The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

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Declaration

I, Helena Svele, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature…………………………………..

Date…………………………………………

To the people who are forced to flee

their homes, families, friends and properties

due to conflict, human rights violations and insecurity.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I am grateful to my Afghan informants who have shared their personal stories, and given me new insights about living as asylum seekers and refugees in Norway. I would also like to thank my non-Afghan informants who have through their sharing of information improved my understanding of the field. Further, I am thankful to my supervisors at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Dr. Ingrid Nyborg and Dr. Nadarajah Shanmugaratnam, who have supported me academically and encouraged me to follow up this work until the end. Another share of thanks goes to the Freedom of Expression Foundation for supporting me with financial means for the study, the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Service for approving my study, and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration for providing me with relevant statistics. Not to forget, I am grateful to my close family and friends, you know who you are, who have supported me throughout the process during ups and downs, and motivated me to complete this piece of work.

Abstract

Afghan refugees and asylum seekers constitute one of the largest groups of immigrants in Norway, and have for decades fled from conflict, human rights violations and insecurity in Afghanistan. Their lives in Norway are characterized as a situation between nation and state, as they are not citizens, although bound to the state. This study is an exploration of their various experiences and perceptions of identity formation, gender roles and relations, and the various forms of human security. It includes an examination of how these experiences and perceptions alter before, during and after flight, with an emphasis on the time in Norway after flight. Likewise, their future prospects are analyzed as it is closely connected to the long-term perspective of human security.

Acronyms:

ANA: Afghan National Army

AREU: Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit

CBO: Community Based Organization

CHS: Commission on Human Security

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

EASO: European Asylum Support Office

HDR: Human Development Report

HRW: Human Rights Watch

IMDi: (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet) Directorate of Integration and Diversity

IOM: International Organization for Migration

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NOAS: Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers

NPA: Norwegian People's Aid (Norsk Folkehjelp)

NSD: (Norsk safunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste) Norwegian Social Science Data Services

SSB: (Statistisk sentralbyrå) Statistics Norway

UDI: (Utlendingsdirektoratet) Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNE: (Utlendingsnemnda) Immigration Appeals Board

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Part 1

1.1. Introduction to the Field

With the long-lasting international presence in Afghanistan and the growing multicultural suburbs in Norway, globalization has come to play a role in different ways for people across continents. Globalization has frequently been seen in relation to international security issues, including the spread of terror, conflict and displacement. Although the world is shrinking, the protection of state borders and features of the state are still of major importance on the international political agenda. In the midst of this, there are Afghan people dispersed around the world due to conflict, human rights violations and insecurity. A smaller, but not insignificant portion of the Afghan population ends up in Norway, most of them as asylum seekers. They are 'living between nation and state' without citizenship in the host country, yet they are bound to the Norwegian state system in order to survive. In Norway, there is an ongoing debate in which some are arguing for the protection of the asylum institute, the principle of providing asylum for those who are in need of protection, but combined with tight restrictions on immigration. On the other side, it is stated there is need for more humane treatment of asylum seekers, and with the undocumented asylum seekers in particular. More humane treatment would involve thorough examination of the individual asylum cases at all stages of the asylum process in order to ensure that the human security of the asylum seekers is safeguarded.

My intention with this thesis is to listen to and communicate voices of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway and their experiences of human security, identity and gender, as well as their thoughts of the future. The idea is to present this case study within an international development context, rather than research on Afghan forced migrants in Norway per se. My aim is to show that there exists an interconnection between life in the busy streets of Oslo and life in a mountainous village in Afghanistan. What happens in Afghanistan has an impact on what happens in Norway and vice versa. A young woman whom has been married by force in Afghanistan may seek refuge in Norway or a Norwegian soldier might end up in an ISAF camp, fighting for a cause with unexpected outcomes. Nevertheless, my focus in this thesis will be on the Afghan women and men who flee to Norway, and how the transition from Afghanistan to Norway affects their experiences of identity, gender and human security. In order to narrow down the focus, I have chosen to focus on the adults, and not the particular experiences among children who flee together with their families or arrive as unaccompanied minor asylum

seekers. Although being aware that they represent a vulnerable group with special needs, I will leave a focus on this group to other researchers. For practical reasons, I sometimes use the term 'forced migrants' when I refer to the Afghans refugees and asylum seekers. Despite the incompleteness of the term, since this form of migration also involves some level of agency, I find this term the most descriptive, as both groups are a consequence of insecure and conflict-related conditions. The term diaspora is frequently used to cover migrant populations with transnational connections to countries of origin, but this term involves not only forced migrants but also those who migrate primarily for work or family purposes.

Identity, gender and human security are all terms that give various connotations; dependent on whom you talk to and to which context you refer. In my theoretical framework I have chosen identity, gender and human security as core concepts for further analysis. When I apply identity in this context it is useful to refer to a *transnational identity*, encompassing the impact of past, present and future on a person who has fled from various forms of insecure conditions. In addition, the identity of a refugee or an asylum seeker does constitute common features of identity, such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, class, and religious, political, educational and geographical background, which I refer to as an *intersectionality* of multiple identities. In the theory section the concepts transnational identity and intersectionality will be explained in detail. I find it necessary to do research on how migration impacts on identities when dealing with immigration and integration policies and practice, since these policies and practice have consequences for individual destinies and their well-being.

Regarding gender I am particularly interested in the *gender roles*, *gender relations* and *gendered security*, being socially constructed concepts, which play a role in people's lives. I want to explore the concepts in the context of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway, with an emphasis on perceptions and experiences I have discovered through conducting in-depth interviews with a limited number of Afghans. Gender roles and gender relations have certainly an influence in our everyday social reality, often reflecting power imbalances, and is perceived and experienced in different ways among people. Gender should also be seen in relation to human security, more specifically as gendered security, since men and women in many cases encounter security

in different ways. In addition, it could be experienced in various ways *among* men and *among* women, as I will reveal in the analysis section.

Human security is a comprehensive framework that is people-centred, rather than state-centred. I want to investigate experiences among Afghans in relation to the concept of *human security* as constituting both human rights and human development, and as a concept distinct from state security, as it places human beings at the centre of analysis. In my thesis, I want to expand and critique the notion of human security, seeing it in the context of Afghan forced migrants in Norway who are living 'between nation and state', in a fluid transitional process of belonging. Under these circumstances, the capabilities available at different times and according to their residential status may have substantial influence on the experiences of human security among Afghan women and men.

The Afghans are currently one of the largest immigrant populations in Norway, and most of them have arrived as refugees or asylum seekers as a cause of conflict, human rights violations and insecurity. They have come to Norway at different points in time; during the Soviet intervention, during civil war and Taliban rule and now during the ISAF/NATO intervention. It is hard to predict what will happen to the migration trend when the international forces pull out in 2014, since there are also strategic interests globally, regionally and nationally that may have consequences for the Afghan people. What we know is that the Afghans constitute a heterogeneous group of people with various ethnic, political, religious and geographical backgrounds, and these variations are also reflected among the Afghans in Norway. At the same time Norway, through its military presence, is involved in the project of fighting terrorism and building a democratic state in Afghanistan, Afghans are seeking refuge and asylum in Norway for various reasons, but they all claim that it is not secure for them to go back to Afghanistan at this point in time.

Security has also become part of a heated discussion after Norway was struck by the terror and massacre incident on the 22nd July 2011 caused by one person who was targeting multiculturalists and Muslims in Norway. Having this incident in mind it is even more necessary to do multidimensional and interdisciplinary research on immigration in Norway looking both at the intertwined causes and consequences of migration. Even though Norway is a small country it is still part of an increasingly

interconnected world. In that regard, I want to underline the need for knowledge about the heterogeneity of population, culture and ideas floating within and across borders. A year after the incidence on 22nd July 2011, there is still hostility and exclusion towards certain groups in society, despite the emphasis on more democracy and openness.

I have chosen to focus on the experiences of the Afghans in my research, not only because they constitute one of the largest groups of refugees and asylum seekers in the country, but also because most of them are Muslims. In addition, Norway has a particular connection to Afghanistan both as an aid donor and as part of the NATO/ISAF force. Hence, it has contributed with a combination of humanitarian assistance and military force with its presence on Afghan soil in a so-called humanitarian intervention. This humanitarian intervention has been characterized by a state-centric approach to security and development ignoring local voices and local understandings of the concepts. Keeping this background context in mind, I want to highlight the situation of Afghans in Norway based on in-depth information I have collected from my informants.

The reason why I chose to write about refugees and asylum seekers in Norway is also out of personal interest. While volunteering for an NGO I lived for a longer period as a foreigner in Sri Lanka. This period was a rich adventure, and I experienced many challenges living as a foreigner in a country significantly different from Norway in terms of culture and custom. Although refugees and asylum seekers migrate to another country as a result of *forced* migration while I moved *voluntarily*, I can still through this experience identify somewhat with their struggles of adapting to a new culture and system. My experience from abroad has also inspired me to do research on refugees and asylum seekers and learn more about the particular situation they are living in as forced migrants. I hope this thesis will give some food for thought to politicians, practitioners, researchers as well as ordinary people who are working and are interested in the field of migration and development.

For my thesis, I have developed two main research questions I aim to address: *What are the experiences of identity, gender and human security among Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway? How have these experiences altered before, during and after flight? What are their thoughts regarding their future and a possible return?* I aim to answer these questions by using a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach to

the field of study building on my background in development studies. In the background chapter there is a brief presentation of the current security situation in Afghanistan, followed by a description of the transnational community of Afghans. Further, I have looked at those who are in need of protection, and then explained the motives and patterns of Afghan migration, as well as the responses to it. Following this, the focus shifts to the role of Norway in Afghanistan and the security-development nexus, the human security of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway and the role of gender with regards to asylum and refuge. In the literature review and theoretical framework chapter I explore the concepts of identity, gender and human security, and related concepts and categories, such as transnational identity and intersectionality, gender roles and relations, agency, empowerment and social inclusion/exclusion, and the different forms of human security, including gendered security. I also see human security in relation to refuge and asylum, the role of the state, and the principle of *non-refoulement*. In the end of this chapter, human security is viewed in the context of gender and migration. Throughout this chapter, I refer to previous research about these issues and try to see it in connection with my focus on Afghan refugees and asylum seekers. In the methodology chapter, the research paradigm, design and methods, as well as the writing process for the study is explained in detail. In the analysis and discussion chapter I reveal the findings I have discovered through the data collection, and discuss these in relation to previous research, national and international law and media. This chapter is divided in following three parts; 1) Transnational identity, gender and forced migration, 2) Human security and forced migration, and 3) Future thoughts and feelings of despair and hope. In the conclusion I refer back to the main findings.

2.1. Background Context

2.1.1. A brief look at the present security situation in Afghanistan

The present international intervention that has been going on in Afghanistan since 2001 has become a mixture of internal conflict with international involvement, reconstruction of a fragmented state and national state building. In the meantime, the everyday human security of the Afghan people is questioned, as the military intervention has prolonged and insurgency still persists. "Intensified warfare by the insurgents have been met very forcefully by the ANA and ISAF/NATO, raising many concerns about civilian casualties during aerial bombing" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:158). The latest Human Rights Watch report from Afghanistan shows that the armed conflict with Taliban and other insurgents increased rapidly in 2011 (HRW, January 2012). This trend is ongoing while the international forces are gradually pulling out by the end of 2014. How the situation will change for Afghanistan and the Afghan refugees worldwide when the international forces are out is uncertain. While there is no pure ethnic or religious conflict in Afghanistan, minorities belonging to distinct ethnic/religious groups do experience exclusion. There are cases of sectarian violence in Afghanistan, although this is more frequently in countries like Pakistan and Iraq[1]. Another urgent problem in Afghanistan is the increasing socio-economic inequality among the population, which creates insecurity.

Most Afghans who flee from conflict and insecurity remain in their country as internally displaced, as they do not have the resources and social network necessary for flight. "As of 30 June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that conflict-related violence had displaced approximately 114,900 people in Afghanistan of which 17,079 were newly displaced in the first half of 2012" (UNAMA, 2012:1). According to this source, displacement caused by conflict in the first half of 2012 was 14 percent higher compared to the same period the previous year. A sizeable population of Afghans has fled to neighbour countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, as well as other countries in the region. Furthermore, a considerable amount of Afghans end up as refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and elsewhere (Schmeidl & Maley, 2008). I will come back to their experiences of human security in a separate section.

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[1] *BBC News Asia* (06.12.2011) "Afghanistan bombs kill 58 in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif" http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16046079. (Uploaded 30.08.2012).

2.1.2. The transnational community of Afghans

The Afghans are composed of a vast number of ethnic groups. According to the CIA World Factbook, the ethnic composition is as follows; Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, and other 4%[2]. However, the percentages of each group may vary among sources, as there could be hidden interests behind the presentation of ethnic groups. Pashtu and Dari (Afghan Persian) are the official languages and most frequently used among the Afghans, but there are several minority languages as well. Almost all Afghans are Muslim, but are separated in Sunnis and Shias, while Sunnis constitute 80%, Shias are estimated to be 19%[3]. This heterogeneous population is represented in different parts of the world as a result of conflict and migration. Marginalized ethnic groups, such as the ethnic Hazaras, have typically been subjected to discrimination and target killings, although their position has improved since the fall of the Taliban regime.

According to Schmeidl and Maley (2008), about 60 percent of the entire refugee population in the world are Afghans. "Presently, the Afghan population is estimated at something over 20 million, but no comprehensive population census has ever been carried out (with the last one in 1979 still being the most accurate one)" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:132). Since there are many refugees who are not registered it makes it even more difficult to do proper data collection. A scattered population of Afghan refugees worldwide is the outcome of three decades of war and turbulence in Afghanistan. "With the passage of time, the consolidation of Afghan communities abroad, family reunification and marriage have led to new patterns of 'chain migration'" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:134). A transnational community of Afghans is developing as a consequence of this chain migration. Some Afghans have hardly spent time in their country of origin, as most of their lives have been spent in exile. Others have returned to Afghanistan at times of reconstruction searching for a new beginning, and some of them have again fled the country.

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[2] 2 CIA World Factbook, Afghanistan
https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html (Uploaded 15.05.2012).
[3] CIA World Factbook, Afghanistan
https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html (Uploaded 15.05.2012).

2.1.3. Who are in need of protection?

According to UNHCR, there are certain population groups at particular risk in
Afghanistan, including deportees, women (in particular those who are victims of serious
trauma, unaccompanied females, widows and young girls), children (in particular those
who are unaccompanied or victims of serious trauma), those born in exile lacking social
networks at home, the elderly and sick, families of 'Communists' who may fear
persecution, Afghans in areas where they are an ethnic minority, individuals voicing
critiques of authorities, individuals associated with internationals, as well as landowners
(UNHCR 2006d; Rahjo 2007, Stapleton 2007b in Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:159-160).
These categories show that there are various groups at risk and several factors that motive
for escape. The UNHCR guidelines are to ensure that vulnerable groups are protected,
and are meant to be an advising framework for countries worldwide. In the regulations of
the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) it is stated they will cooperate with
UNHCR and facilitate their duty of supervision regarding decisions embodied in the
Geneva Convention[4]. However, one of the critiques of the Norwegian immigration
authorities has been that they do not always prioritize the UNHCR guidelines.

On the other hand, when it comes to women, the Afghan government is not
making enough effort to secure their lives, although their situation has in general
improved since the fall of the Taliban regime. Afghan women are still at risk of various
forms of violence and discrimination, and forced marriage and violence against women
persist. "[A]n estimated 70 to 80 percent of marriages are forced and 87 percent of
women face at least one form of physical, sexual, or psychological violence or forced
marriage in their lifetimes" (HRW, January 2012). Even though the numbers from
Human Rights Watch are estimates, it gives an indication of the subordinate status that
women are given in Afghanistan. It clearly demonstrates that violence against women is a
collective, rather than an individual problem, and the problem has also implications
globally as it becomes a motive for escape.

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[4] *UDI Regulations, § 98. Samarbeid med FNs høykommissær for flyktninger. Oversending og utveksling av
opplysninger.*
 https://www.udiregelverk.no/default.aspx?path={3AC1E7D6-8948-4130-A69D-
6B1E6DC0090F}&mid={E4E7EC98-D353-4709-B2E3-FBDD2B18BE0A}#ID1ESDHSDGFA

2.1.4. Motives and patterns of Afghan migration and the responses to it

Having the insecure and unpredictable situation in Afghanistan in mind, the motivations for migration are complex. According to Monsutti (2008) it would be inadequate to separate 'forced' from 'voluntary' migration, as well as refugees from economic migrants when referring to Afghans on the move, since the social strategies are often similar. He points at the complex migratory patterns among the Afghans, and how they are affected differently by insecurities in the country/region. Afghans have migrated at different times and the trajectories of migration are not clear-cut. "The migration of Afghans is neither definite nor temporary; it is more accurate to speak of recurrent multidirectional movement" (Monsutti, 2008:71). The Afghans have migrated in great numbers and in periods during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Mujaheddin overthrow, Taliban rule, and now during the NATO/ISAF intervention, but many migrants have also returned. Since periods of migration have coincided with periods of conflict and insecurity, the Afghans abroad are generally considered forced migrants.

The inflow of Afghans to Europe has gone up and down during the last decade due to changes in the security situation. "It had been decreasing sharply from 2001 to 2004, remained almost stable from 2004 to 2007 and has been on an ascending curve since then" (EASO, 2012:15). Due to the restrictive immigration politics in Europe, including Norway, it seems to be rather common to choose untraditional and illegal ways of crossing the borders. Human smuggling and human trafficking are both forms of organized illegal migration; the former is about organized illegal immigration in which smugglers are paid for the transfer, while the latter involves exploitation, such as slavery and prostitution. The difficulty in entering borders illegally should be seen in relation to the scope of human smuggling[5]. As argued by Väyrynen (2003) "there seems to be a direct correlation between the increasingly restrictive policies by the EU and its member states and the level risks and fees associated with human smuggling" (Väyrynen, 2003:20). Although authorities in refugee receiving states frequently use the argument of combating human smuggling as a strategy in the control of migration, human smuggling is sometimes the only way to escape from danger.

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[5] The Royal Ministry of Justice and Police (2009-2010), *Norsk flyktning- og migrasjonspolitikk i et europeisk perspektiv. Meld. St. 9.*

Among the responses to forced migration, repatriation is considered as one of three durable solutions, together with local integration and resettlement[6]. These durable solutions are part of the UNHCR strategy of safeguarding the rights and well-being of refugees worldwide. The word *return* has come to dominate the migration debate, as part of the strategy to discourage people who are not in dire need of protection from seeking asylum. It has not always been like that, but "since the end of the Cold War, new imperatives have prevailed and repatriation has come to be seen as the most desirable durable solution" (Chimni, 1999 in Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:9). The current focus on protection against security threats such as terror, organized criminal networks and pandemics seems to be an incentive for politicians to favour repatriation, rather than local integration and resettlement. The challenge is that repatriation may also contribute to a recycling of refugees[7] in countries like Afghanistan.

On the other hand, insecurity has also been used as an argument against immigration, particularly from poor countries in the South and Islam-dominated countries, as this is perceived as a threat to the European society and culture. However, this perception contradicts with the real trends regarding immigration to Europe. "Where there is increasing migration into the most prosperous core countries, it tends to come from adjacent areas and these are rarely the poorest areas" (Skeldon, 1997:194). Due to the focus on global terror and in light of the growth of al Qaida and other Islamist terrorist networks worldwide, there has been a simultaneous growing scepticism towards Islam and Muslims. Rightwing political parties are gaining popularity in Europe, and a strong fear of multiculturalism and Islam was manifested through the 22nd July 2011 incident. This background context has contributed to hostility towards Muslims, including Afghans in Norway, based on stereotypical ideas of 'the other'. Likewise, Afghans may also experience hostility based on their ethnic or religious background within their own community. For instance, problems may arise for those who leave Islam or those who convert to Christianity[8].

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[6] UNHCR, "Durable solutions", http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cf8.html (Uploaded 16.07.2012)
[7] 'Recycling of refugees' refers to the phenomena of returned refugees who are once again displaced in their country or region of origin as refugees.
[8] *Dagbladet* (18.07.2008) "Derfor tror de ikke på at afghaneren har konvertert" http://www.dagbladet.no/art/kristendom/asylpolitikk/2578313/ (Uploaded 13.08.12).

2.1.5. The role of Norway in Afghanistan and the security- development nexus

Afghanistan has since the military intervention in 2001 been one of the largest receiving countries of Norwegian development aid. In 2010, Norway donated NOK 726 million to Afghanistan[9]. "Trying to win hearts and minds in the politically polarized worlds of Iraq and Afghanistan (…) has led to the rediscovery of the link between development and counter-insurgency (Slim 2004b in Duffield, 2007:136). Norway has adopted this security-development discourse through the combination of military and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. The difficult security conditions combined with widespread corruption make obstacles for aid having an effective impact. Not only is there a problem of redistribution and lack of coordination between actors, the whole setup of aid has been questioned, as it is primarily based upon short-term humanitarian assistance and is to great extent politicized (Duffield, 2007). What Afghanistan urgently need is long-term development assistance that involves structural changes. Without neglecting the role of the state, a strategy that takes into consideration the everyday human security problems faced by the local population in all areas of the country is more likely to succeed. It is likely that this kind of strategy would also support the reintegration of returned Afghans.

Norway has a special connection to Afghanistan also through the presence of ISAF-forces, which have started their withdrawal in 2012. Since 1st September 2005, Norway's task has been to take care of security and development in the Faryab province, indicating the close ties between these concepts within international politics. The task has been the most extensive project that Norway has been responsible for in Afghanistan. However, the end of September 2012, all Norwegian soldiers will be out of the area and the Afghans are supposed to take over the responsibility. After the exit from Faryab, the operation will be concentrated in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif[10]. One could argue that it is a paradox that the Norwegian government has supported and taken part in a military intervention in Afghanistan since 2001, an intervention that has contributed to displacement and forced migration with millions of Afghans on the move, without a proper engagement in how to solve the continuing problem of displacement.

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[9] Tømte, E. (May 2012) "Aktuelt: Har nidoblet elevtallet" in *Bistandsaktuelt,* nr.4, p14.
[10] Ivar A. Iversen, (11.09.12) "Sa farvel til Afghanistan" in *Dagsavisen,*
http://www.dagsavisen.no/verden/sa-farvel-til-afghanistan/

2.1.6. Human security of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway

According to UDI's definition "an asylum seeker is a person who arrives in Norway on his/her own and applies for protection (asylum)"[11]. If the application is approved by UDI he/she obtains refugee status. If the application is rejected, the person has to leave the country. In a few cases, UDI offer asylum on humanitarian grounds or when a person has strong connection to Norway. Norway is one of the countries that have ratified the international Geneva Convention and Protocol concerning refugees. In addition, the national Immigration Act allows refugees who are in Norway or at the Norwegian border the right to apply for asylum. When it comes to asylum and refugee policies within Norway, there are no formal rights and obligations towards EU, apart from the Dublin Treaty (NOAS, 2012). However, Norway operates with similar regulations on immigration as the EU, for instance do both Norway and EU recognize two groups that have the right to protection; being refugees according to the Geneva Convention and foreigners who risk death penalty, torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment[12].

At the same time asylum is continuously shifting from being treated as a security issue versus a human right issue depending on the political climate. In these times of terror incidents, economic recession and high unemployment rates, the emphasis among politicians in Europe has been on asylum as a security issue, rather than asylum as a human right. Seeing asylum as a security issue is a direct consequence of the securitization in Norway that happens at the expense of the human security of the asylum seekers and refugees. While lots of attention has been concentrated on 22nd of July and millions have been spent on the trial thereafter, the politicians seem to downplay the need for justice and human security of forced migrants in Norway. The neglect of these groups in society, particularly with regards to the undocumented asylum seekers, has engaged civil society, NGOs and CBOs in Norway[13].

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[11] UDI, *Protection (asylum)*
http://www.udi.no/Global/UPLOAD/English/FactSheet/FaktaarkAsyl_English.pdf (Uploaded 17.09.12).
[12] The Royal Ministry of Justice and Police, (2009-2010),"Norsk flyktning- og migrasjonspolitikk i et europeisk perspektiv. Meld. St. 9"
[13] For more information: "Papirløse – ingen mennesker er ulovlige", http://papirlose.no/wp/ (Uploaded 16.09.2012).

In 2011, UDI treated 1200 asylum cases with Afghan nationality, more than half led to rejection, less than half resulted in refugee status, and the final small portion was admitted on humanitarian grounds. The same year, there were 1300 Afghans who got Norwegian citizenship[14]. UDI Key numbers (2011) from the first half of 2011 shows that Afghans were among the three top nationalities that had got asylum. They were representing the largest group of asylum seekers who were living in reception centres, and the second largest group among those who had got Norwegian citizenship[15]. Norway has, similar to other countries, carried out a more restrictive immigration policy in the light of 9/11, simultaneously as refugees and asylum seekers are fleeing from war and human wrongs.

There has also been a discussion on whether Afghan asylum seekers have been rejected asylum on a general basis rather on individual grounds. Already in 2006, 26 days of hunger strike was initiated by a group of Afghan asylum seekers in Norway, who were demonstrating against deportations of Afghans claiming their right to asylum[16]. Although the demonstrators succeeded in getting attention in the media and among politicians, their cause was put aside after some time, and deportations continued to happen. Forced returns are seen as the only way out in cases when rejected asylum seekers refuse to return voluntarily. An agreement between IOM, the Afghan Government and Norway has resulted in a programme motivating and assisting voluntary repatriation back to Afghanistan, titled Information, Return and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan (IRRANA VI)[17]. Despite supporting the IRRANA VI, the Afghan government is far from encouraging repatriation. "Given the fragility of the Afghan economy as well as deteriorating security, the Afghan government has recently discouraged further repatriation, fearing disastrous consequences on top of Kabul's enormously swollen population of over four million" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:136). It is therefore necessary to follow up those who return, whether it is forced or voluntarily.

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[14] *UDI Annual Report* 2011:8, 24.

[15] *UDI* (2011) "Nøkkeltall for første halvår 2011".

[16] *Aftenposten*, (20.06.2006), "Afghanere avsluttet sultestreik med jubel" http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article1360167.ece#.T7KTrhzCo2J (Uploaded 15.05.2012).
 Dagbladet, (20.06.2006), "Vurderer å avslutte streiken. Afghanerne i tenkeboksen", http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2006/06/20/469401.html (Uploaded 15.05.2012).

[17] *IOM Norway*, http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/norway (Uploaded 16.07.2012).

2.1.7. Gender, Asylum and Refuge

Truong, Wieringa and Chhachhi (2006) highlight "how global/local processes have created plural forms of gender power and control, and have shaped new risks and forms of insecurity for women and their communities" (Truong, Wieringa and Chhachhi, 2006:x). Migration is one of these global/local processes that involve insecurity for both men and women, although often in different ways. In an Amnesty report from 2008 it has been reported about the experiences of violence against women in reception centres in Norway. It states that violence may be a cause as well as a consequence of flight[18]. The fact that women who have escaped from violence are sometimes placed at reception centres together with male strangers is not unproblematic, as this may cause an extra burden for the women concerned. It is stated in the report that it is often focused on men's need for protection in the treatment of asylum applications, which means that if a woman leaves her husband because of violence, it may have consequences for her basis for having the right to stay in Norway.

The ideology of 'Purdah' is a traditional part of the Afghan culture and has to do with the protection/control of women's mobility and sexuality. "Purdah means 'veil' and refers to the correct behaviour of women in traditional, Afghan society" (Andersen, 2005:27). 'Purdah' is closely linked to the 'Pashtunwali' tradition of honour, but does also exist elsewhere. Although the tradition is interpreted differently among Afghans, the honour aspect is crucial. The honour of the family depends on the honour of the woman in the family. Since the family is a strong institution within the Afghan society, its reputation and respectability is of major importance (Andersen, 2005). The 'purdah' ideology has been implemented in a way to justify discrimination and violence against women, for example through the practice of forced marriage. Forced marriage is also one of reasons why women flee their country. Furthermore, unaccompanied women could experience gendered insecurity for instance by being sexually harassed, as they may be perceived as women who have brought dishonour to the family. This might in turn leave them with little freedom of movement. On the other hand, if she gets a social security network that supports her, this may in turn lead to new opportunities.

In 2011, the number of Afghan men was three times higher than the number of

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[18] Skogøy, E., (2008) "Rapport om vold mot kvinner i asylmottak i Norge.", Amnesty Norway.

Afghan women fleeing to Norway. While the women comprised the majority among the resettlement refugees[19], the men outnumbered the women among the asylum seekers[20]. A trend across many countries is to send young men to the North, typically the eldest son in the family, so that they gain foothold and other family members may follow (Väyrynen, 2003:20). Since there are risks connected to migration both during and after flight men are often regarded as most fit for this adventure, which also demonstrate the widespread assumption of men being better at handling risks than women. It is likely that Afghan men also migrate as part of livelihood strategies in order to support their families at home. "Women's opportunities to flee are also constrained compared to those of men because of their higher level of illiteracy and their lack of access to economic funds, which are usually controlled by the male members in the family" (Hansen, 2000:292). Nevertheless, the numbers of Afghan women who are travelling unaccompanied are also contributing financially to their families and should not be underestimated. The fact that more women are fleeing unaccompanied nowadays are most likely a result of changing gender roles and relations. The term 'feminization of migration' "is sometimes used to describe the change in migration patterns, wherein women are increasingly moving as independent migrants, for example in search of jobs, rather than to rejoin male family members" (Jolly and Reeves, 2005:7). As the term indicates, a change in migration patterns has coincided with more independency for women to migrate. I will come back to this tendency in the following literature review and theoretical framework.

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[19] "A resettlement refugee is a person who risks persecution in his or her home country, and who stays in another country where he or she cannot be granted permanent residence or be safe, and who is therefore resettled in a third country. The difference between asylum seekers and resettlement refugees is that most resettlement refugees have had their case processed and been recognised as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) before they arrive in Norway". For more information; http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Protection/Asylum-seekers-and-refugees/Resettlement-refugees/#who (Uploaded 30.09.12).

[20] UDI Statistics received on e-mail 05.01.2012 from statistikk@udi.no.

3.1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will concentrate on the three core concepts in my study; *identity*, *gender* and *human security,* in the context of migration. These are all expanding concepts with several categories connected to them. I have chosen some categories that are all relevant in the case of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway. In the first section, I am exploring two identity-related categories; *transnationality* and *intersectionality*. Next, I will look at gender categories, focusing on *gender roles* and *gender relations*. Human security is a concept of newer date, based on the components of freedom from fear and freedom from want, and it is linked to the concepts of *human rights* and *human development*. Human security is of particular relevance in terms of refugees and asylum seekers, as their status indicates that they are in need of protection. The role of the state in human security, the principle of *non-refoulement,* and the concept of *gendered security* are explored in the latest sections. Further, *agency*, *empowerment* and *social inclusion/exclusion* are concepts/categories that are associated with all core concepts of identity, gender and human security.

3.1.1. Intersectionality, Transnational Identity, and Migration

Giddens defines identity "as a process of becoming and as a narrative of life" (Giddens, 1991 in Ghorashi, 2004:106). Identity is therefore subjected to constant revisions. There are various factors that are shaping our identities, meaning that we all inhabit multiple identities. These multiple identities are together shaping an *intersectionality* connecting the different factors involved. "Intersectionality tries to catch the relationships between socio-cultural categories and identities"(Knudsen, 2007:61). Some socio-cultural categories are relatively stable; such as gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity, while others are more or less flexible; such as residence status, nationality, religion, marital status, class, education, employment, and geography. Intersectionality is a useful framework in analysis of multiple identities that are in a process of change, or are subjected to exclusion or discrimination. At times, a person may feel as 'an outsider within' (Choo, 2012). An asylum seeker is typically in such a position, in which residence status is not yet determined. When looking for the variations and transitions in identities among a group of people with a common identity factor, i.e. being an asylum seeker, it is easier to discover the heterogeneity among the people within this group and

within a society as a whole. Choo is pointing at "the need for an intersectional lens that counters the myth of ethnic and national homogeneity" (Choo, 2012:42), referring to the situation of migrants in South Korea. The need for an intersectional lens could also apply to other contexts in which migrants are excluded or marginalized, even in more egalitarian societies such as Norway.

Identities are influenced by migration, and "relevant dimensions of identities are strategically renegotiated and changed in the process of recreating a sense of home and meaningful life in new environments" (Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004:5). It is sometimes referred to 'transnational identities' when explaining common characteristics of migrants, since their identities are formed on a transnational level with bindings to more than one country. "Transnationalism in migration studies is defined as a multidimensional process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch et al. 1994 in Muller, 2008:391). The idea of transnational identity provides an alternative to the more essentialist notion of a migrant's identity as dualist with a distinct belonging to the 'roots' or 'origin' (Ghorashi, 2004:329). Ghorashi (2004) argues that identities are much more complex and heterogenous in transnational processes. "These processes include a variety of cultures and identities articulated and negotiated within newly created spaces. These identities are neither static nor monolithic, but rather dynamic, complex and hybrid" (Ghorashi, 2004:330). In that sense, intersectionality defines transnational identity.

Transnational identities are in transition at all stages of migration – before, during and after migration. Experiences from living and learning in various socio-political and cultural contexts have significant impact on identities. Categories like 'refugees', 'asylum seekers' and 'irregular immigrants' are most descriptive in its legal terms, but because of its relevance it also become part of understanding transnational identities. Nevertheless, behind these categories there are individuals with various backgrounds and capabilities. Theories of intersectionality and transnationality help us understand the complexities when analysing identities in transition. It can be useful in recognizing the different experiences among for instance, Afghan *female* asylum seekers and Afghan *male* asylum seekers, or *unaccompanied* Afghan women and Afghan women who flee *accompanied*.

3.1.2. Gender Roles and Relations within Migration

Gender presents a crucial category within intersectionality, hence, also as a part of transnational identity. Gender roles and gender relations are part of our everyday social reality, and are often referred to as how women and men act and behave according to what is considered 'male' or 'female' in a certain society. In reality gender roles are not fixed, they are however, powerful. "Assumptions and values about men's and women's roles and behaviours condition men's attitudes towards other men and women's towards other women, as well as the relations between women and men" (El Bushra, 2000:4). Gender roles are socially constructed, and do both constrain and contribute to freedom for women and men. Gender relations involve both the relations between women and men, as well as relations among women and among men. Since there is no universal prescription on how women and men should be, gender roles and relations may very from one community to the other, and over time. Similarly to gender roles and gender relations, the notions of 'femininities' and 'masculinities' are socially constructed, neither fixed nor universal. Paechter (2003) refers to the term femininities and masculinities as 'communities of local practice'.

> *It allows us explicitly to acknowledge that being a man or woman, boy or girl (or an intersex individual of one sort or another) is something that has different meanings at different times and places and is not a once-and-for-all, unitary phenomenon; how we enact masculinities and femininities changes as we move between groups, between places and spaces, and through time (Paechter, 2003:541).*

This characteristic is of particular relevance when it comes to people on the move, for instance women and men who flee from Afghanistan to Norway. The changing circumstances are likely to have some kind of impact on the development of the various forms of masculinities and femininities.

El Bushra (2000) points at the opportunities for renegotiating gender relations in situations of displacement. Perceptions of gender roles and gender relations among refugees may change before and during the flight, as well in exile. "[T]he history of flight may impact on essential dimensions of identity, for instance the way people see gender-related notions and images of themselves and others" (Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004:5). For instance, people fleeing from countries inherited with traditional gender

roles and patriarchal values may escape partly or exactly because of this reason. This is typically the case when women are fleeing from forced marriage. Getting settled in a more liberal country characterised by values such as freedom of expression and gender equality would most likely have impact on the immigrant, whether the person appreciates these values or is against them. In this sense, becoming part of a society emphasizing these values influences the transnational identity of a person.

Migration in itself should also be recognized as gendered, since there might be different *reasons* for migration, as well as different *experiences* of flight and exile, among immigrant men and women. It is often assumed that men escape because of economical reasons or because they are seen as financial providers of the family, while women escape from domestic and sexual violence, forced marriage and gender inequality. Migration can lead to both opportunities and hindrances for women and men regarding changing gender roles and relations because of the tension between patriarchy and gender equality. "Experience shows that migration can provide new opportunities to improve women's lives and change oppressive gender relations – even displacement as a result of conflict can lead to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities to women's benefit" (Jolly and Reeves, 2005:1). For instance, a woman whom arrives as an unaccompanied refugee may experience higher degrees of freedom in her new environment. In addition, a male refugee originated from a traditional patriarchal society, such as Afghanistan, may support greater freedom for women too.

However, a transition from a patriarchal society to an equality-based society might also carry on new challenges. "[M]igration can also entrench traditional roles and inequalities and expose women to new vulnerabilities as the result of precarious legal status, exclusion and isolation" (Jolly and Reeves, 2005:1). For instance, people whom support patriarchy could see a refugee woman that has gained larger degrees of freedom in her host society as a threat. This changing status may in turn put her in danger through means of violence, forced marriage or even honour killing initiated by people who want to 'put her in place'. She is challenging the prescribed gender roles and relations in the patriarchal community that makes defenders of male domination fear that other women would follow her example. On the other hand, a refugee woman might experience

exclusion by host society, for instance at the job market because of her traditional clothing style or language deficiency.

3.1.3. Agency, Empowerment and Social Inclusion

Economic interests demonstrate that refugees are agents of change, and not just victims of conflict and insecurity, indicating the link between economic migration and forced migration, or more broadly the link between agency and structure (Castles, 2003). This is particularly evident for those who manage to escape from third world countries to Europe, who are generally well off, educated and with more resources than the majority who stays in the home region. Their background makes them capable of making decisions that would have been rather unimaginable for a poor and illiterate person from the same country with little network connections. "[A]gency forms a sharp contrast to the more established approaches where refugees are pictured as passive victims of violence and disaster, or as mere recipients of relief aid" (Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004:2). The importance of agency does not mean that these refugees are not experiencing difficult times before, during and after the flight. Perhaps it is more appropriate to recognize refugees as victims and agents at different times and in different situations.

Fleeing from one's country of origin can be empowering as much as disempowering for an individual. Empowerment is a process of building self-confidence and enhancing capabilities. According to Kabeer (1999), empowerment is a matter of choice and is built upon three inter-related dimensions: resources, agency and achievements. Disentangling oneself from a repressive regime in the country of origin, and become resettled in a country where one is free to express one's views could be part of an empowerment process. When recognized as equal to citizens of host country and consequently being giving opportunities for personal development, such as education and employment, the person is becoming empowered. On the other hand, in cases where one's qualifications are not recognized and when one is not treated with real dignity in the host country, the transition could be experienced as rather disempowering. "One way of thinking about power is in terms of the *ability to make choices*, to be disempowered, therefore, implies to be denied choice" (Kabeer, 1999:436). A refugee may experience a fall from an upper stratum in the origin society having a respectable and honoured

position, to the lowest stratum in host society in which one is treated as a second-class citizen. In fact, more and more immigrants end up as part of the 'underclass' of the society, and do often end up as homeless people living on the streets in stark contrast to the Norwegian middle class.

Social inclusion involves opportunities for empowerment, while social exclusion is rather a process of disempowerment. Newcomers will most likely experience times or situations of both social inclusion and social exclusion. It is frequently referred to *integration* when it comes to immigrants, and often regardless of the time span the person has stayed in the host country. The concept of integration involves "the interplay between the cultural and structural dimensions in the process of acquiring civil, political and social citizenship rights" (Valenta and Bunar, 2010:466). I would argue that it might be too early to talk about integration when an asylum seeker is still waiting for her application to be processed. Rather, I find it more appropriate to study experiences of social inclusion and social exclusion among refugees and asylum seekers, as it gives a more holistic picture of the situations among the newcomers in a host country and the challenges they experience. Social inclusion and exclusion may take place at different times and settings, and is not necessarily determined by the length of stay in the host country. Some people adapt to new cultural contexts easier and faster than others, but most immigrants experience challenges during the transition. "Various contributions indicate that social identities change due to threats to one's life, the disruptions of flight and the insecurities of resettlement" (Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004:10). I will take a closer look at these forms of insecurities experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in the section below.

3.1.4. Human Security, Refuge and Asylum
The definition of security depends on who defines the concept and the power of those who define it, hence, it determines how security is politicized and put into practice.

> *In the post-11 September 2001 era the world community witnesses the fortification of the state-centric approach to security and a deepening of control over the social body that may override many human rights concerns previously recognized, particularly those emanating from issues of security that has become transnational (Truong, Wieringa & Chhachhi, 2006:xi).*

Examples of transnational phenomena considered security issues are typically the spread

of viruses and diseases, organized criminal networks involved in human trafficking, drugs and arms. However, issues of security go beyond threat-oriented issues and also involve various types of vulnerabilities and insecurities experienced by people that are not recognized in the state-centric approach.

Particularly since the late 1990's and the end of the cold war there has been a growing interest for a human security approach among academics, practitioners and politicians. The concept of human security, combining elements from human rights, development and security, has been embraced by many because of its multidimensionality. According to the UNDP definition from 1994, the concept includes seven main categories; *economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community* and *political security* (HDR, 1994:24). In 2003, the Commission on Human Security published a report, with Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen as co-chairs.

> *The Commission on Human Security's definition of human security: to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms— freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity (CHS, 2003:4).*

As this definition illustrates, human security encompasses essential freedoms and capabilities that need to be protected, in other words both freedom from fear and freedom from want, that is also highlighted in the UN Human Development Report (1994). The human security framework incorporates human rights as an instrument that should ensure all people some basic rights. "Unlike constitutional rights which are given only to the citizens, human rights belong to all human beings and protect non-citizens including refugees and asylum seekers" (Parekh, 2011:18). Human rights have also been an inspiration to the *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and 1967,* as I will come back to later. The human security concept may have become the new buzz-word in the development industry, and at the same time it has been criticized because of its vagueness. Alkire (2003) has through her working definition of human security tried to narrow down the concept while at the same time encompass its comprehensive meaning. "The objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core

of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment" (Alkire, 2003:2). The concept is given real substance only when it is operationalized into practice, through the implementation of the legal framework of human rights (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007: 236). If refugees are to be protected, they need to be incorporated into the wider human rights framework in the same way as citizens.

The debate about human security is concentrated around the question whether the concept is contributing to a more holistic understanding of global problems or if it just lead to further securitization[21] Since the concept arrived on the agenda, international networks have been established, reports have been written and conferences have been held putting human security on the agenda (Duffield, 2007:112-113). The human security concept has come to be seen as an alternative to the conventional way of seeing security, which has been dominated by a state-centric perspective. "Human security appears as an enlightened way of thinking that broadens security beyond states to include other threats to life, for example, poverty, environmental pollution, population displacement, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS" (Duffield, 2007:113). The aim of introducing the human security concept has been to widen the scope on security placing human being at the centre of analysis. In that sense, security is more than for instance protection against state terror; it could also embrace human security of forced migrants exposed to different forms of insecurities.

While issues, such as population displacement, are undoubtedly challenges or problems that need to be dealt with, there is an ongoing discussion on whether these are real *security* threats. These so-called security threats are in many cases intertwined and complex in character, and are part of a wider global uneven system in which access to basic needs and rights are not equally shared. "In a globalizing world, in which threats become transnational and states lose power, security can no longer be studied in a one-dimensional fashion" (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007:2). Global issues of security become localized not only through the spread of terrorism and global instability, but with people escaping from insecurities in conflict-ridden third-world countries in search for a

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[21] Securitization is a concept linked to the Copenhagen School and refers to "the process of presenting an issue in security terms, in other words as an existential threat" (Hansen, 2000:288).

better life in Europe, experiencing new forms of insecurities or vulnerabilities. As means to fight global insecurity, state borders are under scrutinized control with fences and armed guards, which meet people who are crossing the borders. After having crossed the border, new insecurities and vulnerabilities may arise, such as living in a limbo phase when waiting for asylum application to be processed, staying while not having permission to work, adapting to new systems of organizing and a different culture.

According to Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007), human security is defined "as the protection of individuals from risks to their physical and psychological safety, dignity and well-being" (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007:3). People are not only at risk in countries, such as Afghanistan, but during the flight from the country, and even in their country of refuge. This means that refugees may experience insecurity at all three stages of migration; before, during and after flight. "Flight implies changes in the livelihoods, perceptions and identities, 'life projects' and futures, in short, all aspects of the refugees' existence" (Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004:5). Their lives are 'put on wait' as long as their refugee status is not approved. Many Afghan asylum seekers are rejected in Norway and in other receiving states, and are rather encouraged to return voluntarily through repatriation programmes. Those who apply for asylum in more than one country in Europe may be deported back to the country they applied for asylum first, but then again escape. "Human security is at the same time, an independent and a dependent variable, and the interaction between the threats is mutually reinforcing – capable of spiralling into either a virtuous or a vicious circle of inter linkages and consequences" (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007:237). In light of these patterns, it might be more relevant referring to transnational migration, rather than emigration and immigration separately.

3.1.5. The role of the state in human security
"[T]hreats take on a global character because of the disparities that encourage millions of people to leave their homes in search for a better life, whether the receiving country wants them or not" (HDR, 1994:34). Duffield (2007) distinguishes between human security of people in effective and ineffective states, whereas individuals born in the effective states are far more privileged and 'insured', than those in ineffective states who are 'non-insured'. "Reconstructing ineffective states to better support the human security

of the people living on their territories has moved into the foreground of development policy: the state is once again at the centre of development" (Duffield, 2007:111). In this way, a focus on human security does not necessarily mean that the state loses its power. Afghanistan constitutes the typical example of an ineffective state in which powerful states and networks have intervened and sought to gain control.

Duffield (2008) points at a changing security environment connected to decolonization seeing the links between the security focuses in the well-off countries contra the underdeveloped countries.

> *The international security architecture that emerged with decolonization interconnects the containment of irregular migration with measures to integrate migrant communities already settled within consumer society and, at the same time, state-led development initiatives to improve the self-reliance and stasis of underdeveloped life in situ (Duffield, 2008:162).*

In this quote, Duffield (2008) illustrates the impact of globalization in connection with decolonization and new migration patterns. There is an ambiguity towards migration, as it is perceived as both a blessing and a curse. Duffield (2007) refers to the non-insured life and the surplus population as perceived security threats within the current world order. Refugees and asylum seekers tend to fall under the category of surplus population, and are often portrayed as a burden on both sending and receiving states. Illegal immigrants, or undocumented immigrants also belong to the surplus population, and because they are not registered it hard to estimate the scale of this group. Estimates also depend on those who presents them who may use numbers in their favour to underline their views of illegal immigration.

In order to understand the reasons behind the control mechanisms used in order to protect against so-called security threats one need to recognize the fear of social breakdown that exists within the state. As Duffield (2007) points out; "fear of social breakdown has been increasingly connected with an urge to contain its international effects, in particular the spontaneous, and destabilizing forms of global circulation associated with poverty, conflict and migration (…)" (Duffield, 2007:115). Perceptions of insecurity and social breakdown are frequently seen in relation to immigration, particularly from third-world countries or from Islam-dominated regions, in which this form of immigration is seen as a threat to the culture and the majority population in

Europe. "Nevertheless, the majority of refugees stay within their region in the developing world, or in the post communist world" (Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engerg-Pedersen, 2002:4). Perceptions of social breakdown are taken to the extreme in the political ideology of rightwing extremists, and were transformed into action with the tremendous terror and massacre in Norway on the 22nd July 2011, performed by the solo-terrorist Anders Behring Breivik who was targeting multiculturalists and Muslims.

3.1.6. The Principle of Non-Refoulement

Human security, incorporating human rights and human development, also embraces states responsibility of securing individuals who have the right to asylum and refuge. According to the Geneva *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and 1967*, a refugee is a defined as a person whom:

> *owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it[22].*

Although the Convention's definition of a refugee seems inclusive at first sight it does not recognize for instance gender-related issues in connection to flight. The principle of *non-refoulement*, stated in the Geneva Convention, is to ensure that refugees are not sent back to insecurity. "It provides that no one shall expel or return ("*refouler*") a refugee against his or her will, in any manner whatsoever, to a territory where he or she fears threats to life or freedom" (UNHCR, 2010:3). The question arises regarding what is actually considered as threats to life or freedom.

In reality, there is a hierarchy in terms of residence status. In this hierarchy, human security is mainly reserved for those who are citizens, and particularly so for those who are living in the well-off countries. Next, people who have 'refugee status', referring to the legal term, are privileged over those who are merely asylum seekers, who are actually struggling to gain refugee status. Lowest in this hierarchy are the rejected asylum

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[22] *Article 1A.(2) in Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 & 1967*, (Uploaded http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html).

seekers or those who are referred to as undocumented asylum seekers. "Eligibility for asylum depends on whether the home country situation is taken to produce refugees and whether the individual applicant has a plausible story to fit certain bureaucratic criteria" (Essed and Wesenbeck in 2004:53). Sometimes, decisions taken regarding right to asylum seem rather arbitrary and based on value-laden perceptions on what the bureaucrats view as right or wrong. The secondary status of asylum seekers is also observable in the populist language as they are "widely characterized as welfare cheats, competitors for jobs, security threats, abusers of host state generosity (…)" (Gibney in Tunstall, 2006:141). There lies a contradiction in presenting asylum seekers as security threats at the same time as they are considered persons in need of protection.

This contradiction is also manifested in the policies that simultaneously are promoting and preventing immigration. Political measures have been taken by many Western states, as well as receiving states in the third world, in order to prevent asylum seekers from entering their borders. There are "'non-arrival measures' taken by Western states to prevent asylum seekers from reaching their borders where they would be entitled to claim protection" (Tunstall, 2006:8). These 'non-arrival' measures contradict not only the right to asylum that is embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also the principle of *non-refoulement* that should prevent refugees from being sent back to persecution.

3.1.7. Gendered Security and Migration

UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security recognized the fact that women are not just victims, but agents in peace, war and conflict. "The watershed political framework demands that the Council engage in gender mainstreaming in all its work" (Hudson, 2010:44). Human security is gendered, meaning that it could be experienced in different ways *by* men and women, but also *among* men and women. For instance, women may experience insecurities within both the domestic and public sphere; including the risks of discrimination, violence, forced marriage etc, exists in both times of war and peace. The fact that women's insecurities are often overlooked in high-level security discussions is problematic, since gendered experiences of insecurity are left out.

Nevertheless, the importance of linking gender and security has been recognized in, for instance feminist security studies. Seen from a feminist perspective, the conception of security could be seen in light of "the human experience in everyday life mediated through a variety of social structures of which gender is one" (Truong, Wieringa and Chhachhi, 2006:xii). In other words, gender matters in everyday social relations in which power is involved, also when it comes to security issues. Regarding refugees and asylum seekers, gendered insecurity may take place in situations of forced marriage. Particularly women are subjected to forced marriage, and may escape from the country to hide from husband, relatives, neighbours or others who might put her in danger.

Hansen (2000) looks at the problem of honour killings in Pakistan as a collective issue and an example of gendered insecurity among women. "[G]endered security problems often involve an intimate inter-linkage between the subject's gendered identity and other subjects of the subject's identity, for example national and religious" (Hansen, 2000:287). This inter-linkage is what I earlier referred to as intersectionality, and is important to recognize when analyzing gendered security problems among refugees. Resolution 1325 provides a link between women and security that has previously been neglected in high-level security discourse. "1325 is an ideal case study of the security framework as it presents women, a non-traditional security concern, as relevant to a traditional security body on the world stage, the Security Council" (Hudson, 2010:45).

Being aware of the *gendered* security problems among women, one should not forget that men might experience *gendered* security problems as well. For instance, there exist forced marriage in which men are left out of decision-making as well. This put these men in vulnerable positions. Men who belong to particular marginalized groups due to their ethnic, religious, political, national or socio-economic status are also vulnerable, and may be particularly exposed in the public were this form of discrimination takes place. Young men may also escape because the fear of being forced to be soldiers (Jolly and Reeves, 2005:12). An understanding of migration patterns and why men and women flee must involve recognition of the intersectional identities that influence the decision to flee.

4.1. Methodology

4.1.1. Research paradigm

I have chosen to use a qualitative research strategy for this study, since this is the strategy I find the most suitable for answering my research question in the best manner. Initially, I was planning to use an inductive approach since there are few studies that have engaged theory relevant to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway. However, research is seldom purely inductive, since researchers often make use of theory as background knowledge, and it may comprise an implicit part of the way in which one approaches ones research. Theory can also be a useful tool for analysis, as it "provides a framework within which social phenomena can be understood and the research findings can be interpreted" (Bryman, 2008:6). In my study it is relevant to link theories with forced migration as a social phenomenon seen from a multidimensional perspective. I found it relevant to use my empirical data to build on theories based on the concepts of identity, gender and human security, rather than merely testing theories. In my research I wanted to explore the perceptions and experiences of identity, gender and human security among the Afghans, hoping as well that my research will give new insights to these concepts.

After reflections on epistemology and ontology, I chose an *interpretivist* epistemological position, since my aim was to understand the particular situation of the Afghans in Norway. As a researcher I am interpreting data collected from both primary and secondary sources, so choosing this position implies that my research can never be 'objective'. Interpretivism "is predicated upon a view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2008:16). The aim in this regard is to explore and understand the reality and the people within, looking at variations rather than generalizing. I chose my ontological position to be *constructivist* because I refer to reality as socially constructed, in which social and gendered power relations play a role. As a researcher, I also try to discover my informant's perceptions of social reality as asylum seekers. There is not *one* social reality, since "the researcher always presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive" (Bryman, 2008:19). Again, this indicates that research can never be 'objective'.

4.1.2. Research design

I use a case study design in my study focusing on the Afghans as one exemplifying group among refugees and asylum seekers in Norway. There are several nationalities represented among refugees and asylum seekers in the country, and the Afghans are just one of them, although a significant group. The fact that the Afghan refugees and asylum seekers derive from the same country with a distinctive culture makes them characteristic in one way, although forced migrants from all nationalities may have similar experiences from before, during and after flight. "[C]ase study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question" (Stake, 1995 in Bryman, 2008:52). In my case study, I am concerned with the understandings of identity, gender and human security among Afghan forced migrants in Norway. Their situation may be similar to the situation of many refugees and asylum seekers in Norway and elsewhere in Europe, but the aim with the study is once again to exemplify rather than to generalize.

In my research, I make use of alternative research criteria designed for qualitative research, such as *trustworthiness*, including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Trustworthiness is a principle that contributes to more valuable or trustworthy research. *Credibility* is similar to internal validity, and refers to the "credibility of the account that a researcher arrives at that is going to determine its acceptability to others" (Bryman, 2008:377). Credibility is ensured through two techniques; respondent validation and triangulation. In order to fulfil this criterion, I will share the final draft of my paper to my informants giving an overview of my accounts. In addition, I will combine the use of primary and secondary data to ensure triangulation in data collection. *Transferability* is another criterion within trustworthiness, and is verified through thick description of the data collected. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "thick description provides others with what they refer to as a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other mileux" (Bryman, 2008:378). Through conducting and taking notes from qualitative in-depth interviews with my informants I hope to be able to give a thick description of the case. *Confirmability* means that the researcher should act in good faith, and make sure she does not distort the data. I find this criterion crucial for my study, as I work closely with my informants and collect sensitive information. Further, I find it important to be self-

reflective about my own role as a researcher, being aware of how my background may influence the research during the whole process. This self-reflectivity is also helpful in order to discover biases in the research. *Dependability* is another criterion, and can be assured with a complete record of the whole research process so that others can check it. Because of the sensitivity of the information I have collected, I keep the records for myself, or share it with my supervisors, not paying attention to this criterion.

4.1.3. Research method

Since the strategy was to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of human beings I found qualitative in-depth interviews, as well as informal discussions suitable for my study. "Qualitative interviewing is meant to be flexible and to seek out the world views of research participants" (Bryman, 2008:470). From the start I chose qualitative interviewing as my research method, as it is practical for fieldwork within a limited time period and because of its flexibility. I could also have chosen focus groups as a research method, but found individual interviews more suitable because of the sensitive topics that were raised. Only one group interview was conducted during my data collection. Although this experience was useful, I found it more challenging to discuss more personal issues here than in the individual interviews.

The interview style became a combination of semi-structured and unstructured, since the aim was to keep the interviews open for the respondents, but at the same time I wanted to guide them towards issues that were relevant for my research. According to Bryman (2008), "the emphasis must be on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events – that is what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns and forms of behaviour" (Bryman, 2008:438). During all my interviews the strategy has been to give the interviewees as much room as possible. Interview guides were also developed to help me as an interviewer to organize the interviews in a practical manner following questions related to topics on identity, gender and human security. I decided to conduct about 15 interviews with men and women for my data collection. The number of interviews is not of major importance in qualitative interviewing, but the quality of the data is crucial since the purpose is to give in-depth information about a particular issue.

I decided to concentrate on Afghan refugees and asylum seekers as respondents in order to answer my research question properly, but I also found it useful to interview officials in order to see the case from other perspectives. My intention with these interviews were not to check whether my Afghan informants were telling me the truth, rather to get additional information from non-Afghans who were more or less in contact with Afghan asylum seekers and refugees in Norway in their occupations. These officials would typically be employees at reception centres and representatives from the Norwegian immigration authorities or from organizations cooperating with refugees and/or asylum seekers.

As an additional research method I did some observation in order to discover information that cannot be spelled out in verbal communication. Lots of information can be found in body language, in the attitude and behaviour of the person, by observing the environment in which the respondent exists etc. However, I did not want to rely too much on observation, since this would require much more time spent together with the respondents, as in ethnographic research. Considering my time constraints I used observation only as an additional method and in combination with interviewing and conversations.

4.1.4. Secondary data collection and sampling for primary data collection
In the beginning of the research process I searched for books, journals, articles and news articles about Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Norway, and found surprisingly little. On the other hand, there are loads of literature about migration, and also some literature on Afghan migration in particular. Specific sources about Afghan forced migrants in Norway have been hard to discover, despite the significant number of Afghans that have migrated to Norway, already since the Soviet invasion. During my literature search I discovered some research on Afghan immigrants in the Netherlands. However, most research on Afghan refugees has been conducted in Pakistan and Iran, where the majority of this groups stays. Research on refugees and asylum seekers in general who are hosted in Norway is also available, and some researchers have been focusing on the undocumented or irregular migrants in particular.

In order to find the people that were relevant for my study, I used purposive sampling, which means "the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions" (Bryman, 2008:458). As my research questions clearly indicate, it is Afghans that would be of particular interest for the data collection. I wanted to get in touch with both men and women who had come to Norway at different stages during war, conflict and insecurity in Afghanistan. My intention was to interview Afghans who in various ways had ended up in Norway, either as asylum seekers, through family reunification, or as conventional refugees. The reason for having this wide spectrum of informants was to look at the differences and similarities in experiences of human security among these categories of migrants.

I ended up conducting ten interviews with Afghans hosted in Norway, in which one of them was a group interview with four informants. Among the respondents were six former asylum seekers with refugee status and residence permit, in which four were female and two were male. One male refugee had recently got a Norwegian citizenship. I interviewed another six male asylum seekers who were rejected; two of them had sent appeals to UDI and UNE and were waiting for their cases to be reversed, the other four were still living at a reception centre but were finally rejected and were waiting for their date of departure. Another respondent came to Norway through family reunification and not as a refugee, and had got Norwegian citizenship. Initially, I wanted to interview Afghans representing all age groups, but ended up interviewing young adults between 18-33 years, as they were the ones I was introduced to. Asylum seekers are also the largest category among Afghan immigrants in Norway. However, my group of respondents are not necessarily representative for the Afghans in Norway. In addition to the Afghans, I interviewed one female employee at a reception centre and had an informal chat with the male manager at the same reception centre. I also interviewed an employee from 'Landinfo', an agency that provides background information about countries to UDI.

I started the sampling process by contacting several organizations and institutions working with Afghans in Norway. Although the Afghans are one of the major groups of asylum seekers coming to Norway, I found out that it required lots of time in the beginning to get in touch with them, since I had to go through other contacts in order to reach them. Nevertheless, I searched in different arenas to find contacts; at seminars,

through NGO's and relevant networks, through acquaintances and social media. The organizations I was in contact with were NOAS (Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers), NPA (Norwegian People's Aid), and Nansen Peace Center. While the first two organizations are working predominantly with asylum seekers, the last is working mostly with those who have been given refugee status. Through the help of my gatekeepers I got names of informants they recommended me to contact.

In addition, I contacted staff at reception centres in order to find informants. Some of the staff I contacted showed interest in the project and were willing to help, while others were more reserved and unwilling to share information. Later on, I got in touch with Afghan Youth Association in order to recruit informants, and managed to find one informant through their Facebook site. I also went through contacts working with education for newly arrived migrants and settlement of refugees, and recruited some informants through acquaintances working in the education sector. UDI provided me with statistical information about Afghan asylum seekers that I could make use of in my thesis. It turned out being more of a challenge to get an interview with one of the case workers at UDI, assumedly because of time constraints. 'Landinfo' was another important source regarding thematic issues concerning Afghans, and I managed to recruit one informant from this agency.

For practical reasons I ended up interviewing people living in the south-eastern part of Norway. Since many of them had experience from staying in other and various parts of Norway, I also got some information about how it can be for Afghans living in the northern, western and southern parts of Norway. I got some assistance from UDI and SSB, but found that they in fact do not have an overview of where all the asylum seekers and refugees stay. Some stay at reception centres, others stay with family, friends or acquaintances. Another challenge is that employees at reception centres do not necessarily want to inform outsiders of the nationalities of the asylum seekers who stay there, assumedly because of confidentiality reasons.

4.1.5. Experiences with qualitative interviewing and other methods
I have used semi-structured interviewing as the main research method, using interview guides with topics including identity and migration, gender and social relations, human

security, and thoughts of the future. These are all wide and expanding topics, which give room for reflections for the respondents. Some topics were more emphasized than others dependent on the interests of the interviewee. Sometimes I got a bit detached from the interview guide, because the respondent had a lot of things to tell. In these cases I would not stop them in their reasoning and from saying something that was useful for my study. As a researcher one does not necessarily know what is relevant before the interview takes place.

The interviews often took an unexpected turn when the interviewees were telling me about interesting incidents from their lives, or came up with new viewpoints. At these times I found it necessary to ask follow-up questions in order to grasp the details, contributing to thick description, and at the same time link it up to the topics I was interested in. Some were more talkative than others, and the result was that they took the lead of the interview process. Particularly during these times the interview became more unstructured in character. Although I often used as much as two hours for one respondent, I discovered that even this time could be limiting regarding the topics at stake. I experienced that the informants took their time to answer the questions, expressed their interest, and were not rushing to finish the interview. Initially, the plan was to conduct semi-structured interviews, but because of the depth of the topics, it ended up being a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, often described as in-depth interviews or qualitative interviews (Bryman, 2008:438).

Due to differences in language proficiency and time of stay in Norway, the interviews were conducted either in Norwegian or English, according to what was most convenient for the informant. I had planned to do only individual interviews, but one interview ended up being a group interview with four male informants. This happened initially because of a misunderstanding, but I decided to be flexible and give it a chance. Although it was challenging to talk to several people at once, some of them were better in expressing themselves in Norwegian, and could help each other out. However, through this experience I got confirmed that group interview was not the most appropriate method for collecting information about sensitive issues. The fact that the informant shares the information with several people in the room may be a barrier for speaking out about certain issues. While I could have got richer information using an interpreter, I also think

it would have been easier for the informants to sensor themselves having a third person with Afghan descent in the room. In general, I was surprised by the openness among the participants, and how much they were willing to share with me as a stranger. Nevertheless, censor may also have taken place, even without a third person. I also discovered a difference between the men and women in terms of emphasis on certain topics, while the women were more frequently referring to gendered issues, even when this was not particularly mentioned in the question framing, the men were in general more silent on this issue.

In addition to the interviews, I had some informal discussions with some informants on the phone and face-to-face, which also provided me with information that was useful for my study. Furthermore, I used some observation, typically at times or settings when this was easier to discover, such as when I was invited to people's homes. One informant invited me for dinner together with her family. Although this was not according to the plan I found it inappropriate to say no. It turned out to be an interesting experience, and I felt that a mutual trust was built. I also did some observation while visiting reception centres, and one of the informants showed me around at the building and the room where he stayed. When I saw their homes with my own eyes, it was easier to link my observations to the informant's stories of their life conditions. In settings like this one gets some additional and interesting information, which one cannot discover through conversation alone. In this case, the observations were even more valuable because of the language barriers I experienced in the interview.

4.1.6. Qualitative data analysis

In the beginning of my study the idea was to use grounded theory as an approach within qualitative data analysis. The link between theory and data hints at the framework of grounded theory, which is referred to as "an approach to the generation of theory out of data" (Bryman, 2008:541). If not theory is generated as such; there can be a generation of concepts and categories. However, it could also be the other way around, in which theoretical concepts are implemented from the beginning in order to guide research. Before I started my data collection I decided to make use of the theoretical concepts of identity, gender and human security. However, after going through my interview

transcripts, I was looking for new concepts and categories relevant to the data I had collected that could also be linked up with my core concepts.

The new concepts and categories were discovered through coding. "[C]oding is the process whereby data are broken down into component parts, which are given names" (Bryman, 2002:692). Concepts and categories I discovered during this process were gender roles and relations, agency, empowerment, social inclusion and exclusion, as well as particular forms of human security. Although I experienced that the data became fragmented through the implementation of coding, I also found this strategy helpful in the process of organizing the outline of the thesis. Grounded theory has its limitations, and it has even been criticized for being objectivist. However, "a constructivist approach [to grounded theory] recognizes that the categories, concepts, and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher's interaction within the field and questions about the data" (Charmaz, 2000:522 in Bryman, 2008:549). Throughout my study I was linking the theory with my empirical accounts as these were complementing, and I discovered the importance of a constant interaction between theory and data.

After I had done some interviews with the Afghans, I discovered that the interviews were more unstructured in character, and sometimes similar to life stories. I wanted to focus on their perceptions of past, present and future, and many of them were openly telling about their experiences. I considered narrative analysis to be an appropriate way of understanding my empirical accounts, but in combination with grounded theory as a guiding framework. Narrative analysis "is an approach to the elicitation and analysis of data that is sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as tellers of stories about their lives or events around them, detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts" (Bryman, 2008:556). The combination of narrative analysis and grounded theory became a way of analyzing my data, as I was emphasizing perceptions and experiences among the Afghans at the same time as I developed concepts and categories that could be linked up with these narratives. Rather than treating these approaches separately, I found the interaction between these approaches fruitful in the analysis of the data.

4.1.7. Ethical considerations and limitations

From the onset I have reflected around the no-harm principle in my research, particularly because sensitive issues are raised in the interviews, and some participants are in a particularly vulnerable situation regarding their status as rejected asylum seekers. The informants were informed, orally and written, about the research and their role as informants within that research. By signing the information letter they gave their informed consent agreeing that their information could be used in my research, but the information would be used confidentially. I was also careful to tell the informants about my role as researcher, particularly when interviewing the rejected asylum seekers, telling them that I could not influence their cases in any way. In addition, my study was reported to NSD, and was approved by this institution.

Cultural and language barriers are also issues I considered before starting my data collection. Sensitivity to culture and language differences is crucial in order to decrease misunderstandings and build trust and good relations with the interview objects. My experience was that these barriers were in most cases minimal, and it was generally easy to communicate with the informants. Since I have not used a recorder for my interviews I have been unable to give exact quotes from the respondents, but I have used more or less direct quotes in some cases in order to give space for their voices. The limitation of just relying on notes is that the quality of data collected is weakened as a consequence of the inability to catch all the details that are revealed. However, I chose not to record the interviews for two reasons; in order to save time and with respect to the participants as sensitive information was collected.

One limitation of the study is the lack of gender balance in representation of informants. I experienced that it was easier to get in touch with Afghan men than women. An immediate explanation to this could be the simple reason that there are more Afghan men than women who are fleeing to Norway. There could also be other explanations to this related to traditional perceptions of gender roles. In one case there was two unaccompanied Afghan women at a reception centre, but they were unable to give interviews due to psychosocial problems. I do not know the reasons for their problems, but this example shows the limitations that may occur when doing research on a group that are in a particular vulnerable situation.

5.1. Analysis and Discussion

5.1.1. Presenting the findings

What seems to be the case is that most of the Afghans that seek asylum and refuge in Norway are on average more well-off, typically political engaged, and most of them educated young men. Some arrive as unaccompanied, sometimes minor asylum-seekers, while others arrive together with their family members. Others again come to Norway as resettlement refugees. However, little research has documented experiences of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers hosted in Norway. Why and how did they end up here? How did they experience the flight? What does their everyday situation look like now? What kind of impact has their stay in Norway on their identities? How are their thoughts and practice of gender roles and relations? How does the waiting period during the asylum seeking process impact on the asylum seekers? How is the access to rights and basic needs, particularly for the undocumented asylum seekers? What are the Afghan refugees and asylum seekers thoughts on the future and a possible return to Afghanistan? These are among the questions I raise in this analysis. I also discuss my findings in relation to previous research, international and national law and media.

"It is important to have an awareness of the possibility that minority groups can feel and think differently; it is important to listen to minorities' voices in order to understand their unique experiences and thus build an inclusive multicultural society" (Collins, 2009 in Choo, 2012:43). As I pointed out earlier, one of my intentions with the study was to give Afghan asylum seekers and refugees in Norway a chance to communicate their voices, hence, contribute to a better understanding of their situation by shedding light on how identity, gender and human security issues change or maintain during the transitional process from Afghanistan to Norway. In a wider context, this particular research is relevant for understanding Afghans as one diverse group within a broader multicultural society in Norway. In the same way, it is necessary to listen to the voices of both women and men, as they may experience and perceive things differently, as I will come back to later in this chapter. Perhaps the most interesting insights from the interviews with the Afghans were that they challenged the stereotypes of this group as often portrayed in the mass media, associated with negative issues, such as poverty, religious fundamentalism and terror.

Most of the Afghan respondents I interviewed were men in their 20's, and with higher educational background. Some of them were rejected asylum seekers, but since they had sent appeals to UDI and UNE they were still in the asylum seeking process at the time they were interviewed. "Eligibility for asylum depends on whether the home country situation is taken to produce refugees and whether the individual applicant has a plausible story to fit certain bureaucratic criteria" (Essed and Wesenbeck, 2004:53). Some of my informants had stories that fitted these criteria, and were therefore granted refugee status. They had as a result obtained residence permit, and two of them had even become Norwegian citizens. One of the informants who had obtained Norwegian citizenship came to Norway through family reunification, and was an interesting source because he provided another side of the story than the refugees and asylum seekers. By interviewing a few persons who were affiliated with Afghan asylum seekers I complemented what I had already found with perspectives of non-Afghans. I found that the information I gathered from them were of importance as things that were said both confirmed and contradicted with information I got from the Afghans.

As part of the study of identity, gender and human security it was in my interest to find out why they ended up as forced migrants. The reasons for forced migration are complex and there is often a combination of socio-economic, political and cultural reasons, which makes it hard to distinguish it from economic migration. "Conflict and human rights abuse associated with poor governance have become among the key factors impelling much current migration; and it is no coincidence that conflict-ridden countries are often those with severe economic difficulties" (Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:9). Through my interviews, I discovered that economic difficulties were not the main reason for migration; rather there were personal, political and socio-cultural reasons that seemed to dominate. Although the stories behind the flight could differ from person to person and between genders, the overall underlying motivation was a search for a safer place to live, as Afghanistan is currently a country in which human insecurity is part of the everyday reality.

The following discussion starts with a focus on transnational identity and forced migration. I will include my Afghan informant's experiences of the transnational process before, during and after flight, since all periods have more or less impact on identity. The

impact of intersectionality is exemplified through a description of the social categories, such as nationality, citizenship, residence status, and educational, ethnic, political and religious background, being characteristics of the identities of Afghan forced migrants. Further, the first part is concentrated around gender roles and relations, and how these are understood and met by my informants. Gender symbolizes another social category that influences perceptions of identity. I look at how gender roles and gender relations constitute part of everyday social reality as it reflects power structures and power relations. Power relations are not only gendered, they are more or less visible in overall social settings with experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

In the second part of the discussion, I focus on human security of the Afghan refugees and asylum seekers. I have put particular weight on this part because of the specific relevance of the concept in international development studies. The sections include general experiences from Pakistan and Iran, the flight to Europe, experiences from Norway, the right to enter and stay, different immigration control mechanisms, the waiting period and its implications for undocumented asylum seekers, personal security and the rule of law, health security and empowerment, housing and living conditions, economic security and employment, gender and security, ethnicity, religion, politics and security. The emphasis on human security does not exactly resemble the UN division, as presented earlier, but are the forms of security I found important and descriptive to the context of Afghan forced migrants in Norway.

In the third part of the discussion I reflect about what I have discovered regarding future thoughts among my informants. I discovered that these thoughts are easily influenced by the current residence status of these persons and their general feelings of human security, including feelings of despair and hope. Based on this, I have divided this part in sections focusing on repatriation, forced return, resettlement and the search for more flexible and sustainable solutions.

Part 1:

5.2. Transnational Identity, Gender and Forced Migration

5.2.1. Before, during and after flight - developing a transnational identity

What all the Afghan respondents had in common was that they had been living in other countries than Norway after they escaped from Afghanistan. Previously they had been living in Pakistan and/or Iran for shorter or longer periods, which is not uncommon among Afghan refugees. One respondent had stayed some time in Russia because he had relatives there. However, Pakistan and Iran are the main countries hosting a major part of the Afghan refugee population (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:137). Several of my informants had friends and relatives in these countries, which constituted parts of their transnational network. Nicholas Van Hear states that "when people flee conflict or persecution, a common pattern is for most to seek safety in other parts of their own country, for a substantial number to look for refuge in neighbouring countries, and for a smaller number to seek asylum in countries further a field" (Nicholas Van Hear in Nyberg Sørensen, 2006:93). Most refugees from the poor South remain in the region of origin, if not within the country of origin as internally displaced. A flight to Europe requires more resources and refugees may have to rely on contacts abroad.

Refugees who stay in the home region are hosted in neighbour countries where they may know the language, have relatives or friends, and where the culture is similar to their own. Nevertheless, several of my respondents expressed the difficulties they experienced as being illegal refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Saito (2007) has conducted a study for the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit focusing on second-generation Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran, and those who have returned to Afghanistan. She discovered that the attitudes towards Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries were often of conflicting and contradictory nature, irrespective of gender, future thoughts regarding re-migration and the grade of previous assimilation in Iran and Pakistan. "This demonstrates that returnees' 'multiple identities' are subject to continuous renegotiation and they can be easily influenced or motivated to stay or move on to another place, particularly among second-generation returnees who have experienced a place outside their own homeland" (Saito, 2007:2). During my study of Afghans in Norway, I also discovered contradictory attitudes towards Afghanistan showing that there is always a renegotiation of identities taking place (Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004).

Some of the respondents had moved back to Afghanistan short time after Taliban

was overthrown with the hope of a new future for the country, but got disappointed when the security situation became unstable. Although the general situation improved with Taliban's loss of power, the security situation got worse in 2007. Several of the respondents arrived in Norway after that time. According to UDI statistics, the number of asylum applications received by people of Afghan nationality increased from 234 in 2007 to 1363 in 2008[23], which indicates the parallel with the unfavourable security situation during this period. Although the numbers decreased from 2009 to 2010 and remained stable in 2011, it does not correspond with the number of Afghans applying for asylum in the rest of Europe. "[T]he level reached in 2011 is the highest since 2002" (EASO, 2012:15). Needless to say, people who are in need of protection do not stop fleeing all of a sudden because of restrictive immigration mechanisms in some recipient countries.

Since my respondents had been moving between Afghanistan and Norway, as well as Pakistan, Iran and other places, they had developed bindings to several countries, which indicated that the phenomenon of transnationality was taking place. "Contrary to conventional migration theory's binary focus on the process of *emigration from* and *immigration to* particular nation states, transnational approaches suggest that migration should be understood as social processes linking together countries of origin and destination" (N. Sørensen, Van Hear and E-Pedersen, 2002:11). For many Afghans, migration is a continuous process, in which destination is a fluid concept. The level of attachment to Afghanistan varied among my respondents, but most of them said they were willing to go back to Afghanistan if the security situation changed to the better. Those who still had family and friends in the country were having regular contact with them through Internet and by phone. Others again had most of their contacts in Pakistan or Iran, and as a consequence Afghanistan seemed to be less attractive as a possible returning destination. "Mobility has become not only a key livelihood and survival strategy for many Afghans, but an integral part of their lives" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:131). Consequently, this mobility has naturally had an impact on their feelings of identity and their notions of nationality. I found that the changing status of residence also influenced the formation of identities, as it had consequences for their living standard.

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[23] UDI, "Tabell 14: Asylsøknader etter statsborgerskap, 2002-2011".

5.2.2. (Trans)nationality, citizenship and residence status

"Contemporary migrants are designated 'transmigrants' in as far as they develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, social, economic, political, organizational and religious – that span borders" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992:1-2 in Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:11). These multiple relations that span borders build up a transnational identity. One respondent stressed that her identity was Afghan even though she had stayed for some time in Norway. At the same time she felt the need to differentiate herself from other Afghan women, in the way that she preferred to be independent. Although she was critical to aspects of the Afghan culture, she still considered her identity as Afghan. Another respondent argued he was Persian by blood, although he was now a Norwegian citizen. Transnational identity is complex, and the idea of what is 'Afghan' may vary as the context change. As Ghorashi (2004) points out, "'a place of origin' here is not a taken-for-granted point of departure, but is merely a point of reference that is helpful in the process of the construction of multiple identifications" (Ghorashi, 2004: 330). It is in this process that intersectionality takes place.

According to my non-Afghan respondent, who had previously been working with Afghan youth both in Afghanistan and Norway, the perceptions of identity often differed among Afghan exiles and Afghans who did not leave Afghanistan. While many of the Afghan youth she had met in Afghanistan were focusing on their belonging to an Afghan national identity, the Afghans in Norway were more frequently putting emphasis on ethnicity. This tendency indicates how the current national state-building in Afghanistan may influence youth's association with national Afghan identity. At the same time others may associate more with an constructed ethnic identity. According to the Afghan American writer and women's rights activist, Nasrine Gross (2000), the Afghan national identity is characterized by four separate identities; individual identity (influenced by family values), religious identity, ethnic identity and national identity. Her division of identity demonstrates the intersectionality of multiple identities that she finds typical among Afghans. Among my respondents I discovered that some types of identities were more influential than others, for instance the ethnic identity, which I will come back to.

Close to the concept of nationality is that of citizenship, although the latter is a product of a legal framework. "The concept of citizenship is broader than nationality and covers also the legal and moral rights and obligations entailed in being a member of a democratic community and the practices and virtues of 'good citizenship' that help to sustain such communities" (Bauböck, 2006:146). Although labels, such as citizens, refugees and asylum seekers, are deemed to be helpful in terms of policy and practice, it is crucial not to forget that there are individuals behind the labels. Asylum seekers who get their application approved by national immigration authorities are granted refugee status. Consequently, they will get residence permit for one year, and may at a later stage upgrade to permanent residence[24]. In the long run, they may acquire citizenship, as in the case of two of my informants.

Nationality and citizenship are hence concepts that Afghans in Norway have to relate to. Nationality refers to "the status of belonging to a particular nation [or] an ethnic group forming a part of one or more political nations"[25] While nationality is an abstract concept that indicates a person's geographical origin, citizenship is a legal category that in practice opens up for permanent residence on a lifetime basis. However, it means that those who are not granted citizenship are excluded from certain rights. Even more is this the case for asylum seekers who are denied refugee status, and hence, residence permits. "The question of who counts as 'refugee' in the enactment of international human rights is a continuous source of struggle among governments, state bureaucracies and critical movements" (Lauren 1998 in Essed and Wesenbeek, 2004:53). In practice it is a question about who has the right to protection.

The undocumented immigrants are representing "a relatively new category consisting of immigrants who entered on a tourist visa and then decided to stay, those who crossed the border illegally, and those who became illegal when they were refused refugee status" (Leun et al. 1998 in Essed and Wesenbeek, 2004:53). They are described as undocumented immigrants although they usually have some kind of documentation of

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[24] Act of 15 May 2008 on the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom of Norway and their Stay in the Realm (Immigration Act) Section 60, Duration and content of residence permits, Section 61, Renewal of residence permits, Section 62 Pemanent residence permit.
[25] Oxford Dictionaries, "Nationality"
http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/nationality.

their identity – it is not just regarded as trustworthy. The term 'illegal' is even more questionable as it contradicts with the right to legal entry for persons who search asylum.

5.2.3. Educational background and engagement

Through my data collection I wanted to investigate how Afghan refugees and asylum seekers undergo the transition from Afghanistan to Norway, and in what way this change affect their identities. Another influential aspect of identity is education. Many of my respondents mentioned education as an important aspect in their lives, and expressed their motivation to study. In contrast to Norway, access to education is not taken for granted in Afghanistan. "Many schools remain closed in Afghanistan due to the prevailing local security conditions, the inability of local departments of education to access certain communities, and the inability of the government to provide education materials to many schools, including text books and writing materials" (UNAMA, July 2012:33). In the same report it is also referred to several documented incidents of attacks against schools, particularly for girls. Several informants stated that they wanted to study in Norway so that they could bring something back to Afghanistan if/when they returned. I will return back to this point later.

Yet, the level of education achieved varied among the respondents. One respondent who had almost no school experience from Afghanistan had used lots of his free time reading books while he lived in Iran and Norway. He was currently at high school in Norway, and was motivated to continue studying after this. A combination of agency and support from friends and network seemed to have motivated him to continue studying. This hints at Kabeer's idea of empowerment as *a process of change* (Kabeer, 1999). Education is regarded as one of the steps in the process of being empowered as it contributes to increased knowledge and self-esteem. This engagement in education and the presence of empowerment was also evident in the interview with one of my female respondents. She told me her father had encouraged her to study and made her be the person she was today. When she arrived in Norway she was eager to study, but was disappointed that she had to go through stuff she had previously learnt at school in Afghanistan/Pakistan. These examples underline the agency of the refugees and contradict the image of refugees as passive victims and dependants.

Some of the rejected asylum seekers I talked to had obtained 250 hours with Norwegian as part of the introductory programme. From this they had learned the alphabet, and could engage in easy conversations. They were interested in learning more Norwegian, but had no longer right to free lessons and could not afford to take private lessons. It was argued that it was better before when they could attend classes, since this contributed to routines in their everyday lives. The fact that they no longer had the access to free Norwegian classes seemed to have a disempowering effect on them, as they were in practice denied the access to learn the language. However, the case is different for refugees who become resettled. "The law requiring municipalities to provide introductory programmes (the Introductory Act) lays down rights and obligations in relation to learning Norwegian, social studies and more comprehensive qualification programmes for various groups of new arrivals" (IMDi, 2008:18).

5.2.4. Politics, religion and ethnicity – various backgrounds and engagements
When it came to political engagement, this also varied among the respondents. Some of them had been or were still politically engaged, often deriving from families that were involved in politics in one or the other way. Others did not pay much attention to this issue or they tried to stay away from politics, because they had little trust in it. Some of the Afghan informants who expressed their political attachment derived from communist families. According to Peggy (2006), most migrants are transnational activists from time to time, shifting focus from their countries of origin to their countries of host. One respondent expressed his involvement in Workers Socialist Party in Afghanistan; another one had become a member of the Red Party in Norway, yet another was engaged in women's association for minority women in the municipality where she was resettled. One respondent had also been engaged in the asylum march from Oslo to Trondheim in 2007 that was organized to highlight the situation of rejected Afghan asylum seekers in Norway. This march was also a form of resistance to the Norwegian immigration policy and practice and the deportations of Afghan asylum seekers[26].

One respondent had visited Afghanistan several times after he got a residence permit in Norway. He had taken part in a recent political campaign when he was there,

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[26] For more information: "Asylmarsj" http://www.asylmarsj.no/?language=en.

and wanted to continue taking part in the political life when he returned. He was the only one who deliberately said he was going to move back to Afghanistan in a few years, after he had completed his studies in Norway. At the same time, he had a respectable job in Norway, and seemed to have a broad network in the country. Again, this demonstrates the role of agency among refugees (Castles, 2003). Another respondent became a member of an Afghan socialist organization during the time he stayed in Norway. He was eager to learn more about socialism and how systems work. *Life is more than just one self; we are also part of a community.* He was puzzled about how Norway, in his words, could occupy Afghanistan at the same time as Afghans were sent out of Norway. When he heard that thousands of people were living in hiding in Norway, he was shocked. This stood in contrast to the hospitality he remembered in Afghanistan in which people could give away pieces of land, animals and other things to each other.

Some considered religion as a personal issue, while others stated they were non-religious. Religious background was sometimes mentioned as a way of distinguishing one group from another, for instance Shias from Sunnis. The tradition of linking religion with politics in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region has clearly had an impact on the population. The expansion of Taliban took place as they united some ethno-political and religious networks, while at the same time eliminated others. "Despite being ousted from state control at the end of 2001, at the time of writing, there has been a resurgence of Taliban rural opposition to Coalition occupation and the state-building project currently under way" (Duffield, 2007:140). Several of my informants stated they had fled from the Taliban regime, and some were working politically against them.

Among my respondents there were both Shia's and Sunni's. One respondent with Sunni background mentioned that she was placed together with a man with Shia background when she arrived in Norway, and found it difficult to communicate with him because of this difference. This perception of 'the other' was likely an influence of perceptions of Shia people among the people in her own family/ community. Religion was also expressed as a personal issue, and a few also stated they were not religious. One respondent considered himself an atheist after some time in Norway, but he had always been sceptical to Islam. He said there were differences in religious practice within his family, but he felt freer when he got to Norway. He could now drink alcohol, go to disco

and have girlfriends outside marriage without hiding it. This is an example of how a changing environment in exile may influence the identity of a person, and that more liberal values are adapted as a consequence of living abroad.

I also discovered a difference on the emphasis on ethnicity among the informants, while some seemed to be more attached to their ethnic background, others were rather referring to themselves as Afghans. Being aware that ideas of ethnicity and nationality are indeed socially constructed, considering that humans have created nations, and there is no evidence that ethnicity is fixed, it makes even more sense that people have different perceptions of these concepts. Ethnicity refers to "the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition"[27]. I discovered that a few respondents seemed to pay attention to ethnicity as an important factor of their identity. As a matter of fact these persons had experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity. Living as a Hazara in Afghanistan can be tough according to one of my respondents. Not only are the Hazaras subjected to discrimination because of their ethnic background, but also because they belong to the religious Shia minority, and have also fallen victims to target killings. This ethno-religious form of discrimination illustrates how intersectionality plays a role within discrimination. One respondent found it important to focus not only on his personal story, but the situation of the Hazara community as victims of discrimination and target killings both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He was referring to the collective fear among Hazaras as being targets for fundamentalists in their host region.

Other respondents paid less attention to ethnicity; some of them were also of mixed origin. Perceptions of ethnicity are also influenced by language, demonstrating that ethnicity is not really a fixed category. During one of the interviews I was told the name 'Afghan' or 'Augan' in Persian means Pashtun, and hence it does include only the major ethnic group of the population. Afghanistan is often said to be a Persian word that stands for the 'land of the Pashtuns'. However, [w]ith the creation of the modern state of Afghanistan, 'Afgan' was extended to cover all residents of the country, regardless their

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[27] Oxford Dictionaries, "Ethnicity",
http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ethnicity.

language"[28]. This is probably why the respondents in general did not pay much attention to ethnicity. One respondent told me she was both Pashtun and Sunni, but for her this did not play a big role. However, she said there was much talk about it in Afghanistan. Her impression was that Pashtuns are often concerned about themselves and about ruling the country. This example shows the ambiguity that lies in identity, and perhaps ethnicity as a category of identity in particular. Although ethnicity is socially constructed, it is still of importance in many societies, particularly when one ethnic group has more privileges than another ethnic group.

5.2.5. Gender roles and relations in a transnational community
The intention with this study was also to see whether the transition had any impact on their experiences of gender roles and gender relations, since these are part of our daily lives and are influenced by power inequalities. Although I did not manage to get a clear overview of this, the respondents seemed to be relatively liberal in their interpretations of gender roles and relations, for instance had all the women achieved education. Liberal ideas may be an outcome of living in a more egalitarian-based country as Norway, as gender roles and relations are often renegotiated during forced migration (Jolly and Reeves, 2005, El Bushra, 2000, and Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004). However, liberal ideas may have been there earlier but suppressed because of the domination of more traditional norms of gender roles and relations. One respondent felt that the transition from Afghanistan/Pakistan to Norway changed her view of herself. While she felt that she was treated first and foremost as a woman in Afghanistan, she considered herself more than anything else a human being in Norway. On the other hand, more conservative values may also arise among immigrants during time in exile, as a reaction to a society that may be perceived as too liberal. For instance, one respondent mentioned the recruitment of young Afghans in Norway to fundamentalist groups.

The women were openly expressing how it was to be an Afghan woman, referring to the danger of fleeing as a woman, having the opportunity to study as a girl, and experiences with restrictions on clothing and behaviour. The women I interviewed also

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[28] Geocurrents.info, "The complex and Contentious Issue of Afghan Identity" http://geocurrents.info/place/south-asia/the-complex-and-contentious-issue-of-afghan-identity.

referred to serious and humiliating experiences of being a woman in a conservative male-dominated society. Discrimination of women in various forms exists in periods before, during and after periods of conflict. "Where cultures of violence and discrimination against women and girls exist prior to conflict, they will be exacerbated during conflict" (UN, 2002:3). One respondent had fled from her husband, whom she was forcedly married to, while another one had fled from an aggressive suitor. As pointed out earlier, forced marriage is a widespread practice in Afghanistan (HRW, January 2012). One woman had left Afghanistan with her family when she was at the age of 12, and was later told that *some rich men with power* had wanted to marry her and her sister. In order to protect their daughters the parents had hidden this information, since their daughters were still young. She did not know the details about this story, but she did not want to ask that much about it either. These examples do all indicate forms of gendered insecurity, which is a topic I will return to in the next part of the discussion.

Yet another woman fled together with her husband to Norway, and stated that one of the reasons was to escape from his parents. She knew that their daughter-in-law was treated as a servant, and she feared that the same would happen to her if she stayed. In Afghanistan it is common that a married woman move in with her in-laws. However, after some time in Norway, she got divorced from her husband. She explained that she hardly knew her husband at the time they got married and was still young when she agreed to marry. She expressed that she felt freer as a woman after the divorce, although the transition was tough. Divorce is not common in the Afghan community, and it is associated with loss of reputation[29]. The advice was to stay with her husband, but after she had shared her marriage problems, her mother supported her. After the divorce she was happy that she could take decisions without the need for constant negotiations and without being controlled by her husband. This change demonstrates the renegotiation of gender roles and relations, as she could now take her own decisions and was no longer dependent on her husband (El Bushra, 2000, and Essed, Frerks and Schrijvers, 2004).

The perceptions of gender roles and relations seemed to differ between herself and her ex-husband. When Taliban ruled the country he went to school in Afghanistan where they were reading the Quran most of the time, while she grew up in a more liberal

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[29] Landinfo, (27.06.2012) "Temanotat. Afghanistan: Ekteskap."

family in Pakistan experiencing more freedom for girls, regarding for instance girl's access to education. As she got to know him better she understood that their separate backgrounds had contributed to different ways of thinking. This example demonstrates how socially constructed notions of gender roles and relations influence people's ideas of these concepts, and that life in exile might change their perceptions.

The men I interviewed could express gendered issues more implicit through their emphasis on being able to work and earn money, a skill that is often associated with masculinity and male roles. "Certain groups of men are particularly vulnerable to insecurity and marginalization, for instance those who are unable to fill the culturally prescribed role of 'breadwinner' in times of economic restructuring" (Chant 2000 in Carling, 2005:3). Refugees and asylum seekers who have not yet got work permission, or have been refused it, are vulnerable to insecurity and marginalization, particularly if they take part in informal employment. Since the man is often expected to be the breadwinner he may also feel a loss of status if he cannot fulfil this role. On the other side, my female respondents were also concerned about earning an income and support their family, and in that sense they were contradicting the traditional notion of the man as the financial provider of the family, pointing at changing gender roles. As Jolly and Reeves (2005) point out, there has been a change in migration patterns in recent years with a 'feminization of migration', in which more women are travelling unaccompanied. Although access to employment and income for women opens up for independency and personal freedom, this opportunity is not exclusively the way to empowerment for women. Access to paid work does not necessarily put an end to subordination of refugee women, whether it takes place at the workplace, within the household or in other social settings. For instance, an employed woman may still be left out in decision-making processes both at home and in the public.

One thing I discovered in my interviews was that the respondents sometimes had more liberal perceptions of what they thought were female and male roles. "Expectations about men's and women's roles in society have often led to distorted accounts of migration history, in which women are seen as passive and dependant" (Carling, 2005:20). My female respondents did in many ways contrast to this stereotypical idea of the refugee woman; some of them fled to Norway unaccompanied with courage to

overcome barriers and to move on, and most of them were both working and studying. The fact that they were still young women was probably in their favour during the transitional process, as it can be easier to adapt to new settings while one is still young. One respondent argued that she was not like other Afghan women. According to her, many Afghan girls want to marry as soon as possible to have someone to take care of them, while she preferred to manage things on her own. Nevertheless, her father played an important role in her upraising, and his liberal thoughts on female roles seemed to have influenced her already at the time she stayed in Afghanistan. She sometimes used to sit together with her father when he had male friends over for a visit, and was listening to their discussions. This example points at more equal gender relations, in this case between the father and the daughter.

Her story also indicates that it can be dangerous to oppose patriarchal norms in a society in which men are supposed to have control. Her father's actions became a dangerous affair, as he suddenly disappeared from the family. The fact that he had refused to marry away her daughter to a Talib man, as compensation for the housing constructions he had helped him with, seemed to be the reason for the disappearing. According to my informant, there is a local custom in Afghanistan saying that if you are in some kind of debt to a person, you could marry away your daughter as payment to the one you are indebted to. This tradition clearly demonstrates the perception of women as an inferior human being, more directly as a commodity that could be traded. It also demonstrates the influence of the *purdah* ideology, which restricts women's freedom of movement and sexuality (Andersen, 2005). Furthermore, the example shows that it is not an easy task to stand up against these customs in a patriarchal society, in which the man, and in many cases the father, is seen as the main decision-maker.

One of the male respondents did also describe a good relationship with his parents, and he saw them as examples to follow. He grew up in a farmer family in a mountainous village and his parents had no education. His mother seemed to have particular impact on him, as he described her as his best friend and as 'a mountain to him'. The relations between them were built on mutual trust. For instance, while he was in Iran he had a secret girlfriend, but his mother knew about it and accepted it. This example shows how both himself and his mother resisted against traditional norms about

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gender relations that were dominating in their society. The example also challenges the assumption of rural and uneducated families as more conservative. Interestingly, he also stated that he had nothing against choosing an untraditional occupation for his carrier, and he already gained some experience from working in the home care in Norway.

One of the reasons for the escape from Afghanistan among several of my respondents was to get an education for the girls in the family. Education for girls was encouraged among the parents of the female respondents I talked to, indicating that they wanted to involve their girls in a process of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). In Pakistan and Iran the girls experienced more educational opportunities than in Afghanistan. While the girls were allowed education in these countries, they were refused this opportunity under the Taliban regime. One female respondent stressed that she valued higher education for women not only as an economic security, but also as important for one's own personal development. On the other hand, she did not want to underestimate the value of raising children and taking care of domestic chores. *When one has studied long enough it is about time for children, which is a way to give happiness to the family.* Her point was not that all women *should* raise children. Rather, she personally wanted to be a good mother for her future children, in the same way as her mother had been to her throughout her childhood. This example underlines the major role of the family and the relations within the family, not only between men and women, but also among women themselves. As a daughter, she expressed genuine respect for her mother, and the important role she had played in her upbringing. However, expectations within the family or in the society may also determine one's perceptions of gender roles and relations, and sometimes it can be a conflict between more individualistic values and collective values. Gender roles and relations are in that sense always part of negotiations and renegotiations between and among men and women, in which roles and relations are not clear-cut, but constantly changing.

Part 2:

5.3. Human security and forced migration

5.3.1. Situating human security in relation to asylum and refuge

"The loss of human security can be a slow, silent process – or an abrupt, load emergency" (HDR, 1994:23). In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, insecurities and vulnerabilities may take place both during an emergency that causes flight, *and* over time as insecurities may continue during and after flight, involving a long-term process. Another important part of the research was to study the perceptions and experiences among the informants of human security, before, during and after the flight. It may not come as a surprise that the respondents answered that they felt more secure in Norway than in their region of origin. However, as I discovered in my interviews, different forms of insecurities and vulnerabilities occur even after flight. Insecurity could for instance, take place in the form of a person's inability to plan his/her future because of a pending or rejected asylum case.

The human security framework is supposed to be inclusive, but in many cases the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants are overlooked or not prioritized because their needs conflict with other interests of the state. "The tension between feasibility and breadth is likely to be ongoing in discussions about human security, even if human security is understood to comprise survival, livelihood and basic dignity (…)" (Alkire, 2003:20). For asylum seekers, insecurity may occur as (the fear of) the possibility of being attacked or harassed at the reception centre. It may also take place when a person is denied work permission, hence the right to work for an income. Although policies, regulations and control concerning immigration are probably formed with the best intentions of securing the state and society from unwanted phenomena, such as crime, terror and unemployment, they do frequently happen at the cost of the human security of immigrants. This indicates that the link between security and development is not unproblematic with respect to how it is operationalized on the ground. Duffield (2007) refers to development as 'a technology of security', as a way to control insecurity.

> *Rather than development being concerned with reducing the economic gap between rich and poor countries, or extending to the latter the levels of social protection existing in the former, as a technology of security it functions to contain and manage underdevelopment's destabilizing effects, especially its circulatory epiphenomena such as undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, transborder shadow economies or criminal networks (Duffield, 2007:ix).*

In this quote, Duffield (2007) points at the level of state control. The emphasis on control put asylum seekers in a situation in which they are seen as a burden, rather than people who are in need of protection as the label in itself indicates. Although the argument among politicians and bureaucrats is to maintain control in order to protect the asylum institute, this can actually have detrimental effects for individuals, whose stories are not believed. "In the name of preserving state security, the detention of illegal migrants without due process is on the rise globally" (CHS, 2003:42). Norway has been criticized from several accounts for not following UNHCR's guidelines about protection. Taken in consideration that Norway has frequently been referred to as an ideal state in which human rights are prioritized, this accusation places the country several steps backwards. According to NPA (2011) it is now common procedure that asylum seekers from well-known conflict areas, such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq, are denied protection in Norway, which is against the recommendations from UN[30].

The issue around human security of asylum seekers and refugees does not only concern the denial of asylum, but also the way they are treated in host society. "[T]he Convention lay down basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, without prejudice to States granting more favourable treatment" (UNHCR, 2010:3). Asylum seekers and refugees in Norway may experience what Alkire (2003) refers to as indirect and structural threats, through for instance various forms of indirect discrimination. Reported cases of suicide and suicide attempts, vandalism and fires, stabbing and violence, hunger strikes, as well as disappearances of asylum seekers from reception centres indicate that the situation for asylum seekers in Norway is far from optimal[31]. Although several cases like these are reported it has not been taken seriously in terms of establishing preventative mechanisms. Little investigation seems to be undertaken trying to understand why these happenings are taking place. However, recent research shows that there were mostly unaccompanied men who disappeared from reception centres in Norway between 2008-2011, and several of these were involved in Dublin-cases[32]. Some of the disappeared are possible to track down, while others continue to live in hiding. As

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[30] Norsk Folkehjelp (2011) "Asyl og integrering. Posisjonsdokument – standpunkt og meninger".
[31] Johansen, A.D. and S. Lysvold (04.10.2012) "Kurdiske Newsad (20) prøvde flere ganger å ta livet sitt. Forrige fredag lyktes han", *NRK* http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nordland/1.8346026
[32] Nordahl, T. (09.05.2012), "Asylsøkerne som forsvinner" in *Her og nå, NRK P1*. http://p3.no/dokumentar/de-uonskede/#OvervaaketAvAgenter.

these examples indicate, insecurities and vulnerabilities are experienced in various forms and at different times, not only before and during flight but also in exile.

There is need to question how we can refer to Norway as a welfare state incorporating equality as a crucial value if human rights and development are reserved those with citizenship. Valenta and Bunar (2010) point at the mismatch between the ideal of an equal welfare state and the inequalities between refugees and citizens that exist in practice. "Although based on the principle of a strong welfare state, which provides extensive resettlement and integration assistance to refugees, refugee integration policies in Sweden and Norway have not succeeded in equalizing the initial inequalities between refugees and the rest of the population" (Valenta and Bunar, 2010:465). Their research provides some critical thoughts regarding the Scandinavian welfare model and how it is operationalized. In order to understand how human security is experienced among forced migrants, referring to the Afghans in this study, it is also necessary to discover their actual situations in more well-off countries such as Norway. According to the Commission on Human Security (2003), the protection of refugees is not only a responsibility in the hands of states and the UNHCR, as civil society organizations and refugees themselves also need to play a role in this regard.

Many of the respondents I talked to seemed to have adapted well to the changing circumstances due to migration, although challenges were experienced along the way. Sense of social belonging is a necessary aspect in people's lives, and is influential with regards to the general feeling of human security. Nevertheless, various forms of racism, discrimination and social exclusion do take place, whether it is in explicit forms or more implicit. "At the 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism, fear and hatred against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were recognized as one of the main manifestations of modern racism" (CHS, 2003:46). The labelling of 'others' exists in public and political space, and should be recognized as it may contribute to social exclusion as well as isolation of groups and individuals in host society. "Labelling inherently creates exclusive divisions given that once labelled, there are clear ideological constructions of 'us' versus 'them', or even 'them' versus 'another-them'" (Gupte and Mehta, 2007:68). One problem caused by the rhetoric of 'us' versus 'them' is the social exclusion of 'them' in various spheres of society.

Since all my Afghan informants were interviewed in Norway, I have chosen to concentrate on their experiences of human security in this country, although I connect these experiences with happenings before flight. First I take a brief look at their experiences from Pakistan and Iran, which were the first countries of asylum for most of my informants, an the following section is centred on the flight to Europe. In the remaining sections I point out several aspects of human security and obstacles that they may encounter in search for a better and more secure life in Norway.

5.3.2. A brief look at experiences from Pakistan and Iran
What was common for most of my respondents was that they had been staying as refugees in Pakistan and/or Iran before they came to Norway, and some had even lived most of their time outside Afghanistan. The problems raised were the challenges experienced as illegal refugees, hiding from the police, and working under hard conditions for a minimum wage. One respondent described the harsh working conditions he experienced in Iran while he was working at construction sites. *It's like a cage!* In fear of deportation and abuse, they worked, lived and slept at their working place. Turton and Marsden (2002) refer to the neglect by the Iranian government to register new arrivals from Afghanistan, and how Afghans are frequently questioned by the police on the street as most of them are considered illegal immigrants (Turton and Marsden, 2002:15 in Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:139). One respondent told me the police once beat him when he got to know that he was an Afghan. This example is an indication of how the combination of negative perceptions and hostile treatment of refugees creates vulnerability and insecurity for the offended.

Similarly, immigration policies and practice in Pakistan demonstrate how refugees are treated as second-class people, even when they have been staying for years they may be treated in the same way as those who has newly arrived. Pakistan has still not signed the Geneva Convention and Protocol, but they have signed a tripartite agreement with Afghanistan and UNHCR that allows registered Afghan refugees with a Proof of Registration-card temporary permission to stay in the country. According to

UNHCR it is almost impossible for Afghan refugees to get Pakistani citizenship[33]. This is an indication of how state policies prioritize state security over human security, in accordance with the anti-terror strategy that takes place worldwide. A consequence of the priority of state security and the hostility towards newcomers is that it creates barriers for integration of refugees and hindrances for cooperation between origin and host.

Hand in hand with Iran's policy towards repatriation of Afghan refugees after 2001 there are decreasing rights for Afghan refugees, exploitation of cheap labour and high rental prices for property. However, the salaries and the opportunities for work are higher than in Pakistan (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:153). Some of my respondents told me they experienced economic difficulties in Iran, working under hard conditions for small earnings. One of my respondents told me that there are many illegal Afghan immigrants in Iran, but they do not need permission in order to work, as they do in Norway. Nevertheless, it is part of Iran's policy to remove illegal immigrants from the country. "Since April 2007, the Iranian government has moved actively to expel Afghans who lack formal papers permitting them to reside in Iran" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:139). This policy of expelling does not seem to match the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. One respondent pointed out that unemployment in Iran is a reason why Afghans often get the blame for the socio-economic problems in the country, but in fact most of the buildings in Iran are built with the support of Afghan labour.

5.3.3. The flight to Europe

In line with local integration as one of the durable solutions to forced migration, UNHCR aims to improve the legal status of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan, as well as their access to livelihoods (UNHCR, 2012:45). However, the hostility towards Afghan refugees in the neighbour countries seems to push people to seek for opportunities outside the region. In some cases, refugees who have the financial means may end up fleeing to Europe. The flight can also be dangerous for the forced migrants because of the unpredictability and insecurity that is connected to it. In *Human Security Now* (2003) it is

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[33] Landinfo, (21.12.2011) "Respons Afghanistan: Statsborgerskap for afghanske flyktninger i Pakistan/ statsborgerskap på grunnlag av ekteskap med afghansk borger i Pakistan."

mentioned several risks that migrants are exposed to during flight; including sexual violation, physical abuse, diseases and minimal access to health services.

As mentioned earlier, the flight often involves smuggling. The refugees have to be loyal to the smugglers and careful when crossing particular areas or borders were they might be under scrutiny. The respondents told me they got to Norway through different forms of transportation – by foot, in overcrowded boats, and in and even under trucks. Frequently, they were stopped by the police and in some cases they had experienced police violence. Greece is a destination for many refugees as it paves the way to Europe. According to one of my respondents, many refugees decide which country they are heading to from here. My respondents informed me about ruthless conditions in which people were sleeping on the streets, got beaten and even died as a result of the circumstances they were in. Human smuggling has become an industry that grows in tandem with states' increasingly restrictions on the movement of people. "Koslowski observes that prevention [of human smuggling] runs the risk of producing an unintended outcome, that of closing down one of the few means of escape left open to refugees" (Tunstall, 2006:12). Nevertheless, numbers from UNHCR shows that there has been a slight increase in asylum claims from Afghanistan to Europe after 2007, and the continued volatile situation seems to be the reason for this increase. "With 35,700 asylum claims lodged in 2011, Afghanistan was the most important **source country** of asylum-seekers in the 44 industrialized countries" (UNHCR, 2011:3). These high numbers indicate the need for more research on Afghans on the move, their motivations, patterns of migration and the responses to it. On the other hand, it is crucial to recognize the increasing containment of refugees who remain in the poor regions.

Several of the respondents confirmed that they had been smuggled to Norway, and they did not seem to hide this information. "It is estimated that more than half the 15-30 million illegal migrants in the world have been assisted by smugglers or been forcibly relocated by traffickers" (CHS, 2003:42). Human smuggling networks are widespread and they seem to be easy to get in touch with as long as one can afford the costs for the flight. One of my Afghan respondents could confirm the easy access to smugglers. *It is easy to get in touch with them, people know who they are and they need money*. According to Maley (2000), the scale of smuggling from Afghanistan has a connection to

the expansion of Taliban and the subsequent fear of a refugee flux. "During the late 1990s, as the Taliban movement expanded in Afghanistan, some Afghans used smuggling networks to move abroad, fearing that adjacent countries would be increasingly inhospitable" (Maley, 2000 in Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:134). One respondent said openly that he had worked as a smuggler himself, while he was still a minor and in need for a job. This points at how smuggling also can be a way of coping with economic insecurity. When smuggling takes place it is apparently an alternative to the restrictive border control system worldwide. However, one should keep in mind that human rights violations might also take place in human smuggling, although the motives for the smuggler is to help the migrant reaching the new destination and at the same time make profit out of it.

Some of the interviewees told me they went through Turkey, and that there were lots of refugees passing this country during their flight to Europe. This trend is referred to in the article by Väyrynen (2003), who mentions that many migrants, among them Afghans, pass through Turkey, as one of the main gateways to Europe. The Dublin 2 Treaty has also resulted in unjust sharing of responsibility among the recipient countries putting pressure on the countries easily accessible for refugees, for example Turkey and Greece. Being aware the increasing restrictions on migration and control of borders, it is not rare that forced migrants choose untraditional routes of escape. The widespread control of borders results in a risky adventure, and a journey that may take months to complete. My informants told me that some places could be dangerous travel during daytime, so they had to travel by night. For some of my respondents it took about 6 months to reach the final destination Norway.

5.3.4. Experiences of human security in Norway

"From a human security perspective, the movement of people should be looked at comprehensively, taking into account the political, civil, security, economic and social dimensions affecting peoples' decision to move" (CHS, 2003:45). Migrating from Afghanistan to Norway is a powerful decision to make and educational and economical background is most likely to influence this decision, as I discovered concerning my informants. I found that the reasons for ending up in Norway were often similar among

the respondents. Among the reasons were Norway's position in terms of implementation of human rights, the good living standard, and the reputation of Norway as a liberal country. Since my informants highlighted these characteristics in a positive way it means they could identify somehow with these values. The opening for family reunification and opportunities for studies were also mentioned as motivations. Some also said they had ended up in Norway as a coincidence, as they did not necessarily know the route plan from the onset. They also experienced that the plan could be changed during the flight.

As a refugee succeeds completing the journey to the host country, the challenges and experiences of insecurity does not necessarily stop here. "For many people (…) migration is vital to protect and attain human security, although their human security may also be at risk while they are migrating" (CHS, 2003:41). A person's experience of safety depends a lot on the safeguarding of rights and access to basic services. Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is the only humanitarian organization that operates reception centres in Norway, and their role is to ensure inclusion of asylum seekers in the country. It is recognized by the organization that asylum seekers, as well as refugees and ethnic minorities, are the ones who get lowest scores in surveys about living conditions, who experience discrimination in different settings, and who in many cases are not ensured the rights they have been granted. According to NPA, they see it as their role to be engaged and take responsibility in this field, as they emphasize the values of solidarity, human dignity and unity[34]. As I understand, these values, with human dignity in particular, are to be central in the operationalization of human security. Human dignity means also equal treatment of those who enter and stay in the country of host.

5.3.5. The right to enter and stay

"The Convention (…) stipulates that, subject to specific exceptions, refugees should not be penalized for their illegal entry or stay. This recognizes that the seeking of asylum can require refugees to breach immigration rules" (UNHCR, 2010:3). A person's experience of safety also depends on their right to stay in the host country. The right to stay is particularly important as it contributes to a sense of human security. One employee at a reception centre told me the Norwegian immigration system was made for Norwegians,

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[34] *Norsk Folkehjelp*, (March 2011) "Asyl og integrering. Posisjonsdokument – standpunkt og meninger."

in the sense that it was hard for newcomers to grasp how the system was working. An immigration system that recognizes the need for human security of refugees is more likely to benefit the refugees, as well as the population as a whole. Combined with tailored integration policies and practice it could contribute to further empowerment of refugees, as they have more surpluses when their basic needs are covered. Studies by Valenta and Bunar (2010) "shows that people who immediately upon arrival, are given access to employment, housing, education and language training, achieve a greater degree of integration" (Valenta and Bunar, 2010:465). This should be reason enough to prioritize the operationalization of human security of refugees and asylum seekers.

"Entry status (irregular, regular, refugee, asylum-seeker, dependent spouse) often determines residency and employment rights, ability to gain legal citizenship, access to social services such as health and education, access to language training and income security programmes" (Jolly and Reeves, 2005:18). Hence, the right to stay in a country depends upon the legal hierarchy of residence. Although not every asylum seeker may desire to be a Norwegian citizen, every human being wants to be an equal part of society including having the right to stay and live a descent life. Several of the rejected asylum seekers expressed that a residence permit would improve their situation. However this depended on the decisions taken by officers at UDI, as they inhabit the power to decide who have the right to stay, as stated in the Immigration Act of Norway. "Administrative decisions regarding temporary or permanent residence permits, renewal and revocation shall be made by the Directorate of Immigration"[35]. This power of decision also involves the determination of a person's right to protection. As I come back to later, this means a great deal of control of a person's destiny in the hands of bureaucrats.

5.3.6. Control mechanisms: The Dublin 2 Treaty, EURODAC and the use of age tests
Since the 1990s, new national and regional measures have been implemented in the Western European countries in order to minimize immigration and entry of asylum seekers. "The unforeseen consequence of such restrictions was the rapid growth of a transnational 'migration industry'. Rather than stopping immigration, the measures

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[35] *Act of 15 My 2008 on the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom of Norway and their Stay in the Realm (Immigration Act),* Section 65 Power of decision.

created business opportunities for new transnational enterprises (both legal and illegal)" (Castles, 2003). The 'migration industry' has practically opened up for human smuggling across borders at the same times as state authorities are tightening the grip.

According to Gupte & Mehta (2007), the implementation of policy frameworks and laws control "the status, rights, livelihood options and future of (…) refugees at the national and international level" (Gupte and Mehta, 2007:68). One of the measures to control immigration to Europe is the Dublin 2 Treaty. The aim of the treaty is to make sure that an asylum application is treated in only one country, to avoid 'asylum shopping', and to make sure that families are not separated (Taraku, 2011:19). Those who apply for asylum in more than one country are generally referred to as 'Dubliners'. In practice the Dublin 2 Treaty leads to insecurities connected to whether the asylum seeker gets protection or not. As a consequence of this treaty there have been a substantial number of deportations of Afghans within Europe as well as to Afghanistan.

One respondent told me that when he arrived in Norway he was met with suspicion when the police discovered a fingerprint of him showing that he was a 'Dubliner'. Through a cooperating fingerprint system called EURODAC, the police can easily find out if the asylum seeker is registered in another country (Taraku, 2011:19). During some of my interviews the respondents told me they knew several asylum seekers who had been deported to their first country where they applied for asylum, and some of them had returned back to Norway. While rejected asylum seekers are expected to return 'voluntarily', it is not necessarily seen as a good solution in the eyes of an asylum seeker. "The use of 'voluntary' in this context, however, is problematic, especially when the bulk of the remaining refugees have lived most of their life in exile and many have never set their foot in their home country" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:131). In this regard, the returning refugees need to be sure there are some opportunities for them after the return, a point I will return to later.

Another concern among asylum seekers in Norway, and elsewhere in Europe, is the use of age tests that are supposed to ascertain a person's age through x-rays of teeth and wrists. This is particularly evident when the immigration authorities want to know if the person is an adult or still a minor, according to the legal definitions.

> *Where, in a case concerning asylum or in a case concerning a residence permit for a family member, it is not possible to establish with reasonable certainty whether the foreign national is over or under the age of 18, the foreign national may be requested to allow himself or herself to be examined in order to determine his or her age[36].*

The underlying reason for using age tests is to determine the exact age if there is doubt about whether the asylum seeker is telling the truth. However, the practice has been widely criticized by medical experts because of the uncertainty of the tests. The age tests do not recognize that bodies are growing in different ways and are therefore unreliable[37]. Several of my respondents claimed that the ages stated by the tests differed from their real ages. Although the age tests are voluntary it may have consequences for the outcome of a case if an asylum seeker refuse to take the test. The use of age tests is an example of the control mechanisms associated with immigration management, and has real consequences for minor asylum seekers who are not treated as minors.

5.3.7. The waiting process and its implications for undocumented asylum seekers
The waiting process while the asylum application is being treated can be a stressful process. According to UDI, the processing of asylum cases (the sum of all nationalities) went down to 98 days, more than 50% down from last year. A third of all asylum cases were treated in 60 days[38]. Nevertheless, as I understood from my informants who were stuck in this situation, the waiting period was long enough. Living in a limbo phase, not being able to make plans apart from the daily routines of getting up in the morning, eat and go to bed in the evening, will most likely contribute to frustration. Another respondent also expressed his frustration of not having the capability to plan his future. *I cannot plan anything… it is not in my hands. My plans are in the hands of UNE.* The rejected asylum seekers stressed their repeated efforts trying to reach contacts through UDI and UNE. According to the Immigration Act (2010) a foreign national has his/her right to make a statement, stating " the immigration authorities shall ensure that the foreign national is given the opportunity to present his or her own views in a language in

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[36] *Act of 15 My 2008 on the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom of Norway and their Stay in the Realm (Immigration Act)* Section 88 Age Examination.

[37] Rønold, I. (29.08.2012) "Langer ut mot norsk asylpolitikk" in *Dagsavisen.* http://www.dagsavisen.no/samfunn/langer-ut-mot-norsk-asylpolitikk/ (Uploaded 29.08.2012)

[38] UDI Annual Report 2011:28.

which he or she can communicate adequately"[39]. However, such experiences as mentioned above suggest that the bureaucracy hinder the asylum seekers in making plans for the future, since their future prospects are frequently postponed as a cause of the pending asylum status, and their lack of influence in the process. "Considering the severe consequences of the administrative elimination of individuals, it is worth noticing that the construction of the idea of the 'genuine' refugee places unprecedented powers with bureaucratic officials" (Essed and Wesenbeek, 2004:57). This weighty power does not resemble the aim of human security to empower people and ensure human dignity. It also contradicts the principle of placing human beings at the centre of analysis, as in this case, the asylum seekers. The inability to plan one's future contributes to feelings of insecurity, as the person has to live on a day-by-day-basis. In the Commission on Human Security Report (2003) it is argued that there are limited opportunities for resettlement in a third country, despite the urgency for protection.

Most of the men I talked had to wait for a long time before they got an answer to their asylum application. At one reception centre I visited, the Afghan male asylum seekers had gathered together writing a letter to the Parliament asking for an explanation to why they were all rejected. Their concerns were that they were all young, unaccompanied men, and they thought they were treated on a general basis, rather than on individual basis. "People in such circumstances develop ambiguous relationships towards the places in which they find themselves, and this may seriously constrain the influence they can have on the development of such places of residence" (Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:10). Not only does their ambiguous relationships to host constrain the positive impact they could have on this society, it could also lead to destructive behaviour among the concerned, contributing to a process of disempowerment.

Although UDI has made efforts in trying to reduce the waiting period, it is still reported about asylum seekers who stay for years even after asylum is rejected, because their identities are not proved. It is, however, a small percent that cannot verify their identity. Among those who was granted asylum in 2011, 94 % contributed to substantiate

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[39] *Act of 15 My 2008 on the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom of Norway and their Stay in the Realm (Immigration Act),* Section 81, Foreign national's right to make a statement.

their identity somehow[40]. In an interview in *Klassekampen*, Ida Børressen, the Director of UDI, argues that there are many good reasons why people who flee lack identity papers; among them are the fact that it is really dangerous to travel with documents if you are indeed persecuted, and there are also many who flee from countries where they cannot issue these kind of papers. With regards to the Afghans, it is not common that they receive these documents, and it could be dangerous for persecuted Afghans to contact the government in order to get these papers[41]. These conditions must be taken into consideration in the process of safeguarding the human security of Afghan asylum seekers.

5.3.8. Personal safety and the rule of law

There are several threats connected to the physical security of the individual as well as particular groups of individuals worldwide. In the *Human Development Report* (1994) it is referred to seven forms of threats; including physical torture by the state, threats from other states through war, ethnic tension, crime and street violence, rape and domestic violence directed against women, child abuse, and threats to self through drug use and suicide (HDR, 1994:30). Refugees constitute a group of people that are exposed to several of these kinds of insecurities. Through my data collection I discovered that personal insecurity was in many cases a reason for escape among the Afghans. Although gender insecurity is often referred to as a form of personal insecurity, I have treated it in a separate section because of its importance and particular relevance in my study.

In the *Human Development Report* (1994), global poverty is recognized as a problem causing 'illegal migration', but the consequences of using the category 'illegal' when referring to migrants, or refugees in particular are not reflected upon. Essed and Wesenbeek (2004) points out how the category 'illegal' conflicts with the notion of a refugee,

> *More than anything the construction of the category 'illegal' symbolises the bankruptcy of the notion of 'refugee' in the Human Rights Declaration, in an era of global capitalism, environmental disasters, internal wars, massive*

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[40] UDI, (07.03.2012) "Identitet: Hvordan vet vi hvem søkerne er" http://www.udi.no/arsrapport2011/Asyl-og-mottak/Hvem-sokte-asyl/Identitet-hvordan-vet-vi-hvem-sokerne-er/.
[41] Brandvold, Åse (23.09.2009) "9 av 10 oppgir identitet" in *Klassekampen*. http://klassekampen.no/56629/article/item/null.

mobilisations and continuous movements of people (Essed and Wesenbeek, 2004:53).

In that sense, they question the mismatch between the essence of the framework of universal human rights in relation to the notions of citizenship vs. illegal immigrants. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 opens up for several rights and freedoms of the individual, the notions of citizenship and the whole idea of 'illegality' excludes people from several rights stated in the declaration. The argument of 'limits' are frequently used to defend restrictive immigration policies, as the idea is that these will control what is perceived as overcrowding of refugees. "Even when human rights are recognized as important and acceptable guidelines for policy, acting accordingly is defined as a function of the successful enforcements of 'limits' in the area of immigration policy" (Essed and Wesenbeek, 2004:56). The focus on 'limits' has also been up in Norwegian politics arguing that one needs to ensure that the asylum institute is not violated.

"More restrictive legislation has been accompanied by a tendency to confuse the status of refugees and illegal migrants and to lump together concerns about terrorism and the problem of asylum seekers" (Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:2). Illegal migrants and asylum seekers are often used as scapegoats for the problems in host society, such as crime, unemployment and terrorism, especially during times of economic recession and global instability. Those who have got refugee status are placed higher up in the social hierarchy because of their legal status, but may still experience racism or xenophobia. During the time after the 9/11 attacks, one respondent had some unpleasant encounters with people following him several places in the city where he lived. Another respondent could inform about experiences of discrimination at the airports in Norway with people asking 'lots of stupid questions'. At the same time he stressed that prejudice is not particular for Norway, it takes place in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Gupte and Mehta (2007) argue "that the simplified labelling of refugees and oustees bears the risk of decontextualizing suffering, devaluing personal understandings, and de-emphasizing the material, non-material and cultural factors that need to be addressed to mitigate suffering" (Gupte and Mehta, 2007:65).

5.3.9. Health, safety and empowerment

"Ensuring human security does not mean taking away from people the responsibility and opportunity for mastering their lives" (HDR, 1994:24). There is usually a combination of agency and structure that influence on how the respondents conquer personal problems, which may also have effect on their health situation. Some respondents informed that they had sleeping problems in the beginning of their stay in Norway. Although being scared in the beginning, one of my interviewees answered to the question on how she confronted the situation of coming as an unaccompanied young woman to Norway; *I knew if something happened to me, I had to defend myself.*

Some respondents informed that they had got help from psychologists/ psychiatrists after they arrived in Norway. The psychologists had motivated them to think forward, and not dwell too much on the past. They were also encouraged to do positive things and try to get a network in Norway. However, one respondent seemed to be depressed and was isolating himself, as he could no longer see any hope for his case. He was spending most of the time in his room at the reception centre. After his asylum application was rejected he found it difficult to see any hope for his future. In addition, there were some family-related problems that seemed to be hard to solve. His wife and children in Afghanistan had escaped, and he did not know where they were staying. Another respondent, whose status was rejected, said he had no family to go back to in Afghanistan, and his closest family was living in Pakistan. Since he was the only son in the family he was expected to migrate to Europe. Essed and Wesenbeek (2004) argue that "state policies and the nature of bureaucracies undermine some of the fundamental human rights of people without legal status" (Essed and Wesenbeek, 2004:54).

One respondent arrived in Norway in company with her mother and siblings. She was only a teenager at that time, but experienced that she had to take a big share of responsibility, as her mother had a difficult time in the beginning. The experienced challenges particularly while they were placed in a reception centre far north in Norway, and with very few people around. After some negotiations, they managed to move to a place further south, and became neighbours to an Afghan family they knew from earlier. According to the respondent this change was influential for their well-being, especially for her mother.

In the Commission on Human Security Report of 2003, it is stated "migration should be seen as a process that empowers people and creates new opportunities for people and states alike" (CHS, 2003:47). During my data collection, I discovered processes of both empowerment and disempowerment. Research shows that psychosocial problems are more frequent among refugees than the rest of the population, and that there exist many complex and traumatic experiences of abuse. In a survey conducted by Jacobsen, Sveaass, Johansen and Skogøy (2007), based on interviews of asylum seekers only, they found that more than half of the respondents had been exposed to life-threatening situations, rape or torture (Brekke, Sveeass and Vevstad, 2010:10-11). This survey demonstrates not only the need to recognize the various experiences of human insecurities among asylum seekers, but also the necessity of an immigration system that is cooperating with basic institutions in society safeguarding human security. Based on my findings, I found that the asylum seekers who had been granted refugee status and residence permit were more likely to show optimism concerning their situation than the rejected asylum seekers.

5.3.10. Housing and living conditions

"The Swedish and Norwegian cases offer a reminder that refugee integration and any subsequent upward social mobility are processes that take time to achieve, even in those countries which have invested tremendous energy in 'Facilitators' of integration" (Valenta and Bunar, 2010: 479). These 'facilitators' of integration include housing and employment assistance. Several respondents described their dissatisfaction with the conditions at the reception centres, and informed about overcrowded, dirty and noisy surroundings. According to one of my informants, the reception centres are not supposed to be attractive, as they should not function as a pull-factor for migration. In one of the reception centres I visited I observed that the housing standard was rather moderate. One of my informants showed me his tiny bedroom that he shared with another asylum seeker. "Several studies also indicate that reception conditions are used as a tool to discourage new arrivals and provide motivation to leave the reception camp, as well as acting to discourage potential new asylum seekers from coming to Scandinavian countries" (Brekke 2004a; Valenta 2004; Brekke and Vevstad 2007 in Valenta and

Bunar, 2010:478). Contrary to the argument that asylum seekers apply for asylum in Norway because of rumours about better living conditions, I find it more likely that they end up here for much more complex reasons. They arrive as forced migrants, and because of insecurity in their home country they were forced to flee. Wars, conflicts and instability in Afghanistan have produced refugee cycles detaching people from their place of origin at different times of war and instability. They are sacrificing family, friends and properties at home, even their own lives on a dangerous and unpredictable journey, motivated by a hope for a better and more secure living. Even though they may be dissatisfied with their new conditions at host, for instance with regards to housing or the bureaucratic system they have to relate to, it does not necessarily mean that they are motivated for return.

One of the employees working in a reception centre I visited told me that vandalism was a problem at the centre, particularly in the houses where the men were staying. She did not know who was responsible for the damage, but she had her suspicions that the vandalism was caused by rejected asylum seekers. She had experienced an increase in damage after the so-called waiting reception centres[42] were closed down and people were transferred to the ordinary reception centres. As rejected asylum seekers are considered 'unwanted' in host country it may contribute to a sense of apathy and indifference. In that sense, there is a potential risk that rejection contributes to destructive attitudes and behaviours among the affected. She knew there had been cases of fights, and it seemed to happen mostly at night or outside office hours. Several of my Afghan informants had also experienced cases of fights at the reception centres, which again contributed to physical insecurity of those who were living there. One respondent described how she once witnessed a group of men beating each other, while the women were fighting with their tongues. Since they were staying in an old wooden house, she felt the whole building was shaking.

"The resettlement of refugees and former asylum seekers who have been granted permanent protection and a residence permit is administered through cooperation between central authorities and local municipalities" (Valenta and Bunar, 2010:474). In

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[42] 'Waiting reception centres' refers to where the rejected asylum seekers used to be hosted while they were waiting for their departure. These kind of waiting centres are not use anymore, and there is currently just one detention centre in Norway.

Norway, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) has the responsibility of resettlement of those who are granted refugee status in Norway[43]. As part of the strategy to disperse refugees in order to speed up integration, the refugees are often settled in more remote areas. However, refugees tend to move away from these areas and rather move to urban areas. My Afghan informants were not all content about the geographical areas in which they were placed in the beginning of their stay in Norway. Several of the asylum seekers and refugees I talked to had previously lived in remote areas in Norway, but did often find these places 'empty' or boring and migrated to more urban areas. Other reasons behind these decisions were to find jobs, meet more people, and reunite with families and friends. One of my respondents who were now resettled was tired of moving from place to place, because she had to build up and then break networks many times. *It has become almost a tradition to move every third year*. One time they had to move because the reception centre closed down.

5.3.11. Economic safety and employment

"The concept of human security stresses that people should be able to take care of themselves: all people should have the opportunity to meet their most essential needs and to earn their own living" (HDR, 1994:24). Several respondents mentioned that they had no real economic problems when they were living in Afghanistan, but in order to arrange the flight they had to sell house and other properties, and some did also rely on savings. The economic situation changed when they moved to Norway, as they had to rely on economical support from the state. Asylum seekers in Norway are allowed to choose to stay in a reception centre receiving economic support, or stay with relatives or friends as self-reliant.

> *Any foreign national who intends to take up employment with or without remuneration or who wishes to engage in business activity in the realm must have a residence permit giving him or her the right to take up employment or to engage in business activity, unless otherwise provided in or pursuant to this Act[44].*

During interviews with the Afghans, employment was emphasised as a way of

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[43] *IMDi* (13.02.2009) "Settlement" http://imdi.no/en/Sprak/English/Settlement/.
[44] *Act of 15 My 2008 on the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom of Norway and their Stay in the Realm (Immigration Act)* Section 55 Requirement as to residence permit in order to take up employment and residence

keeping oneself occupied, this was also stated among those who wanted to be employed but did not have work permission. After the demand of documentation of identity was introduced in 2009, only a few of the asylum seekers in Norway have got work permit. Most of the asylum seekers do not provide valid travel documents, and as a consequence very few get work permit. The demand of proof of identity in order to get work permit is part of the strategy of making Norway less attractive to asylum seekers without the need for protection arriving with the main purpose of work. Another reason for this demand is to make more people document their identity[45]. However, this argument is an example of state authorities' tendency to separate forced migration from economic migration, although the situation is usually more complex.

As part of the Norwegian immigration authorities' regulations it is stated that the asylum seeker may have the right to work if the person has been through an asylum interview, if there is no doubt about the identity of the person, and if it is not in the interest to expel the person[46]. One respondent told me he could not get work permission because his identity card from Afghanistan was not approved, but he could not see the reason for why it was not approved. Although he had some kind of identity proof it did assumedly not resemble with the bureaucratic criteria. Harrell-Bond (2002) raises a central question concerning the non-utilized resource that lies in refugees who are not allowed to work.

> *Why are refugees and displaced people defined as a welfare problem requiring 'relief' or 'care and maintenance', rather than as people who have problems, but who also have the determination to survive and who are ready to put their energies into productive work that could also benefit their hosts? (Harrell-Bond, 2002:9 in Gupte and Mehta, 2007:67).*

Rather than creating dependency on socio-economic support from the host state one could perhaps search for other solutions, such as temporary work permits and practice for asylum seekers who are able and willing to work. Instead of isolating asylum seekers at reception centres with little interaction with the rest of society, it would more likely benefit both parts if the asylum seekers were engaged in formal paid employment.

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[45] The Royal Ministry of Justice and Police, (2009-2010) " Norsk flyktning- og migrasjonspolitikk i et europeisk perspektiv." Meld.St.9.

[46] *§ 94. Søkerens rettsstilling under behandlingen av søknaden*
https://www.udiregelverk.no/default.aspx?path={3AC1E7D6-8948-4130-A69D-6B1E6DC0090F}&mid={E4E7EC98-D353-4709-B2E3-FBDD2B18BE0A}#ID1ESDHSDGFA

Although work permission is one step ahead, the access to descent paid work is another question. One of the asylum seekers had managed to get work permission in Norway, but experienced difficulties in getting a stable job and a predictable and descent income. "Contrary to the goal of curbing international migration, increasingly stringent policies may benefit illegal human smugglers and employers who hire undocumented migrants to avoid complying with existing pay and working conditions regulations rather than stem migration" (Tacoli and Okali in Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:12). The other asylum seeker who really wanted to work, but could not get work permission had to rely on the financial support he received at the reception centre, which he didn't find sufficient. "[O]ne thing migrants without legal residence have in common is that they are among the most marginalised people in Norwegian society today, as they are systematically denied work permits of all kinds and do not have access to regulated work" (Øien and Sønsterudbråten, 2011:89).

Among those who are hosted in reception centres, they receive economical support from UDI every month, as a substitute for wages. "To date, the Norwegian authorities have been reluctant to grant economic compensation to asylum seekers who arrange their own accommodation" (Brekke and Vevstad 2007 in Valenta & Bunar, 2010:478). Many of my informants complained about the minimal support they got at the reception centre, this was particularly evident among the rejected asylum seekers who receive even less than those who are still waiting for their cases to be processed. For one of the respondents with no work permit it was important to stress that he had a respectable job and a steady income back in Afghanistan. He had even started his own business short time before he escaped from Afghanistan. For him it was a major change coming to Norway and live on a minimum while living at the reception centre, not having the permission to work. It is not uncommon to experience a fall in economic status after fleeing from a developing country to a rich country like Norway. This is also the case for many Afghans in the Netherlands as Muller (2008) points out. "Many Afghans must deal with the paradox of being persons who occupied relatively influential positions in the country of origin and find themselves in a situation of socio-economic deprivation in the Netherlands" (Muller, 2008:395). This is a paradox in the sense that class mobility is changing in the opposite direction of what is supposed to.

Valenta and Bunar (2010) refer to housing and employment assistance as the two major pillars of Norwegian and Swedish refugee integration policies. However, as they point out, in practice there are remarkable inequalities between refugees and natives in Norway with regards to housing and employment. "Studies have found that unemployment levels are three times higher amongst refugees and immigrants than in the case of indigenous Norwegians and Swedes, and that refugees are over-represented in low-income/low-status occupations" (Valenta and Bunar, 2010:470). Even refugees and immigrants who are resourceful and highly skilled encounter difficulties in access to higher income/higher status occupations. The Afghan respondent who had migrated to Norway through family reunification described the obstacles he met in search for work. He had studied for several years, and had finally got a job as a social worker. However, he had higher ambitions, and was comparing himself with friends in Afghanistan who had positions as leaders and diplomats. *I am a person with lots of resources, and I would like to use them.*

"Migration can provide a vital source of income for migrant women and their families, and earn them greater autonomy, self-confidence and social status" (Jolly and Reeves, 2005:1). In that sense, migration has the potential impact on women becoming more capable to make plans ahead, which in turn can make it easier to become an 'insider' of the host society than if they had to stay at home. Nevertheless, as with men, they might also experience an overwhelming responsibility to take care of their family abroad. The Afghan women I interviewed, apart from the youngest one, were economically active and were supporting their family with money they earned from jobs in Norway. "While early research on migration simply assumed that men migrate for work purposes and women migrate as dependants, more recent research has challenged this and showed, for instance, that many men migrate in order to marry" (Bøcker 1994, Kofman, 1999 in Carling, 2005:6). Research shows that women send a great share of their earnings to their families, and are therefore important for their economic security (Carling, 2005:7). One of my female respondents described how much she had worked in order to show the immigration authorities that she was able to support her family members if they could come to Norway through family reunification.

5.3.12. Gender and security

Among the Afghan women I talked to, all of them had experienced forms of insecurities or vulnerabilities as a consequence of being girls and women. *Gendered security* has often been overlooked in the security discourse, and it has frequently been treated as an personal issue and not as a collective issue, as Hansen (2000) points out looking particularly at honour killings. Forced marriage is another aspect that contributes to gendered insecurity. In most cases, it is women or girls who are victims of forced marriage, and fleeing the husband can be one motivation for migration. An estimated half of approximately 700 women and girls in Afghanistan are imprisoned for 'moral crimes' such as running away from home. "Afghanistan at present has 14 shelters, each able to house an average of around 20 to 25 women and their children" (HRW, 2012:3). Taken in consideration the scale of violence against women in Afghanistan, as referred to earlier, these amount of shelters is far away from enough to satisfy the needs of the affected women. One respondent had fled to Norway because she had been married to her cousin against her will; she had tried to kill herself twice after this, but managed to escape the country. In order to do so her mother supported her and paid some smugglers for the flight in secrecy. Even after the arrival she was afraid her husband could find out where she lived and follow after. This particular example demonstrates how physical insecurity intersects with gendered insecurity.

It turned out that the cousin of this respondent was probably homosexual, a sexual orientation that is associated with lots of stigma in Afghanistan and is rather hidden from the public sphere. In this light, it is likely that her husband also was unwillingly accepting the marriage. The fact that men are also subjected to forced marriage is used as one of the argued causes for violence against women, as the man let his frustration out on his wife, and polygamy, as the man has a right to choose the ones he wants to marry when he gets older[47]. One the other hand, sexual relations between men is interpreted as a relation between man/no-man rather than a man/man relation, as it is normally interpreted within Western frames of reference. The man/no-man relationship demonstrates that there is a gendered hierarchy among men as well, and not only between men and women.

The role of marriage must also be seen in relation to the importance of the family

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[47] Landinfo, (16.04.2012) "Respons. Afghanistan: Homofili"

institution. In Afghanistan, family is the primary security network in absence of a strong state, and it is crucial both economically and socially. As a consequence, honour and social status of an individual is determined by the status of the family, and subsequently the status of the family has a reputation in the wider society. Marriage is seen as an agreement between families, rather than individual choice between the forthcoming spouses as a relationship based on feelings[48]. In that sense, the role of traditional systems of marriage in Afghanistan seems to be much more stronger than the degree of agency and choice when it comes to marriage. As argued in the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) report about marriage practices in Afghanistan, "for most Afghan families the question of whether to get their daughters or sons married at all would not be seen as a decision to be made, as not marrying a child is not seen as an option" (Smith, 2009:16). Although marriage is the norm in Afghanistan, as the research done by AREU clearly shows, the level and form of participation of the different family members within decision-making about marriage vary across the country. In the case of my respondent, it was her father who had taken the decision about the marriage, and he did not know about the escape before later. Although the father has normally a crucial role within the family, it is not necessarily the father who takes the decision in cases of marriage.

Gendered insecurity and unequal power relations between men and women were also discovered in the case of another female respondent. She had escaped from a Talib man at the age of her father, whom was already married and wanted to marry her as well. In this case, her father would not accept the marriage proposal, and disappeared short time after the proposal was rejected. She still does not know where her father is, but she is sure that Taliban is responsible for the disappearance. According to Sharia and Afghan civil law (Civil Code 1977, art. 86), a man has the right to be married with several wives at the same time. However, the scale of this practice is not known[49]. Nevertheless, her case demonstrates gendered power relations in the society, in which decision-making is a complex affair. It also demonstrates that gender roles are not fixed. Although the Talib man asked her father, being the male authority of the family, for permission to marry the girl, the rejection was still not accepted. It can be dangerous to oppose to norms and

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[48] Landinfo, (16.04.2012) "Respons. Afghanistan: Homofili"
[49] Landinfo, (27.06.2012) "Temanotat. Afghanistan: Ekteskap"

customs in society, as power structures and power relations may determine the outcome of such resistance. According to her description of her father, it was probably not the first time his father had opposed discriminative behaviour against women. My respondent told me that her father had always supported her and encouraged her to study. *My power is my father. He made me be what I am today.* Although not emphasized by the respondent, her mother and uncle seemed to be quite influential too. With support from her mother and uncle she managed to flee the country. Short while after her escape, the rest of her family had to flee to another district of Afghanistan as they were still under threat. Feelings of insecurity may also take place through an individual's concerns of the insecurity of her family or friends. These worries may influence the psychological well-being of that individual, and hence, his/her experience of insecurity. Here lies probably the ambiguity of transnationality, as the long distance contributes to challenges in terms of keeping up family relations. She has tried her best to get her family to Norway, but yet without luck. My respondent told me she was particularly worried about her sisters.

While mainly women refugees are vulnerable to forced marriage and domestic violence, male refugees could be subject to other forms of vulnerabilities. One of the male respondents expressed that it was more dangerous to live as a male refugee in Afghanistan and Pakistan because men are more frequently outdoors and there are more risks outside the home. The respondent had several sisters, but as the only son he was sent to migrate to Europe. In this regard, it is needed to recognize the various insecurities and vulnerabilities experienced by men and women who flee. "[A]lthough men might be more actively involved in organized fighting, women may need to flee to refugee camps, be subjected to violence, assume non-traditional responsibilities, and intensify their efforts to secure food, shelter and security for their family" (UN DDA, 2001 in Gupte and Mehta, 2007:72). Through awareness of gender roles and gender relations it is easier to recognize that security is often gendered, and men and women could be subject to different kinds of risks.

5.3.13. Ethnicity, religion, politics and security
I realized that the respondents who had experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnic, religious or political background were more likely to bring up issues concerning

these topics. "In several nations, ethnic tensions are on the rise, often over limited access to opportunities – whether to social services from the state or to jobs from the market. Individual communities lose out, or believe that they lose out, in the struggle for such opportunities" (HDR, 1994:32). One of the respondents expressed his fear of going back to Afghanistan because of the discrimination and target killing of people with his ethnic background. He stressed that this was not just his personal fear, but also a collective fear among the Hazaras. "While Afghanistan has not experienced mass ethnic conflict, there have been some grim specific episodes that have left their mark on the psyches of different refugee groups" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:135). The ethnic Hazaras have suffered a lot being easy targets for Taliban. On the other hand, Pashtuns who are living in the north of Afghanistan are also facing problems as being an ethnic minority in that area. According to my respondent who was working at 'Landinfo' there are socio-economic problems in all ethnic communities, and there are both families living in poverty and with lots of resources in all the ethnic communities.

Another threat to human security that is not particularly raised in the *Human Development Report (*1994) is the threats to individuals or groups of people with particular spiritual or religious backgrounds. Although freedom of religion is recognized in the Afghan constitution (Constitution 2004 Art 2), it is not part of the practice, as freedom of religion is against Sharia law and may lead to death penalty[50]. One respondent who had been living in Norway for several years had to escape because he and his family were in opposition to Taliban, at the time they were ruling the country. However, none of my respondents expressed fear of persecution with regards to their religious or spiritual background in particular. However, one respondent stated that he had become an atheist during his stay in Norway. The real consequences of leaving Islam in Afghanistan are unclear as there is a contradiction between law and practice. Another problem causing human security in Afghanistan and the region is the motivation for sectarianism between Sunnis and Shias[51]. One of my Afghan informants were referring to the religious extremist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi that is targeting Shias, which are supposed to have

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[50] Landinfo, (07.04.2009), "Respons. Afghanistan: Risiko for overgrep ved retur for ateister/personer som har forlatt Islam".

[51] *Dawn* (08.12.2011) "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi: inciting sectarianism in Afghanistan" http://dawn.com/2011/12/08/lashkar-e-jhangvi-inciting-sectarianism-in-afghanistan/ (Uploaded 28.09.2012).

ties to Al-Queda and Taliban, and are responsible for several deadly attacks against Shias. Since he was belonging to the Shia community himself, although not practicing the religion, he was afraid of his own security if he was returned back to Afghanistan. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is banned as a terror group in Pakistan, but is still operating in the region.

In the Human Development Report (1994) it is stated that human rights violations are most likely to emerge during periods of political unrest. The Afghan population has been exposed to political unrest for decades as imperialists, clans, warlords and terrorist networks have competed for power. The rivalry for political power and influence has caused human insecurity for civilians, whether they are engaged in politics or not. According to one respondent, he had fled the country after he was attacked in the office at the software company he was working for. The main reason for the escape from Afghanistan was that he was concerned about his family's security. While the respondent was living in Afghanistan, the company had become one of the leading companies, and had big international customers. They had also started a project for the Ministry of Interior funded by USAID, and developed a database for a political prison. According to him it was the access to this database that contained lots of classified info that created problems for him. An escape from the country was regarded as a solution to this problem, although he was tired of moving from place to place. Since he had the economic means for an escape and also some relatives in Norway he was able to migrate to Europe.

Part 3:

5.4. Future thoughts and feelings of despair and hope

Reflections on the future are closely related to human security and the possible life prospects for the refugees and asylum seekers. In the following sections, I examine these future thoughts by critically looking at the so-called durable solutions; repatriation and resettlement. I will also include a section on forced return although it is not regarded as a durable solution in contrast to voluntary return/ repatriation. Forced return has nevertheless been put into force at several occasions, and Afghans are among those who are subjected to this solution. At the end of this chapter, the focus is on the search for more flexible and sustainable solutions that could benefit the asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the host and sending countries.

5.4.1. Repatriation
"Strengthening the protection of refugees requires a better understanding of the causes and actors forcing people to flee" (CHS, 2003:48). In addition, a better understanding of the situations of asylum seekers and refugees in exile may also help us understand the reasons why people want or do not want to return. Ironically, while the respondents who were denied asylum were the ones who thought the only solution was to get residence permit in Norway, the respondent who had even gotten a Norwegian citizenship was planning to return to Afghanistan in a few years. First, he wanted to complete his studies and get a masters degree in Norway before going back to Afghanistan. The fact that he had recently got married in Afghanistan seemed to be influential on his decision to return. He also seemed to have a security net back in Afghanistan and his family was in a privileged position. On the other hand, if the security net is absent, repatriation as a solution becomes much more complex.

"Repatriation is questionable from a protection stance as well as from the perspective of sustainability and stability in Afghanistan" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:146). The return of a considerable amount of Afghans have led to a 'recycling of refugees', contributing to prolonged life situations of displacement, which is not sustainable in the long run. However, both receiving countries and the UNHCR are advocating for voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan as one of the durable solutions. "UNHCR will provide assistance during voluntary repatriation to ensure that it is sustainable and takes place in safety and dignity" (UNHCR, 2012:46). In that sense,

UNHCR undertakes the responsibility of safeguarding human security also during times of repatriation. Having said that, UNHCR is also aware of the challenges related to return. According to the UNHCRs interpretations of the situation in Afghanistan, "even an extension of existing arrangements for repatriation *sine die* may resolve neither the immediate tensions between the rate of return and absorption capacity inside Afghanistan, nor provide a definite solution'" (UNHCR 2004a, 2 in Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:144). This argument indicates the complexity of return due to the current situation in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, in line with a decision of repatriation, there must be a motivation for return. One motivation for return could be the assurance that there are opportunities in their home country, such as employment, health services, housing facilities, access to safe drinking water etc. In Afghanistan there is a strain on resources available. "Returnees to Afghanistan have to cope with insufficient services in the areas of health care, education, and basic infrastructure" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:157). These are challenges that need to be taken into consideration when advocating for return of Afghans abroad, as a return must involve some kind of reintegration. Reintegration is also emphasized by UNHCR in relation to repatriation. "UNHCR will work closely with partners and beneficiaries to design and implement pilot reintegration projects aimed at helping returning refugees achieve full reintegration, by improving economic, legal and social conditions needed to sustain their livelihoods" (UNHCR, 2012:46). Long-term perspectives and sustainability-thinking is crucial in terms of reintegration if it is going to be successful.

As Afghanistan is currently in a transitional phase, there is also need for skilled and educated young Afghans in the rebuilding of the country. As I referred to earlier, education was emphasized as an investment in the future among several of my informants, and they wanted to make use of their qualifications if they returned to Afghanistan. "Second-generation Afghans returning to their homeland from neighboring countries can be seen as a crucial asset for the country in rebuilding its communities from the grassroots level" (Saito, 2007:4). For many young Afghans abroad it seems to be important to bring something back to their country of origin if they finally decide to return. As I discovered in the interviews the Afghans expressed a wish to contribute with

something for their country of origin, if/when they returned. A contribution could for instance be to complete their studies while they were abroad, so that they could use their knowledge and experience in favour of the development of Afghanistan. As one of my respondents expressed: *If the country gets better and when I can give something back to my country, I will go tomorrow.*

"Return following a longer stay abroad when the migrant has saved a given amount of money to meet specific development purposes back home – such as building a house or investing in business related activities – has far better developmental prospects" (Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:18). It is also more likely that people who have obtain residence permit in their host country, and who have had time to build up some capacity and investment abroad will be motivated to return. There might also be expectations from family, friends and community in the country of origin, which contribute to a feeling of responsibility towards their nation of origin. If returned migrants are able to contribute with something that benefits the country this may also be regarded as a kind of compensation for their escape.

5.4.2. Forced return

It is important for returning refugees to know that they have something to get back to and that they are capable to start a new life in these circumstances. The rejected asylum seekers I interviewed could not make plans for the future due to lack of control over the situations they were in, some of them expressed that they felt like they were living in the middle of nowhere, not uncommon for others who are in the same kind of situation. According to the Immigration Act of Norway, the refugee may be sent back to their country of origin if other parts of the country are regarded as safe.

> *The right to be recognised as a refugee (...) shall not apply if the foreign national may obtain effective protection in other parts of his or her country of origin than the area from which the applicant has fled, and it is not unreasonable to direct the applicant to seek protection in those parts of his or her country of origin[52].*

Kabul is currently considered to be a relatively safe place for Afghans, and the recent trend has been a return of rejected Afghan asylum seekers to the capital, although they

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[52] *Act of 15 My 2008 on the Entry of Foreign Nationals into the Kingdom of Norway and their Stay in the Realm (Immigration Act)* Section 28 Residence permit for foreign nationals in need of protection (asylum).

might not descend from this part of the country. Several of the informants who were rejected asylum expressed their frustration about perceptions among the Norwegian immigration authorities regarding return of Afghans. *Everyone say we can go back to Kabul, but it is not safe!* This perception of safety does not only contradict the view of the Norwegian immigration authorities, but also the general view of UNHCR. Stories that are seldom known or seldom told in public concern what happen to the rejected asylum seekers who return or disappear. Apart from engagement in civil society and NGO's such as People Peace[53] there is no organized follow-up of deported asylum seekers from Norway.

"Nevertheless, while the vast number of refugees who have returned tend to be used to demonstrate success, less attention has been given to the entire question of 'sustainability of return' leading to internal displacement after return, the 'recycling' of refugees, or returning refugees changing status to migrant workers (legal or illegal)" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:167). While the Norwegian immigration authorities are to follow the UNHCR guidelines, one of the critiques has been that they are not always following these guidelines. Numbers from UNHCR (2007b) shows that 199 Afghan refugees were deported from Norway between 2002 and 2007 (UNHCR 2007b in Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:166). Among those who are deported there are also some who try to go back to Norway[54]. However, deportations have not taken place without resistance from civil society. In 2006, rejected Afghan asylum seekers organized hunger strikes in Oslo and other places in Norway in protest against the deportations of Afghan asylum seekers to Afghanistan. The hunger strike was later followed by the Asylum March from Oslo to Trondheim the same year.

There are few stories that actually come out in public about returning Afghans from Norway. In 2007, several Afghan human rights activists who had participated in the march in Norway a year earlier were deported to Kabul. They had to leave Norway without any passport or travel documents, only a document stating that they were

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[53] "Peoplepeace - Norwegian Organisation for Deportees is an independent non-profit organisation dedicated to the welfare and legal protection of asylum seekers and migrant workers during forced deportation from Norway"
http://peoplepeace.org/web/index.php?section=about&subsection=statutes (Uploaded 16.09.2012).
[54] Berntzen, A., *TV2*, (08.01.2012) "Sendt med tvang til Afghanistan – på vei tilbake til Norge" http://www.tv2.no/nyheter/utenriks/sendt-med-tvang-til-afghanistan-paa-vei-tilbake-til-norge-3677273.html. (Uploaded 03.08.2012).

deported from Norway[55]. Resistance against deportations has not only taken place in Norway. "Deportation charter flights to Afghanistan have been repeatedly cancelled as a result of the spiralling security situation in the country"[56]. These cancellations are a result of people's resistance to what is perceived as failed and unjust decisions made by the immigration authorities, and more implicit as a reaction to the priority of state security over human security.

According to the findings of Øien and Sønsterudbråten (2011), there are several reasons for not wanting to return among irregular migrants, also referred to as undocumented migrants. "These can be concerns for their security and stability, threats from social networks and family, or the migrants experiencing poverty and unemployment without having any means of changing their situations, to name but a few" (Øien and Sønsterudbråten, 2011:90). Another finding based on answers of my informants was the feeling of having no future if they returned. Some of the rejected asylum seekers I talked to stated that a residence permit would be the best solution to their situations. With a residence permit they would be able to make plans ahead. One respondent seemed to have high expectations about Norway as an outstanding country with good implementation of human rights. Nevertheless, he was disappointed after a while as this perception contradicted to his personal experience.

5.4.3. Resettlement

"Access to resettlement is still difficult; as with the fall of Taliban many Western countries started «incentive programmes» in order to induce the «voluntary repatriation» of Afghan refugees, (…)" (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:161). The interagency Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas programme in Pakistan is an example of a project supported by the UNHCR "designed to enhance refugees' self-reliance, promote coexistence between refugee and host communities, and contribute to sustainable development" (UNHCR, 2012:47). Being aware of the complex realities not only in Afghanistan but also in the region, it can be argued that the more prosperous countries should recognize

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[55] *Klassekampen* (31.07.2007) "Fortsatt på flukt" (Uploaded 31.08.2012).
http://www.klassekampen.no/47821/article/item/null/-fortsatt-pa-flukt.
[56] *Stop Deportations! Growing the Resistance against Mass Deportation Charter Flights* (Press Release 1/05/2012) "Detention of Afghans who cannot be deported is unlawful, say anti-deportation campaigners" http://stopdeportations.wordpress.com/ (Uploaded 15.05.2012).

their responsibility to protect refugees, despite the new challenges it brings in terms of integration. "Given the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, the unwillingness of major host countries to integrate refugees locally, and increasing political instability in the biggest host country, Pakistan, circumstances may force the international community to reconsider its stance on resettlement (Schmeidl and Maley, 2008:162).

Norway as a prosperous country with a relatively small population is an alternative recipient country. Despite the culture being distinctively different from Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries it has become the home of a growing population of immigrants from the region. The Commission on Human Security (2003) points at the possible positive effects of resettlement and how it could benefit both the refugees and the host society. "Expanding resettlement opportunities for qualified and needy refugees, particularly in Europe, will contribute to burden-sharing, facilitate the orderly movement of people and ease the need to attract labour migrants" (CHS, 2003:48). Several of my Afghan informants were resourceful people engaged in studies and work and took part in associations in the free time. Not surprisingly, the respondents who had gotten residence permit seemed to have a more optimistic view of their future. The fact that they were recognized as refugees with the following access to settlement seemed to have empowered them, and given them new hope for the future. Most of the respondents seemed to be quite ambitious regarding their own life prospects, although they were recognizing the challenges ahead. For those who had obtained residence permit it had given them opportunities in terms of education, employment and network-building.

One of the challenges in terms of resettlement is however, to settle people in municipalities as quickly as possible. "Long periods in reception centres waiting for resettlement weakens the integration opportunities making refugees more passive" (IMDi, 2008:17). A combination of personal agency and the ability to encounter the new system and culture with the help from family and friends seemed crucial in the case of my informants. Several respondents who had got residence permit expressed their need to move on, and not focus too much on problems from the past, indicating that they were in a process of empowerment. With regards to resettlement this recognition seems like an important step towards integration in society.

Resettlement does also involve integration and feelings of social belonging. In the

interviews, several respondents mentioned individuals they have met that made impressions on them here in Norway. One of my respondents told me that he had a Norwegian girlfriend for some time after he came to Norway. He understood that her parents did not like him, although he could not see the reason why. However, he seemed to look back at the relationship in a positive way, as she gave him a chance to learn and practice Norwegian. The more he learned the language, the easier it was to find Norwegian friends and be part of a broader network. However, establishing a Norwegian network does not mean that one need to abandon the connections with the society of origin. Several of my informants had friends from the Afghan community in Norway, as well as friends representing other nationalities. Social contact with people of the same origin may also help migrants feel included in host society as they may share a common language and other reference points. One respondent had got several Afghan friends after joining the organizing of the Asylum March from Trondheim to Oslo, and the following hunger strike against deportations. Despite the motivations behind this march, it seems like this process contributed to social inclusion, as he established contacts both from the Afghan and the Norwegian community during this process.

"Integration in receiving societies and commitment to origin societies are not necessarily substitutes, but can be complements" (de Haas, 2008:38). Although living isolated from the family can be a barrier, opportunities for transnational activities have increased with advanced technology and communication systems. Access to Internet is now more widespread, even in the developing countries in the south. For refugees who have had permanent residence for some time, the opportunities also arise for travels across borders. Resettlement may also lead to positive outcomes for people in sending countries. During resettlement the residents are able to support their families and communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran or elsewhere by sending remittances, hence contributing to development in these societies. Remittances are more significant than development aid, although the targets are usually of a smaller scale. "Remittances by migrants, much greater than the total amount of official international development assistance, alleviate poverty of the family members remaining in the country of origin" (CHS, 2003:51). However, the challenge is that it may also create disparities between those who receive support from abroad, and those who do not get this form of support.

5.4.4. Seeking more flexible and sustainable solutions

It has been argued that when an asylum seeker gets residence permit she is better able to plan her future and perhaps motivate herself for a return to her country of origin. This motivation for return was apparent in the interview with one of my respondents, whom had stayed in Norway with a residence permit for several years, and had finally gotten a Norwegian citizenship. Despite his attachment to the Norwegian society, he still wanted to migrate back to Afghanistan. Having the agency to choose whether to stay or not must also have had some impact on his decision. On the other side, the undocumented and rejected asylum seekers have less control of their agency, and are rather controlled by the current immigration system. If they do not return voluntarily, they will be deported at some point. Some of my respondents had already gotten a date of departure. Their rejected status indicated that they were placed at the lowest level in the residential hierarchy with a minimum of rights and privileges compared to those with residence status.

Among the basic principles of NPA are inclusion and participation stressing that asylum seekers should be met with opportunities and expectations, rather than with passivity and clientism[57]. Providing asylum seekers with training and opportunities for employment is one step towards inclusion and participation, and could contribute to making them feel valuable within their new society. Nyberg Sørensen (2006) points at the possibilities for more flexible solutions in terms of refuge and asylum that could be beneficial for the people in the long run.

> *So-called durable solutions are not bound to be either integration or repatriation but could well combine the two in durable transnational, transregional or translocal strategies in which dispersed social networks are acknowledged as important factors of political and economic development (Nyberg Sørensen, 2006:97).*

Taken into consideration that repatriation cannot be received as the only solution for the Afghans, and that there are challenges connected to both local integration and resettlement as well, it is probably worth seeking more complex solutions to forced migration. In this regard, one needs to recognize the reasons for flight and the patterns of

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[57] Norsk Folkehjelp (2011) "Asyl og integrering. Posisjonsdokument – standpunkt og meninger".

mobility among the Afghans. "Policywise, a more comprehensive solution is needed, which takes into account the full range of strategies and responses developed by the Afghan population, including the back-and-forth movements between Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and beyond" (Monsutti, 2008:59). By capturing these back-and-forth movements it could help identify the needs of the refugees and asylum seekers and contribute to more tailored solutions for the displaced Afghans worldwide.

As I have collected information from my respondents and heard their stories, I have become more aware of challenges that refugees and asylum seekers may encounter before, during and after flight. It is crucial that these stories are heard as they all represent individuals with stories often overlooked in political debates and in overall decision-making by the immigration authorities. In search for better solutions it is evident to listen to the experiences of the asylum seekers and refugees, whether they are good or bad, as they are the key to understanding how policies could work properly. Another starting point in the search for more flexible and sustainable solutions is to think and act multidimensional and interdisciplinary, engaging actors with different forms of responsibilities in terms of human security, and create synergies between them. "Better information, a more culturally-sensitive welcome and the use of bridge-builders in the follow up work are useful prescriptions for preventing humiliation with all new refugees" (Fangen, 2006:90). The actors could involve politicians, bureaucrats, police officers, lawyers, psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors, employees at reception centres, representatives from NGOs or CBOs and other relevant actors. As far as possible, international cooperation, particularly with state authorities and NGOs in sending countries could be initiated and followed up in the process of creating more flexible and sustainable solutions.

6.1. Conclusion

The Afghans are representing one of the largest groups of immigrants in Norway, and has arrived in Norway mainly as a consequence of forced migration. This has been one of the reasons why I have researched this particular group and their experiences of the transition from Afghanistan to Norway. In my study I have implemented a multidimensional and interdisciplinary focus in order to discover the situation of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers from different viewpoints. Afghans have grown up with decades of conflict, human rights violations and insecurity in a region distinctively different from Norway. In that regard it is important to recognize their particular experiences by making their voices heard. With that as a base one could easier deal with the forced migrants in a way that is more appropriate. When listening to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers hosted in Norway I gained insights into their situation by exploring the role of identity formation, gender roles and relations, and various aspects of human security among this group. Further, I discovered how they reflected about their future and their thoughts of return.

The purpose of this thesis has not been to generalize, rather to complement previous research on immigration in Norway, and try to discover the variations within a group with the same national background. It is crucial to be aware of these variations in order to avoid stereotypical or essentialist constructions of a group. At the same time there may be socio-economic and cultural patterns taking place among Afghans, whether it is the value of educational investment or the practice of forced marriage. Although the Afghan refugees and asylum seekers are representing one of many immigrant groups in Norway, they may share similar experiences of situations before, during and after flight, as other refugees and asylum seekers. I hope this study could work as a tool to inform politicians, practitioners, and others involved in work with refugees and asylum seekers, about the experiences of Afghan forced migrants. Immigration and integration policies that incorporate the needs and rights of those fleeing to Norway would benefit not only the asylum seekers and refugees themselves, but also the society as a whole. In that way, it is also possible to build an inclusive multicultural society.

Through the use of in-depth interviews I discovered the individuals behind the constructed categories: refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented asylum seekers, as well as citizens. Although constructed, these categories are powerful because they influence the experiences of self. Transnationality often characterizes the lives of

refugees and asylum seekers as many of them have been on the move for subsequent years of their lives, which in turn influence their identities. Most of my informants had long experience from life in exile, and had stayed for years in Pakistan and Iran before they came to Norway as asylum seekers. They had families and friends abroad, and were developing a transnational network in which they could maintain social relations and engage in both societies of host and origin. I discovered how several socio-cultural categories, such as gender, ethnicity and residence status, is instrumental in the formation of a changeable intersectional identity. For instance, the residence status has particular impact on their human security and consequently the identity, as a residence permit creates some sort of security insurance. A life 'between nation and state' involves an ambiguous relationship to nationality, as the person may lack a specific attachment to *one* nationality, at the same time the person is stateless in the sense that he/she has not (yet) been granted citizenship.

Closely connected to (transnational) identity is the understanding of gender roles and gender relations as they shape our everyday social reality and are influenced by power inequalities. In the Afghan traditional culture there seems to be relatively clear norms about what is considered to be male and female roles and how men and women should interact. Nevertheless, the interpretations of gender roles and relations and the implementations of these into practice may differ from the traditional norms in society. Negotiations, renegotiations and resistance are taking place at different levels as individuals and groups find it necessary to oppose conventional norms about gender roles and relations. I discovered that changing gender roles and relations may also be a consequence of life in exile, since host society is sometimes characterized by other norms and values than the society of origin. Although migrants often adapt more liberal values prominent in the Norwegian society, such as equality, migration provides no automatic change in terms of adaptation to these values. Through my data collection, I found that some of my informants were indeed escaping from patriarchal notions of gender roles and gender relations as these norms created insecurity.

When it comes to security its meaning changes due to the context. The understanding and definition of security has been dominated by a state-centric approach, which is also the case in Norway. The concept of human security provides an alternative

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notion of security, placing the human beings at the centre of analysis, The rights of refugees and asylum seekers at all stages in the process should therefore be recognized. The Norwegian state has a responsibility to ensure human security of refugees and asylum seekers, as it has ratified the *Convention and Protocol Relating the Status of Refugees of 1951 and 1967*. They are also individuals who should be granted rights and freedom, but since they are not (yet) citizens their human security are often overlooked or not prioritized. UN, as well as several NGOs and civil society nationally, have particularly criticized the current rule of law for asylum seekers in Norway, as their juridical rights are not taken seriously into account. Empirical findings indicate that the rights and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers ought to be given more weight in political decision-making and as part of the continuation of a socio-democratic welfare state. I found that although the common claim of the refugees and asylum seekers is protection the reasons for and the experiences of insecurity are various. While one informant had fled from her husband she was forcedly married to, another had fled the country because his political opposition to Taliban had put him at risk of persecution.

Through my study I discovered experiences of insecurities and vulnerabilities taking place before, during and after flight and often in different forms as they vary according to the context. The emphasis in international development debates has usually been on maintaining human security of refugees and internally displaced people contained in poor countries in the South through relief assistance. At the same time, the challenges regarding human security experienced by asylum seekers and refugees hosted in Norway should not be underestimated. Not only do refugees and asylum seekers carry on memories from traumatic incidents that caused the flight, they also experience difficult times during flight due to unpredictable and insecure circumstances. Further, life in host society involves new types of insecurities in terms of residence, economy, housing etc., as I understood through the interviews of my informants.

Another important finding was the fact that the reasons for flight and the experiences of insecurity were to great extent gendered, affecting men and women differently. For instance, there are mostly women who are victims of domestic violence and forced marriage, as a consequence of the subordinate status they are given in these settings. All the Afghan women I interviewed had experienced some kind of gendered

insecurity. On the other hand, men are often expected to be the breadwinner of the family, and may experience insecurity if they cannot fulfil this role. The rejected asylum seekers could no longer fulfil this role, and had to rely on minimal economic support from the state. One of my main findings were how influential the asylum/residence status is on the Afghan's experiences of human security, as it provides a sense of security and stability for an individual, as well as his or her family who depend on this person.

Taken into consideration that remarkable changes in life situations, such as experiences of conflict, flight and displacement, have impact on the identities of people involved, it is necessary to do research on groups affected by these experiences in order to understand their particular situation. Increased awareness of their complex situation could in turn lead to improvement and reformation of policies of integration and immigration. Refugees and asylum seekers from developing countries in the South who manage to flee to Europe are in a particular situation, as most people from this part of the world remain in the country or region of origin. They have normally the financial means to cover travel expenses and may also have relatives abroad, which I discovered through my interviews with the Afghans. Nevertheless, they sacrifice a great deal in order cross the borders to reach Europe, and deserve the same protection of human security as citizens.

Through my study I also discovered that their thoughts on their future were very much dependent on their present asylum status. For those who had residence permit it was consequently easier to plan ahead than for those who had a pending asylum case or were finally rejected. This indicates that more stable and secure solutions for asylum seekers and refugees could empower them and perhaps motivate them for an eventual return to their country of origin when feasible. Better and increased cooperation and coordination between various actors working with refugees and asylum seekers nationally, regionally and internationally could be fruitful in this process.

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