

This is not to argue that they were not critical of Italian society and way of life. However, their criticism was constructive in the sense that the majority of the refugees were pragmatic and realistic in the way they negotiated their dissatisfaction with certain characteristics of the society that the majority perceived as their new home. These spontaneous and individualised encounters between cultures as a way of learning about the receiving society was also important for their perception that the process of learning, shifting and shaping attitudes is mutual, and how it impacts upon both the newcomers and Italians. The scope and quality of social contacts made with

the established community contributed to a subjective feeling of refugees in Rome that the wider society is not alien and closed community beyond reach. This subjective feeling played a positive role in assessing their individual situations in exile, and tended to compensate for their dissatisfaction with the quality of their participation in the labour market as well as their objectively under valued social role.

Montgomery's (1996) research of components of refugee adaptation shows that how refugees feel about their experiences are as important as objective indicators of adaptation such as employment, income, and language efficiency. For the refugees in Rome, the subjective feelings about their situation were importantly grounded in their experiences of Italian culture. This experience indicates the perception of compatibility of cultures or lack of a profound "cultural distance" (Baubock, 1996) between sending and receiving societies. Baubock comments on the important role the concept of cultural distance plays in extra-group interaction. He emphasises that cultural distance may prove to be a barrier to communication even when both parties are willing to communicate and, thus, when none of the group feels the need to emphasise difference by fixing a symbolic boundary between cultures (p. 118).

Although before becoming refugees in Italy, most had never set foot in Rome, they all mentioned their positive attitude towards the "Italian life-style" and Italy. As a Mediterranean country, it was perceived as similar to their countries of origin. Most of the people interviewed came to Italy because, as discussed in Chapter 4, that was the only country they could reach, as it was nearby and because Italy was one of the last EU states to introduce a visa regime for nationals from the post-Yugoslav states. Nonetheless, this research indicates that the perception of the compatibility of cultures was also one of the factors which played a role in their decisions to flee to Italy. It also proved to be one of the reasons for remaining in the country regardless of the

hardships they experienced. Additionally, and very importantly, the lack of experiences of racism and xenophobia at the level of informal social contacts facilitated the establishment of a satisfactory extra-group interaction, that is, outside the ethnic group.

6.3 Attitudes towards citizenship, participation in the political realm, and state institutions

This section explores the attitudes of the studied population in Rome and Amsterdam towards the wider political and public realm of the receiving societies. Discussion focuses on the ability and willingness of refugees to participate in civil/political realm of the receiving society, and their perception of structural barriers to their societal participation.

◆ Experiences of refugees in Rome

To what state I belong now [after becoming a refugee] is a purely practical matter. I don't feel that I belong to any state but I have to have someone's passport. I'm where I am because of that.

[**Mirsad**, a 25-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a barman and a student, in Rome since the summer of 1993, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

I'd like to become Italian citizen for purely practical reasons. I was never interested in politics, like very many people of my generation back home, because I thought that no politician there ever deserved my vote. I've kept that opinion regarding the political situation in Italy as well, because there's no such thing as an honest politician.

[**Alija**, a 31-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Rome since November 1993. He works and studies; holds a humanitarian residence permit]

The curiosity about what's going on here in politics is normal. I follow politics because I live here, it is of interest to me. I'm not indifferent about who the prime minister is, which party is in power - on the contrary. I look and read critically, because I live here. Nonetheless, I have no interest in taking part in that 'game', not after what had happened in our country [former Yugoslavia].

[**Lepa**, a 50-years-old woman from Croatia with a university degree. Since September 1994, when she arrived in Rome with her family, she has been a house-cleaner]

When I'm walking in the street here I feel great, and when I'm at the University I feel great. I flirt a little and say that my Italian isn't that good and everyone says it's great, and that no one could tell that I'm not Italian. But when you're faced with administration, in the Questura or the Secretariat for Foreign Students, a person feels humiliated and that's when I feel a foreigner[...]The political and media campaigns that foreigners are bad create a climate that makes you feel rejected. I feel that I belong here in many ways and Italians accept me as such. Nevertheless I'm extracomunitari [non-EU citizen] here. That has this unpleasant ring to it - as if you've just climbed down a tree or as if you're some kind of criminal, who came here in a gommone [rubber dinghy] at night. That feeling and the constant reminder of it bother me very much.

[**Ana**, a 24-year-old woman from Croatia, a student in Rome, works occasionally as a babysitter, in Rome since 1995, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

I feel at home in Rome. The only time I don't feel at home is prior to the expiry date of my residence permit to stay. Then I really feel as a foreigner. Otherwise, I feel at home.

[**Dule**, a 29-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Italy since the summer of 1992. Between 1992 and 1999 he was employed as an assistant in a photo-shop. In the autumn of 1996 he enrolled at a university and graduated in the autumn of 1999. Since graduation, he has been employed in his profession on a short-term contract basis; holds a humanitarian residence permit]

◆ Experiences of refugees in Amsterdam

Nothing has changed much since I have become Dutch citizen. I only feel more secure here, because I know that no one can force me to leave. I was very upset after the Dayton Peace Agreement [in 1995], because the Dutch were very euphoric at the time; they expected all Bosnians to go back immediately. There were discussions in the Parliament that Bosnians should be returned, including those with 'A' status [convention status]. They couldn't understand that war destroyed not only houses, but also relationships and ties among people. There are many Dutch who even now, ask us [Bosnians] when are we going to go back.

[**Nadan**, a 59-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since October 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998. A technical school degree, still attends a Dutch language course, unemployed]

Dutch citizenship meant, first and foremost, that I was able to travel without a problem. I did vote, though, because I felt that was my duty towards the country that accepted me. But I don't follow much about the economic or political situation here. I am more oriented towards Bosnia and what is happening there, and I can't miss voting in the Bosnian elections.

[**Emir**, 51-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since the summer of 1993; Dutch citizen since 1997. A technical school degree, unemployed]

I don't think I'll ever vote here [after he becomes Dutch citizen], because I am not interested in that sort of thing here. I could vote, though, for the Socialist Party only because I am grateful for their support of the refugees from Bosnia, but not

because I want to get involved in politics here. I was very disappointed after I came here and realised that all that talk about democracy, human rights and liberties is actually crap. I saw with my own eyes how violently the police dealt with anti-EU protesters at a peaceful demonstration here in Amsterdam. Besides, not many people vote here, anyway.

[**Miro**, 27-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since January 1997; holds humanitarian, 'C', status. A university student and an intern in a Dutch firm]

You know, I did vote once back home, that was before the war [the first multiparty, democratic, election in former Yugoslavia]. At the time, I didn't know anyone in the city [his hometown] who voted for the nationalists, and they got 90 percent of the votes in Bosnia. Someone was definitively lying, and I have no longer any illusions about democracy or voting. I am no longer interested in that crap.

[**Sinisa**, a 40-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since May 1993, Dutch citizen since 1998. A university degree, employed]

Foreigners are extremely marginalised here, although that is officially denied. Foreigners, except the Americans who work here, are usually portrayed in the media in a very bad way. When you look at the members of the Parliament, there are almost none that are not native Dutch. Also, I don't know of any mayors in the Netherlands that are not native Dutch. I feel here pretty much the same as I felt in my hometown in Bosnia under the Muslim government during the war. They kept us [non-Muslims] there to show the world that they are a democratic state. It's the same thing here; they keep us here to show the world that some foreigners may be successful and 'well-integrated'.

[**Boris**, a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994; ethnically mixed background. A university degree, employed]

As the narratives presented in this report document, the need and willingness of refugees to participate in informal social interaction in the receiving societies was absent when participation in formal institutional structures is concerned. Their need to become part of the social fabric of life in the places they settled was not associated with an equal interest to become active in civil and political realm of Italian or Dutch society. Their notions of integration and active participation in the receiving society did not involve any need to participate in its political realm and thus their willingness to accept membership in the receiving society was not associated with the need for full political integration.

In the case of the studied population in Rome, three interrelated factors, two of which are related to the context of the country of origin and one to the receiving society, can explain this attitude. First, most of the refugees in Rome belong to a generation brought up in an undemocratic political system, which created among the younger people a perception of politics and political activism as a 'dirty business'. Secondly, their experience with the first multiparty political elections in Yugoslavia when nationalistic parties came into power was "deeply disappointing", as almost all the interviewees indicated. The consequent war, bloodshed and dismemberment of the country left them convinced that politics is a 'dirty business' in both one-party and multiparty political systems. Thirdly, the characteristics of the Italian political system were not a particularly favourable context for facilitating a change of the attitudes of the refugees towards their participation in politics and democracy. Italian democracy was for a long period a "blocked democracy", as Vincenzi (2000) argues. He explains this situation as the one where "Governments were always composed of the same parties and, not rarely, formed by the same men." (p. 92). Although his analysis of the character of the Italian political system refers primarily to the situation in the country until 1992, it also outlines the situation in the subsequent years. It shows that the coalitions in power since 1992 have also been unstable and unsuccessful in securing a cohesion and coherence of political programmes among the parties in office as well as among those in opposition. This briefly outlined analysis of the political situation in Italy echoes the voices of the refugees in this research who commonly were of the opinion that "nothing changes in Italy depending on who's in power, the so-called left or the so-called right." The characteristics of the political context in Italy only added to the disbelief of the refugees that voters could change much in politics.

For all these reasons, refugees in Rome approached the issue of citizenship as a purely *practical* matter that will not make them feel more ingrained in Italian society, rather it will allow them to “travel freely” and to feel “accepted by a state”. The latter reflects the situation concerning their still temporary status in Italy, as well as an increase in racism and xenophobia in the country and not as much an articulated need to gain more social and political rights. It can be argued, that for many refugees fleeing wars involving a break-up of their country of origin, citizenship increasingly means regaining a sense of security and a freedom of movement that they had lost. This, however, is not seen as a possibility to become active participants in civil and political sphere of the receiving society.

The studied population in Amsterdam was not as uniform in their attitudes towards the rights gained by citizenship and their participation in the political realm of Dutch society, as the refugees in Rome. A group of interviewed in Amsterdam expressed disinterest in participating in the political realm and explained their attitude similarly to those in Rome. Some, however, reported some level of participation in the political sphere, through voting at local and national elections. They considered it their duty or an expression of gratitude towards the country or political party that accepted them, rather than their need and feeling that such participation can improve their situation and make them more ingrained in Dutch society. Although the practical side of citizenship was mentioned by all, that is, the advantage of travelling on Dutch passports, the interviewees in Amsterdam put much more emphasis on the issue of feeling secure and not in danger of forcible expulsion. Even so, quite a few of the refugees, now Dutch citizens, expressed a degree of uneasiness or fear of a possibility of their citizenship being revoked if the political situation in the Netherlands was to change and somehow was to turn all non-native Dutch into undesired aliens.

This feeling of uneasiness, in all respects unfound, can be explained by two interrelated factors. First, the reception and integration systems of refugees in the Netherlands are heavily state controlled either directly or indirectly through high penetration of society by the state through the state-related institutions assisting the reception and integration process. This has contributed to the perception of refugees that the state is controlling their lives by turning them into *objects* of its policies. For individual refugees, particularly unemployed and thus dependent on social benefit, it seem plausible that the logic of control and a strict guidance exercised by the state and its institutions during the reception and integration 'phase' can extend itself to the 'citizenship phase'. Second, the lack of closer and more intimate social ties with Dutch, as discussed earlier, shapes the perception of a profound difference between native and non-native Dutch, which translates into doubts concerning equality of citizenship rights between the two groups.

The mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in the receiving society operate at two levels. At the level of day-to-day social contacts with members of the established community, on the one hand, and at the level of state institutions and the wider public, on the other. Experience within these two contexts influences the ways in which boundaries between *us* - refugees and *them* – the established community are constructed and within which the notions of difference are created. By the same token, this experience affects the process of negotiation of an individual's commitment to the receiving society in terms of the perceived meaning of citizenship and questions of belonging. For those in Rome, the experience of exclusion at the level of state institutions in Italy was often compounded by the experience of exclusion associated with break-up of country of origin. This situation tended to create circumstances in which notions of belonging were the most accurately

conceptualised in transnational terms, as well as in relation to locality (Rome, for example), rather than in terms of belonging to a nation-state. For those in Amsterdam, the experience of exclusion on the level of day-to-day social contacts with the Dutch contributed to the feelings of detachment from the society regardless of their formally equal rights to access the state institutions in the Netherlands gained through citizenship. These circumstances tended to create a feeling of radical displacement, leaving many in a social and psychic limbo and ongoing search for a place called home.

Chapter 7 - Links with countries of origin and the question of return

This Chapter discusses the question of return; the issue that has been equally intriguing for those forced to leave their countries of origin, for practitioners and governments of the receiving societies, as well as for researchers. It was long considered among practitioners and researchers alike that one of the most important features of the refugee experience is a desire to return home. A myth of return or “idealisation of a nostalgia for home”, as Warner (1994:162) points out, is embedded in “concepts of community and home that assume a world of order and symmetry”. He argues that such an assumption misrepresents “the problematic of the relationship between the individual and group, the group and state, and the state and territory” (p. 162). Warner suggests the disaggregation of this linear model, which in splitting the individual/community from government, state and territory, denies the ‘politics of place’ and opens-up a world in which politics and identities are constantly negotiated instead of solved by simple equations (p. 167). The following discussion of the experiences of refugees from former Yugoslavia settled in Rome and Amsterdam supports Warner’s arguments and documents that meaning of return and home is “far more complex than simplistic invocation of the durable solution of voluntary repatriation would lead us to believe” (Warner, 1994: 192).

◆ Experiences of refugees in Rome

When I first went back there [to his hometown] in the summer of 96, I didn't feel at home. I didn't know anyone. A lot of people I was friends with moved away to other countries. And so I ended up feeling like a foreigner in my own home. It was something of a surprise - you come home and yet you don't feel at home. Then I said - I'm going back home to Rome!

[**Mirsad**, a 25-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a barman and a student, in Rome since the summer of 1993, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

Amongst ourselves [within his family] we openly speak about not going back, but it doesn't necessarily mean that we won't. Things change, and I hope that one day they'll change enough to bring about a change in our attitude about going back as well.

[**Bogdan**, a 53-year-old man from Croatia with a university degree, manual worker, in Rome since the autumn of 1994, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

I want to stay here because I have children who will marry and have their families here. I'm looking forward to watching my grandchildren grow. When you have children, I think that all plans should have to do with their lives.

[**Milka**, a 45-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina with a college degree, employed as a house cleaner, in Rome since August 1992, holds a humanitarian residence permit]

During my first years here I was totally convinced that I'd never go back to Bosnia. Today, I don't rule out the possibility of going back some day. And if I go back, I have a fear of being nostalgic for Italy. So I've got used to the idea that I'll always be between two worlds. You can handle that kind of situation only if one world is kind of 'next door' to the other.

[**Omer**, a 33-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina with a university degree, employed as a PR in an organisation, in Rome since July 1992, holds a work residence permit]

◆ Experiences of refugees in Amsterdam

I went there [to his hometown in Bosnia-Herzegovina] for the first time two months ago. I felt as if I was in a foreign country, it didn't feel like going back home.

[**Kemo**, a 23-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since the summer of 1995, Dutch citizenship since 2000. A technical school degree, employed]

I go to visit Bosnia because of my father who is still there. When I go, I have a feeling that that isn't my country, my home. The feeling that in the place where I spent my childhood, a very happy one, I can't find my friends and people I knew horrifies me. They are all gone; they are all over the world now.

[**Silva**, a 25-five-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1995; Dutch citizen since 2000. A student at a university in Amsterdam]

I went to visit Bosnia as soon as the war was over, in 1996. Since then, I go two- three times a year. I go to visit my mother, but also because my soul is empty here. My wife and children work, we are fine financially, we have enough to eat, to drive a car, and pay the bills, but the soul is empty. My ultimate determination is Bosnia, I want to return one day.

[**Zlatan**, a 50 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since June 1993; Dutch citizen since 1999. A technical school degree, unemployed]

I am always under the impression that I am going to go back tomorrow. My body is here, but my soul is in Bosnia. I follow closely the situation there and I'll go back as soon as it becomes possible. As soon as my children complete their education here and start earning, I am going back, there won't be a reason for me to stay.

[**Emir**, a 51-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since the summer of 1993; Dutch citizen since 1997. A technical school degree, unemployed]

It all depends on our children. As it seems now, they will stay here and so, I don't see any reason to return. I have relatives in Croatia and my husband has relatives in Bosnia, but our children come first. If they are going to stay, we are staying as well. Although it is hard to say we'll never return, I think that the two of us [her husband and

she] are going to have our 'nest' here and go to Bosnia or Croatia for longer visits to our relatives and friends.

[**Larija**, a 58-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since November 1993; Dutch citizen since 1999. A university degree, employed but not in her profession or adequate to her degree]

I don't think about returning to Bosnia, because life can't be as it was before. I am no longer young to start my life all over again, I feel tired.

[**Smilja**, a 49-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since the summer of 1995; Dutch citizenship since 2000. A technical school degree, unemployed]

Since I arrived here, I suppressed any thoughts about going back. I think that I've changed a lot, as well as the people I knew in Bosnia. It's a big gap between us now, and there's no way of bridging it. So, I am focused on my life here and I want to stay.

[**Belma**, a 42-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since November 1993; Dutch citizen since 1998. A technical school degree, employed]

As long as our parents are alive we [his wife and he] are going to go to Bosnia to visit. After they are gone, there won't be any reason to go, because all our friends left too.

[**Boris**, a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the Netherlands since April 1994; Dutch citizen since 1999. A university degree, employed in his profession]

This research documents that when a conflict that caused a massive exodus of populations is prolonged, as was the case in former Yugoslavia, the negotiation of the question of return involves several parameters, only one of which relates to individual assessment of the safety to return. It shows that the question of return involves a complex set of intervening variables and thus represents a *process* that can be very long or even never completed.

Narratives of the refugees interviewed in Rome document that during their first years of exile, the question of return was centrally related to the developments of the war as well as to their personal experience of fear, violence and persecution. In cases in which refugees fled regions where they were a minority, ethnic or political, it was not only the experience of horror that shaped their decision never to return but it was also a feeling of profound bitterness caused by the nationalistic politics in the region. Many of those who fled in fear of conflict, hence, without having experienced physical violence and material destruction, lived the first years in exile thinking that they would return within months,

which influenced their attitude towards their situation in Rome. They characterise those years as their “that-is-how-it-is-now-and-it-will-pass” period, without thinking much and strategizing about their future prospects and lives in Italy. Although this ‘typology’ cannot be considered all-inclusive and exhaustive it points to the two most often mentioned reasons that influenced negotiation of the question of return during the first years of exile. It is important to note that those who thought that they would never return were significantly more numerous (approximately 70 percent) than those who were determined to go back to their places of origin.

A majority of the refugees interviewed in Amsterdam fled their homes after experiencing war violence and destruction or after a prolonged period of exile in Croatia. Those who were younger, better educated and fled with their spouses and/or with children came to the Netherlands with a strong determination to stay and build a new life in the country. As with the refugees in Rome, their decision not to return was shaped by the experience of horrors of war and feelings of profound bitterness about the nationalistic politics in the region. Also, those who arrived in the Netherlands relatively late, in or after 1995 or after a couple of years of exile in Croatia, had time to consider opportunities and options concerning their stay, exile or return. In all such cases their decision to leave or to move further away from home was embedded in their decision not to live in or return to their places of origin. Their determination to (re)build their lives in the Netherlands shaped their goals, needs and expectations in exile. However, those older, relatively less educated and from semi-urban areas, predominantly male, arrived in the Netherlands hoping that their stay would not be permanent. This group (15 percent) never learned Dutch well nor was determined to re-train and find employment. Instead, they confined themselves to the boundaries of their local community ethnic association nourishing their hopes of return. Consequently, this group has become preoccupied with the economic and political

developments in their country of origin, while following closely any new policy developments concerning voluntary repatriation programmes sponsored by the Dutch government. This research indicates, however, that the policies and procedures concerning their legal status and rights and entitlements it entails was central to all, regardless of whether they came to stay or wanted to return.

Interviews in Rome indicate that the temporary character of the legal status of the refugees in Italy did not play a central role in the process of negotiation of the question of return. The issue of return was primarily considered within the framework of individual contexts of refugees, such as the reasons of flight, the situation of their immediate family members and so forth, and not with regard to any excessive pressure felt concerning the possibility of expulsion. The narratives of refugees in Rome also document that the hardships they faced in making their living and reconstructing their lives did not influence in any significant way their attitude towards return.

As the conflict had not been resolved for years, the difference between the two groups interviewed in Rome, i.e., those who thought that they would never return and those who wanted to return immediately after the conflict would end, gradually diminished. Those who hoped to return within months realised that their stay in Rome will last and that realisation announced the beginning of the second phase of negotiation of the question of return. This phase coincided with the end of the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, when many went back to their places of origin for the first times in years. Both those who decided never to return as well as those who believed that they would go back as soon as the armed conflict would end felt like strangers at the places where they had lived before. Like many of the refugees interviewed in Amsterdam, they emphasised the extraordinary experience of feeling and *being* foreigners at the places that once were their homes. Additionally, they realised that although there was an end to the armed conflict, the

reconstruction of the economy and, even more importantly, the social fabric of life would take decades. This phase of negotiation of the question of return resulted in a realisation that their lives and *homes* were no longer at their countries of origin and the question of return was postponed for many.

Narratives of most of the refugees involved in this research echoed in many ways Warner's (1994: 168) argument that there is "no reason to assume that return can (re)create what was there before", and that the concept of return further blurs the meaning of home. Accounts of the refugees collected in this research document that the concept of return reflects the complexities of the relationship between the situation of refugees and that of places of their origin, both of which change over time. The analysis also indicates that although the process of negotiation of return may never be completed it involves for many, as Warner's (1994: 169) reminds us, the element of *hope* that is an integral part of the refugee experience.

Narratives collected in Rome document that over the years of exile, attitudes towards return and ideas about *when* and *how* the return would materialise were more heterogeneous than during the first four-five years of exile. In general, the category of those who stated that they would not return has slightly decreased (from 68 to 65 percent) leaving the category of those who considered returning still relatively small. However, the question of return has become a very vaguely open possibility, which no longer corresponds to a clearly defined event that should happen in the future or a specific time when the actual return would take place. Many toy with the idea of a 'semi-return', which seems feasible from Rome because of its proximity to their places of origin. Interviews in Amsterdam also document a relatively small decrease in numbers of those determined not to return (from 85 to 75 percent), leaving the possibility of returning as vaguely open as in the case of the refugees in Rome.

Regardless of the attitude of the refugees in Rome towards the possibility of returning, a feeling that “the country of origin is next door” was central to all. The geographic proximity of Italy to the places they fled from did not affect only their decisions to come to that particular country. It also influenced how the interviewees negotiated the question of return as well as the way in which they keep their links with the country of origin. Almost all of the interviewed have been back to the places they lived before exodus. Many also had their relatives and friends visit them in Rome.

Apart from short visits and contacts with the closest relatives and sometimes friends, most of the refugees in Rome and Amsterdam did not express a desire or need to closely follow developments in their countries of origin. After the armed conflict was over they gradually lost interest in following the local newspapers available in the two cities or watching local television programmes available on cable TV. The majority emphasised that they were preoccupied with their lives in Italy or the Netherlands and, consequently, had neither the time nor interest to nourish ties with their places of origin. Only for the group of interviewees in Amsterdam, consisting of older men active in their local community ethnic association, such an interest and need was still crucial.

The process of negotiation of return among refugees in this research also involved a realisation that the return would mean yet another ‘uprooting’ for many, particularly for those with children. The research indicates that gender is a factor influencing the process of negotiation of return for refugees with children. Women who were mothers were more inclined than men/fathers to root their attitudes towards return in the lives and futures of their children what also shaped their notions of ‘home’. Although this distinction does not apply to all those with children, it indicates the influence of traditionally constructed gender roles within family where women, still prevalently regarded as caregivers and emotional providers for their children, tend to centre their lives and expectations on their parenting

role. This gender-differentiated pattern of negotiation of return revealed among the refugees in this research is also linked to the issue of how notions of 'home' are constructed. Brah (1996:4) reminds us that the prevailing image of 'home' is that of "the site of everyday lived experience. It is the discourse of locality, the place where feelings of rootedness ensue from the mundane and the unexpected of daily practice." Home here connotes, as she points out, the networks of family, kin and other 'significant others' (p. 4). Such a construction of the image of 'home' corresponds to the socially constructed notion of women seen as predominantly responsible and involved in creating and maintaining a 'nest' for their children. These social constructs are making women more prone to relate to the social and psychic geography of space called 'home' that translates at a functional level into building their 'home' where their children are.

As the discussion in this Chapter indicates, attitudes towards return affect the process of integration and the individual desire to participate in the wider society. Al-Rasheed (1994: 199) argues that "the presence or absence of the myth of return among refugee groups is important for understanding not only of the relationship with the homeland, but also the relationship with the host country". The research, however, does not indicate that the structural and organisational opportunities for integration, that is, the presence or absence of developed integration programmes in the receiving society, play the central role in refugee attitudes towards return.

Chapter 8 - Dilemmas of integration and ways forward: concluding remarks

This research project has set out to examine, in a comparative way, the situation of refugees settled in Italy and the Netherlands, by exploring their accounts and experiences of mechanisms that facilitate or hinder their participation and inclusion in community and the receiving society. The study has been empirically focused on a close and in-depth examination of how refugees themselves perceive their circumstances and conditions relating to the two contrasting ‘models’ of integration, how they define integration success and develop strategies to achieve their goals. Given the limitations associated with this type of study and its methods of research, such as the number of research subjects involved, this report makes no claim to being representative of the situation of all the refugees in the two study sites or to being capable of producing ambitious generalisations. Despite these limitations, this report offers a number of valuable indications of the problems refugees have in integrating within the two policy contexts, both in terms of economic and social inclusion. The close insight into the realities of lives of a selected number of refugees explored in this study has documented that integration, as it is perceived and desired by the refugees themselves, is about both its functional aspects and social participation in the wider community. As it has been revealed in this study, these aspects of integration consist of sets of overlapping processes that take place differently in various sub-sectors and/or spheres of the receiving society, and have various outcomes. This complexity should be recognised in policy terms in order to facilitate integration in each of these sub-sectors and spheres.

The discussion has documented that the Dutch model of reception and integration of refugees is based on a number of measures and interventions by the state intended to meet the immediate needs of refugees and to facilitate gradually their

further structural and institutional integration in Dutch society. These policies and resources are targeted at the instrumental level and essentially approach integration as a one way assisted process, which turns refugees into policy objects, rather than approaching them as a vital resource in the integration process. As the result, many remain unemployable and dependent on social funds or stay unemployed because they are not motivated to enter the labour market and earn income that hardly exceeds social benefit they are otherwise entitled to. Many more are not able to continue with their professions, not because their skills are not needed on the Dutch labour market, but because of the many structural barriers that prevent them to do so.

Furthermore, this report has documented that integration is importantly linked to conditions of immediate settlement. Prolonged stay in asylum centres and how those accommodated are 'managed' in the centres, may alleviate immediate social and political pressures in the receiving society caused by fear of being 'swamped' by the newcomers, but they clearly do not facilitate integration of those confined to them. This study has revealed that for the studied population in the Netherlands the experience of asylum centres has not only slowed down the process of their functional integration, but also has had a negative affect on how refugees perceive the Dutch society and their attitude towards their new homeland.

As it has been argued in this research, although these policy interventions address many of the requirements self-identified by refugees as important for integration to happen, they do not in themselves make refugees feel integrated as they do not provide a strategy for wider social inclusion. Rather, they are experienced as state measures that often do not correspond to their needs and integration goals, to which refugees, nonetheless, are required to conform because of the lack of power and 'voice' in the process of integration.

One of the outcomes of a combination of these factors, that is heavily state controlled and staged functional integration and the lack of a strategy for a wider social inclusion, is a widespread doubt among refugees in this study concerning equality of citizenship rights between native and non-native Dutch. The perception that the state is controlling their lives through a number of state-related institutions during the reception and integration process contributes to their belief that the same logic of control exercised by the state during the integration 'phase' can extend itself to the 'citizenship phase'.

The study has also indicated considerable problems of the refugees in Italy, primarily in achieving a minimal financial security and in integrating in the labour market in a meaningful way, which would provide them with a *valued* social role. Given that the refugees were left without guidance or assistance regarding vocational training opportunities it was difficult for them to find employment more suited to their skills and financial needs. Consequently, almost none of the interviewees felt that they had succeeded in settling in Italy so as to give them a sense of security in planning their future. Nonetheless, in recapitulating their experience in Italy none of the interviewees thought that they would have *felt* better about their lives if they had been in some other EU state or in North America. This attitude was shared equally by those who succeeded in finding better employment and/or in having their diplomas recognised as well as by those who after five or six years in Rome still worked at manual labour. Moreover, those who experienced exile in some other EU state before arriving in Italy, or those who could qualify for resettlement in the United States or Canada, for example, shared this feeling.

This assessment did not imply their satisfaction with the *quality* of their functional integration via the labour market and education. Although they prized the

right to work, they also contended that the lack of an *initial* reception system forced them to become self-sufficient and independent at the cost of entering a niche of the labour market from which it is very hard to move up the economic and social ladder. For those with an interrupted education, the cost was delaying or abandoning the idea of its continuation. The refugees defined the losses involved in their flight and exile in terms of losses of economic welfare or uncertain prospects for their future, but not so much in terms of loss of personal agency.

This interpretation of the experiences of refugees in Italy as they have been documented here must be taken with caution because of the many limitations of this research. Limitations included the fact that it examined the experience of those who were resourceful enough to survive seven or eight years in Rome with practically no assistance; all others left the city before this research took place. Those with children, for example, were among first to move, either to other parts of Italy where they were more likely to find employment or to try to resettle in a third country. Additionally, these refugees represent a relatively young, educated and urban population that fled to Italy *spontaneously*. Spontaneous flight already implies a considerable level of agency and resources, ranging from material to social in terms of skills and networks. All these factors make the refugee population in Rome considerably resourceful and, therefore, more likely to develop successful survival strategies for re-establishing their lives in new environments.

With all these limitations in mind, it can be argued that disadvantages involved in the lack of an organised programme of assistance for refugees in Rome, although profound, also entailed potential advantages because it permitted and enhanced personal *agency* of refugees *in reconstructing* their lives. The absence of reception and integration programmes meant that refugees did not have to confront

the structural limitations inherent in the encounters between the helpers and recipients, based upon unequal power and authority.

The discussion in this report has also indicated that personal satisfaction and assessment of integration success goes beyond simple, measurable, indicators, such as individual occupational mobility and/or economic status, and includes indicators, such as quality and strength of social links with the established community. As has been indicated in this research, the perceived compatibility between the native culture(s) of refugees and that of the receiving society plays a role in facilitating social communication with the established community. In the case of the refugees in Italy, although cultural distance exists, ranging from profound language differences, to religion in cases of refugees from non-Catholic religious backgrounds, and political system, aspects such as interpersonal communication, some values and traditions, were found to be familiar if not entirely compatible. These latter aspects, as this study has indicated, facilitated informal social interaction with Italians, although they were not necessarily always sufficient for their mutual understanding and establishment of closer social ties.

The level of agency these refugees were allowed in the Italian context, as well as the nature and character of their contacts and communication with Italians were central to how they assessed their situation in Italy. The analysis indicated that their active societal participation at the level of informal contacts with the established community tended to compensate for the numerous problems of other aspects of their integration in Rome. The perceived level of *compatibility* between lifestyles and cultures of the refugees and Italians has played a role in the process, and has contributed to their feeling of being accepted and part of the social fabric of life, regardless of their legal and economic status.

The emphasis on the importance of providing refugees with a framework for an active reconstruction of life, however, should not be understood as an *apologia* for the absence of a strategy for integration. Rather, the reasoning behind this emphasis echoes Harrell-Bond's (1999) sound claim that the way in which refugees are 'helped' may itself undermine their personal coping resources. As this study has documented, the two policy contexts examined have different outcomes concerning different aspects of integration. They also affect differently refugees of different age, gender, education, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The needs of those with interrupted education, children, particularly with young children, elderly, and/or those with lower education and socio-economic backgrounds, were in a way better met by the Dutch system. By the same token, the needs of refugees between 25 and 40 years of age, well-educated and with professional skills have hardly been addressed in neither of the two systems, undermining not only their individual life prospects, but also the potential they bring with them to the receiving society. However, the space for agency the latter group was given in the Italian system, compounded by the compatibility of cultures, played an important role in how these refugees assessed their situation and prospects in exile.

Hence, a desirable and successful integration policy should provide refugees with a legal, financial and institutional framework within which they are given *space* for agency and the functional adjustment of their attitudes and skills necessary for entering the receiving society as social actors. Such a framework should also provide a certain degree of *flexibility* and allow for differentiated strategies for integration of refugees of different age, gender, and educational and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, successful policies and accompanying resources have also to address the issues of integration in community and promote a notion of social and individual

belonging grounded in social interaction between refugees and the established community. Citizenship, as an indicator of the formal membership in the receiving society, clearly cannot be considered as a mark of full integration, because it does not guarantee full social inclusion, regardless of its *de jure* guarantee of enjoyment of a set of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Policies and interventions facilitating settlement and full participation in the receiving society should, therefore, recognise refugees as a vital resource in effective policy development, by formulating policies that are also informed by their experiences and needs. This could transform the notion of integration as a two-way process in operational reality, and acknowledge the critical role refugees play in the process of building mutual understanding and trust on which full acceptance and belonging in the community depend.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Contacts made with NGOs, church organisations, governmental and international organisations, and academic and research institutions in Italy and the Netherlands

1.1 Italy

NGOs

The Italian Refugee Council

Director: Mr Christopher Hein
Integration co-ordinator: Ms Grazia Curalli
Integration project: Ms Sabina Eleonori, Ms Lucia Falchetti
Integration/health project: Ms Germana Monaldi
Legal unit: Ms Antonella de Donnado, Ms Laora Ferrari

Casa Diritti Sociali

Mr Manfred Bergmann, Programme Co-ordinator

Centro Informazione e Educazione allo Sviluppo

Ms Zana Belic, Co-ordinator

Consorzio Italiano de Solidarity

Mr Giulio Macon, President
Mr Nadan Petrovic
External Relations Officer

Forum delle Comunita Straniere in Italia

Ms Loretta Caponi, President

Asociazione Recreativo Culturale Italiana

Ms Anja Gujak, Coordinator

Church Organisations

Caritas Rome

Ms Miriam Lani
Deputy Director

Caritas Documentation Center

Mr Franco Pittao, Director
Mr Olivier Forti, Research Officer
Chiese Evangeliche
Ms Ana Maria Dupre, Director

- Comunita S. Egidio

Ms Daniela Pompei, Programme Coordinator

- Fondazione Migrantes

Padre Bruno Mioli

Mr Roberto Ragno

- Jesuit Refugee Service

Padre Francesco De Luccia

- **Governmental Institutions**

Ministry of Interior

Direzione Generale Servizi Civili

Mr Compagnucci

Mr Stefano Vincenzi

Ministry of Social Affairs

Integration Department: Ms Vaifra Palanka

International Organisations

- UNHCR, Rome

Mr Salvatore Ippolito

Senior Liaison Officer

IOM, Rome

Ms. Enisa Bukvich, Co-ordinator

International Rescue Committee, Rome

Mr. Rade Korac, Senior advisor

Academic and Research Institutions

University of Rome

Sociology Department

Professor Macella Delle Donne

University of Naples

Sociology Department

Professor Enrico Pugliese

CERFE Grope, Rome (research institute involved in research on migration)

Ms. Claudia Colonnello, Director

Mr. Renato D'Arca, Senior Research Officer

Mr. Luciano D'Andrea, Senior Research Officer

Centro Studi Emigrazione

Ms. Carolina Brandi

1.2 The Netherlands

NGOs

Dutch Refugee Council - Amsterdam (National)

Director: Mr. Eduard Nazarski

Integration co-ordinator: Ms. Roswita Weiler

Documentator: Edy Philipsen

- The Dutch Refugee Council – Amsterdam (Local)

Director: Ms. Jacqueline van Loon

Integration co-ordinator: Mr. Martijn Kool

- Emplooi (organisation facilitating integration in the labour market) - Amsterdam

Ms. Ruth Limpens

Home for Peace - Amsterdam

Ms. Nives Rebernak

LIZE (umbrella organisation for South Europeans) - Utrecht

Mr. Sittrop, Boudewijn

Mr. Raimond de Prez

VON (umbrella organisation for work with refugee community organisations) - Utrecht

Director: Ms. Fatma Ozgumus

Consultant: Ms. Alem Desta

Co-ordinator for refugees from former Yugoslavia: Mr. Dinko Kajmovic

UAF (University Assistance Fund) - Utrecht

Head of the Office: Ms. Wies Kalsbeek

Consultant: Ms. Stani Maessen

E-Quality (organisation on gender and ethnicity) – The Hague

Ms. Amalia Deekman

Ms. Astrid de Vrch

Governmental Institutions

- Ministry of Justice – The Hague

Senior policy officer: Mr. Peter Wagenmaker

Ms. Jacoba Ghrib- Van den Erde

Ministry of Interior - The Hague

Senior Officer Ethnic Minorities Policy: Mr. Ben Koolen

Senior Integration Officer: Mr. Van Alten

Integration Officer: Mr. Thomas Hessels

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport: The Hague

Senior Officer: Mr. Menon Hekker

IND Information and Analysis Centre (INDIAC) – The Hague

Policy Officer: Mr. Arjen Taselaar

National Statistics Office: The Hague

Ms. Erna Hooghimstra

Municipality of Amsterdam

Policy advisor: Ms. Susan Brom

Academic and Research Institutions

University of Amsterdam

Dr Marlie Hollands - AGIDS/InDRA

Dr Philomena Essed - AGIDS/InDRA

Dr Rinus Penninx, Director, IMES

Dr Jeroen Doomernik, IMES

Dr Joanne van Selm, IMES

Dr Flip Lindo, IMES

University of Utrecht

Dr Philip Muus, ERCOMER

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Dr Erik Snel, Department of Sociology

Appendix 2 - Community organisations of nationals from former Yugoslavia in Rome and Amsterdam

2.1 Rome

Associazione Italo-Croata

Mr Luka Krilic, President

Gruppo di aiuto per la Bosnia-Erzegovina

Mr Nino Kemura, President

2.2 Amsterdam

Bosnian Community Association – Amsterdam

Vice President: Mr Besim Ibisevic

-

Croatian Community Association – Amsterdam

Mr J. Bonacic

-

Yugoslav Association in the Netherlands – Rotterdam

Mr R. Rakocevic

Appendix 3 – Refugees Interviewed

3.1 Refugees interviewed in Rome

1. **Omer** – age 33, a university degree; he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in July 1992 and came directly to Rome. He is single, of ethnically mixed background, and has a work permit since 1994.

2. **Dragan** – age 38, interrupted university education; he fled Serbia in March 1992 and came directly to Rome where he did not continue his education. He is single, Serb, and holds a humanitarian status.

3. **Nermin** – age 31, interrupted university education, at the time of the interview he was a student in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in the winter of 1995 and first went to Croatia. In March of the same year he came to Rome. He is single, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian status.

4. **Senad** – age 42, a university degree; he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in November 1992 and came directly to Rome. He is single, Bosniak, and has a work permit since 1997.

5. **Tanja** – age 22, student in Rome; he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1993 and first went to Denmark where she obtained convention refugee status. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, in Rome since 1998.

6. **Stipe** – age 24, interrupted high school education; he completed a course for barmen in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in July 1992 and came directly to Rome. He is single, of ethnically mixed background, and has a work permit since 1997.

7. **Rada** – age 32, a secondary school degree; she fled Serbia in November 1993 and came directly to Rome. She is single, Serb, and has a work permit since 1996.

8. **Damir** – age 27, a high school degree before the flight and a college degree from Rome; he fled Croatia in the summer 1991, and came directly to Rome. He is single, Croat, and holds a humanitarian status.

9. **Faruk** – age 23, interrupted primary education; he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1992 and first went to Croatia where he completed his primary education. In the summer of 1993 he arrived in Rome where he did not continue his education. He is single, Bosniak, and he holds a humanitarian status.

10. **Mirsad** – age 25, interrupted high school education; he obtained high school degree while in exile in Croatia. At the time of the interview he was a student in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1992 first to Croatia. In the summer of 1993 arrived in Rome. He is single, Bosniak, holds a humanitarian status.

11. **Milena** – age 33, a university degree; she fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1992, and first went to Croatia. In November of the same year she arrived in Rome. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, and she holds a humanitarian status.

12. **Bojana** – age 29, a university degree; she fled Croatia in the fall of 1993 and came directly to Rome. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, born and raised in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and holds a humanitarian status.

13. **Marija** – age 32, a secondary school degree; she fled Montenegro in December 1993 and came directly to Rome. She is single, Montenegrin, and has a work permit since 1998.

14. **Jusuf** – age 42, a secondary school degree; he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in December 1993 and came to Rome via Croatia. He is single, Bosniak, and has a work permit since the end of 1994.

15. **Jana** – age 23, interrupted her high school education; she fled Montenegro in the winter of 1995 and came directly to Rome. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, and has a work permit since 1996.

16. **Vera** – age 34, a university degree before the flight and a student in Rome at the time of the research; She fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in the summer of 1993 and came directly to Rome. She is single, Serb, and holds a humanitarian status.

17. **Marko** – age 30, interrupted university education and trained as a computer specialist in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992 and first went to Serbia, in February 1993 he arrived in Rome. He is cohabiting, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian status.

18. **Vesna** – age 33, interrupted university education, and trained as a computer specialist in Rome. She fled Croatia in the summer of 1991 and first went to Serbia. In November 1992 she arrived in Rome. She is cohabiting, Serb, and holds a humanitarian status.

19. **Goca** – age 31, interrupted university education and a student in Rome at the time of the interview; she fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1992 and first went to Germany. She arrived in Italy to join her boyfriend in the summer of 1992. She is cohabiting, Serb, and holds a humanitarian status.

20. **Dule** – age 29, interrupted his university education, and a university degree in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1992 and first went Montenegro. In the spring of the same year he arrived in Italy. He is cohabiting, Serb, and holds a humanitarian status.

21. **Branka** – age 33, a university degree; she fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1991 first went to the Netherlands. In the winter of 1991 she arrived in Italy. She is cohabiting, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian status.

22. **Mirza** – age 36, a secondary school degree and a course for chefs in Rome; he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1991 and first went to the Netherlands. In January 1992 he arrived in Italy. He is cohabiting, of ethnically mixed background, and has a work permit since 1994.

23. **Suada** – age 29, interrupted university education and at the time of the interview a student in Rome. She fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992 and first went to Croatia. In September 1992 she arrived in Rome. She is cohabiting, Bosniak, and holds a humanitarian status.

24. **Alija** – age 31, interrupted his university education and at the time of the interview a student in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1993 and first went to Serbia. In November 1993 he arrived in Rome. He is cohabiting, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian status.

25. **Emira** – age 28, interrupted her university education and at the time of the interview a student in Rome. She fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in May 1992 and first went to Croatia. In the summer of 1992 arrived in Rome. She is cohabiting with her Italian partner. She is Bosniak, and holds a humanitarian status.

26. **Mirsada** – age 37, a university degree; She fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1992 and came directly to Italy. She is cohabiting with her Italian partner. She is Bosniak, and has a work permit since 1999.

27. **Milka** – age 45, a secondary school degree; she fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in August 1992 and came directly to Rome. She is married with two children, Croat, and holds a humanitarian status.

28. **Milan** – age 47, a university degree, fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in August 1992 and came directly to Rome. He is married, with two children, Serb, holds a humanitarian status.

29. **Darko** – age 20, interrupted primary education and at the time of the interview in his final year of high school. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in August 1992 and came directly to Rome. He is single, of ethnically mixed background, holds a humanitarian status. He lives with his parents.

30. **Aca** – age 22, interrupted primary education and at the time of the interview a student in Rome. He fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in August 1992 and came directly to Rome. He is single, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian status. He lives with his parents.

31. **Silva** – age 41, a secondary school degree; she fled Croatia in August 1991 and first went to Serbia. In the summer of 1993 she arrived in Rome. She is married, with two children. She is a Croat, and has work permit since 1998.

32. **Misa** – age 43, a university degree, he fled Croatia in February 1991 and first went to Serbia. In February 1993 he arrived in Rome. He is married, with two children. He is a Serb, and has a work permit since 1998.

33. **Lepa** – age 50, a university degree; she fled Croatia in November 1993 and first went to Germany. In September 1994 she arrived in Italy. She is married, with one child. She is a Serb, and has a work permit since 1995.

34. **Bogdan** – age 53, a university degree; fled Croatia in November 1993 and first went to Germany. In September 1994 he arrived in Italy. He is married, with one child. He is a Serb, and holds a humanitarian status.

35. **Ana** – age 24, interrupted high school education and at the time of the interview a student in Rome. She fled Croatia in the summer of 1993 and first went to Serbia. In the summer of 1995 she arrived in Rome. She is single, Serb, and holds a humanitarian status. She lives with her parents.

36. **Nada** – age 32, a university degree; she fled Serbia in 1991 and came directly to Rome. She is married, has no children. She is a Serb, and has Italian citizenship. She lives with her Italian husband.

37. **Sanja** – age 26, a high school degree before the flight and at the time of the interview a student in Rome; she fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in the fall of 1992 and came directly to Rome. She is married, has no children. She is of ethnically mixed background, and has Italian citizen. She lives with her Italian husband.

38. **Iva** – age 34, a university degree; she fled Bosnia-Herzegovina in the spring of 1992 and came directly to Rome. She is married, has no children. She is of ethnically mixed background, and has Italian citizenship. She lives with her Italian husband.

39. **Srdjan** – age 32, a university degree; he fled Serbia in the fall of 1993 and came directly to Rome. He is married, has no children. He is a Serb, and has a sojourn permit to stay for family reasons. He lives with his Italian wife.

40. **Spomenka** – age 38, a university degree; she fled Serbia in April 1993 and came directly to Rome. She is divorced, has two children. She is a Serb, and has a work permit since 1999.

3.2 Refugees interviewed in Amsterdam

1. **Zenaida**, a 30-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; she is in the Netherlands since January 1992. She is self-employed after obtaining an additional university degree in Amsterdam. She is married, has one child. She is a Bosniak, and has Dutch citizenship since 1997. She lives with her husband and the child. Her mother also lives in Amsterdam.
2. **Boris** a 35-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; he is in the Netherlands since April 1994. He is employed in his profession after completing additional education and training. He is married, has one child. He is of ethnically mixed background, and has Dutch citizenship since 1999. He lives with his wife and the child.
3. **Kajo**, a 37-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; he is in the Netherlands since July 1992. He was in the process of additional education and training for his diploma recognition at the time of the research. He is single, Bosniak, has Dutch citizenship since 1997. He lives on his own.
4. **Nadan**, a 59 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a technical school degree; he is in the Netherlands since October 1992. He is unemployed and married, with one child. He fled his hometown in the spring of 1992 and found a refuge in a Bosnian town where he stayed until September 1992. He is a Bosniak, and has Dutch citizenship since 1998. He lives with his wife. His son also lives with his family in Amsterdam.
5. **Emir**, a 51-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a technical school degree; he is in the Netherlands since the summer of 1993. He is unemployed and married, with three children. He is a Bosniak, and has Dutch citizenship since 1997. He lives with his wife, three children and his mother-in-law.
6. **Mira**, a 30-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, interrupted university education; she is in the Netherlands since April 1993. She is self-employed after gaining a university degree in Amsterdam. She fled her hometown in the spring of 1992 and went to Croatia. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, and has Dutch citizenship since 1998. She lives on her own. Her parents and the brother also live in Amsterdam.
7. **Sasa**, a 63-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; he is in the Netherlands since February 1994. He works occasionally on short-term contracts. He fled his hometown in the winter of 1994 and came directly to the Netherlands. He is married, with two children. He is a Serb, and has Dutch citizenship since 1999. He lives with his wife. His two children also live in Amsterdam.
8. **Laria**, a 58-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; she is in the Netherlands since November 1993. She is employed but not in her profession or adequate to her educational level. She fled her hometown in the autumn of 1992 and went first to Croatia. She is married, with two children. She is a Croat, and has Dutch citizenship since 1999. She lives with her husband. Her children also live in Amsterdam.
9. **Belma**, a 42-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a technical school degree; in the Netherlands since November 1993. She is employed after completing a vocational training. She

is divorced, with two children, and has Dutch citizenship since 1998. She lives with her children. Her sister and her children are also in the Netherlands.

10. **Silva**, a 25 year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a high school degree before coming to the Netherlands in April 1995, and a student at a university in Amsterdam. She fled her hometown in mid 1994 and first went to Croatia. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, and has Dutch citizenship since 2000. She lives on her own. Her mother and brother are also in Amsterdam.

11. **Nikica**, a 34 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, interrupted university education; he is in the Netherlands since July 1993. He is employed after completing a vocational training course. He fled his hometown in the autumn of 1992 and first went to Croatia. He is married, has no children. He is of ethnically mixed background, and has Dutch citizenship since 1998. He lives with his wife. His parents and younger sister also live in Amsterdam.

12. **Cica**, a 34 year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a secondary school degree; she is in the Netherlands since April 1994. She is employed after completing a vocational training course. She fled her hometown in December 1993. She is married, has one child. She is of ethnically mixed background, and has Dutch citizenship since 1998. She lives with her husband and son. Her brother also lives in Amsterdam.

13. **Vladan**, a 36-year old man from Croatia, a technical school degree; he is in the Netherlands since the summer of 1991. He is self-employed after obtaining a secondary school degree in Amsterdam. He is married, has one child. He is a Serb, and has Dutch citizenship since 1998. He lives with his wife and the child. His parents also live in Amsterdam.

14. **Zlatan**, a 50 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a technical school degree; he is in the Netherlands since June 1993. He is unemployed and married, with two children. He is Bosniak, and has Dutch citizenship since 1999. He lives with his wife and the children.

15. **Jelena**, a 26-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a high school degree before the flight; she is in the Netherlands since 1997. She is a student at a university in Amsterdam. She fled her hometown in July 1993 and first went to Germany. She is single, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian, 'C', status. She lives with her parents. Her brother is also in the Netherlands.

16. **Kemo**, a 23 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a secondary school degree before the flight; he is in the Netherlands since the autumn 1995. He is employed after obtaining an additional technical school degree. He fled his hometown in the summer 1995. He is single, Bosniak, and has Dutch citizenship since 2000. He lives with his mother.

17. **Miro**, a 27-year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; he is in the Netherlands since January 1997. He is a student at a university in Amsterdam, and an intern in a Dutch firm. He is single, of ethnically mixed background, and holds a humanitarian, 'C', status. He lives on his own. His mother and brother also live in the Netherlands.

18. **Sinisa**, a 40 year-old man from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; he is in the Netherlands since May 1993. He is employed after completing additional training. He fled his hometown in April 1993. He is married, has one child. He is a Serb, and has Dutch citizenship

since 1998. He lives with his wife and the child. His brother and his brother-in-law also live with their families in Amsterdam.

19. *Smilja*, a 48-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a secondary school degree; she is in the Netherlands since May 1995. She is unemployed, and divorced, with two children. She is a Serb, and has Dutch citizenship since 2000. She lives on her own. Her sons are also in the Netherlands.

20. *Ivana*, a 47-year-old woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a university degree; she is in the Netherlands since 1997. She was attending a vocational training at the time of the interview. She is unemployed and divorced, with two children. She is a Serb, and holds a humanitarian, 'C', status.