



LIVING IN TURMOIL: REFUGEES IN CAIRO- EGYPT

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE LIVELIHOOD OF URBAN
REFUGEES IN AN UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRY.**

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Summary

In this thesis I address the importance of context on the production of current perceptions of refugees. Most studies regarding forced migration focus on refugees in developed countries. Nevertheless, more than 80% of the refugees in the world are settled in under-developed countries. Thereby, the studies that do exist regarding refugees in developing countries tend to give primary attention to those refugees who are accommodated in camps. They tend to ignore that actually most of the refugee population is living in urban areas in the developing world, and Africa in particular. The problems surrounding large influxes of refugees in developing countries are altogether different than in the urban areas of developed countries. The most significant difference is that the capacity in providing for refugees is severely limited in developing countries. The relation between such a host society and the refugee population will be studied in this thesis. Cairo, Egypt will be used as a case study to explore an urban area in an under-developed country as a context for refugees to forge a livelihood in. Instead of looking exclusively at domestic policies affecting refugees or looking exclusively at the influence of international policies on refugees, in this research I consider both. The role of international, local and community based actors will be explored where contradictions between policies and realities are considered. Together these actors form the context in which refugees need to forge a livelihood in.

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Introduction

“Today we face not so much a crisis of numbers but of cooperation and solidarity – especially given that most refugees stay in the countries neighbouring their war-torn homelands”- UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.¹

According to the latest global report by the UNHCR, the world is experiencing the highest number of displaced people ever recorded. At the end of 2015, 65.3 million people have fled their homes due to war, persecution, or disaster.² The noticeable increase in the amount of refugees entering Europe sparked a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the large influx.

The political and social atmosphere in Europe is dominated by the refugee crisis and a continuous debate is taking place about how to deal with the matter. This debate is characterized by an ideological division regarding national identity and diversity, mainly due to the relatively big amount of Muslim refugees entering Europe. Negative attitudes towards Muslims are linked to a belief that Muslims do not wish, or are not capable of, participating and adjusting to a society that is not predominantly Muslim. The claim that Muslims are on a path of ‘taking over’ Europe is an idea that is getting more widespread.³ Nevertheless, many do not realize that the majority of (Muslim) refugees are fleeing to their neighbouring, under-developed countries, where the biggest crisis is actually happening.

Most of the world’s host countries to refugees are all characterised as developing countries. According to the UN report, low- and middle-income countries are being disproportionately affected by refugee movements, both in terms of demographic as well as economic impact. More than half the new refugees in the first half of 2016 fled Syria’s conflict, with most staying in the near region, namely Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. Developing countries host around 80% of the refugee population while eight out of ten of

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Poorer Countries Host Most of the Forcibly Displaced,” UNHCR. Accessed May 8, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2017/2/58b001ab4/poorer-countries-host-forcibly-displaced-report-shows.html>.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Global Trends Report 2015,” UNHCR. Accessed May 8, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>.

³ Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes and Katie Simmons, “Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees will mean more Terrorism, Fewer Jobs: Sharp Ideological divides across EU on views about minorities, diversity and national identity,” *Pew Research Center* (July 11, 2016) accessed 6 July 2017, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/>.

the top countries hosting refugees are in Africa, the remaining two are in the Middle-East.⁴ Despite these rather shocking statistics, most studies on forced migration are based on the situation in developed countries. It is important to get an understanding of the heavy burden the under-developed countries carry in comparison to the European countries when it comes to hosting refugees. When Europe becomes more aware of the fact that most refugees do not settle in Europe but stay in their own region, the fear of 'too many Muslims' might weaken.

Moreover, the studies that do exist regarding refugees in under-developed countries give mainly attention to those refugees who are settled in camps. The same goes for the media, when the media depicts the refugee situation in an under-developed country they mostly show us images of refugees in tents in a camp somewhere in Lebanon for example. Scholars and the media tend to ignore that actually most of the refugee population lives in urban areas in the developing world, and Africa in particular.⁵ The problems surrounding large influxes of refugees in developing countries are altogether different than in developed countries. The most significant difference is that the capacity in providing for refugees is seriously limited in developing countries.⁶

During my masters I went to such a developing country that is also a host country to refugees, namely Egypt. Egypt is like described above, a developing country which hosts a large number of refugees not in a camp but in its urban area amongst the local population. I spent six months in the capital city of Cairo for an internship at the UNHCR to work as a caseworker for refugees. It was not until I was working there for over several weeks, that I started to comprehend this rather unique refugee situation. The aspect that makes this situation so unique is the fact that both refugees with and without legal status settle among the local population of a country where the population itself struggles to make ends meet. The relation between such a host society and its refugee population is an informative one to study. Studying other contexts in which refugees settle and the outcome of these settlements can provide us with new insights that can shed some light on the refugee situation in 'the West'.

⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Poorer Countries Host Most of the Forcibly Displaced."

⁵ HEART editor, "UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas," Health and Education Advice and Resource Team. Accessed May 8, 2016. http://www.heart-resources.org/doc_lib/unhcr-policy-refugee-protection-solutions-urban-areas/.

⁶ Tom Kulhman, "The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model," (1990. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam):1.

As a caseworker I had the chance to interview more than fifty refugees in Cairo. These interviews were for the purpose of assessing and determining the vulnerability and needs of an applicant. Through these extensive interviews and the work in general, I gained an insight in the complexity of refugees living in an urban area in a developing country. Considering the experience and knowledge I gained in regards to this particular refugee situation, it is necessary and much needed to shed some light on this rather precarious context in which refugees try to survive.

It is relevant to understand the different contexts refugees have to live in and what other host countries have to deal with in order to get some perspective on the refugee situation in 'the West'. An important aspect to explore in order to gain some perspective on the particular refugees contexts is the role of religion. The restraint shown by 'the West' in regards to refugees can be partly explained by the fear of Islam and its Muslims entering a 'western society.'⁷ But does this mean that a predominantly Muslim society as a host society to refugees, like Egypt, does not fear or restrict large influxes of Muslim refugees in its country since they share the same religion? It is important to explore this question in order to gain a better understanding of the underlying problems behind refugees entering a society.

In this research I discuss the importance of context on the current concept of refugees. Instead of looking exclusively at state policies affecting refugees or looking exclusively at the influence of international policies on refugees, in this research I include both. The role of international, local and community based actors will be explored whereas the interconnectedness of the different actors. Thereby, discrepancies between policies and realities will be acknowledged. Together these actors form the context in which refugees need to live in. The context in this research is the urban area in a developing country. I will use Egypt as a developing country and its urban area Cairo as a case study. The following question will be at the centre of this thesis: "How do international policies, national settings and local actors define the context in which refugees need to forge a livelihood in? A case study of Cairo-Egypt as a host society to refugees."

⁷ Matthew Goodwin, Thomas Raines, David Cutts, "What Do Europeans Think About Muslim Immigration?" *Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs*. Accessed July 2017. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration>.

Egypt, and in particular Cairo, is an interesting case study when researching the context of an urban area in an under-developed country since Egypt is not only a developing country that is host to hundreds of thousands of refugees, its urban area is also one of the biggest and most densely populated metropolises in the world.⁸

Egypt is considered a low-income and food deficit country. The total population of Egypt reached 91 million with around 20 million in Cairo alone. Approximately 23 million people in Egypt live under the poverty line and 31% of the children under 5 years are suffering from malnutrition.⁹

Most of the refugees in an urban setting like Cairo live in lower-class neighbourhoods where nationals from the poor classes live. Living among the local population in urban areas means for most refugees that they have to survive in an often economically exhausted and politically corrupt environment.¹⁰ According to the UNHCR, Egypt is currently host to a total of 256,384 registered refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR believes that the number of unregistered refugees is much higher. The Egyptian government estimates that the Sudanese population alone in Cairo consist of around 4 million people.¹¹

Obviously, considering these statistics, the Egyptian government has not made many resources available for the refugee population. Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and therefore has the main responsibility to provide protection for all persons who seek asylum in its country. Nevertheless, there are no national asylum procedures and institution in place in Egypt. As a consequence, the UNHCR has the responsibility regarding all aspects of the refugee procedure, including registration, documentation and refugee status determination (RSD).¹²

The UNHCR seeks one of three durable solutions for these urban refugees, namely voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum or resettlement to a third country. However, because resettlement to a third country is only

⁸ World Food Programme, "Egypt Country Programme (2013-2017)," United Nations World Food Programme - Fighting Hunger Worldwide. Accessed June 9, 2016. <https://www.wfp.org/operations/200238-country-programme-egypt-2013-2017>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood: Livelihood and Diasporic Identity Construction of Somali Refugees in Cairo," *New Issues in Refugee Research* (June 2004): 2.

¹¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Egypt," UNHCR. Accessed June 9, 2016.

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486356.html>.

¹² Ibid.

possible for around 1500 refugees per year in Egypt and voluntary repatriation is for most populations not possible, local integration is mostly the only remaining solution.¹³

Due to the continuous instability in Egypt, the protection environment for refugees has been affected which resulted in an increase in reliance on the UNHCR for assistance and protection. In a deteriorating political and economic environment, where refugees are finding it difficult to make ends meet, Egypt is facing its own refugee crisis.¹⁴

During my time at the UNHCR in Cairo, refugee protests erupted almost on a daily basis in front of the office gate. These demonstrations often turned violent where tragic incidents were the result of desperation. One of these tragic incidents was a man who set himself on fire as a cry for help, which eventually cost him his life. Other people went on hunger strikes or left their children behind at the gate and disappeared. The helplessness also becomes obvious when looking at the growing number of refugees in Egypt taking the risk to reach Europe via sea, through smuggling and trafficking networks.¹⁵

To comprehend this refugee situation, or what can be called a crisis, I will explore the various actors within this refugee context and the interplay between them. Since I am not only approaching the refugee issue in Egypt as a researcher but also as a practitioner who have worked closely with refugees and policy makers in the UNHCR, I can give a comprehensive view of the current refugee situation in Egypt. Due to this comprehensive view, the refugee issue in Egypt will not only be illustrated through theories and previous field studies but also through a depiction of the reality on the ground through the eyes of a practitioner in the field, which can provide us with new perspectives.

Before analysing the refugee situation in Egypt, it is important to first define the term 'refugee' and who fits into this category. There are numerous conceptions when it comes to the definition of refugees. The UNHCR uses the legal definition of the 1951 Convention¹⁶ that focuses on the idea that someone is a refugee when that person has:

¹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UNHCR Handbook for Self-reliance," *UNHCR*. Accessed June 9, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/44bf40cc2/unhcr-handbook-self-reliance.html>.

¹⁴ Karen Jacobsen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective," *Journal of Refugee Studies* (Augustus 2006). Accessed June 9 2016: 276.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *1951 Convention*: This Convention is a multilateral treaty of the United Nations that defines who is a refugee and sets out the rights of those who are granted asylum and the responsibility of the nations who granted asylum.

*Well-founded grounds for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and is unable to obtain sanctuary from their home country [...]Such a person may be called an "asylum seeker" until considered with the status of "refugee" by the Contracting State where they formally make a claim for sanctuary or right of asylum.*¹⁷

Certain scholars disagree with this definition like anthropologist Hoffstaedter, who argues that this definition can be limiting and fear of persecution cannot always be measured adequately.¹⁸ Although it is an interesting debate whether or not this definition of refugees is adequate, for this research I do not intend to elaborate on this debate but rather point out that the UNHCR definition is too narrow for this study.

I will use the approach of anthropologist Malkki, who conceptualizes the term refugee as 'refugeeness', which means 'a gradual transformation instead of an automatic result of crossing a border.'¹⁹ "Refugeeness' does not only refer to someone who has experienced war and violence back home, but also entails the complex daily practices of living, constructing identities and networking that such individuals experience when they live in a host society.'²⁰ This approach includes asylum-seekers who are waiting for their refugee status determination interview, people whose application has been rejected or who are waiting their appeal. Many of these individuals, whose files are closed because their claim for asylum has been denied, decide to stay in the host country for a variety of reasons. As illegal immigrants, without any legal permission to stay in the country or any protection or assistance provided by the UNHCR, they are more marginalized than the 'accepted' refugees.²¹

Besides (rejected) refugees and asylum seekers, this thesis also includes economic migrants. Although the reason for economic migrants to leave their country is predominantly based on the idea that they want to improve their standard of living, I include

¹⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," UNHCR. Accessed January 9 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>, 3.

¹⁸ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015): 3.

¹⁹ Liisa Helena Malkki, *Purity and exile: violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006):114.

²⁰ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood: Livelihood and Diasporic Identity Construction of Somali Refugees in Cairo": 1.

²¹ Katarzyna Grabska, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt," *Forced Migration and Refugee Studies* (American University in Cairo, 2006): 9.

them anyway into the mix. I want to focus on the current livelihood of (forced) migrants in the context of Egypt rather than on the reasons why these people left their country. Once in Egypt the difference between an economic immigrant and a refugee tends to fade away in most cases since both groups end up struggling to survive at the margins of society. In this thesis, when I use the term refugee, I refer to all people in Egypt who identify themselves as such since they fled their home country because they could not find security or stability.²²

Framework and methodology

To tackle an issue as complex as the refugee situation in Egypt, it is necessary to have a clear vision on how to approach such a matter. From the beginning of this research I have been inspired by the methodology of Barbara Harrell-Bond, an anthropologist who founded the Refugee Study Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford in 1982. She was one of the first who argued for research that examines the political context in which forced migration, protection, settlement etc. occurs, since she recognized that people became and remain refugees mostly because of (inter)national politics. Moreover, she argued that people who are no longer protected by their own state need to depend on the international system to provide them with their basic needs and legal protection. Therefore she included international organizations and law into her programme.²³

The notion that people became and remain refugees mostly due to (inter)national politics might seem an obvious one but it is an important one to underline. The idea to analyse forced migration by examining the (political) context of forced migration and to include the international system into the mix is an approach that will be used and built upon in this thesis.

So, in order to understand the refugee situation in Egypt I will seek to understand the context in which refugees forge livelihoods in Egypt. Analysing the context in regards to the livelihood of refugees, can best be done by using a so-called 'livelihoods framework'. A livelihood framework can develop the understanding of problems faced by refugees and

²² Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood: Livelihood and Diasporic Identity Construction of Somali Refugees in Cairo," 2.

²³ Dawn Chatty, "Anthropology and Forced Migration," in the Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long, and Nando Sigona (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014): 79.

their strategies to survive.²⁴ So far, no clear definition on refugee livelihoods has been developed, which shows the difficulty of the concept. However, Chamber and Conway provide a broadly accepted definition of livelihoods: “A livelihood comprises the capability, assets and activities required for a means of living. Essentially livelihoods refers to the means used to maintain and sustain life.”²⁵ A livelihoods framework comprises an analyses of the institutional and structural context, sometimes called the vulnerability context, in which refugees use strategies and assets to achieve the desired outcomes.²⁶

The advantage of using a livelihood approach is that it gives you an analytical basis within a structured framework that allows you to study the interconnectedness of certain aspects of life. You can better address vulnerabilities of the refugee community when you understand their livelihoods. The livelihood framework is based on three key components: the vulnerability context, assets and strategies, and outcomes.²⁷ This research will not explicitly apply a livelihood framework, but is nevertheless roughly based on one of the framework’s key component: the vulnerability context. The vulnerability context is the ‘sum of external factors that make people vulnerable.’²⁸

One’s livelihood is mostly affected by factors in the external environment. These factors determine the vulnerability context that people have to survive in. This external environment will be divided into three levels, namely the international level, the state level and the society level, a division that will also be followed for the chapter division of this thesis.²⁹ This division in external levels is to bring structure to such a broad and complex issue as the external environment. Although certain concepts are discussed within a particular section or level, in reality these levels intersect and various concepts can be explained within different sections.

In chapter one, the international level will be explored, where refugees are placed as transnational actors between countries of origin, countries of asylum and resettlement countries. The international policies on urban refugees, including the policy of the UNHCR,

²⁴ Machtelt de Vriese, “Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence,” *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit* (February 2006): 1.

²⁵ Machtelt de Vriese, “Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence,” 10.

²⁶ Dawn Chatty, “Anthropology and Forced Migration,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*: 79.

²⁷ Machtelt de Vriese, “Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence,” 36.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 1.

²⁹ Karen Jacobsen, “Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective,” 280.

are aspects that will be discussed since they determine the vulnerability context of refugees on an international level.

When analysing the state level in chapter two, the vulnerability context is determined by the host government's laws and policies in regards to refugees and the institutions in place to assist them. Analysing the society level in chapter three means an 'on the ground' examination of the practical outcome of the international and state policies. This chapter will explore the interface between society and the refugees in which the community is central, and where the dominant public attitude of the host society towards refugees determine the vulnerability context.³⁰

Where mostly laws, policies and ways of settlement will be explored at the international and state level in order to determine the vulnerability context, analysing at the society level requires more in-depth, qualitative information. Therefore, on the society level the data I collected during my six months at the UNHCR in Cairo will be examined. This data exist among others of in-depth social assessments I conducted with refugees who came to the UNHCR. The purpose of these social assessments was to assess the vulnerability and the needs of a person with 'specific needs.' The value of these assessments lies in the unstructured and unplanned information shared by the refugees, since they are not asked a certain question for the purpose of a study but are plainly asked to share their troubles and the reason why they turned to the UNHCR for help. Besides the social assessment I also conducted in-depth interviews with some of the interpreters of the UNHCR, who are also refugees themselves. In these interviews the interpreters share the reason they fled to Cairo and how they survive in this metropolis.

In order to process the data I collected I will use the qualitative research method set up by the scholars M.Hennink, I.Hutter and A.Bailey in *Qualitative Research Methods*. Their approach to qualitative data analysis broadly follows the principles of Grounded theory, which is based on an inductive approach. However, these scholars also acknowledge the usage of deductive methods during data analysis. They argue analysis involves the interplay between inductive and deductive reasoning, an approach that has been the guideline for this research. It is helpful to use deductive codes to help recognize specific concepts or contextual issues in the data. Since this approach remains close to the interpretive nature of

³⁰ Ibid, 280.

qualitative analysis, it is well-suited for purpose of this research since interpretation and flexibility is key when analysing the data I collected.³¹

Although the first two chapters are based mostly on facts and already existing information and literature, the section regarding the vulnerability context on the level of society will consist of an on-going dialogue between pre-existing information and theory and new insights created as a consequence of empirical observation. As a tool in analysing the relation between the host society and the refugees, I will use the identity vs. alterity theory of Gerd Baumann. But as in the Grounded Theory approach, this thesis will start by exploring the already existing literature (deductive codes) where after the collected data will be added (inductive codes).

³¹Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative research methods* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015) 204-206.

Chapter one- The international level

In this chapter the focus will be on the international, external environment and its influence on the livelihood of refugees. In agreement with the view of Barbara Harrell-Bond, the international level will be explored in this thesis since it is of great importance due to the fact that refugees are no longer protected by their own states and therefore depend on the international system to provide them with their basic needs and protection.³² In this chapter I will pose the sub-question, “How does the international level define the context in which refugees need to forge their livelihoods in Egypt?” First, this chapter outlines the different settlements in which refugees can live, the concept of urban refugee, the international policies regarding urban refugees and the role of the UNHCR. Secondly, I will analyse the way the international settings influence the vulnerability context of refugees that lays the groundwork for the following two chapters, where the focus is on the national and society level.

Refugee settlements

The historical, social, economic and political context in which refugees seek asylum vary enormously. One can argue that the choice of settlement is made on an individual level since refugees can ‘choose’ to move to a camp or settle in an urban area amongst the local population. Nevertheless, the choice of settlement is mostly not a free choice but a result of international politics and realities in place at that moment. For example, many refugees that tried to cross the Mediterranean sea to Europe are encamped now in Turkey due to international deals and politics. And the choice of refugees to self-settle in Egypt is mostly because of the relatively big resettlement program at place in Egypt, which is also a result of international policy. So, although I am aware that one can argue that refugees ‘choose’ where to settle, I argue that these choices are mostly based upon policies made on the

³² Dawn Chatty, “Anthropology and Forced Migration,” in the Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, 79.

international level. Therefore the matter of settlement will be dealt with on the international level. Nevertheless, the levels are interconnected and therefore the issue of settlement is influenced as well by other factors.

The typical idea of settlement, namely a 'camp', can in itself already have different forms in reality. Refugee camps can vary from open villages to enclosed areas and can differ with people being totally dependent on aid organization to people with a great amount of independency.³³ *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* defines encampment as;

*A policy which requires refugees to live in a designated area set aside for the exclusive use of refugees, unless they have gained specific permission to live elsewhere. The host state is obliged to ensure that the human rights are upheld, including the rights to shelter, food, water, sanitation and healthcare, and education, but how these are delivered varies enormously.*³⁴

Kibreab argues that most African countries prefer to isolate refugees and leave them in harsh legal and economic conditions so they will be forced to depend more on aid organisations, which in return leads to an increasing vulnerability of refugees.³⁵ Karen Jacobson states that many host governments, particularly in Africa, give their limited economic capacity as well as security concerns as one of the main reasons to oppose local integration of refugees.³⁶

Besides encampment there is also the alternative of self-settlement. The current statistics of the UNHCR show us that most refugees are self-settled and that only a minority live in camps.³⁷ Nevertheless, in 1993 the numbers stated that only 30 per cent of persons of concern in Africa lived outside of camps.³⁸ These numbers changed in the late 2000s when

³³ Oliver Bakewell, "Encampment and Self-Settlement" in the Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, 129.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Gaim Kibreab, "Local Settlement in Africa: A Misconceived Option?" *Journal of Refugee Studies* (1989). Accessed on June 2016, 468-490.

³⁶ Karen Jacobsen, "The Forgotten Solution: Local integration for Refugees in Developing Countries," *New Issues in Refugee Research*, vol:25 (2001) 14.

³⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Global Trends Report 2015," UNHCR. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>.

³⁸ Oliver Bakewell, "Encampment and Self-Settlement" in the Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, 131.

the UNHCR started to report on the number of refugees whose whereabouts were unknown. Due to the shift in reporting of the UNHCR it is difficult to identify clear trends regarding self-settlement and encampment but it does show the recognition of the concept of self-settlement.³⁹

Self-settlement can be an appropriate solution in response to the refugee problem when it is supported by the local population. Self-settlement refugees can seek for a better life and have a sense of autonomy whereas refugees living in camps have to deal with a loss of autonomy and a restriction of movement. But at the same time self-settlement can leave refugees in a less secure legal position and in a situation where their basic needs are not met. Refugees who stay outside a camp may maintain their autonomy but might have to sacrifice access to resources. Oliver Bakewell states that different studies show that self-settlement is often the option people prefer when they have a choice.⁴⁰

In the case of self-settlement, the host society plays an important role in the possibility of the success of this settlement. As Bakewell states, self-settlement is often referred to as 'spontaneous settlement', but this term is incorrect since refugees cannot just appear in another country and take over a certain space; they can only live in areas where the local residents allow them to be. This can mean having to negotiate with local community groups, gangs etc. One should have a good understanding of the language and culture and maybe even have some pre-existing relationship to succeed in such negotiations. This relationship can be found mostly when refugees flee across the border into the neighbouring country where the 'borders cut across traditional lineages', which is the case in most of Africa.⁴¹

An example of such a relationship is that between Egyptians and Sudanese Arabs. The border between Sudan and Egypt is an artificial one and therefore cuts across the Arab ethnicity that the Sudanese and Egyptians share. Their shared background made the influx of the first Sudanese refugees in Egypt less complicated compared to other refugee groups. But since the last two decades this relationship went downhill, mostly due to the rising number of Sudanese coming to Egypt. I will explore this relationship in greater depth later in this thesis, but in general it is known that when the amount of refugees entering a country

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 132.

⁴¹ Ibid, 133.

becomes relatively big, the concern about the refugee population rises in the host society population.⁴²

The big influx of refugees can mean a range of social challenges for the host society. The refugee population may be seen as adding to problems, especially when the local population is already struggling itself. So it is likely that when the influx of refugees is big that the host population is reluctant to accommodate the new arrivals. Since self-settling refugees depend on the acceptance of the local community in order to settle somewhere, self-settlement can be a problem. The local population can react with suspicion, resentment, and even violence. In order to manage the problems that arise with the arrival of refugees, states often respond by controlling where the refugees should stay. As Bakewell argues, 'states focus on the control of the alien in their midst rather than addressing the response of their citizens.'⁴³

A common reasoning is to use camps as a way to control the refugee population and protect the livelihoods and security of the host population. The camp is also practical in distributing aid and in securing the safety of the refugees. So, a common thought shared by host states as well as aid organisations is that encampment for refugees is the most secure and practical solution. Nevertheless, as Bakewell states 'neither encampment nor self-settlement can be seen as good in themselves when it comes to developing a settlement policy for refugees.'⁴⁴

Studies show that most African states tend to choose for the policy of encampment for refugees. Egypt is an exception to the rule since its refugee policy is based on self-settlement. Only during the Libyan civil war in 2011 there was a temporary camp, 5 km from the border with Libya, that provided shelter for the big influx of refugees coming from the war-torn neighbouring country. Nevertheless, this camp was closed in mid-2013 by the Egyptian government. According to a field report of *Refugee International*, the Egyptian officials were against any form of permanent shelter since they believed this could increase the so-called 'pull-factor' to this Saloum camp or 'to be interpreted as a sign of permission to

⁴² Ibid, 129.

⁴³ Ibid. 129.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 134.

lengthen the stay of those already present'. The camp was forced to close by the government after less than two years.⁴⁵

So, the Egyptian government has a different view on what is the best way to settle refugees than the common idea that one can control refugees by keeping them in settlements. They do not see a camp as a way to control the refugees and secure the Egyptian population's livelihood and safety but rather see it as something that will attract more refugees to come. They do not want the refugees to feel 'at ease' which might result in more refugees who will stay longer.

A senior staff member at the UNHCR⁴⁶ stated that another possible reason why the Egyptian government opposes camps is because of the preference of invisibility of the refugees. When the refugees are placed in a camp, they are visible and so are their numbers and problems. When they are visible they cannot be ignored, contrary to when they live scattered across the big city. Hence, the refugees entering Egypt are not given shelter in any kind of settlement but are expected to find shelter themselves from the moment they enter Egypt. Most refugees arriving in Egypt travel to the urban city of Cairo instead of going to the rural areas. Studies show that more and more refugees tend to go to cities, which makes sense given that more than half of the world's population is urbanized and therefore also the displaced.⁴⁷ We continue with a focus on refugees in urban areas.

Urban refugees

Since the last 10 years, urban refugees have started to receive attention from researchers, policymakers and aid organisations. Especially when the second Gulf War displaced hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, the focus towards urban refugees increased. Loren B. Landau argues that another explanation for the rapid move from a side interest to the centre of debate regarding the concept of urban refugees has to do with visibility. Landau argues that UNHCR's fear over increasing costs of providing assistance in urban areas as well as their own reluctance regarding the credibility of urban refugee claims, contributed to a sceptic attitude to engage with refugees in cities. She argues that people refused to see

⁴⁵ Matt Pennigton, "Field Report Libya Protecting Civilians in a drawn-out Conflict," *Refugees International* (13 April 2011) <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4da6975f2.pdf>.

⁴⁶ *This particular staff member of the UNHCR in Cairo spoke with me 'off the record' since she wished to stay anonymous in order not to harm the relationship between the Egyptian government and the UNHCR.*

⁴⁷ Oliver Bakewell, "Encampment and Self-Settlement" in the Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, 134.

urban refugees. However, the political urgency to respond to displaced Iraqis resulted in change.⁴⁸

In 2009 the UNHCR issued a declaration that stated that almost half of the refugee population lives in cities and towns. The United Nations Agency for Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (UN Habitat) stated in a June 2015 report that 60% of the 14.4 million refugees and 80% of the 38 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) are thought to live in urban areas. The number of refugees living in urban areas has increased by 8% the past three years. 45% of refugees are in protracted situations, meaning that they are displaced for the long term.⁴⁹ Developing countries host over 84% of the world's refugees, compared to 70% ten years ago.⁵⁰ The numbers of refugees is rising, as well as their movement to cities. The UNHCR defines urban areas as:

*A built-up area that accommodates large numbers of people living in close proximity to each other, and where the majority of people sustain themselves by means of formal and informal employment and the provision of goods and services.*⁵¹

In urban areas, refugees are more dependent on their own networks since the UNHCR tends to offer minimal support to only the most vulnerable people in the refugee community. The UNHCR considers someone vulnerable when he or she fits into one or more of the specific needs categories. These categories include people with a disability, victims of sexual and/or gender based violence, unaccompanied minors, single parents, victims of trafficking/torture, or people with a serious medical condition. The ones who fit into one or more of these categories are likely to receive a minimum amount of assistance when it comes to livelihood, healthcare and education.

Refugees in urban areas are often dispersed, which makes it hard for aid providers to assess who is really vulnerable since the most vulnerable people are the ones who might be too 'weak' to come to the UNHCR office to ask for assistance. This leaves many urban

⁴⁸ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁹ UN HABITAT, "Migration and Refugees in Urban Areas," *UN HABITAT Issue Papers* (New York, 2015) http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Habitat-III-Issue-Paper-2_2_Migration-and-Refugees-in-Urban-Areas-2.0.pdf. 2.

⁵⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Global Trends Report 2015," UNHCR. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>.

⁵¹ HEART editor, "UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas," 2.

refugees in hardship. An UNHCR report from 2008 stated that '30 percent of the basic needs of urban refugees are not being met,'⁵² The most needed resources are livelihood, health and education for their children. Although the UNHCR and many other NGO's try to offer basic education and health for free, mostly these need to be financed by refugees. Moreover, receiving this assistance mostly means travelling from and to the doctor or school, which is not only costly but may also be dangerous. The danger lies in being exposed by authorities when one is illegal or from the host population itself. As scholar Hoffstaedter states; 'The city is a place of promise as well as danger and a space that refugees often have to learn to navigate for the first time in their lives.'⁵³

Although many refugees are trying to be anonymous in the city, some remain rather visible, like 'dark-skinned' African refugees in Cairo. For these refugees, living in an urban area can be even more difficult since they are more noticeable and therefore targets for harassment and discrimination. Discrimination and violence in the city can have a deep impact on refugees. Most refugees in urban areas in developing countries are not able to find work, move freely or avoid violence from the host society. In developing countries, refugees need to compete with other people at the margins of society over work, food and housing. This competition can lead to further weakening of this vulnerable group. Not having the right to work also increases the hardship of the refugees and the dependence on aid organisations. It is a recurring problem for urban refugees around the world not to have the right to work. The lack of work rights results in the exploitation of illegal employees and to the increasing reliance on existing networks with friends, family and community.⁵⁴

UNHCR urban refugee policy

The first policy paper regarding urban refugees was issued by the UNHCR in 1997. This paper defined UNHCR's policy as minimum engagement, 'based on the presumptions of state responsibility for protection and assistance and refuge self-reliance.'⁵⁵ The policy stated as well that no assistance should be provided to refugees living in urban areas when there is

⁵² Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, 2.

⁵³ Ibid, 4-5.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UNHCR Comprehensive Policy on Urban Refugees," accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/41626fb64.pdf>, 2.

UNHCR assistance in a camp or in rural areas. So, the 1997 policy paper stated that refugees belong in a camp and everyone who lives elsewhere is denied assistance.⁵⁶

12 years later, in 2009, the UNHCR issued a new urban policy paper. This paper made urban areas a 'legitimate place for refugees', which changed the way protection areas around the world were viewed. This new urban policy represented a break from the old policy in which urban refugees were not seen as legitimate and were discouraged from trying to leave the camp. The 2009 policy is, in UNHCR's words 'the beginning of a new approach.' But the situation on the ground is more complicated.⁵⁷

The main focus of the policy was to provide sufficient support to urban refugees by creating a better relation between the UNHCR and the institutions on the ground like the refugee communities, the local partners and the national authorities. This has been a difficult task to achieve in many places. When a particular government does not comply with international refugee rights, cooperation with the host government can be problematic. Interaction with local partners can also be strained due to incapability of these organisations or inefficient communication. Furthermore, the relation with the refugee communities can also be difficult due to scepticism of these communities with institutions like the UNHCR. Developing an international policy framework to deal with refugee populations in different local and regional settings has proven difficult. The diversity of both host countries and refugee populations make the development of this policy a complex task. The UNHCR policy framework and the reality on the ground can differ a lot.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the senior staff member of the UNHCR in Cairo, who at the time of this research had been working in the office already for more than fifteen years, stated that the 2009 policy was a real breakthrough regarding the assistance of refugees in Cairo. She stated that prior to this policy revision, the office in Cairo was constantly trying to work around the label of 'illegitimacy' regarding urban refugees in order to be able to provide assistance for those refugees in need anyway and to receive funding for their cause. The 2009 policy gave their cause legitimacy, which led to more funding, research and dialogue with headquarters.

The UNHCR states that there are three solutions for refugees living in urban areas, namely voluntary repatriation, resettlement or local integration. Where voluntary

⁵⁶ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, 1-2.

⁵⁷ Michael Kagan, "Why do we still have refugee camps?" Urban Refugees.org, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://urban-refugees.org/debate/tag/2009-policy/>.

⁵⁸ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, 1-2.

repatriation is a possible option in the foreseeable future, this is the preferred option for all refugees, according to the UNHCR. Resettlement is only possible for a very small amount of the refugees. Egypt is considered to be a transit country with one of the largest resettlement programs in the world but even this large program only takes up to 1500 refugees yearly to be considered for resettlement.⁵⁹ So since resettlement and voluntary repatriation are in most cases not a feasible solution, the only possibility that is left is local integration. In order to stimulate this local integration, the UNHCR changed his policy from a 'care and maintenance model' towards a more 'self-reliance model'. According to the UNHCR, decreasing the assistance of refugees to a minimum makes refugees less dependent and necessitates integration more.⁶⁰ But how does this international change of policy towards a 'self-reliance model' turn out in a national context like that of Egypt? In the next section the national settings that define the vulnerability context at a state level will be outlined.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed the influence of the international level on the livelihood of refugees. We can conclude that the influence of the international level on the livelihood of refugees already starts with the choice of settlement. Although refugees 'choose' the way of settlement, this choice is mostly not free and spontaneous but is based on international politics and realities in place at that moment. Nevertheless, some choices of settlement are more a result of international policies than others and therefore the choice of settlement should be seen as an interplay between the individual and the international level.

The way of settlement has a profound influence on the livelihood of a refugee. Where refugees living in camps have to deal with loss of autonomy, self-settlement refugees retain more autonomy and can take matters into their own hands. Nevertheless, the gain of autonomy often goes hand in hand with the sacrifice of resources. Especially in developing countries, refugees need to compete with local people who live at the margins of society. Since 2009, urban refugees are officially perceived as 'legitimate' by the UNHCR, and therefore eligible for limited assistance when needed. Nonetheless, although the international settings changed positively in the last ten years in regards to urban refugees,

⁵⁹ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UNHCR Handbook for Self-reliance," UNHCR. Accessed June 9, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/44bf40cc2/unhcr-handbook-self-reliance.html>.

the situation on the ground is more complicated. Especially in the case of self-settlement, the support of the host society is of high importance. In the following chapter the vulnerability context will be dealt with at a state level where Egypt has the function of host country.

Chapter two- The state level

In the previous chapter I referred to Barbara Harrell-Bond who argues that; ‘people became and remain refugees mostly due to national politics.’⁶¹ Although the reasons why people became refugees will not be addressed in this thesis, the reason why people remain refugees as a result of national politics will be explored in this chapter. I will pose the sub-question; “How does the state level define the context in which refugees need to forge their livelihoods in Egypt?” Although the main focus of this thesis is on the livelihoods of refugees in the urban area of Cairo, I will discuss the political context of Egypt as a whole. The reason for this is the fact there is no division between state level and city level governance in Egypt when it comes to matters such as immigration. This means that decisions regarding immigration are taken on a state level and apply to all areas in Egypt. Therefore, I will first discuss Egypt’s historical and geographical context with regard to refugees where after the refugee policy in place will be described. Secondly, the role of the UNHCR in Egypt will be analysed.

Egypt as a host country

Throughout history Egypt has been host to many foreigners and refugees from across the world. In the first half of the twentieth century the refugee population mostly consisted of Palestinians and Armenians. In the second half of the century the refugee population increased due to wars in the horn of Africa, which resulted in an influx of refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia. Thereby, the past two decades presented an influx of refugees from Iraq after the 2003 US invasion and from Syria due to the conflict there.⁶²

⁶¹ Harrell-Bond, Barbara. *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies*, 79.

⁶² Katarzyna Grabska, " Living on the Margins: The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese refugees with closed files in Egypt," Academia.edu, accessed October 10, 2016,

An important reason why many refugees tend to come to Egypt is because it has a relatively large resettlement program, both through the UNHCR and the private sponsorship programs to Australia, the USA and Canada. Resettlement means for most refugees escaping war, insecurity and poverty.⁶³ Egypt is considered to be a transit country, but it is more than that; “it is a refugee host in its own right”, according to Danielson. Since there are no refugee camps in the country, most refugees settle in Cairo. But Cairo is a ‘troubled environment to live in, and a source of stress and fear for those who seek asylum in it.’⁶⁴ Cairo is the biggest city in the Middle East and Africa and the tenth largest urban area in the world.⁶⁵ Cairo is also considered to be one of the noisiest and most stressful cities in the world due to its overcrowded streets and traffic jams.⁶⁶ A refugee stated during an interview with Danielson that “refugees who are settled in Egypt are living in a developing country with chronic problems, where the nationals themselves struggle to live with dignity.”⁶⁷

These problems came to the forefront in the 2011 revolution in which the nationals protested against poverty, injustice, and detention and led to the fall-down of president Hosni Mubarak after 30 years. Unfortunately, the revolution resulted in more violence, insecurity and poverty, both for the Egyptian society as well as the refugee population. Many refugees demonstrated in this period in front of the UNHCR office in Cairo, protesting because they felt left alone since the office closed during the revolution.⁶⁸ Now, five years later, these problems have not yet been solved and many say that the situation in Egypt has gotten even worse than before the revolution.

http://www.academia.edu/1423393/2005.Living_on_the_Margins_The_Analysis_of_the_Livelihood_Strategies_of_Sudanese_refugees_with_closed_files_in_Egypt, 4.

⁶³ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁴ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, 13.

⁶⁵ "Demographia World Urban Areas," *Demographia*, accessed November 22, 2016,

<http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Hayley Birch, "Where is the world's most stressful city?," *The Guardian* (October 08, 2015) accessed June 10, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/oct/08/where-world-most-stressful-city-urban-life-depression-anxiety>.

⁶⁷ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, 13.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 13.

Egypt's refugee policy

Egypt is both one of the drafting members as well as a party to the 1951 convention, its 1967 Protocol and the OAU Refugee Convention of 1969.⁶⁹ Being a party to these conventions means having an international obligation in regard to providing asylum for refugees that are eligible.⁷⁰ One would think that the vulnerability context depends on the fact if a country has signed the Convention or not since recognized refugees should be granted the right to freedom of movement and work and thereby have access to healthcare and education. The reality, however, is highly different in most host countries in Africa and the Middle East, like in Egypt. For these countries, who as well are host to the highest numbers of refugees, it is more common that they don't fulfil their legal obligations or have handed over the responsibilities for refugees to the UNHCR and other NGO's.⁷¹

Egypt made four reservations on the articles in the 1951 Convention. The first reservation is that refugee children are not entitled to free education, except for the Sudanese. The second reservation is that refugees need to have a working permit, which is almost impossible in Egypt due to its tight restrictions regarding work rights of foreigners. Thirdly, refugees nor other foreigners can get the Egyptian citizenship, regardless of the length of their stay. Finally, refugees are not entitled to government assistance.⁷²

Nationality in Egypt is granted on the basis of descent only. Refugees who have a new born and are unable to go to their embassy are highly affected by this law since it is almost impossible to get a birth certificate for their new born. During my time at the UNHCR I dealt with a lot of cases of refugees who could not get a birth certificate for their new born child. Not being able to get a birth certificate puts the child and the parents in a very insecure situation and restricts their legal protection, possible resettlement etc.

One of these cases was a 23 year old, Eritrean girl who had a daughter out of rape in an Eritrean prison. After she was released from prison she escaped with her daughter to Cairo. She became a recognized refugee and was found eligible for resettlement to the United States. Nevertheless, she could not get a birth certificate for her daughter in Egypt

⁶⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," UNHCR, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>.

⁷⁰ Katharina Grabska, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19, no. 3 (2006): 292.

⁷¹ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, XII.

⁷² Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood: Livelihood and Diasporic Identity Construction of Somali Refugees in Cairo," 4.

since the father of the child was unknown and therefore the child was not recognized by Egyptian law. Since the child did not have a birth certificate, mother and daughter could not get resettled to the United States. This is just one of the many stories that demonstrate what impact these reservations have on the legal and economic vulnerability of refugees.⁷³

Moreover, Egypt did not take the appropriate procedures regarding refugee status determination which resulted in the UNHCR taking over. Katarzyna Grabska, a professor at the Refugee Studies department at the American University in Cairo, states that the Egyptian government's reluctance to take responsibility for the status determination and assistance can be explained in different ways. The former head of the Refugee Affairs Department stated in an interview with Grabska that the reason lies in "institutional and financial obstacles".⁷⁴

Another way to explain the government's reluctance in dealing with refugees is, according to Grabska, due to the political significance of the refugee population. A big part of the refugee population in Egypt are Palestinians and Sudanese. Due to the Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause, it would be unthinkable for Egypt to require a status determination procedure for Palestinians. Furthermore, Egypt cannot provide Sudanese with a refugee status since this would mean that they indirectly criticize the Sudanese government which could cause problems between the two allies. According to the former UNHCR Deputy Representative in Cairo, a national refugee protection system can be provided when the Sudanese refugee problem is solved satisfactorily.⁷⁵ But for now, the UNHCR has taken up all the responsibilities regarding the refugees in Egypt. In the next section, the role of the UNHCR in Egypt will be explored.

The UNHCR in Egypt.

In more than 60 countries, the UNHCR is now the decision maker for refugees' claims. These countries include both the ones that did not ratify the 1951 Convention but also countries that did ratify the convention, like Egypt. Although these countries signed the convention and are therefore obligated to protect refugees in their country, some of them have failed to set up the necessary institutions for their refugee population. Also some

⁷³ Ibid, 4.

⁷⁴ Katharina Grabska, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo," 293.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 292.

countries ignored their responsibility since the Refugee Status Determination procedure (RSD) is time consuming. So, although Egypt signed the convention, they left most responsibility regarding registration, RSD etc. to the responsibility of the UNHCR.⁷⁶ Consequently, the UNHCR in Cairo determines whether the asylum seekers will be granted refugee status or not, and they provide legal, medical and cash assistance. As has been said before, UNHCR's international programming was first based on a 'care and maintenance model'. The change towards a more 'self-reliance model' became operative in Egypt in 2004. This model was aimed at helping to increase the livelihood of local settlement refugees through micro-credit employment and vocational training.⁷⁷

Although most refugees do not receive any form of assistance anymore, for some there is still a limited amount of assistance available but only on a temporary basis and for persons with specific needs only. This assistance includes cash, medical, and psychosocial assistance provided by UNHCR's implementing partners. The main partners are Caritas (for cash and medical assistance), Refugee Egypt (for medical care for babies and HIV patients), and PSTIC (for psychosocial support). In addition to the implementing partners, refugees receive assistance from faith-based institutions, local NGO's and refugee community based associations. Until now, there are no official governmental programmes available for the assistance to refugees. However, the majority of refugees in Egypt are left with no support at all due to the reduced funds available to UNHCR and the expanding refugee population. The ones who did not get the refugee status are excluded from any kind of assistance from the UNHCR.⁷⁸

But even becoming legally secure does not necessarily mean that refugees have more opportunities to integrate. While assessing the interviews I conducted during my stay at the UNHCR in Cairo, it became clear that having legal status does not automatically mean being less vulnerable. When it comes to work, most of the recognized refugees as well as unrecognized refugees have unskilled, low paid jobs without any legal rights. The women mostly work for Egyptian families as cleaning ladies or au pairs and the men mostly clean company buildings, compounds etc. Although being a recognized refugee should reduce the level of vulnerability also in terms of protection, in reality this is not the case in Egypt.

⁷⁶ Koichi Koizumi and Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Urban refugees: challenges in protection, services and policy*, 7.

⁷⁷ Katharina Grabska, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South," 292.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 292.

Recognized as well as unrecognized refugees both stated that they face security issues, from the police, the Egyptian people or from other refugee groups in Cairo. Furthermore, the fear of going to the police to file a report regarding security incidents, is present in both groups. Although the recognized refugees might not share the fear of being deported like the unrecognized refugees do, both parties are reluctant to go to the police mostly because the police are 'Egyptian as well'. Even though recognized refugees fall under the protection of international law, and Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Convention, in reality they have to face the rule of law in Egypt.

Conclusion

Egypt, and Cairo especially, is a troubled environment to live in for both the locals as well as those who seek asylum in it. The country is one of the drafting members to the 1951 convention, its 1967 Protocol and the OAU Refugee Convention of 1969. But the country made four reservations on the articles in the 1951 Convention, which have a great impact on the legal and economic vulnerability of the refugees. Although being a recognized refugee in Egypt should reduce the vulnerability level since Egypt signed the 1951 Convention, in reality it does not make a big difference. Most refugees have to compete with the locals at the margins of society and hope one day to be resettled to a western country. In the next chapter the relationship between these two groups at the margins of society will be explored.

Chapter 3- The society level

In the previous chapters the vulnerability context on an international and state level have been analysed. Egypt as a context and the urban area as a settlement have provided us with a broad view on the context in which refugees live in Cairo. In this chapter the following sub-question will be posed; “How does the society level define the context in which refugees need to forge their livelihoods in Egypt?”

When looking at the level of society the relationship between the host society and the refugee population is at the centre of research. The vulnerability context at this level depends on the relation the refugee population has with the host society. One can argue that livelihood and integration are linked. Not being integrated can mean having less chance to secure one’s livelihood. Especially in countries like Egypt, where having connections can help in many ways, it is important to be connected to the host society. When looking for a job, a place to stay or when in need of protection, having connections can make the difference. So, when trying to understand one’s livelihood and the vulnerability context it is important to first look into the concept of local integration. Although the concept of integration has been mentioned briefly in previous chapters as a perceived solution of the UNHCR for urban refugees, in this chapter this concept will be explored in greater depth. Since the success of local integration depends mostly on the relation between the refugee population and the host society they are in, the issue of local integration will be explored on the society level. Nevertheless, the different levels are all interconnected and all have their own influence on the issue of local integration.

Local integration

The UNHCR sees local integration as one of the three solutions for refugees living in urban areas. Besides local integration there are the options of returning home voluntarily (voluntary repatriation) or settle in a third country (resettlement). According to the UNHCR, the preferred option for refugees is voluntary repatriation. Nevertheless, in most cases this is not a plausible option in the foreseeable future. Thereby, resettlement is only possible for a very small amount of refugees. Egypt has one of the largest resettlement programs in the world and is therefore considered to be a transit country. Nevertheless, this 'large' resettlement program only considers 1500 refugees on a yearly basis to be resettled. So since resettlement and voluntary repatriation are in most cases not a feasible solution, the only possibility that is left is local integration.

Integration as a concept has been used in various and sometimes inconsistent ways, whether by scholars, NGOs, or government institutions working with refugees.⁷⁹ The UNHCR itself defines integration as 'the process by which the refugee is assimilated into the social and economic life of a new national community.'⁸⁰ The UNHCR argues that acquiring the nationality of the country of asylum is the conclusion of this integration process. The organisation estimates that over the past decade, 1.1 million refugees acquired citizenship in their country of asylum.⁸¹ Scholars like Harrell-Bond argue for a broad conceptualization of the term integration that 'takes into account cultural differences, unequal access to resources and conflicts among different refugee groups and with the host society.'⁸² Harrell-Bond states that integration is a situation in which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing both social and economic resources, with no greater conflict than that which exist within the host society itself.⁸³

Integration is one of the four possible outcomes of the acculturation process, according to social psychologist Berry. The concept of acculturation refers to the 'cultural changes resulting from the encounters between refugees and the host society.'⁸⁴ The other

⁷⁹ Mulki al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood," 2.

⁸⁰ Tom Kulhman, "The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries," 6.

⁸¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Local Integration," UNHCR, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c101.html>.

⁸² Mulki al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood: Livelihood and Diasporic Identity Construction of Somali Refugees in Cairo," 3.

⁸³ Barbara E. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing aid emergency assistance to refugees* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989): 7.

⁸⁴ Katarzyna Grabska, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt," 6.

outcomes of acculturation are assimilation, segregation/ separation, and marginalization. Berry based this distinction on whether a refugee engages in social relations with the host society and whether he loses or maintains his identity. When one becomes a assimilated, he becomes embedded in the host society. When there are no relations with the host society and the group sticks to its own identity it is called separation (or segregation when it is imposed by the dominant group). Marginalization is when the group loses its own culture but does not become part of the host society. Integration, according to Berry, is when a group maintains its own cultural identity but also interacts with the society. Integration can only be successful when the host society is open to cultural diversity and when there is mutual acceptance by both groups to live as culturally different peoples.⁸⁵

Berry concludes that the integration strategy can only be pursued in host societies where cultural diversity is seen as a value to society, where there is a 'positive multicultural ideology present, relatively low levels of discrimination and racism and a sense of identification with the larger society by all groups.' Some host societies are open to the idea of cultural diversity resulting from immigration while others are against this diversity and try to segregate 'foreign' populations in their society.⁸⁶ People's attitudes towards the four ways of acculturating can vary and one's choice of acculturation strategy can be influenced by many aspects. For example, those whose physical features set them apart from the host society may experience racism and discrimination and might be more reluctant to integrate or assimilate into the dominant society. Moreover, another aspect that may affect the acculturation strategy is the national context in which refugees need to forge their livelihood. This national context can have such a big impact on the livelihood framework to the point where there is a very limited role for personal preference.⁸⁷

The option of local integration is not accepted by many host governments in the Middle East and African. This becomes clear when you look at the reluctance of these countries when it comes to giving legal residency rights to refugees. Giving legal rights to refugees is a key aspect of successful integration. Many host countries see refugees as only temporary guests and are therefore rather vague when it comes to their residence rights.

⁸⁵ John W. Berry, *Immigration, acculturation, and adaption* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1997): 8-10.

⁸⁶ Tom Kulhman, "The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries," 16.

⁸⁷ John W. Berry, *Immigration, acculturation, and adaption*, 8-9.

Giving residency rights to refugees mostly means greater security and permits them to pursue economic opportunities.⁸⁸

Thus far, Egypt does not offer permanent residence and citizenship rights, like the right to employment. The presence of refugees is viewed by the Egyptian government as temporary and resettlement is the preferred solution to them. Many refugees do not see integration as a feasible goal as well. Obtaining the refugee status from the UNHCR while hoping to move one day in the future to the 'West' is seen by most refugees as the only way of life they can lead in Egypt.⁸⁹

Society of settlement

In the society of settlement a number of factors are important to the acculturation process. When examining the acculturation process it is important to understand the historical as well as the social situation faced by refugees. The data I collected during my six months at the UNHCR in Cairo, provides insights into the Egyptian attitudes faced by the refugees, both from the government apparatus and the society. Although the data I collected was not intended in particular for the purpose of this thesis, but more for the purpose of assessing the vulnerability of a particular individual and understanding the needs that individual has, a lot of problems and concerns regarding the attitude of the Egyptian society towards refugees came to the fore during these qualitative interviews.

I am aware that the objective of the interviewees that were present in these social assessments was to be found eligible for assistance from the UNHCR. Therefore, some of the information that was given and the stories that were shared might have been exaggerated or are only partially true. Nevertheless, when a specific concern or story recurs throughout these assessments, I take this to indicate that it is a present issue in the lives of refugees in Egypt, which makes it possible to use and therefore some conclusions can be drawn from this information.

Although I did not specifically pose the question in my assessments if the refugees encountered bad behaviour from the Egyptians, in almost all cases refugees would express their concerns regarding the protection issues they face due to discrimination. These issues

⁸⁸ Karen Jacobsen, "The Forgotten Solution: Local integration for Refugees in Developing Countries," 23.

⁸⁹ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood: Livelihood and Diasporic Identity Construction of Somali Refugees in Cairo," 3.

ranged from not being able to make use of the public facilities, being mistreated by authorities or being attacked in the streets. Different refugee groups encounter different problems in the Egyptian society. I will give some examples of refugees from different national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds that were confronted with discrimination or maltreatment from the Egyptian government or the society.

An example that demonstrates the different forms of discrimination refugees deal with in Egypt is the issue of receiving education. The Sudanese, for example, have free access to public schools, just like Egyptians do, but in reality some have to deal with resistance when trying to enrol their children in school due to their background. And while Iraqis may experience less discrimination from the society itself due to their 'shared skin colour and ethnicity', they cannot enrol their children into public school because the Iraqis are thought to be rich and therefore they are forced to enrol their children into private schools. The Iraqi refugees expressed during the interviews that the private schools are relatively costly which means that for many of them they cannot afford to send their children to school.

Another form of discrimination Iraqi refugees face is the high rate of arrests. From the seven Iraqi families I interviewed, three families were arrested by the Egyptian authorities on claims that they are radical Islamists and part of the just deposed regime of the Muslim Brotherhood. When asked why they believed to be accused of being radical Islamists, they argued that the accusations were based on the long beards of their men and the fully covering niqabs of their women. Some of them were detained and interrogated for days or even weeks without a trial. With two of the families, the minors were also arrested by the police and held for multiple days.

What has to be taken into consideration is the probability that this phenomenon is not only something Iraqi refugees in Egypt have to deal with. After the overthrow of president Mohammed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013, the party faced a huge crackdown by the military in which hundreds were being detained or even killed. Many people with a conservative, Islamic outlook faced problems since both the authorities and the society made the presupposition that these people were supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The first few months Egypt was declared to be under a state of emergency, which allowed security forces to detain people for any period of time, for virtually any reason. They were also granted far-reaching powers to restrict public gatherings and media

freedom.⁹⁰ Hence, the fact that I interviewed Iraqi refugee families that were detained by Egyptian authorities does not have to mean that this has happened to them because they are refugees in this case. This only means that they as refugees have the UNHCR to turn to, whereas Egyptian people, who might similarly risk imprisonment because of their conservative outlook, are not always able to share their story with a representative of an international, 'independent' organisation.

Nevertheless, the Iraqis were the only nationality from the range of nationals I interviewed that expressed this particular form of mistreatment at the hands of the authorities. Although refugees with other nationalities, like Somali or Sudanese nationals, can have a particular 'conservative' outlook as well, these groups mainly have to deal with other forms of discrimination than that of being accused of being a radical Islamist. This might have to do with the fact that in Iraq the rise of the extreme radical movement 'ISIS' occurred during a period when the crackdown on so-called 'radical Islamism' took place in Egypt. In the eyes of the Egyptian authorities, the Iraqi refugees were probably more likely to be 'radical Islamists' than Sudanese or Somalis, due to the fact that the Iraqis originate from a region where the growth of such a radical group was on the rise.

Another example of mistreatment by the authorities is the detention of the refugees who attempted to take the boat to Europe from the Mediterranean coast in Egypt. I interviewed a Somali, young, single mother with a three-year-old son, who attempted to cross the Mediterranean sea to Europe in order to get medical treatment for her son, which was not available in Egypt. On her way with many other refugees to Europe, the boat broke down and they could not continue their journey. They managed to temporarily repair the boat to get back to the Egyptian coast where the police immediately arrested them. The interviewee and her son were detained for two weeks, of which the first four days they stayed on the bathroom floor of a police station with almost no food or water. The medical situation of the son deteriorated quickly during these days. Eventually UNHCR staff arrived at the police station and managed to move the Somali woman and her son to a 'better' prison before being released.

⁹⁰ Inside Story, "Why is Egypt under a state of emergency?," *Al Jazeera English*, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/09/2013919658997369.html>.

Once again it must be repeated that although this is a story told by a refugee, this does not mean that someone with the Egyptian nationality receives more humane treatment. On September 21st 2016, a boat carrying around 600 people, on route to Italy, capsized near the Egyptian border. A large number of the people on the boat were, unlike before, Egyptians. Most of the survivors were detained and although it is not known for how long and under which conditions, a member of the Egyptian parliament, Elhamy Agina, said in a public statement that the victims of the tragedy “don’t deserve sympathy due to their participation in an illegal activity.”⁹¹ Two interesting points can be drawn from this story. First of all, the fact that Egyptian citizens are now also attempting to reach Europe due to the deteriorating economic circumstances under the regime of president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. This makes the Egyptians not only a part of a host society to refugees but presently also part of the refugee community. And second of all, the treatment these Egyptians receive when trying to cross the Mediterranean sea from their own government official, despite their Egyptian nationality.

Exploring the mistreatment of refugees at the hands of the Egyptian authorities is a difficult task. The fact that refugees share stories of mistreatment they face in Egypt, does not automatically mean they are being mistreated because they are refugees or because of their different background. A possibility is that Egyptians are being mistreated on the same level in the circumstances described above but that because they do not have an organisation like the UNHCR to turn to, their stories are not being heard. Many Egyptian, non-governmental organisations that were in place for Egyptian nationals to turn to for help have been shut down in a recent unprecedented crackdown on non-governmental organisations by the authorities, stated in a report by Amnesty International of 23 march 2016.⁹²

The mistreatment of refugees at the hands of the authorities should be seen in the current political context of Egypt. When looking at different maps and reports regarding human rights violations per country, Egypt scores particularly high. Maplecroft, a global risk and strategic consulting company evaluated all 197 countries on various human rights

⁹¹ Egyptian Streets, "Egypt MP Elhamy Agina Says Victims of Capsized Migrant Boat 'Deserve No Sympathy'," Egyptian Streets, September 27, 2016, , accessed February 12, 2017, <http://egyptianstreets.com/2016/09/27/egypt-mp-elhamy-agina-says-victims-of-capsized-migrant-boat-deserve-no-sympathy/>.

⁹² Amnesty International, "Egypt: Unprecedented crackdown on NGOs," accessed June 11, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/03/egypt-unprecedented-crackdown-on-ngos/>.

violations. It classified 20 countries as having an extreme human rights risk in 2008. That number has since risen to 34 in 2014. Of the countries with a high risk of violations, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Mali and Guinea-Bissau have seen the worst deterioration of their human rights situation, according to the report.⁹³

In the report of the Guardian, Egypt takes the fifth place in the human rights index of countries with the most severe human rights violations.⁹⁴ Freedom House, an NGO conducting research on political freedom and human rights, gave each country on the world map two scores, one score for political rights and the other score for civil liberties, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. Egypt scores a 6 for freedom on political rights and 5 on civil liberties and so ends with an average of 5.5, which makes Egypt one of the least free countries in the world regarding political rights and civil liberties.⁹⁵ Hence, when analysing the abuse by the Egyptian authorities of refugees one has to keep in mind that this abuse might not have to do as such with being a refugee but with being a inhabitant of Egypt.

Apart from the government's mistreatment of the refugee population, the xenophobic attitudes present in the Egyptian society tend to marginalize many refugee groups even more. Especially darker skinned African refugees express that they feel racially discriminated with no means to turn to the authorities when this happens. Most interviewees commented on racial abuse from local people in the streets or their employees.

Some scholars, like Al-Sharmani, argue that in some Middle Eastern societies, like Egypt, Libya and Saudi Arabia, there is very little room for multiculturalism and ethnic differences. "Their discourse of nationhood is based on restricted and highly exclusionary notions of what defines a national."⁹⁶ In order to verify this statement I analysed a map of the World Data Survey on the world's most and least racially tolerant countries. This institute mapped the countries according to the highest and lowest rate of people stating that they don't want people with other 'ethnic backgrounds' to be their neighbours. Egypt

⁹³ Sara Gates, "The Ten Worst Countries for Human Rights," *The World Post* (12 April 2014) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/03/human-rights-risk-atlas-2014-violations-maplecroft_n_4374133.html.

⁹⁴ The Guardian, "*Human Rights Abuses by country*," accessed January 19, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/Tables/4_col_tables/0,,258329,00.html.

⁹⁵ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2017," accessed January 19, 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2017>.

⁹⁶ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood, 6.

has a rate of 30 to 39,9% of people that stated that they do not want someone with another ethnic background to be their neighbour, which makes Egypt one of the least racially tolerant countries.⁹⁷

This high rate of intolerance towards other ethnicities in Egypt matches the complaints I heard repeatedly when conducting social assessments. Refugees from different countries, with various ethnicities, coming from numerous tribes, face racism and discrimination in Egypt. Some because of their skin colour, some because of their language and others because of their habits or their appearance. While the African refugees stand out mostly because of their skin colour, Iraqi refugees might stand out because of what is viewed as their 'conservative Islamic' way of dressing, or because of their Shi'a traditions and habits. But as Berry argued, those whose physical features set them apart from the society of settlement may experience the most blunt racism. 'Dark skinned' refugees in Egypt can be easily distinguished as being 'the other' just by looking at them, while for example Shi'a Iraqis are also considered 'the other' but it is not as obvious.

Mostly 'dark skinned' refugees in Cairo, from all different African countries, like (South)-Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somalian and Nigerian complain about the constant verbal insults they hear, the violent attacks by Egyptian youth and the overall lack of respect they get from the Egyptians. In 2004 there was a gang of Egyptian criminals operative in poor areas, attacking Sudanese children and men on the street by stabbing and beating them.⁹⁸ Many interviewees of African origin expressed their concerns regarding the physical and verbal abuse their children face at school or in the streets. 8 out of 43 interviewees shared stories about their children being attacked in the streets by Egyptian pupils because of their skin colour. As a result, many African families keep their children inside their houses in order to protect them. This actually leads to further segregation of the two 'societies'.

Furthermore, 12 of the 43 interviewees stated that they themselves have been the target of physical attacks by Egyptians towards them. This physical abuse occurred mostly on the streets and happened to men and women. They were being robbed by Egyptian gangs or

⁹⁷ Max Fisher, "A fascinating map of the world's most and least racially tolerant countries," The Washington Post (May 15, 2013) accessed January 19, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/05/15/a-fascinating-map-of-the-worlds-most-and-least-racially-tolerant-countries/?utm_term=.86b70bc5abab.

⁹⁸ Katarzyna Grabska, "Living on the Margins: The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese refugees with closed files in Egypt," 73.

just physically attacked for no particular reason. All of the attacked were 'dark skinned' refugees.

Besides the discrimination and the physical attacks refugees in general face in Egypt, refugee women also have to endure sexual assault. The frequent and severe sexual assaults against refugee women have a great impact on the livelihood of the women and a negative influence on their chance of integrating in the Egyptian society. Victims of sexual assault were mostly 'women of colour'. One can ask the question if this is just coincidence or if there is a link between sexism and racism. If there is a link, where both isms are used as a tool of oppression, then the intersection of these attitudes make women of colour particularly susceptible to sexual violence. Al-Sharmani argued in his studies that in Egypt, African women are mostly perceived as having loose manners and being provocative, which certain Egyptians believe results in corrupting the morals of the Muslim society.⁹⁹

7 of the 43 female interviewees expressed that they have been sexually harassed by Egyptian men. Again, it has to be noted that not only refugee women suffer. Harassment is a big problem in Egypt. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women published a report showing the most recent statistics of sexual harassment in Egypt. The study shows that 99.3% of Egyptian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment.¹⁰⁰

A more shocking number is the number of refugee women that have been a victim of rape. Of the 43 interviewees, 9 expressed that they have been raped by Egyptian men. These attacks were mostly carried out by landlords, or employers. Especially here the extreme high rate of refugee women that have been a victim of rape, and the fact that they were all 'women of colour' cannot be left unnoticed. Although the verbal harassment of women is a plague in Egypt that women of all colours, nationalities and ethnicities suffer from, it seems that dark skinned women are more susceptible when it comes to actual sexual attacks. Especially when trying to forge a livelihood by working and renting a place, single women are more vulnerable.

So, the difficulty of integration of refugees into Egyptian society is illustrative in Egypt's position towards refugees and their place in Egyptian society. Within the framework

⁹⁹ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood,2.

¹⁰⁰ Basil, El-Dabh, "99.3% of Egyptian Women Experienced Sexual Harassment." *Daily News Egypt* (April 28, 2014) <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/04/28/99-3-of-egyptian-women-experienced-sexual-harassment-report/>.

of the policies of the government and its actual practices, refugees can be seen as the 'others' that cannot and should not be part of what is perceived as the 'nationals'.¹⁰¹ But who is the 'other', and why is the other, 'the other?' To answer these questions I will use the theory of Gerd Baumann regarding the 'us' vs. 'them' categorizations in identity discourses.

Identity vs. alterity

In order to comprehend the relationship between the 'self' and 'other' in different discourses, Baumann has developed a useful guide. He claims that identity, whether collective or individual, is inevitably tied to exclusions of alterity; every 'us' excludes a 'them'. Besides the simplistic binary grammar of 'we are good, so they are bad', Baumann explores more complex grammars of selfing and othering.¹⁰²

Baumann distinguishes the notion of 'othering' by differentiating various processes of selfing/othering according to three 'grammars'. These grammars are based on three classic social theories, namely; Orientalism by Edward Said (1987), the 'Segmentation Theory' by Evans-Pritchard (1940) and the 'Theory of Encompassment' by Dumont (1980). First of all, orientalising creates the 'self' and 'other' as 'negative mirror images' of each other. Baumann states that Orientalism is not 'a simple binary opposition of 'us=good' and 'them = bad', but a shrewd mirrored reversal of: 'what is good in us is (still) bad in them, but what got twisted in us (still) remains straight in them.' The theory of segmentation from Evans-Pritchard defines 'self' and 'other' according to the level of exclusion or inclusion. It defines identities and alterities according to context. Evans-Pritchard studies the Nuer people in Sudan, who seemed constantly to be at war with each other, from the smallest to the largest scale but came together to resist British interference. The common enemy stopped the fighting against each other and united them to fight the external enemy together. This is what Evans-Pritchard calls 'the fluctuation of the classificatory levels.' And thirdly encompassment, a theory that originates from the analysis of Dumont on the Indian system of caste. Encompassment means an 'act of selfing by appropriating,' where the 'self' and 'other' are defined by hierarchical categorization.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Refugee Livelihood, 30.

¹⁰² Gerd Baumann, *Grammars of identity/alterity: a structural approach* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006):19.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 19-25.

These grammars interact in various processes of 'other' and 'selfing' in the fields of politics, religion or the society in general. This interaction between these grammars can be seen in the competition of person against person, party against party or country against country. Within these competitions, each part constructs its 'self' and the 'other' where after it decides to proclaim the 'other' into an orientalist mirror image, a segmentary ally, or as an 'encompassable part of us.'¹⁰⁴

Baumann argues that orientalist selfing/otherings can be relatively peacefully and can result in the idea of complementarity, but does not usually lead to ideas of equality. Reaching equality can be reached best in the segmentary grammar, mainly because any enemy can be classified as a friend in a particular situation. This segmentary grammar, however, is rather unstable, unless threatened by a common outside enemy, argues Baumann. According to Dumont, the idea of encompassment does not include equality whatsoever, but can nevertheless mean peaceful co-existence.¹⁰⁵

When applying this theory on grammars of selfing and othering to the relationship between certain refugee groups and the Egyptian host society one could argue that the selfing/othering of the Egyptian society is structured by an orientalist grammar. Although the selfing/othering is based on different elements when it comes to the different refugee groups, in most of the Egyptian grammar, an orientalist grammar can be found. The rhetoric of 'we are good, and they are bad' is present, but is mostly heard when talking about African refugees, where the African people are seen as 'different' with 'oriental' traditions, clothing etc.

Although this orientalist grammar of Egyptians towards African refugees is not unfamiliar to me since I lived in Cairo and interacted with Egyptians for extensive and long periods, I have not come across an example to demonstrate this grammar myself. Nevertheless, Grabska cites in her study regarding the marginalization of Sudanese in the Egyptian society, some common complaints from Egyptians regarding their Sudanese neighbours. One of these complaints is their frequent family and friends visits, which are common to Sudanese. Sudanese socializing and the practice of hosting guests are perceived as annoying and against Egyptian norms, argues Grabska.¹⁰⁶ I believe the orientalist grammar

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 48.

¹⁰⁶ Katharina Grabska, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo," 301.

comes to the fore clearly in this example since it does not only demonstrate the rhetoric of 'we are good' and 'they are bad' but also the shrewd mirrored image of 'what is good in us is (still) bad in them' since Egyptians mostly consider themselves, and are proud of, being social beings that care extremely about hosting friends and family. So it seems that the Sudanese socializing, which is common in a lot of African cultures, is a practice that is experienced by Egyptians as a practice being good within themselves but bad in the 'others', who are in this case the Sudanese refugees.

But when analysing the selfing/othering rhetoric of Egyptians towards the refugees in their country, it becomes clear that there is more to it than just an orientalist grammar. Another grammar that can be traced when analysing the 'self' and other in the Egyptian society, is the segmentary grammar. A crucial factor in the segmentary grammar of identity/alterity lies in its contextual awareness. In this grammar the scale of exclusion or inclusion is determined by the context. As stated before in this thesis, it is essential to understand the context in order to understand the refugee issue in Egypt. The notion of context is central in this theory, just as it is in this research. The fluctuating classificatory levels by Evans-Pitchard can also be traced in the relationship between certain groups or countries and Egypt.

An example that cannot be left untouched is the relationship between Egypt and Sudan since it is quite a complex one, where Egyptians refer to Sudanese as 'their brothers' alongside the more degrading term of 'poor cousins'. Sudan has long held traditions and deep roots in Egyptian society, going back to the British rule in the region, where Egypt and Sudan were treated as one country. Later on, Nasser called for Arab Unity, which put Egypt at the centre of the Arab world and placed northern Sudan in Egypt's political sphere.¹⁰⁷ This goal of Arab unity was to end western influence in the Middle East. A common enemy, namely 'the West', resulted in the alliance of Sudan and Egypt.

Before 1995, the Wadi El Nil agreement was in place between Egypt and Sudan which gave the Sudanese almost unrestricted access in Egypt to employment, health services, education and the ownership of property, similar to that of citizens. As security conditions deteriorated in Egypt, the Sudanese experienced an increase in security checks and the relation between the Egyptian and Sudanese governments became strained. In 1996, former

¹⁰⁷ Anita Häusermann Fábos, "Ambiguous Borders, Ambivalent Subjects," *Auto/Biography and the Construction of Identity and Community in the Middle East* (2001) 179.

President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, survived an assassination attempt during his visit to Addis Ababa. The rumour went that the failed attack was carried out by an 'Islamic' terrorist group with the help of the Sudanese Intelligence Services. After that attack the Wadi El Nile agreement was annulled. This move made the status of Sudanese residing in Egypt almost the same as that of any foreigner. This period also marked the beginning of screening applications for refugee status from Sudanese.¹⁰⁸ So, not only did the common external enemy of Egypt and Sudan fade away as the colonial period was 'over', Sudan became a new external power to watch out for. The classificatory levels shifted when the context changed, where at one moment one can be classified as someone's foe and in another situation that same foe can be classified as a friend.

The 'newly' arrived Sudanese go through a different experience in comparison to the well-established and integrated group whose arrival took place in the time Sudan and Egypt were still foes. The Sudanese refugees now are often perceived by the Egyptian community as a poor, uneducated group with a very different cultural background. The long established Sudanese community in Egypt claims that since the arrival of the refugees from Sudan, the image held by the Egyptians of the Sudanese has negatively changed.¹⁰⁹

Grabska argues in her case study of Sudanese refugees in Cairo that despite the hardship Sudanese refugees face from Egyptian society, some manage to 'informally' integrate into the society. According to Grabska, integration depends on the refugees' religious background and their place of origin. She argues that those with an Arab Muslim origin coming from the northern part of Sudan are more aligned with the Egyptian Arab society, while those with Christian, non-Arab origins are less aligned and more prone to further marginalization. In addition, the scholar al-Sharmani argues that the restrictive nationalist discourse goes hand in hand with an inclusive Muslim identity and that Muslim refugees often make claims to their religion in an attempt to be more accepted in the society. Al-Sharmani says that the Muslim identity is differentiated in an Arab Muslim identity where the non-Arab ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the 'other' set them apart from the Egyptians and place them in an inferior status.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Katharina Grabska, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo," 294.

¹⁰⁹ Anita Häusermann Fábos, "Ambiguous Borders, Ambivalent Subjects," 179.

¹¹⁰ Gerd Baumann, *Grammars of identity/alterity: a structural approach*, 27.

Regarding the above mentioned statements of two of the main scholars on refugees in Egypt, Grabska and Al-Sharmani, a discontinuity can be found between this 'deductive code' namely; religion as a tool for integration and the 'inductive codes', collected from my own data. Where both scholars argue that the possibility of integration in Egypt can depend on one's religious background, my collected data did not show a difference between Arab-Muslim refugees, Muslim refugees, or refugees with other religious backgrounds. Refugees from all kinds of ethnic and religious backgrounds told stories of discrimination, harassment and violent attacks by Egyptians.

Nevertheless, it needs to be taken into consideration that it is hard to compare the integration opportunities of Muslim refugees and refugees with other religious backgrounds, since I mainly interviewed Muslim refugees due to the fact that most refugees in Egypt originate from predominantly Muslim countries. However, without making a comparison, the conclusion that can be made here is that Muslim refugees in Egypt face much discrimination, despite the fact that they are Muslim. Moreover, the fact that Egypt scores very high regarding intolerance towards 'the other' and 'the other' consist mostly of people with a shared Muslim identity, shows that this Muslim identity does not result in more acceptance. So, contrary to the arguments of both Grabska and al-Sharmani, my data showed no division of 'us' vs. 'them' based on a shared religion, or a shared ethnic/religious background like an Arab Muslim. Baumann provides some possibility for explaining this.

Baumann states that religious competition for authority are mostly argued by the orientalisising grammar. Baumann gives as example the Catholics, 'who value their own ritual finery above the sobriety of the Protestants, whilst at the same time admitting that Protestant' liberal individualism has something compared to Catholic hierarchical thinking.' Baumann argues that this orientalisising grammar can be found as well between Christians and Muslims, and the same goes for the other religions. He further argues that when the 'selves' and 'others' are facing pressure from the outside, their mutual differences are often put aside through segmentary grammars. The intervening levels 'choose' who is included in the new selfing and othering and who is excluded.¹¹¹

A well-known example is the Muslim idea of 'The People of The Book' which claims a relation between Muslims, Jews and Christians by recognizing the first book as a common source. After the September 11 attacks, politicians in the United States used this idea of a

¹¹¹ Gerd Baumann, *Grammars of identity/alterity: a structural approach*, 29.

common book to calm anti-Muslim rhetoric. Nevertheless, despite the efforts, the appeal to this segmentary grammar did not prevent the arrests of many Muslims in America. Baumann explains this by arguing that it is hard for segmentary grammars to argue for unity when orientalism is the dominant sentiment. As one can see, the grammars fluctuate and depend upon agency. 'Even the most inclusive religious selfings and otherings can switch from a grammar of segmentation towards a grammar of orientalism or encompassment.'¹¹²

Apparently, when applying Baumann's theory on the case of Egypt, the orientalist grammar is a stronger sentiment than the segmentary grammar when it comes to religion. Refugees with a Muslim identity are not perceived as being equal, although they share common ground. This might be because there is no perceived external threat that unites the 'selves' and 'others' under one banner. So, as religion might be able to play a role in the potential for integration of refugees into a predominantly Arab and Muslim society, racist and xenophobic attitudes often overrule it. Sharing a religious identity with the majority of the host society does not seem to alleviate the effect of being considered an 'outsider' in Egypt. The 'other' consists mostly of 'dark skinned' African refugees, whose othering is based on a predominantly orientalist grammar.

But although the relation between Egyptian hosts and refugees is often characterized by discrimination at the hands of the Egyptians, this simplification does not reflect the complex interactions between the two groups. There is also a lack of trust present within certain refugee groups towards the Egyptians. This is especially the case among those refugees with a Christian religion and non-Arab background, like the South-Sudanese. South-Sudanese refugees mostly have bad memories and experiences of discrimination, Islamization and Arabization from Sudan.

Many Sudanese interviewees with a non-Arab ethnicity or with a non-Muslim religion, or both, (like the South-Sudanese) shared stories about being attacked by 'Arab rebels' in Sudan. Many villages in Sudan are under constant attack by the Arabs as a result of an Arabization and Islamization project that was, and still is, very prominent in Sudan today. The ongoing, horrendous oppression of ethnic and religious minorities in Sudan at the hands of the Arabs resulted in the fleeing of many across the border to Egypt, only there to find themselves again living in a predominantly Muslim and Arab society. Especially those minorities feel threatened that integrating with the locals will make them lose their identity,

¹¹² Ibid, 30.

something they fought so hard for in order to keep in their country of origin. Keeping their culture and traditions is very important to them. Therefore, refugee parents often refuse to send their children to Arabic speaking schools, since they prefer their children to be educated in English. But since the possibilities for English education are limited, parents often decline education for their children.¹¹³

The intensity of the mistrust of these particular refugee groups towards the Egyptians became all the more clear to me when I attended community meetings as a UNHCR staff member. The community meetings were set up as a part of the community outreach project initiated by the UNHCR as an efficient way to get to understand the needs of the different refugee groups who are spread across Cairo. Every refugee association has a chance to send their representatives and sit down with the UNHCR staff to discuss the problems the community is facing in Egypt and what kind of help they need from the UNHCR to tackle these problems. During the meetings I attended, the community leaders complained about the mistreatment they suffered from Egyptians.

The community association that represented the people from the Nuba Mountains in Sudan, even refused to have Egyptian staff attending the meeting. Against the background of the history the Nuba Mountain people have with Arabs back home, it is hard for them to face this same ethnic group in their country of refuge. Although the residents of the Nuba Mountain identify with the South, they weren't allowed to join South Sudan when it became independent in 2011. Therefore, they still live under the authoritarian Arab rule of Sudan. The community leaders expressed their anger towards what they called the 'Arab' colonialism of which they believe they are still a victim of in Egypt. For them it was unthinkable to sit across the table from people they see as their enemy.

The 'us' vs. 'them' rhetoric is obviously present here in both parties. The segmentary grammar can be depicted here, where the 'Arabs' are their enemy to whom multiple distinct peoples with different languages and religions, unite against under one umbrella, called the Nuba Mountain people. Due to this mistrust, community based projects are often treated with scepticism since certain refugee groups are reluctant to join in projects in cooperation with Egyptian organizations as they fear being taken advantage of. This means that the long-term prospects of these Sudanese minority groups to integrate or their chance of securing

¹¹³ Katharina Grabska, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo," 301.

their livelihood are considerably lower than those without this mistrust in the society they seek refuge in.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

The vulnerability context at the society level depends mostly on the relation between the refugee population and the host society. In countries like Egypt, one's livelihood depends mostly on being connected to the society, which means being integrated. So when trying to understand the vulnerability context on a society level it is important to understand the possibility of integration in that particular society. Berry argues that integration can only be pursued in host societies where there is a positive 'multicultural ideology' present. When looking at statistic and my own collected data it becomes clear that this positive stance towards a multicultural society is not present in Egypt. Although for some refugee groups it is easier to blend into the society than others, there is a general 'us' vs 'them' rhetoric present that is not really based on religion or ethnicity but more on an orientalist overall feeling. Especially the darker skinned African refugees express that they feel racially discriminated. Many refugees see integration as an unfeasible goal in Egypt.

But how do refugees survive in an urban environment like Cairo, where the UNHCR sees integration as the most plausible option for them but is in reality for most not a realistic goal? The data that I have been able to collect during my internship with the UNHCR unfortunately cannot shed much light on this issue. To answer this question would require another study. However, two interpreters from the UNHCR, who are also refugees, shared stories with me that throw some light on their strategies to survive in Cairo. I will now present their case studies as a first exploration of what strategies refugees in Cairo may employ and what both personal and structural factors may inform the choices they make.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 303.

Chapter 3.1- Two illustrative case studies

The story of Nusa

I will start with the story of Nusa, a 26 year old female from the Nuba Mountains in Sudan. Nusa fled to Cairo three years ago due to the ongoing terror of the Arab militia against the people from the Nuba Mountains. The Nuba mountains are home to different ethnic groups, together referred to as the Nuba people. Nusa is part of one of the largest ethnic groups of the Nuba people, the Moro tribe. Most members of the Moro tribe are Christian.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement that led to the independence of South-Sudan in 2011 did not give the Nuba Mountains the right to join their Southern allies. The region stayed under the control of the government of Bashir. Since most of the Nuba people do not share the Arabic language or the Sharia law with the north, cultural disputes led to the prosecution of the Nuba people by the Sudanese regime. Civilians are up until this day attacked by bombs and militia attacks.

Nusa told me about the many attacks she and her family had to endure on an almost daily basis. Every time such an attack occurred people ran away and searched for shelter in the mountain caves. The last time the militia came and attacked the village, Nusa and her family fled the scene and went in separate directions. After Nusa returned from hiding in the mountains her village was destroyed and her parents were nowhere to be found. Nusa decided to leave the Nuba Mountains for Khartoum. During her journey she was arrested

and detained by militia who interrogated her for two weeks. After she was released she finally reached Khartoum but left quickly for Cairo due to the racism she faced from the Arab-Sudanese in Khartoum because she was a 'black', Christian woman from the Nuba Mountains. Once she arrived in Cairo she discovered that the situation for her in Cairo was not much different from that in Sudan. She stated:

I miss the Nuba Mountains and I think it is maybe better to live there since I am still facing discrimination from the Arab Sudanese as well as from the Egyptians. They beat us here as well. So what is the difference? If I have to die, I rather die in the Nuba Mountains. But for now I just keep on fighting here.

Nusa received shelter and food from her community as soon as she arrived in Cairo. Since the beginning of 2015, Nusa shares a house with other single women from the Nuba mountains. Since people know that they are not accompanied by men, their house is under a lot of attacks by Egyptian men who harass them and rob them of their belongings.

They took away my phone and everything we had at home. They said that black people don't deserve to have belongings, that's why they took it from us.

When I asked Nusa how she survives as an African, single woman alone in Cairo she answered that she is not alone. Many Moro people live in Cairo, which she considers as her family and together they deal with the problems and hardship they face. When she started to speak about her community her sad mood changed in a proud and hopeful attitude.

The Moro community is really strong, they are good people. I do hang out with other tribes but I feel mostly at ease with my own people. The Moro people have their own culture and tradition. We are really different from other tribes. We have an unique way of dancing for example. Even here in Cairo, we still practice our dancing and our culture on a weekly basis. The community is really important for the young generation, especially the children that lost their parents. We give them advice and teach them their culture. I am very active in this, I love to do this.

The Moro tribe in Cairo is organized and officially represented in the UNHCR. There is a community leader, a centre where they meet and where they have regular meetings. Most

of the Moro people live in the same area. I asked Nusa if she could marry someone from another tribe if she would want to do so. She stated that she can marry anyone but when she marries someone they will become a part of the tribe and the family and so the tribe needs to approve of this person. But that does not mean he has to be Moro. Although she does prefer someone that has the same religion as she has.

Clearly, Nusa sees her community as a positive aspect in her life. The community gives her a sense of belonging in a place and time where she has lost everything and is being treated as an outsider due to her ethnicity, skin colour and religion. The traditions for her and her community are extremely important since they are fighting back home and outside for their existence.

In light of the livelihood framework, Nusa's vulnerability context is defined by several aspects. One of these aspects is her physical feature as a 'dark-skinned' person which sets her apart from the members of the host society. Another important aspect that influences her vulnerability is her flight history. Back in Sudan Nusa fled the terror she faced as a Christian, 'African' woman under an Arab, Muslim regime. When she arrived in Cairo she found herself once again living in a predominantly Muslim and Arab society. Not only did she had to seek refuge in this society after fleeing such a society, she had to settle amongst them.

To Nusa, Egyptians are Arabs and Arabs are the aggressors. However, as discussed before, most Egyptians do not make this distinction between Arabs and Africans. Nusa is to most Egyptians just a 'dark-skinned' woman from Sudan. As becomes clear, the 'us' vs. 'them' grammar here is quite complicated. Regarding the Segmentation Theory of Evans, the classificatory levels differ for both parties which results in different segmentary allies. For Sudanese Arabs being Arab means being included in the 'us', and being African means being excluded to the 'them'. For the Egyptian Arabs, being Arab is not the including factor in their 'them'. Their including factor is being Egyptian and one can say that their excluding factor is being 'dark skinned'.

The Arab Egyptians are for Nusa not just 'others', she perceives them as aggressors, more than they see her as an aggressor. As a result, one can describe Nusa's acculturation strategy as a mix of segregation and separation. Nusa is separated since she sticks to her own identity and does not wish to have a close relation with members of the host society.

Nusa is segregated in the sense that her not being part of the host society is also imposed by the dominant group since they perceive her as the 'other' as well.

Besides being 'dark-skinned' in Egypt, being a single, young woman is another aspect of Nusa's vulnerability context. Not only does Nusa face racism but also sexism which makes her a victim of the intersection of both isms and therefore particularly susceptible to sexual violence. Nusa has been a victim of several violent attacks, which she explains as a result of being vulnerable as a 'dark-skinned' woman alone, without parents or a partner.

When looking at the various aspects, one can say that Nusa is particularly vulnerable in Egypt. She is an African, Christian, single woman who is living in a predominantly Muslim-Arab society that is intolerant towards other races and has a bad record of harassment towards women. The institutional and structural context in which Nusa has to forge a livelihood is rather difficult. Nevertheless, she considers to have an important asset in Egypt; her fellow Moro tribe members who are also living in Cairo. Her community has not only provided her with basic needs like shelter and food but also with a sense of belonging.

The story of Hamdi

Someone who has a rather different opinion regarding the idea of community is Hamdi. Hamdi is also an interpreter for the UNHCR. He is a 33 years old man from Darfur-Sudan and originates from the Barku tribe. He was born in al-Ginena (west-Darfur) but he grew up with his aunt and uncle in Gezira state (east-central Sudan). According to the tradition of his tribe, children are adopted by their mother's sister as soon as the mother stops breastfeeding them. Hamdi explains that the intention of this practice is probably to strengthen the family bond by making children strongly attached to both their biological parents as well as their aunts and uncles. So, Hamdi grew up with his aunt and uncle until he was old enough to attend high school. At the age of 9 he left Gezira State to go to the capital city of Sudan, Khartoum, in order to receive higher quality education.

Since his father was selling fruits at the market and his mother was a housewife there was not enough money for him to continue his studies after high school. Therefore, Hamdi left Sudan at the age of 17 and went to Egypt alone to earn money to go to the university. Hamdi admits that the main reason he left Sudan was not because of the war in Darfur since he never experienced the war first hand. He left Sudan mainly for economic and education purposes. Prior to his travel to Egypt, Hamdi contacted a member of his tribe who was

already living in Cairo to ask for his help as soon as he would arrive in Cairo. The man hosted him for a couple of weeks and got him a cleaning job. Due to the job Hamdi managed to become self-sufficient rather quickly. He moved into an apartment that he still lives in till now. He shares the house with four other Sudanese men, all from Darfur but only one of them originates from the same tribe as Hamdi.

Hamdi lived in Cairo for over one year until he found out that there is a UNHCR office in Cairo where one can register as a refugee. The fact that Hamdi did not know about the presence of the UNHCR for so long probably has to do with the fact that he does not interact a lot with his community. Since the information flow of the UNHCR is mostly based on a community network approach, information barely reaches the 'exceptional cases' like Hamdi, who do not interact with their community. Being closely connected to the community in Cairo means having access to information and channels for help. Unlike Nusa, Hamdi is not involved with his community and so the possibility for him to receive information or help is quite limited. Although the Barku tribe has a strong sense of community in Cairo, with weekly community meetings in their community centre, Hamdi chose not to be part of all this. Although his tribe keeps on trying to include him in their activities, he kindly rejects their offers.

I am not part of a community. Maybe you can say I am part of the Sudanese community but I am definitely not part of the tribal community. Everyone is saying we need to raise our voice as a tribe but I believe we need to raise our voice as refugees in general. Not even Sudanese refugees only, we refugees need to stand together and not divide ourselves into different groups. Who will listen to you when you say I am better than you? To say I am Barku and I am better than you, how can this result into anything positive? Become better than me by education, but not by the fact that you are just from another tribe. To be proud of a tribe is primitive. I will never tell them that I think they are primitive cause they might kill me, or at least they will stop talking to me.

So, Hamdi argues that the focus on tribal communities results in a division between the different tribes, which stands in the way of cooperation as one group of refugees and in the way of positive change. Another negative effect of the community centred lives according to Hamdi is the fact that people do not think for themselves but plainly follow the century old

traditions of their tribe. They never ask themselves if these traditions are right or wrong. This attitude stands in the way of development, he argues.

For example, if I go to another tribe and offer them my services as a teacher to educate their children for free, they will decline my offer just because I am from another tribe. This is a clear example of how these tribal communities stand in the way of development. Even if I have to offer something from which they can benefit, they will not accept it just because I am from another tribe. They choose tradition before development. Without development we will never be successful.

When I asked Hamdi if he could give an example of a tradition in his tribe that he believes should not be followed he answered that although his tribe does not have 'bad' traditions, many other tribes do. He explains that his tribe is known as one of the most religious tribes in Sudan and so religion is at the core of all its practices, unlike other tribes where religion is more on the background and the tribal culture and its traditions are the leading factor. Hamdi hesitantly stated that some of these tribes have the tradition that the bride and groom have sexual intercourse the night before they get married, a tradition that is not in line with the rules of Islam.

I asked Hamdi if he ever felt the urge to discard his principles and join his community in order to receive some help. He answered that he never felt this urge but many other people do and use their tribes just for the benefits.

I came here as a teenager who didn't know anything, I couldn't even speak any other language except that of my mother tongue. Now I can speak English, Italian and French and I graduated from the Cairo University. I did this all on my own. Some people live in the 'best' countries, like the United States, but they didn't achieve what I have achieved. It doesn't depend on the country you are in, it depends on yourself. That doesn't mean that I do not want to get resettled but resettlement for me is not just moving from one country to another 'better' country. I will first try to figure out what I will do there. Just moving to the United States for example does not solve my problems.

Although Hamdi opposes the idea of a community, he does admit that he mostly hangs out with Sudanese people since he believes that they understand each other best, partly because of their common language. The person that he is most close to in Cairo is his friend Mostafa, who is not only Sudanese but originates from the Barku tribe as well. He met

Mostafa through a common friend in Cairo. Nevertheless, marrying someone from another tribe is no issue for Hamdi. Although his future wife has to be Muslim, the rest does not matter to him.

Obviously, Hamdi has a very different perspective on the concept of community than Nusa has. Where the community to Nusa is an institute that gives her a sense of belonging and strength, to Hamdi the community means an obstacle towards development. He does not use the community as an asset to forge a livelihood in Cairo like Nusa does. To Hamdi, education is the strategy to survive in Cairo.

How can it be explained that the way Hamdi forges a livelihood is so different from the way Nusa does, although they are both 'dark-skinned' refugees living in the urban area of Cairo? Where Nusa uses her community as a strategy to survive, Hamdi finds his asset in education instead of the community. The fact that Hamdi's strategies and assets in his livelihood framework are different than that of Nusa might have to do with their different vulnerability contexts. When looking at Hamdi's vulnerability context, a few things come to the forefront. First of all, Hamdi shares with Nusa the vulnerable aspect of being 'dark-skinned' in Egypt, which makes him also the 'other'. Also, just like Nusa, Hamdi came to Cairo alone without any relatives. But besides these two aspects, it seems that the context of Hamdi is quite different than that of Nusa. When looking at Hamdi's flight history for example, he left Sudan under very different circumstances than Nusa did. Although Hamdi was born in war-torn Darfur, he grew up in Gezira state where after he attended high school in Khartoum. For that reason he never experienced the direct effects of the war. Moreover, since Hamdi's tribe shares the language and Sharia law with that of the Sudanese government, he did not face the same aggression as Nusa did. Therefore, Arabs are not the aggressors or 'the others' to Hamdi, as is the case with Nusa. This probably makes it less complicated for him to settle in a predominantly Muslim/ Arab society like that of Egypt.

One can argue that the 'other' to Hamdi is the community and the 'us' to him are the people who are thinking outside the (community) box. But there is more to Hamdi's simplistic binary grammar of they are bad and we are good. When one reads between the lines, it seems that Hamdi believes that his tribal community is less bad than other tribal communities. When he was asked what he believed to be a 'bad' tradition in his tribe, he answered that although his tribe did not have any bad traditions, other tribes do. One can

depict here a orientalist rhetoric of what is good in us is still bad in them. Although communities in general are bad, his community is still better than other's.

What can be derived from the different livelihood frameworks of these two individuals is the notion that the context matters but also the actors in it. Although Nusa and Hamdi both need to settle in the same society, their livelihood framework differs from one another. Although the international, state and society level define the institutional and structural context in which a person needs to settle, the individual level shows us how a person settles within this context. Aspects like the flight history or the gender of a certain individual can also explain a great deal about how and why a person acts in a particular way in a certain context. Single women like Nusa not only need their community for assistance in food and shelter or for a sense of belonging but also for protection. These aspects all influence one's choice of acculturation strategy. The possibility of integration does not only depend on the structural and institutional context but also on the agency of the individual refugee. Integration in Egypt is for most a hard goal to achieve, but for some even more difficult than for others.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to understand the experience of urban refugees by comprehending the context in which they forge livelihoods as well as by examining their own actions. The following question has been posed in this thesis: "How do international policies, national settings and local actors define the context in which refugees need to forge a livelihood in? A case study of Cairo-Egypt as a host society to refugees."

To answer this question, a livelihood framework was used as the basis for analysis. This framework explored the interconnectedness of certain aspects that together define the context refugees need to forge a livelihood in. The external environment has been divided into three components, the international, state and society level. By exploring these components on the refugee situation in Egypt, we gained an understanding of the experience of the urban refugees in Cairo and their actual vulnerabilities and threats they face.

As we have seen, Egypt is a peculiar country when it comes to hosting refugees. The Egyptian government chose not to settle refugees in camps due to fear of creating a pull-factor for refugees. Nevertheless, due to international policies another pull-factor has been

created, namely the relatively big resettlement program in place in Egypt. Many refugees come to Egypt in the hope of one day being resettled to 'the West'. However, only a small per cent of them actually do see their dreams come true. The rest of them are expected to voluntarily repatriate or to integrate in Egyptian society. Since most conflicts in the neighbouring countries are ongoing, integration is mostly the only possibility left. In order to stimulate local integration, the UNHCR changed its policy from a 'care and maintenance model' towards a 'self-reliance model'. According to the UNHCR, decreasing the assistance of refugees to a minimum makes refugees less dependent and necessitates integration more. However, Egypt does not offer permanent residence and citizenship rights, including the right to employment, which makes integration rather difficult.

So, despite efforts of the Egyptian government not to create a pull-factor, Egypt became an attractive country to settle in due to the international resettlement program put in place by the UNHCR. Nevertheless, most refugees in Egypt find themselves not eligible for resettlement and so they are expected to integrate but the national settings in place do not work in their favour. The goal of the Egyptian government is not in line with the objective of the UNHCR, which leaves refugees in a state of limbo.

In accordance with Berry, integration can only be pursued in host societies where cultural diversity is seen as a value to society. As became clear throughout the thesis, a positive stance towards a multicultural society is not present in Egypt. There is a general 'us' vs. 'them' rhetoric present that is not based on religion or ethnicity but mostly on an orientalist overall feeling. Especially for 'dark-skinned' refugees, Egypt is a troubled environment to live in. Many refugees tell stories of harassment and discrimination they face at the hands of Egyptians. So, besides the difficult national settings of the host country, the cultural and linguistic incompatibility between the host and refugee communities make the possibility of local integration a difficult goal to achieve.

As we have seen, the fact that the host society shares the same religion with the majority of refugees does not result in a better relationship between the two parties per se. This is an interesting notion when looking at the refugee situation in 'the West', where the restraint towards refugees is often linked to the fear of Islam. It makes one wonder if there would be a more positive stance from the host society towards refugees when the refugees would share the same religion with the majority of the Europeans, or if these refugees would

face the same reluctance as Muslim refugees, despite their shared religion. To answer this question would require another research but it is a relevant question to ask oneself.

Going back to the context of Egypt, one should ask if a positive stance towards refugees entering their country can be expected from a society in an economically depleted country, where the lower and middle class are struggling themselves to survive? Refugees need to compete with the locals at the margins of society over work, living space and food. This competition can lead to further destabilization of these vulnerable populations. The fact that the refugee population does have a chance, although very small, to be resettled to 'the West', and are entitled to receive assistance from the UNHCR when they have a 'specific need', can lead to frustration and violence from the local population who is not entitled to receive this form of assistance.

One of the arguments of the UNHCR for the 'self-reliant model' was regarding the danger that lies in providing urban refugees with relatively a lot of assistance when they reside in an under-developed country. Although one can question if the motive of the UNHCR was the fear of angering the local population, it is something to take into account. Nevertheless, cutting the assistance to a minimum and expecting refugees to integrate and be self-reliant in a context where the national settings do not allow refugees to work, and where the local population is intolerant towards the 'other', is an unrealistic expectation. Investing in programs for economic self-reliance (livelihood programs) for both the refugee population as well as the local population might be an effective tool to minimize the segregation between these groups.

Currently, with their assistance cut and without effective livelihood programs in place, refugees survive in the harsh environment by creating their own small societies within the urban area. These small societies mostly have a leader, regular meetings and a centre where they live out their traditions. Some are more involved in their community than others, but for many, relying on the community means the only way to survive. The UNHCR in Egypt is aware of the community centred lives and plays upon this concept with the so-called community based approach. This approach means relying on the community leaders and networks to get an understanding of what is needed and ways to provide assistance. Nevertheless, the focus of the UNHCR on the community is in contrast to their objective for refugees to integrate in the host society, since the focus on the community only further segregates the groups.

However, I would argue that this community based approach is an effective tool to assist refugees in Cairo. With this approach the UNHCR uses the context they work in instead of fighting it, as is the case with the objective of integration. Although the relationship between the UNHCR and the refugee communities still remains difficult, it is at least a starting point in efficiently assisting refugees in an urban area like Cairo. The international policy objective of integration is not something the current reality in Cairo allows and should maybe not be strived for at the moment.

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