NEVER STOP TRYING:

Research on livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers in Utrecht

VU UNIVERSITY AMSTERDAM

SNDVU

NEVER STOP TRYING:

Research on and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers in Utrecht

Master's Thesis Social and Cultural Anthropology

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Image on Front Cover:
From a series of images of Stichting Stedelijke Fotografie Utrecht, Petra Stavast (2011)

"You don't see us, but we are here.
We're in Europe without a residence permit.
We don't belong to European registers.
Officially we don't exist.
But we are here.
There are millions of us in the European Union.
I was born in Azerbaijan. I was a successful researcher in the United States of America. Now I'm a homeless single mother of two in Amsterdam.
Arlindo is a former child soldier from Angola. Now he lives in Finland.
Marissa left Iran.
And Clara, Elias, Ashraf, Leyla, Tibor.
The list just goes on.
We're all different, but what we do have in common is the constant fear of getting caught and being deported.
Human Rights don't apply to us.
That's why we keep silent, whatever we must face.
We, the paperless people, are the real outcast of the European Society.
We spend sleepless nights, and fear the police.
We are not criminals, we are just foreigners without the right documents."

(Voiceover in: Undocumented lives 2013).

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PREFACE

This report is my master's thesis for the conclusion of my Master's program in Social and Cultural Anthropology, with the focus on Human Security, at the VU University of Amsterdam. It is also the conclusion of three months of fieldwork I conducted among refused asylum seekers living in shelter houses of *Stichting Noodopvang Dakloze Vreemdelingen* Utrecht (SNDVU). I really appreciate the many people who helped me during these three months.

I would first like to thank Marsha, my 'supervisor' at SNDVU and the one who introduced me to most of my informants. I also want to thank Gonnie, Coordinator of SNDVU for her permission to do my research. Furthermore, I want to thank Myrthe, Rana, Dominque, Alex and all volunteers for the inspiring conversations we had about my subject and for the way they made me feel comfortable at the office.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Ina Keuper, who supervised me during both Field Research Design and Master's Thesis SCA. During long and fruitful sessions, we discussed not only the practical and scientific instructions on my fieldwork. Ina always asked personal questions and was curious to know why I have chosen to write about this subject. This helped me really well during the writing process.

Moreover, I want to thank all my informants for sharing their stories with me, especially the people in the houses of which I was mentor, and all the people I have spoken to during house visits. Thank you for the laughing together, the crying, and for all the information you gave me for this thesis. Without you, this thesis could never have been established.

Last but not least, I want to thank my parents, Serena, Leon and my friends for their support. Although I was in the Netherlands instead of Guatemala this time, I needed you more than ever to share my experiences. Sometimes it was hard for me to let things go, since I could not step out the research setting easily. The many phone calls and the many stories I told you really helped me during the process. Like mom told me every time I shared my experiences: "It's like a book you're in, and I am curious to hear the rest of the story next time."

Today I finished this 'book'. However, writing the last chapter, does not mean the end of the story. I will continue to challenge myself in the future to support refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands. This is not the end, but just the beginning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dutch asylum policy has increasingly restricted refused asylum seekers' access to welfare support. In recent years, there have been growing concerns about the impact and the scale of destitution among refused asylum seekers. It is estimated that a number of 100,000 undocumented people originating from more than 200 countries are residing within the Netherlands (WODC, 2011). Leerkes (2009) guesses that refused asylum seekers constitute 15 percent of this illegal population. The discrepancies in the national policies regarding public support for refused asylum seekers implied that many local care institutions for homeless people in Dutch towns were confronted with this group of people. This was also the case in the city of Utrecht. Therefore, SNDVU *[Stichting Noodopvang Dakloze Vreemdelingen Utrecht*] was established in 2001 with the support of the municipality of Utrecht.

This thesis focuses on refused asylum seekers living in shelter houses from SNDVU in the city of Utrecht. The research reveals how refused asylum seekers, without access to legitimate means of securing a living except the support of SNDVU are currently living in Utrecht. The strategies adopted by them have been analysed within a sustainable livelihoods framework, to show different types of resources to which refused asylum seekers do and do not have access, and the impact this has on their lives. Looking at their economic recourses such as money, shelter and personal belongings, social resources such as friends, family and organizations, and their health, knowledge and skills, I will demonstrate how they cope on a daily basis and how they use their resources to pursue livelihood strategies for future perspectives. Lives of refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands go hand in hand with fear for the police, detention and deportation, which influence many of the decisions they make. Both on a daily basis and for their future. Resources available to refused asylum seekers overlap and are convertible and interrelated into each other. The use of these resources in their daily lives as well as for their future, is influenced by the many restrictive policies and measures of Dutch asylum policy. Many refused asylum seekers are willing to remain in the Netherlands and are gathering as many proof for the IND as they can get, most of the time failing to gather enough. Others are trying to go back for years, but are still living in shelters from SNDVU. Both phenomena suggest the failure of the contemporary government policy in the Netherlands and of other countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research

This thesis focuses on refused asylum seekers living in shelter houses from *Stichting Noodopvang Dakloze Vreemdelingen Utrecht,* in the city of Utrecht, the Netherlands. I chose to write on refused asylum seekers due to previous research I conducted in Guatemala on resettled refugees from February to April 2011, and because of my internship at *Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland* from August 2011 to August 2012. During my internship, I met a lot of people with an official refugee status. For many of them, it took quite some time before they finally received this status. Several people had been waiting for more than ten years and moved from asylum centre to asylum centre. For them, receiving a residence permit meant that a process of 'waiting' and uncertainty was finally over. During my internship, I also read and heard about people who failed in their quest for asylum and that for these people, socio-economic support had not been provided by the state.

The focus of my research in Guatemala, which I conducted in a rural area, was on livelihood strategies of resettled refugees. Although I found out that economic capital was really important in the construction of their livelihood strategy, access to land, having a social network and access to health care institutions and infrastructure were even more important. Using a sustainable livelihoods framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Bebbington, 1999; Rakodi, 2002; Kollmair & Gamper, 2002; Jacobsen & Nichols, 2011; Crawley, Hemmings, & Price, 2011) made it possible not only to analyse the importance of economic capital, but also of other forms of capital to secure a livelihood. Since livelihood strategies are mainly researched in rural areas, or in urban 'development' regions, there is little known about livelihood strategies of marginalized groups in for example the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is a clear exponent, and in many areas even a front runner, of the Nordic Welfare states that has introduced new legislation and new policies of law enforcement to deal more effectively with irregular migration. Internal controls for instance, have been tightened in order to curb illegal residence and employment (Van der Leun & Kloosterman, 2006). These measures have limited the scope of refused asylum seekers to navigate in the legitimate institutions of society (Engbersen & Broeders, 2009). In combination with demographic changes and the arrival of new groups of undocumented immigrants, the gap between illegal immigrants and the receiving society has widened, resulting in unintended outcomes of the restrictive policy. Under this logic refused asylum seekers are formally excluded from legal documentation and registration, and are thus

excluded from the institutions themselves as they lack the proper 'entry tickets' for access (Engbersen and Broeders, 2009, p. 871).

Refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands have much in common with resettled refugees in Guatemala, like for example issues regarding poverty and exclusion. That is why I decided that the sustainable livelihoods framework, which I used in my Guatemalan research, would also be very appropriate to explore the experiences of refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters in Utrecht. The framework comprises an analysis of the capitals (human, social and economic) and strategies that individuals use to achieve desired outcomes, as well as the institutional or structural context or processes, institutions and policies, which constrain or enable access to these capitals and strategies (Jacobsen, 2006, p. 279). The sustainable livelihoods framework includes an explicit acknowledgement of the aspirations of refused asylum seekers, and of diversification by people undertaking a variety of activities in pursuit of their livelihood strategies (Crawley et al., 2011, p. 11). It encourages a focus on the active agency of refused asylum seekers. Their ability to shape and influence their lives and environments and how they pursue a range of livelihood strategies in their day-to-day coping and their future perspectives. This does not mean that agency can always be freely exerted or that refused asylum seekers have the power to exert control over their futures (Jacobsen & Nichols, 2011; Crawley et al., 2011). A major influence on people's choice of livelihood strategies is their access to capitals and the policies, institutions and processes that affect their ability to use these capitals. The livelihood strategies that asylum seekers in the Netherlands pursue are, amongst other things, especially bounded by the Dutch and European Union legislation and law enforcement regarding illegal immigration.

This research reveals how refused asylum seekers, without access to legitimate means of securing a livelihood except the support of SNDVU are currently living in Utrecht. The livelihood strategies adopted by refused asylum seekers have been analysed within a sustainable livelihoods framework to get a systematic understanding of the different types of capital to which refused asylum seekers do and do not have access. Furthermore, it shows how they use forms of capital on a day-to day basis to cope with their current situation and how they construct their livelihood strategies to improve their future perspectives. Unraveling the connections between these complex and dynamic processes and the outcomes of different strategy combinations (Scoones, 1998) is the key aim of this study.

1.2 Research question

In order to organise my research and the presentation of the data collected, I have used the following main research question:

How do refused asylum seekers in Utrecht use economic, human and social capital to cope on a day-to-day basis and how do they pursue these livelihood strategies to influence their future perspectives?

To answer my research question I have provided the following three sub-questions:

1. *What kinds of economic, human and social capital do refused asylum seekers have?*
2. *How do refused asylum seekers use these different forms of capital for daily coping?*
3. *How does the use of capital for daily coping influence the future perspectives of refused asylum seekers?*

My field research took place from January to April 2013 in Utrecht. The most important methods I used during this research were participant observation and informal chats among fifteen informants living in shelter houses of SNDVU. I will further elaborate on my research methods in the methodology chapter of the thesis.

1.3 Social and scientific relevance

This research aims to fill the gap in scientific literature on the topic of 'livelihood strategies' of refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands. There is a lot of scientific literature to be found on livelihood strategies, different forms of capital and the sustainable livelihood framework, and the same goes for literature on refused asylum seekers. However, literature in which these topics are combined is hard to find. The sustainable livelihoods framework is mainly used in policy management to indicate poverty problems in 'third world countries'. In a recent rapport of Crawley et al. (2011), it is claimed that the sustainable livelihoods framework is a useful way to explore the experiences of destitute asylum seekers living in the UK and the ways in which they draw on a range of assets to cope with destitution. Nevertheless, no research is done in the Netherlands using the concept of livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers. Therefore, this thesis aims to introduce a new perspective to the literature on refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands.

The sustainable livelihoods framework produces a more holistic view on what different forms of capital or combination of these, are important to refused asylum seekers, including not only focusing on the economic, but also on their social and human capital (Bebbington, 1999; Krantz, 2001; Jacobsen & Nichols 2011; Crawley et al., 2011). Likewise, the framework helps to understand how a variety of factors, at different levels, directly or indirectly determine or constrain refused asylum seekers' access to capitals of different kinds, and thus their livelihoods.

The social relevance of this thesis is of high importance. A lot is written about refused asylum seekers and a lot is written for them: laws and legislation that restricts them from fully participating in society. When I began working on this topic in September 2012, news media reported nearly daily on refused asylum seekers in 'camps' in the Netherlands. Gradually, many of these refused asylum seekers moved to the *Vluchtkerk (*Refuge Church) in Amsterdam and a lot of volunteers were eager to help them. However, although these refused asylum seekers from the *Vluchtkerk* were very often in the news, they are not the only illegal migrants in the Netherlands. Thousands of refused asylum seekers are hiding in the bigger cities of the Netherlands, living like shadows. Therefore, I asked these refused asylum seekers who are not in the news, to share their stories with me. Every story is unique and I hope that, although I cannot change policy myself, this thesis will contribute to more knowledge and a better understanding of the hopes and fears of refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands among Dutch policy makers and the general public.

1.4 Thesis outline

In the text above, I have presented the research topic, the main concepts of my theoretical approach and the research problem. In the next chapter, I will give a brief overview of the recent immigration policies of the Netherlands, and introduce the SNDVU of Utrecht, the organization I joined as a volunteer for my research to get access to my informants. I will focus on the (historical) background of the policies regarding irregular migrants in the Netherlands and the current legislation regarding refused asylum seekers. This information provides data about the context which determines or constraints the agency of refused asylum seekers at SNDVU in Utrecht. In chapter three, I will present my theoretical framework in which I describe and justify the sustainable livelihoods framework and my use of its concepts in more detail. In chapter four, I will explain the methodology used for my research. It will delve into my research population, the different methods I used for gathering my data and the ethics and limitations I had to be aware of during my research. In chapter five, I will describe

the different forms of capital that are available to the refused asylum seekers in my research. Chapter six will analyse how these different forms of capital are used for daily coping and in chapter seven I will explain how refused asylum seekers use these livelihood strategies to influence their possible future perspectives.

2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will briefly explain the institutional and political context of refused asylum seekers of SNDVU in Utrecht. Understanding institutional processes allows for the identification of restrictions and barriers, opportunities and gateways concerning sustainable livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). Policies, laws and institutions in Europe and specifically the Netherlands regarding refused asylum seekers, are processes that are important for access to different forms of capital, the use of these capitals, and the way in which livelihood strategies are applied. First, I will give an overview of the Netherlands, the country in which my research is situated.

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

Nearly 17 million people reside within the Netherlands; according to the Dutch national bureau of statistics in 2013 the country had 16,782,300 registered inhabitants (CBS, 2013). Little is known about the number of people who live in the Netherlands unregistered, also called 'illegals'. A report of the Dutch Ministry of Justice (WODC, 2011) estimates a number of 100,000 undocumented people originating from more than 200 countries. Many of them came to the Netherlands on tourist visas and overstayed, while others crossed the border illegally or became illegal migrants when they were refused refugee status. Leerkes (2009) guesses that refused asylum seekers constitute 15 percent of this illegal population.

Figure 1: Location of the Netherlands in Europe

Source: http://kaarteuropa.net/kaart-europa-zonder-namen

2.2 MIGRATION FLOWS

There are several different forms of migration in current times, of which refugee flows are very well known. Castles (2000) states that according to the 1951 United Nations Convention, a refugee is "a person residing outside his or her country of nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return because of a 'well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion'" (Castles, 2000, p. 270). In the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918), millions of people fled their countries of origin in search for a safer place. Governments replied by drawing up a set of international agreements to offer travel documents for these people who were, effectively, the first refugees of the twentieth century (UNHCR, 2011, p. 1). After World War II, the number of people seeking refuge increased. Therefore, the international community provided a set of guidelines, laws and conventions to ensure the adequate treatment of refugees and protect their human rights. An asylum seeker is someone who proclaims to be a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated. The 1951 Convention only protects those who meet flawlessly the criteria for refugee status. While accepting that not everyone who applies for asylum meets the definition contained in the 1951 Convention, I would like to note here that it is not recognition that makes a person a refugee, but the circumstances that have caused one to flee. Categories of people who are not acknowledged as refugee are called 'failed asylum seekers', 'illegal residents', 'undocumented migrants', 'irregular migrants', or 'rejected asylum seekers'. Although the term 'failed asylum seekers', is common used in literature, I rather use the term 'refused asylum seekers', since it implies a rejection by the Dutch authorities instead of their own failure in their quest for asylum.

2.3 LAW AND POLICY

As a result of the influx of millions of immigrants and the high number of refused asylum seekers residing in receiving countries, new questions of international security are posed and some European governments have started adopting more restrictive immigration policies to reduce the level of immigration (Ayhan, 2009; Schuster 2011). Restrictive immigration policy in the Netherlands (Amnesty, 2008, p.10) is a response to a variety of developments, both international and local, to promote the return of refused asylum seekers.

In 1989, illegal migration was first mentioned in an agreement: The Netherlands was

not an 'immigration country' but was only receiving asylum seekers and refugees due to the 1951 Convention (Kox, 2009). Since the early 1990-s, the Netherlands has steadily developed a new policy program that is aimed at the exclusion of illegal migrants that have taken residence inside the Netherlands. Exclusion of these people has become an explicit policy goal. Main instruments of exclusion are legislation, controls, documentation and registration and new forms of surveillance (Engbersen & Broeders, 2009). In 1991, refused asylum seekers were not able to get a BSN (Citizen Services Number) anymore. A BSN is a personal number people receive when they are registered in the basis administration of a Dutch municipality and is used for the administration of taxes and the provision of all kinds of public services. Having a BSN has only become possible for those residing legally in the Netherlands. Goal of this policy was to exclude refused asylum seekers from the social-fiscal system. The Aliens Act of 1965 was replaced by a new one in 1993 in which new asylum procedures were introduced. Another law that was introduced is the 'Identification Act', which was implemented in June 1994. With this act every citizen from the age of twelve became obliged to carry identification documents in specific circumstances such as when being at work, when using the public transport system without a valid ticket and when attending a football match. In many situations documentation can be demanded (Beck & Broadhurst, 1998). Employers for example, are obliged to keep a record of the documents of their personnel, and examinations in the workplace can be a significant tool when trying to curb illegal employment. However, police officers are not permitted to carry out random walk checks of ID cards without special reason or genuine suspicion (Van der Leun, 2003). Due to the new Linkage Act that entered into force in 1998, all information on the residence status of aliens is now easily accessible to the officials implementing the social security legislation. The Act excludes illegal aliens from any right to social benefits, health insurance etc. (van Bennekom, van den Bosch, Groenendijk and Vermeulen, 2000, p. 5). The Aliens Act 1993 was renewed in 2000 and implemented from April 2001 and is still of use. According to this law refused asylum seekers do not have the right for shelter anymore and can be deported at any time when their asylum claim is rejected. Due to this new law, living options for refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands are much reduced or deprived (Kox, 2009).

Return of refused asylum seekers to their country of origin, has been figuring prominently in asylum debates in most European countries. The return policy of illegal or undocumented migrants is regarded as the capstone of immigration policy in the Netherlands. Most of the time, in practice, the return policy mainly centers around the illegalization and exclusion of the facilities of the welfare state (Autonoom Centrum, 2004, p. 29). Several

policies to increase returns have been launched and implemented. The most recent plan is the penalization of illegal residence by law. This idea has existed since 2002. In the current proposal, the Aliens Act 2000 will be changed in order to punish illegal residence. Infringement will be punished with a penalty of 3900 Euros and if not paid, with detention. This detention is not part of criminal law, but administrative. Since 1996 the Netherlands has been using detention for refused asylum seekers, although in the first decade it was not used as much as nowadays. For 2014 an estimation of 1529 detention places is considered, which is fourteen percent of the total places in detention (including criminal law) in the Netherlands (Van der Linde, 2013, p. 27). According to Amnesty International (2008, 2011) and the National Ombudsman (2012) detention of refused asylum seekers has to be a final resource when other resources do not work. Instead, in the Netherlands it is used frequently and as a standard procedure but according to the Nationale Ombudsman (2012) this procedure is inhumane and against International Human Rights.

2.4 "DESERVING" AND "UNDESERVING"

For countries in the European Union (EU), the challenge of managing the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers had an impact on their immigration policies. Certain EU states with highly developed welfare systems claim that their welfare provisions act as a magnet for asylum seekers. These states ask for an approach to make all states equally unattractive to them. According to Bloch and Schuster, "political discourse around asylum has been reinforced by the media, who regularly use terminology such as frauds, parasites, benefits cheats and economic refugees to describe asylum seekers" (Bloch & Schuster, 2002, p. 406). Such a terminology reinforces the link between asylum and welfare.

Refugees who arrive in the Netherlands and ask for asylum, have an interview with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND). After that, the IND decides whether the refugee has a right to seek protection in the Netherlands and is allowed access to the asylum procedure (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, 2012). The concept of the 'deserving and undeserving' continued to be used in public discourse. Asylum seekers are increasingly seen as 'underserving' as their motives for seeking asylum are called into question (Bloch & Schuster, 2002, p. 399).

The asylum procedures can take a long time before a decision is finally taken, whether or not the person can stay in the Netherlands or has to leave. Occasionally, these decisions can take years. During these years, the uncertainty and the very limited contact with society take a heavy toll on refugees (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, 2012). There is also the chance of not

being recognized as a refugee. When that is the case, a person has 28 days to leave the country. There are also people who are 'technically not deportable' (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland, 2012), partly as a result of being undocumented and partly due to instability in and political reluctance from the countries of origin (Valenta & Thorshaug, 2011). These refused asylum seekers are, according to Dutch authorities, obliged to leave the country. Yet, in practice, many remain and become vulnerable illegal citizens.

2.5 MUNICIPAL POLICY

The presumption that the restrictive policy in the Netherlands has not reduced the number of illegal residents, resulted in research conducted by academics, claiming the restrictive policy as 'symbol policy' for a problem that cannot be solved (Engbersen, van der Leun, Staring and Kehla, 1999). Likewise, ten years ago, as a protest against the introduction of the renewed Aliens Act 2000, Dutch municipal leaders informed the minister of immigration that they would no longer cooperate on adequate shelter in asylum centers, when the government would not be more active in the return of refused asylum seekers. In June 2002, more than forty municipalities argued that they felt to be saddled with the failing national return policy. They refused to put asylum seekers who were 'technically undeportable' on the streets, because they claimed to feel responsible for them. The presence of homeless people was considered as socially unacceptable and besides these humanitarian grounds, it would provide problems for public order, safety and public health (Autonoom Centrum, 2004, p. 48-49).

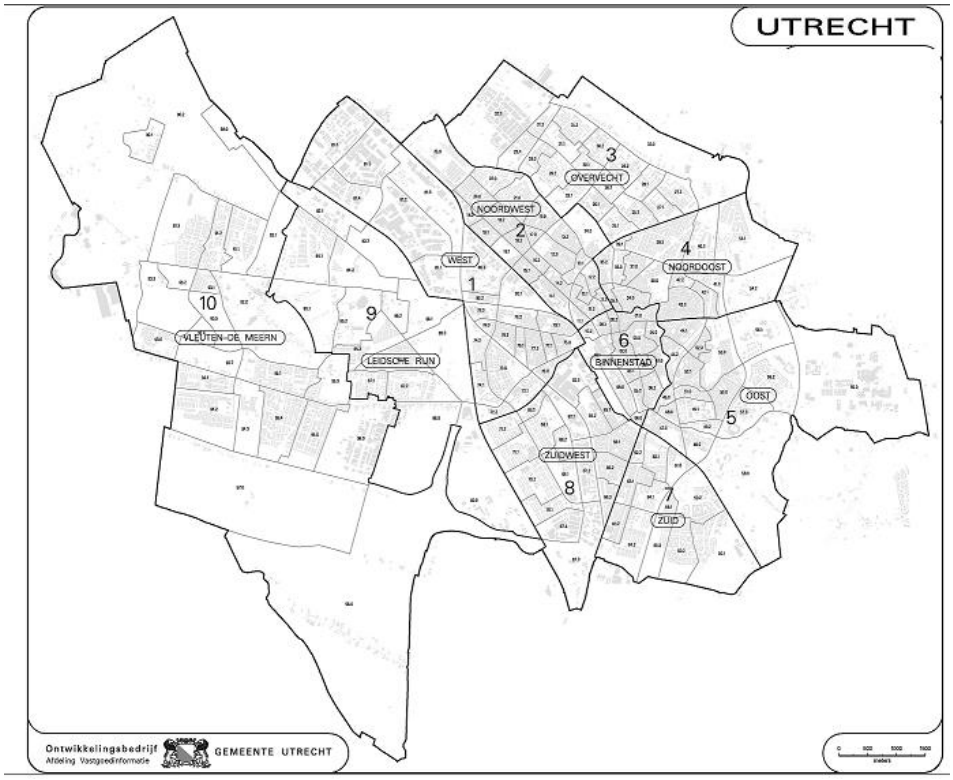
Municipalities and social workers were and still are complaining about the fact that the national government does not allow them to help refused asylum seekers. They claim that the policy of the government contains gaps in the care for refused asylum seekers, because the actual return of these people is missing: many countries are refusing to take their citizens back. Many municipalities experience the policy as inconsistent and not realistic (Autonoom Centrum, 2004). Therefore, other alternatives are established.

2.6 SNDVU

One of the cornerstones of SNDVU is to provide 'bed, bath and bread'. Early 2013, SNDVU provides sober and temporarily shelter for about 100 refused asylum seekers in Utrecht, located in 21 different houses spread out over the city of Utrecht. As the municipality of Utrecht claims that refused asylum seekers are not supposed to live on the streets, they provide grants for emergency accommodation. The 21 different houses are scattered over the city of Utrecht, situated in neighbourhoods like Overvecht, Kanaleneiland and Zuilen.

Accommodation is provided by various housing associations in the area of Utrecht, like SSH, Mitros, Bo-Ex and Wolf (SNDVU, 2012).

Figure 2: Map of Utrecht city



Source: (Bestuursinformatie/Geo-informatie, gemeente Utrecht 2006: 141).

To obtain help from SNDVU, certain criteria (established by the municipality of Utrecht) have to be fulfilled: a). there have to be bonding with the region of Utrecht, b). positive perspective on a new procedure or legal status, c). active cooperation when return is possible. The International Network of Local Initiatives with Asylum seekers (INLIA) assesses files of applicants on criteria and after permission of the municipality clients will be accepted by SNDVU. Together with the clients SNDVU takes possibilities and impossibilities regarding the return into account.

The clientele of SNDVU consist mainly of single men, a couple of women (with children) and few families. The group of clients can be divided into adults, who get social/legal support from employees of SNDVU and ex-Ama's (ex single underaged asylum seekers). This group is supported by 'Ex-Ama team' from Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland. SNDVU provides shelter, money to live and living support. Three forms of support can be distinguished here: clients who get shelter as well as money to live, clients who only receive money to live and clients who receive money from COA, but are living in shelters from SNDVU (SNDVU, 2012). Refused asylum seekers often become clients of SNDVU after

having been on a waiting list for some time. Some first tried to rent a room themselves in Utrecht, others had a room before they applied for help. To be accepted as a SNDVU client depends not only on the personal situation of the refused asylum seeker, but also on the availability of space in one of the SNDVU houses, spread over various neighbourhoods in Utrecht.

The office of SNDVU is situated in the St. Dominicus church in the neighbourhood Oog in Al. About eleven volunteers are working for SNDVU, five of them are in the (voluntary) board. Furthermore, five employees and one intern are working at the office, each with own skills and knowledge. Rana and Dominique are providing social and legal support to clients, Marsha is Housing and Social Activities Coordinator and Alexandre is busy with the administrative aspects. Myrthe, studying MWD (social work) was working as an intern this year. The team is controlled by Gonnie, the General Coordinator. They know each other's work, so when needed, somebody else can take over. Together with a volunteer, employees of SNDVU weekly provide consults for clients on Tuesday mornings which is important to keep contact with all the clients. Furthermore, Willem is doing odd jobs in the shelter houses to avoid possible dangerous situations (heatings, electricity etc.) and to learn clients how to deal with electricity in the shelter houses (SNDVU, 2013).

SNDVU (2012) claims that clients have agency and that they are able to prove opportunities which could lead to improvement of their current positions and independent lives. This is also argued by Engbersen and Broeders (2009). They claim that refused asylum seekers will react to changing options and are able to create new solutions for their problems (Engbersen & Broeders, 2009). Therefore, I have chosen to focus on agency, coping and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in shelters from SNDVU. I will focus on political restrictions, but even more important, I will highlight their possibilities within this difficult context. The next chapter will provide some theoretical concepts which I have used to gather and analyze my findings and to answer my research question.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The sustainable livelihoods framework is a way of analyzing the complex issues regarding exclusion and poverty. I will use this framework to explore the experiences of refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and the ways in which they draw on a range of capabilities and capitals to cope with destitution. The sustainable livelihoods framework comprises an analysis of the capitals and strategies that individuals use to achieve desired outcomes, the context of processes, institutions and policies, and the vulnerability context which constrain or enable access to these capitals and strategies (Jacobsen 2006: 279). Theories on sustainable livelihoods fit in the broader agency-structure debate (Marx, 1963; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Archer, 1982, 1996) that helps us to understand how people make sense of their lives and how they act within a range of environments and contexts. Capital, strategies and context are key concepts in my theoretical framework and have led to the formulation of my research questions. This chapter provides insights and analyses of various authors on different aspects of the sustainable livelihoods approach. At the end of the chapter I will provide a framework in which I present the theoretical concepts and the way in which these concepts were operationalized for the process of data gathering in the field that have helped me to contribute to the current agency-structure debate.

3.2 VULNERABILITY CONTEXT

The institutional and political context which concerns *vulnerability* for refused asylum seekers is outlined in chapter 2. Crawley et al. (2011) describe that this context is one in which the withholding of welfare support for refused asylum seekers has been increasingly utilized by successive governments as a tool for controlling immigration. Unlike poverty, which is usually measured with statistic indicators such as income or wealth, vulnerability is a dynamic concept, intended to capture the ability to respond to perturbations or shocks (Jacobsen & Nichols, 2011, p.11). In contrast to the traditional approach which targets vulnerable 'environments', social geographers have also focused upon vulnerable 'populations', namely marginalized and excluded groups within society (Philo, 2005) Vulnerability was long ago defined by Chambers and Conway (1992) as a combination of defenselessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress. Moser (1998) defines vulnerability as "insecurity and sensitivity in the well-being of individuals, households and communities in the face of a changing environment, and implicit in this, responsiveness and resilience to risks that they

face during such negative changes" (Moser, 1998, p.1). Vulnerability is a multilayered and multidimensional social space defined by the determinate political, economic and institutional capacities of people in specific places at specific times (Watts and Bohle, 1993, p. 46).

3.3 AGENCY-STRUCTURE

The relationship between *structure* and *agency* has been expressed in many ways. One of the key debates focuses on how structures and material conditions determine the extent to which agents are free to act as they wish (Marx, 1963). The agency-structure relation can help us to better understand individual agency and power dynamics in a range of contexts, including organizational and institutional settings. As a response to the emphasis in structural sociology on the causal significance of social structures, Giddens (1979, 1984) attempted to re-assert the prominence of agency. In his analysis, agency and structure are intrinsically linked. "The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represented in a duality" (1984: 25). Archer (1982, 1996), however, is critical of Giddens's (1979, 1984) explanation of structure and agency. For Archer, Giddens places too much emphasis on agency and enabling structures and she argues that 'institutions are what people produce, not what they confront' (Archer, 1982: 463).

In Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) work on agency, temporal dimensions are critically important . They argue a reconceptualization of agency as 'a temporally embedded process of social engagement' (1998: 963), expressed through three interrelated temporal elements: current, future and past. They argue that although within any action, each of the three elements is present, it is possible to speak of one element being 'predominant', to speak of more or less engagement in the past, future or present. Refused asylum seekers have difficulties pursuing their livelihood because of the lack of legal status and access to public institutions, caused by organizational and institutional settings. In order to understand what people require, want and what strategies they use in obtaining their livelihood, I will outline theories and viewpoints on livelihood and livelihood strategies in this section, which also have linkages with the concepts of *human security*, that it is concerned with "how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities and whether they live in conflict or in peace" (Alkire, 2002, p. 13). The act of fleeing persecution is often thought to eliminate a migrant's 'agency' and 'choice'. Interestingly, however, it has been observed that 'there is no clear-cut distinction between "proactive" and "reactive" migrants but, rather, a continuum between

those who have some freedom of choice whether, when and where to move, and those who are impelled by circumstances beyond their control' (Richmond, 2002: 709).

3.4 A (SUSTAINABLE) LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK

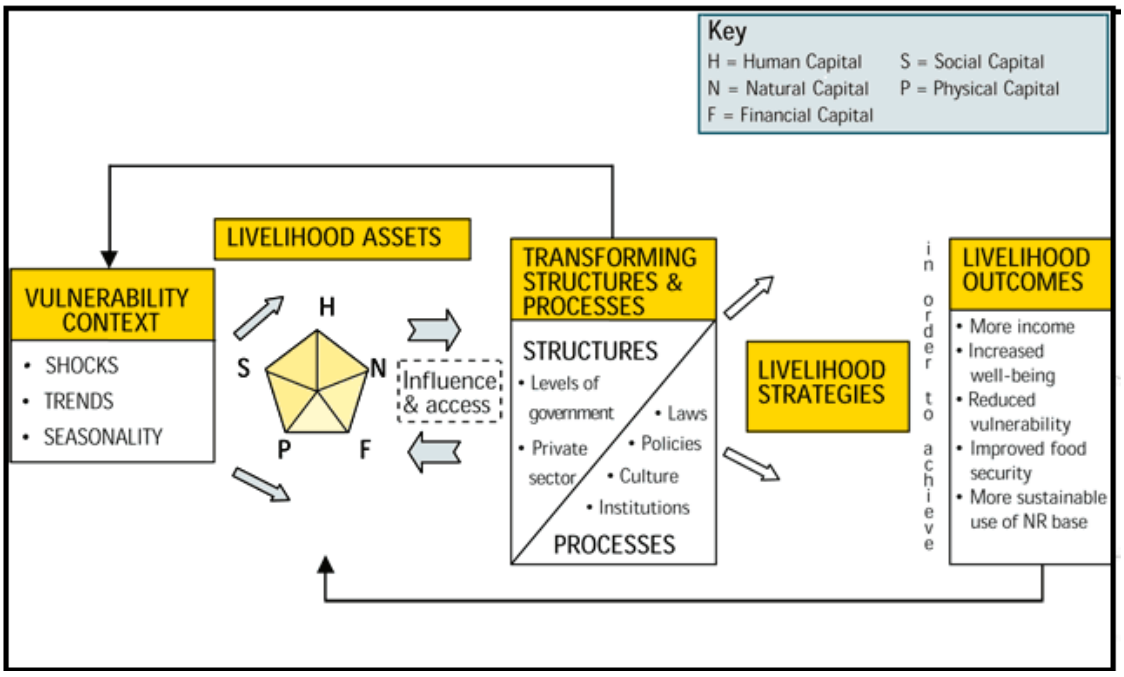
There are many influences which have supported the creation of the *sustainable livelihoods framework*. One of the first scholars working on poverty and livelihoods was Chambers (1983). He claims that poverty refers to the lack of physical necessities, assets and income. It includes, but exceeds being income-poor. Poverty can be distinguished from other dimensions of deprivation such as physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness with which it interacts. Almost ten years later, Chambers and Conway (1992) proposed that "a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living." They added that "a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term" (Chambers & Conway, 1992, p. 6).

Deriving from theories on livelihood, Kollmair and Gamper (2002) argue that the sustainable livelihoods framework could serve as an instrument for the investigation of poor people's livelihoods (Kollmair & Gamper, 2002, p. 4). According to Krantz (2001), the concept of sustainable livelihoods is an attempt to go beyond the conventional definitions and approaches to poverty reduction. These conventional approaches were evaluated as too narrow because they focused only on certain aspects or manifestations of poverty, such as low income, or did not consider other vital aspects of poverty such as vulnerability and social exclusion. According to Petersen and Pederson (2010), the first basic principle is that development work has to focus on people, which means that we have to focus on what matters for them. Another principle is that the people themselves have to be key actors in identifying the important aspects of their own livelihoods (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010). Furthermore, the context in which vulnerable actors have to strategize is important for understanding the framework.

One of the critiques on the sustainable livelihoods framework is that there are too many components to address, which makes it impossible to go into depth with any of these, hence making the framework too broad and superficial to actually analyze anything (Clark & Carney, 2008). However, the proponents claim that the framework is meant as a holistic overview of which factors might be beneficial to include in any given development activity,

and how these factors cannot be analyzed without considering some of the other components (Krantz, 2001, Kollmair & Gamper, 2002). Like all models however, the framework is a major simplification and does not represent the full diversity of livelihoods, which can only be understood by qualitative and participatory analysis at the local level. Kollmair and Gamper (2002) further claim that in its simplest form, the framework consists of groups and individuals as operating in a context of vulnerability, within which they have (possible) access to certain capitals. These livelihood capitals are "assets that give people the capability to be and to act" (Bebbington, 1999, p. 5). In the framework, the different forms of capitals gain their meaning and value through the prevailing social, institutional and organizational environment [transforming structures and processes]. This context however, influences the way people possibly pursue their livelihood strategies.

Figure 3. Sustainable livelihoods framework diagram.



Source: Kollmair and Gamper (2002).

Crawley et al. (2011) note that the sustainable livelihoods framework is a useful lens through which to explore the experiences of asylum seekers in the UK, since the framework includes "a recognition of the dynamic aspirations of poor people, of diversity between different people adopting different strategies, and of diversification by people undertaking a variety of activities in pursuit of those strategies" (Crawley et al., 2011, p. 11). A major influence on peoples' choice of livelihood strategies is their access to capitals and the policies, institutions and processes (context) that affect their ability to use these capitals to achieve positive

livelihood outcomes. Because of the particular policy context in which refused asylum seekers live, they are actively discouraged and legally prevented from utilizing these resources. According to Peluso and Ribot (2003) access is "the ability to derive benefits from things" broadening from property's classical definitions as "the right to benefits from things" (Peluso & Ribot, 2003, p. 153). Access to capitals is clearly a factor that determines who is able to benefit from resources by controlling or maintaining access to them. Access analysis can focus on the policy environments that enable and disenable different actors to gain, maintain or control resource access, or the micro-dynamics of who benefits from resources and how.

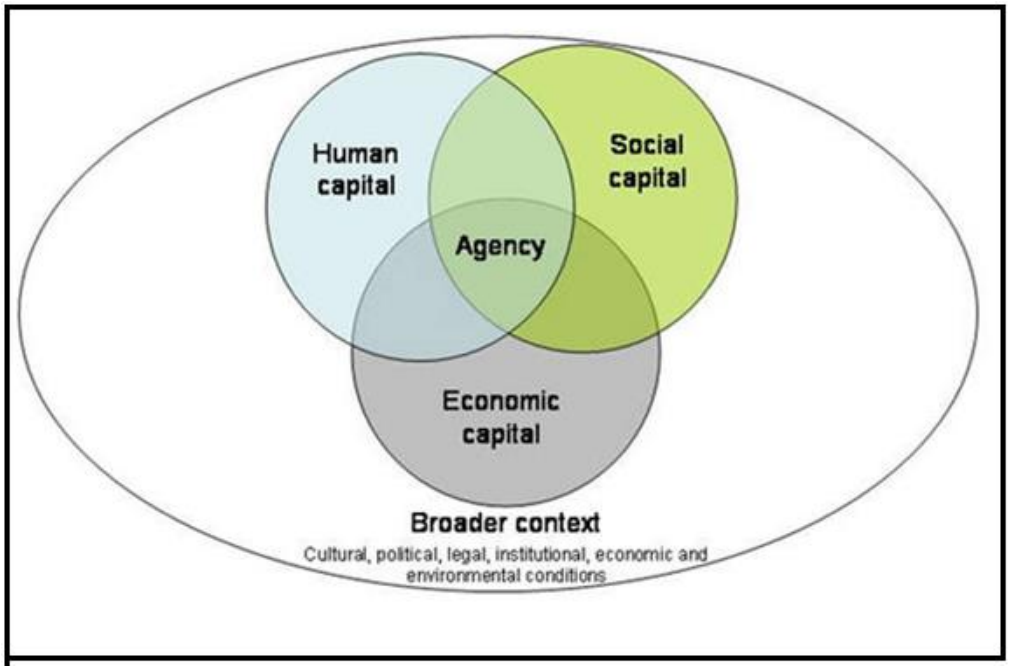
3.5 DIFFERENT FORMS OF CAPITAL

"A concept that has expanded generality and reputation in explaining achievement under the conditions of what Antony Giddens defines as 'late modernity' is, is that of 'capital' (Schuller, Bynner & Feinstein, 2004, p. 3). In everyday language the term capital refers to wealth. We talk about investing capital, for example, implying that capital is an asset that can be owned and allocated, an aspect of wealth. Bourdieu (1986, p. 242) states that capital is "the accumulated labor which enables people to achieve [social] goals". Capital takes time to acquire and accumulate, and the structure and the distribution of different types and sub-types of capital represents the structure of the social world and the possibilities for individuals in this world (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).

However, different options about the use of the term capital have generated continuing debate amongst a range of disciplines about how tightly 'capital' is to be defined (Schuller et al., 2004). Bourdieu (1986) identifies three types of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. He mentions all three of them, but claims that cultural and social capital are the most important and are in ways convertible into economic capital. Bourdieu's work suggests how economic capital generates cultural capital which in turn enables those with this capital to continue to secure their place in society. In his view and the views of others [following Marx] all capitals are ultimately reducible to the economic (Schuller et al., 2004, p. 18). Portes (1998) differentiates the various forms of capital into economic, human and social. He stresses that whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in their relationships. In the sustainable livelihood framework of Kollmair and Gamper (2002), natural and physical capital are added: they distinguishes capital into five different forms: human, social, economic (financial), natural

and physical capital. In my theoretical framework, I will use the concepts economic, human and social capital, following Portes (1998) and Gooey and Howden (2004). I will analyze how these capitals are translated into each other; the extent to which one can substitute for another and the ways in which they run against each other or cancel each other out. Figure 4 clearly shows the interrelation between these three different capitals.

Figure 4: Agency as determined by access to human, social and economic capital.



Source: (Gooey and Howden, 2004).

3.5.1 Economic Capital

Among the different categories of assets *economic capital* is probably the most versatile as it can be converted into other types of capital that enables people to adopt different livelihood strategies, or it can be used for direct achievement of livelihood outcomes and is direct convertible into money (Bourdieu, 1986; Kollmair & Gamper, 2002). Economic capital includes the financial resources available to people (including savings, credits, remittances and pensions) which provide different livelihood options to them (Bourdieu 1986; Rakodi, 2002, Jacobsen & Nichols 2011). According to Bourdieu (1986) two main sources of financial capital can be identified: available stocks comprising cash, bank deposits or liquid assets such as livestock and jewellery, not having liabilities attached and usually independent on third parties. Regular inflows of money comprising labour income, pensions, or other transfers

from the state, and remittances, which are mostly dependent on others and need to be reliable (Kollmair & Gamper, 2002, p. 7).

3.5.2 Human Capital

The second capital in this framework is *human capital.* In the field of development studies, 'human capital' is a very vaguely used term with various meanings. Human capital was introduced in 1961 by the economist Schultz to recognize human assets as a form of capital (Côté, 2001; Gooey & Howden, 2004; PRI, 2003; Lin, 2001; Schuller, 2001; Woolcock, 2001). This development was driven by the need to describe the quality of labour and levels of education and training, as an element of production (Goeey & Howden, 2004). However, in the context of the sustainable livelihoods framework it is defined as follows: "Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives" (DFID, 2000; Rakodi, 2002; Jacobson & Nichols, 2011). Crawley et al. (2011) claim that the ability to develop a livelihood strategy depends, in significant part, on an individual having skills, knowledge, the ability to work, and good health. These resources and strengths enable refused asylum seekers to cope with the challenge of destitution and to mobilize social and economic resources. Also language abilities are important in urban settings that are characterized by a mix of people of different origins. Likewise, speaking the local language is important because it increases access to employment, helps with protection and enables them to join local organizations and networks (Crawley et al., 2011, p. 51).

Sen (1997) argues that the possession of human capital not only implies that people produce more (efficiently); it also gives them the capability to participate more fruitfully and meaningfully with the world and the capability to change the world. Human capital, or what is called cultural capital by Bourdieu, is on certain conditions convertible into economic capital and is institutionalized in the form of for instance educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244).

3.5.3 Social Capital

The third form of capital in my theoretical framework is *social capital* which consists of social obligations or 'connections' and, is on certain conditions, convertible into economic capital (Jacobsen, 2006; Amisi, 2006). Social capital according to Bourdieu (1986) is the actual or potential resources someone has on the basis of a network of relationships with

people on the basis of mutual acquaintance and recognition, it is being part of a group (1986: 52). In the context of the sustainable livelihood framework it means the social resources upon which people draw in seeking for their livelihood outcomes, such as networks and connectedness (Narayan et al., 2000, 54), that increase people's trust and ability to cooperate or membership in more formalized groups and their systems of rules, norms and sanctions (Kollmair & Gamper, 2002, p. 6). The idea about the concept is that one's family, friends and associates are an important asset that can be called on through networks or social relations, as a means to achieve desired outcomes (Gooey & Howard, 2004). For the most vulnerable, social capital often represents a place of refuge in mitigating the effects of lacks in other capitals through informal networks (Kollmair & Gamper, 2002, p. 6-7). Social capital is derived from community groups and institutions which are characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity (Jacobsen & Nichols, 2011, Rakodi, 2002; Stone, 2001). The amount of social capital of a person depends on the amount of people someone knows and the amount of other forms of capital available by these people. Social relationships can be between individuals, or between individuals and a wider network of other people (Crawley et al., 2011, p. 35). Not only individual networks is important, but also prayer houses and organizations influence the support (Kox, 2009, p.149). Having social support networks, or knowing the local language assists in securing livelihoods and housing. According to Crawley et al. (2011) "contacts are everything" and that in order to meet the basic requirements of coping, to access social support, and even to find work, it is essential to have a portfolio of social contacts.

3.6 LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

In the previous section I described different forms of capital as important aspects of the sustainable livelihoods framework. This section will show how capital can be used to pursue *livelihood strategies*. In this perspective the concept of strategies directs our attention both to the way people engage in the world and the way they move towards positions they perceive as being better than their current situation and the possibilities that flows from moving towards these positions (Vigh, 2009, p. 432). Long (1984) was one of the first who referred to 'livelihood strategies' in his book "Family and work in rural societies", in which "the 'survival' in non-wage forms and 'traditional' patterns of family and household organization in capitalist economies had been interpreted in various ways: as a transnational phenomenon, as a structure and a system" (Long ,1984, p.1). While claiming the importance of wider structural factors, stress is placed upon the adaptive strategies developed by rural producers in less developed countries to solve their livelihood problems.

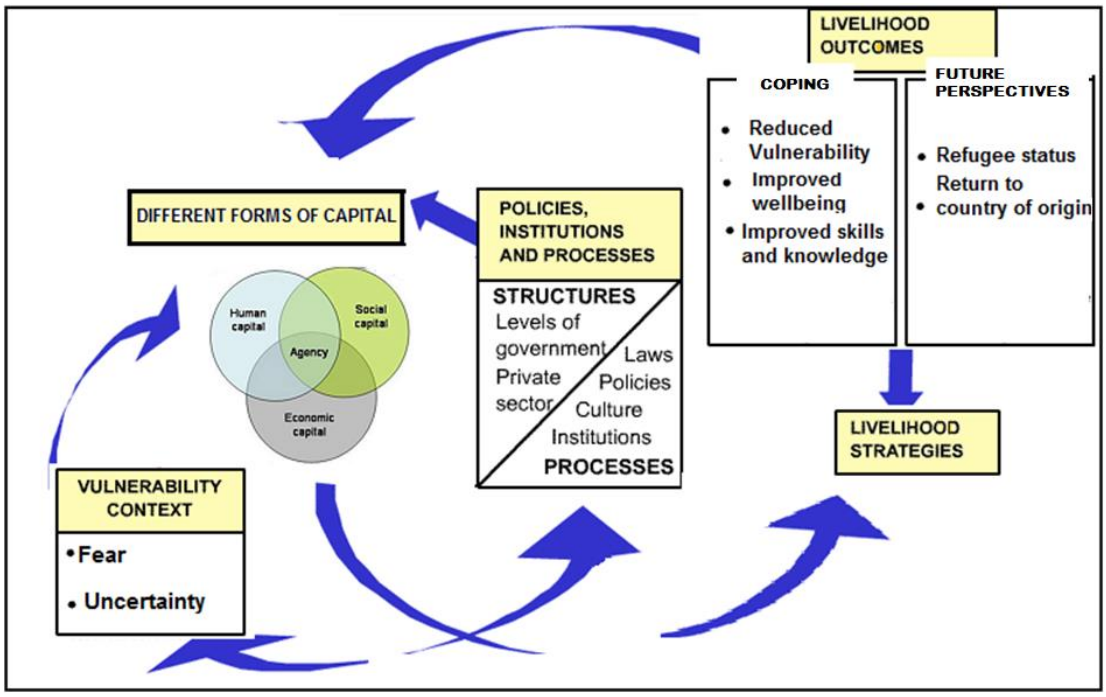
Rakodi (2002) argues that the concept of 'strategy', has the advantage of restoring agency to vulnerable people, rather than regarding them merely as passive victims. Moreover, according to Vigh (2009), 'strategy' can be defined as "the process of demarcating and constituting space and tactics as the process of navigating them" (Vigh, 2009, p.432). Basically, livelihood strategies are the ways in which people combine and use capitals in pursuit of beneficial livelihoods (Majale, 2002; Kollmair & Gamper, 2002) taking account of the vulnerability context, supported or obstructed by policies, institutions and processes (Hamilton-Peach & Townsley, 2002).

The concept of livelihood strategies, as mentioned by Kollmair and Gamper (2002) is comparable to the concept of *social navigation* (Vigh, 2009). Social navigation springs to mind when looking at how people move in uncertain circumstances and is referred to in academic debates when focusing on "the way agents act in difficult situations, move under the influence of multiple forces or seek to escape confining structures" (Vigh, 2009, p. 419). Livelihood strategies, as well as social navigation, is an interesting concept as it gives us an alternative perspective on practice and the intersection between agency, social forces and change. According to Vigh (2009), "we act, adjust and attune our strategies and tactics in relation to the way we experience and imagine and anticipate the movement and influence of social forces" (Vigh, 2009, p. 420). In Bourdieu's perspective people may move and act vertically in the social field, competing for position and capital, and thus act strategically in relation to each other as competitors (Vigh, 2009, p. 427).

Another helpful way to structure this analysis according to Valenta and Thorshaug (2011) would be to indicate the actors who operate within this given social field, organization or institution and their respective goals (Valenta & Thorshaug, 2011, p. 8). They mention the metaphor of 'the arena of struggle' by Collins and 'the field of struggle' by Bourdieu and Wacquant to suggest that actors with their respective resources, will always strive to improve their situation by mobilizing their means and resources (as cited in Valenta & Thorshaug, 2011, p. 8). Furthermore, the advantage of such an approach is that one can relate it to both actors' actions and the rules that govern their action within a given environment (Valenta & Thorshaug, 2011, p. 8). This analysis fits perfectly in the sustainable livelihoods framework. Having presented various scholars and their arguments regarding the sustainable livelihoods framework and different forms of capital, I constructed the following scheme to analyze livelihood strategies for daily coping and the influence of livelihood strategies on future perspectives of refused asylum seekers living in SNDVU shelters in Utrecht. I will argue that the framework depicts refused asylum seekers as

operating in a context of vulnerability, within which they have access to certain forms of capitals. These capitals gain their meaning and value through the prevailing social, institutional and organizational environment. The context decisively influences the livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers in pursuit of their self-defined beneficial livelihood outcomes for daily coping and to influence possible future perspectives (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework applied to refused asylum seekers from SNDVU



4. METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the different research methods which I have used to gather my data in the field.

4.1 ACCESS AND INFORMANTS

Gaining access to refused asylum seekers in Utrecht was the first step in carrying out my research. I made arrangements with *Stichting Noodopvang Dakloze Vreemdelingen Utrecht (*SNDVU) to do voluntary work at the organization from January to April 2013. More information about SNDVU is provided in the regional background of this thesis. I worked weekly at the office, especially on Tuesdays, the day that my informants received their money. In the first weeks I was only observing these consults, later on I did the consults myself. Since I positioned myself different in this setting it was useful for the intersubjectivity of my data: the method of connecting as many different perspectives on the same data as possible that is less likely to be prone to individual bias or gaps in knowledge (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007)

During the first weeks of my fieldwork, I visited twelve of the 21 SNDVU houses, just to see how people were living, where the different houses were situated and how people were reacting to the fact I was coming to research them. Later on, I became 'house mentor' of three houses. Suddenly, a lot was happening with the clients living in these shelters. Some were caught by the police, certain clients had to move to another place, others came to live in the shelter and so forth. These occasions became helpful for my research. On the other hand, being a volunteer was helpful for SNDVU as well. This form of reciprocity was of high importance. I was happy to have entrance to the field site via SNDVU and I was really willing to contribute in the form of volunteerwork.

In total, I visited fifteen people with different age, gender and religious affiliation, on a regular basis during my house visits in the three months of fieldwork. Other houses of SNDVU were visited sporadically or not even at all. I collected research data during my work at the office, during house visits and while supporting clients in meetings with other organizations. When I was working at the office, reading and looking for information for my thesis, clients were likely to come around for advice or an appointment with their contact person. In this way, I learnt about their procedures and about the reason why they came to the office and how frequently they did so. Due to these different ways of gathering data, I obtained a lot of information.

One house that I was mentoring, was merely inhabited by women. In the beginning, four women were living in this house. Later on, one of them went to an asylum seeker centre (AZC), because of her pregnancy. In a while, a new room was built in the house, and three other women came to stay. The last weeks of my research, six women were staying in that house. My best contacts were three women who I met at the beginning of my work at SNDVU. Because of my regular visits to this house I also saw the other women very often. The other two of my mentor houses were inhabited by men. Four men were living in one of these houses. All of them came to live here during the time I was visiting this house weekly. They had been on the waiting list for quite a time and finally got shelter. In the third house, three men lived in the house during the whole period of my research. The person whom I considered to be my key informant, was living in another shelter than the ones described above. Although I did not see him every week, he was able to explain to me a lot when we did meet. Because of the sensitivity of the topics and the fear of many of my informants, I use pseudonyms for all of their names.

4.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

During my research I mainly used participant observation, a method in which researchers take part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 1). Participant observation combines two different processes. Pure observation seeks to the maximum extent possible, to remove the researcher from the action and behavior so that they are not able to influence. Pure participation has been described as 'going native' and 'becoming the phenomenon'. During participant observation, 'being there' is most important. "Being there in the fullest sense means that our ideas and notions are continually challenged and resisted by the actions and words of those within the setting" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 13). As a participant observer I became involved in the daily lives of people rather than only observing it (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 502). Yet I avoided 'going native', because I needed distance to look at the situation clearly.

During the first couple of weeks, I tried not to focus too much on my research questions. This was hard, because I wanted to know everything from the beginning. I mainly had informal chats with various clients from SNDVU to build up *rapport. Rapport* according to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) is "a state of interaction achieved when the participants come to share the same goals [….] in a respectful and thoughtful way that allows the informants to tell his or her story" (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002, 47). Later on, once rapport was built up

piece by piece, it was easier to talk about more sensitive topics. I was able to explore my sub questions about different forms of capital through participant observation. Later on, I asked questions about the things I was seeing and hearing.

4.3 INTERVIEWS

Interviewing involves an ironic contradiction: you must be both structured and flexible at the very same time. While it is important to prepare for an interview, with a list of planned questions to guide your talk, it is equally important to follow your informant's lead (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 238). It is critical not to ask too many closed questions or questions that assume particular responses, because fieldworkers listen en record stories from the point of view of the informant rather than their own (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 238).

I did not make use of 'formal' interviewing, because of the sensitivity of most of the topics. Many of my informants associated interviews with the IND[1], which is fearful and sometimes even traumatic to them. This was telling for the topic of my research: my informants are always wondering whom to trust and not to trust and it takes a while until they finally do. The omission of formal interviews was no problem since I got all the information out of informal chats or informal interviews. This was possible, because I saw all my informants regularly. I had enough time to collect the data during these chats, instead of one larger interview. I also reckon that in this informal setting, people were more eager to talk to me and felt more secure because it was no so intrusive. By doing informal interviews, I could participate in naturally unfolding events, and observe these as carefully and as objectively as possible (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 120). I followed the lead of my informants, but I asked occasional questions to focus on the topic or to clarify points I did not understand. Then my informants were more aware of the fact that they were really explaining something to me (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002, p. 122).

On several occasions informants shared with me photos, music, (religious) books, laptops and so on, to show me something of importance for them. I found that by probing, observation and analysis, these belongings also provided opportunity to gain better understanding of their livelihood strategies.

[1] Immigratie en Naturalisatie Dienst

4.4 FIELD NOTES

I wrote many field notes during fieldwork. The notes constitute the basic element for the analysis and thick descriptions that constitutes a thesis (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 66, 76-78). However, they are more than a collection of notes taken from my observations, questions and informal conversations with my research group. They also demonstrate that I am aware of and reflexive to myself. Therefore, I had to clearly "separate my observations from my reflections and analysis; what I am seeing from what I am feeling" (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 111).

A useful method for separating my notes from my thoughts was the construction of double-entry field notes. Every time I wrote down my field notes, it contained relevant information like date, place and time of the observation, but also sensory impressions and personal responses regarding the field notes and questions for future investigation (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 103). I reviewed my field notes all the time, by noting what surprised me, what intrigued me and what disturbed me, for later analysis (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 106).

I was planning to write down the wide variety of data obtained by participant observation, interviews and observation in different notebooks. But, since I was not carrying five different notebooks with me all the time, I wrote everything down in a notebook, on my phone and in my email account, and I organized it later. When it was possible, I took notes directly at the field site. However, this was not always possible, for instance when it could have be seen as inappropriate or intrusive. Most of the time I wrote down my field notes afterwards, when I was at home or back at the office.

4.5 ETHICS, REFLECTIONS AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

4.5.1 Positioning

In fieldwork, 'positioning' includes all the subjective responses that affects how a researcher can possible see the data (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 131). During my fieldwork, I constantly needed to be aware of this and therefore I achieved a kind of objectivity, which in anthropology is called intersubjectivity. Since I was my own research instrument in the field it was important to know where I was standing in my research. So, I situated myself in a fixed, and also a subjective way.

Fixed positions are the personal facts that might influence how I see my data, which

include for instance my age, gender, class, nationality and ethnic background (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 131). These factors did not change during my fieldwork, although nothing is truly fixed. The fact that I am a woman, and some of my informants were men, implied other outcomes than when I would have been researching only women, since "men and women have access to different people, different settings and different bodies of knowledge" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 86). The mixed gender of my informants was interesting for my research, because of the different opinions and interpretations that exist among them. Several women said that it is easier for men to live like they do, because women are more vulnerable than men. Some men thought that for women it is always easier to get a permit, because they can get pregnant for instance. Doing research among male and female refused asylum seekers enriched my data. Likewise, nationality played an important role, because the problem of refused asylum seekers is situated in the Netherlands and I am a Dutch woman. Sometimes when my informants talked about 'they', the Dutch people, I felt ashamed, since I did not want to be seen as 'them'. It gave me the feeling to apologize for how they are being treated. Subjective positions such as life history and personal experience also affected my research (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007, p. 132). Since I live my life in a safe country, did not have to flee, had the chance to go to school and to go to university, and have documents to proof that I really am Tamara, make myself different from my research group. From the day I was born I experienced a very other life than that of my informants, although some of them even have been living in Utrecht for a longer time than I do myself. It was hard to see people cry, to see people upset or angry about the situation, because I was not able to fix it. I was not able to give them the help they really needed. The only thing I could do for them was listening and writing it down, in the hope that it may have changed something.

4.5.2 Overt versus covert

Doing research among refused asylum seekers was a politically sensitive topic. Therefore, ethical guidelines were considered necessary as a way of regulating what I as a researcher could, could not, or should not do in certain areas of research (Ferdinand, Pearson, Rowe & Worthington, 2007, p. 520). 'Being ethical' in research, was more difficult than it seemed beforehand. The issue of overt versus covert research is discussed by Ferdinand et al. (2007). Covert research means that the position of the researcher is disclosed, in contrast with overt research in which the role as researcher is publicly known among the research population

(Ferdinand et al., 2007, p. 526-527).

My research among refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters was generally overt although I worked there as an intern/volunteer. On the 8th of January 2013 I was introduced as a volunteer employee or intern at the office employees and to the refused asylum seekers; from this perspective it was a kind of covert position. At the same time I was clear from the beginning about my role as a researcher to all of my informants. I thought that when I would do so, the clients of SNDVU would not think that I was able to help them in a way social workers do. In reality, they did. Although I was repeating over and over, that I was doing research for my study, they asked me to help them with certain things like how to buy a new closet, where to find a second hand computer, how to cope with the situation. I did not mind that they asked me things like that, and I helped them as much as I could. For issues that I could not solve I sent clients to their contact persons and explained that I could not help them. Sometimes it was confusing for both myself and my informants, that I was not working as an independent researcher. Some ethical questions arose and I was wondering about my information sometimes. Did my informants tell their stories because they wanted to? Or did they think that they had to because I was working as an employee for SNDVU?

4.5.3 Being objective, keeping distance

According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), relationships established in the field could present some ethical dilemmas. At times, I was struggling with keeping distance. When you see your informants very frequently, and you see them even more than your own friends, the borderline between informants and friends becomes a little blurred sometimes. Beside the things I wanted to know for my research, I also went shopping, watched television and listened to music to build up *rapport*. I also do these things with my friends. On the other hand, when they asked me where I was living I always said the name of the neighborhood or 'near to the station'. I never told my address and most of the time I was calling them with number protection. For me this was strange sometimes and I wondered why I was acting like that. Was I treating them as criminals too now? I asked them to trust me, but I did not trust them? I questioned myself all the time about these issues. My role as 'an employee' was useful in these situations, so I could distance myself.

Because I decided not to record my 'interviews', I took notes at the research site, or immediately when I had the time. Because I relied on my understanding of the note taking capability and own memory, it is likely that some data were lost in this process. In terms of

reliability, which is "that quality of measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon" (Babbie, 2004, p. 141). This presents some limitations. On the other hand, because I was working with this group of people all the time and saw many of the same patterns, I was able to gather enough information to answer my questions. Moreover, I realize that because of the fact that I am my own research instrument, the data I gathered are of course directed to the focus of my research. In all likelihood, my thesis would be different when I had been looking with a different lens. Important to note is that all my findings are my interpretations of the interpretations of reality by my informants. Yet, because of the different methods used and the many reflecting moments on my field notes, I think that my data are reliable enough to present in this thesis the livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in SNDVU shelters spread over the city of Utrecht.

5. DIFFERENT FORMS OF CAPITAL

In this first data chapter I will present information to answer the first sub question of my research regarding the different forms of capital refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters do have. As explained in my theoretical framework of chapter four I decided to distinguish economic, human and social capital. I will start with outlining economic capital, in the subsequent sections I will elaborate on various aspects of human and social capital.

5.1 ECONOMIC CAPITAL

Among the different categories of assets economic capital is probably the most versatile as it can be converted into other types of capital or it can be used for direct achievement of livelihood outcomes (Bourdieu, 1986; Kollmair & Gamper, 2002). In this first section, I will present three kinds of economic capital SNDVU refused asylum seekers do have: money to live, having shelter and having personal belongings.

5.1.1 Money

I am in the Sint Dominicus church, waiting at a big wooden table. Next to me, a volunteer is sitting with another volunteer in front of her. The chair next to them, at the head of the table, is empty. We are waiting for refused asylum seekers to receive their money from SNDVU. It is ten a.m. and snowing. I can feel why most of the clients are coming late. It is cold in the church, which is used by SNDVU for consults on Tuesday mornings. I am thinking about the irony of this location, receiving people in the house of God to give them money so that they can eat. For now, the church is a very helpful location, as a building at least.

Somebody knocks the door. It is Ngozy, a men from Nigeria. He is living for a lifetime in Utrecht, but still has not obtained a resident permit. He is coming every week, instead of the usual every two weeks. He has complex medical problems, so he needs medicine and some extra care. The unique combination of both mental problems and diabetes, which cannot be separated, makes it very hard for him to survive on his own. Ngozy takes a seat at the empty chair and drinks his diet coke, a special exception from the tea and the coffee that clients can drink while waiting for consult. He tells us that he is going to the *Catharijnehuis* in the afternoon, a daytime open house for homeless people in the centre of Utrecht. He is used to go there every day and is having his social contacts there, which is very important in his situation. “Look Ngozy, your 50 euros for this week”, the volunteer in front of me tells him. “And fifteen euros for transport”. Ngozy takes a nip of his coke. He has to

obtain his medicine every week and therefore he needs money for transport.

Because refused asylum seekers are not allowed to work, they do not have an income. Moreover, because they are 'illegal' they do not receive state benefits. Therefore SNDVU provides them with money for their meals, clothing and other daily needs. This money SNDVU receives from the municipal administration. All SNDVU clients obtain 100 euros for two weeks. Families with children, receive 35 euros extra for every child they have. Furthermore, every client has the right to receive ten euros for social activities like sports, the library etc. each month (SNDVU 2012). SNDVU also gives clients the opportunity to borrow extra money for larger expenses when they really need or want these, like a bike or a laptop. Every client can borrow a maximum of 50 euros. Multiple loans at the same time are not allowed because it is not possible for clients to pay it back. In the building, the bell is ringing twice in two minutes. Apparently, some clients dared to face the snow. "Don't forget to sign Ngozy", the volunteer next to me says to him. It is important that clients sign the paper, to demonstrate that they have received their money. Ngozy takes a pen and writes down, very carefully and concentrated, his signature next to his name. He takes a final nip of his coke, then he stands up and shakes our hands, " thankyou, bye, have an nice day." At the hallway, people are talking in different languages. I cannot hear what they say, but I can imagine that they have some small chats about the weather. Most of them came by bike and are grateful to warm their hands to cups of hot coffee or tea. Kpaka, a young men with dreadlocks comes in, his jacket full of snow. "I am a little late", he says. "I have to hurry because I have to work at the *Voedselbank*[2]". Kpaka receives 90 euros because he still has to pay back the bike he bought. "Do I still have to pay for that? Now what!" He signs both the loan list and the attendance list and takes his money.

5.1.2 Shelter

As was explained in chapter 2 section 7 the main activity of SNDVU is to provide temporarily shelter for refused asylum seekers who are not able to leave the Netherlands or who are in a procedure of a new request for asylum after the rejection of one or more previous attempts. Having a shelter provides refused asylum seekers with a very basic type of economic capital as it contributes to their decisions and strategies in their daily lives and their future perspectives. According to Majale (2002), the concept of 'adequate shelter' is more than simply "a roof over one's head". It also means: "adequate privacy; adequate space; physical

[2] Food distribution centre for poor people in the Netherlands.

accessibility; adequate security; security of tenure; structural stability and durability; adequate lighting, heating and ventilation; adequate basic infrastructure, such as water-supply, sanitation and waste-management facilities; suitable environmental quality and health-related factors; and adequate and accessible location with regard to work and basic facilities: all of which should be available at an affordable cost" (Majale 2002: 1). The shelter houses of SNDVU provide all these basic items for refused asylum seekers for the period of their stay. In the scheme below I will present an overview of these.

Figure 6. Basic living items in SNDVU shelter houses

LIVINGROOM	KITCHEN	BEDROOMS (Depending on number of inhabitants, adults/children)	REST
-Couch -Side table -Television & closet for television -Diner table and chairs -Floor lamp -Hanging lamp -Curtains	-Washing machine -Gas cooker -Refrigerator -Microwave -Coffee machine -Water boiler -Stew pans(3) -Skillet -Fying pan -Plates (breakfast and dinner depending on the number of inhabitants) -Cups and glasses (depending on the number of inhabitants) -Utensils -Drain reck, bowl and brush -Trash can	-Bed (one person) + matrass+ pillow blanket +sheets -Wardrobe -Hanging lamp -Floor covering -Curtains -Lamp	-Vacuum cleaner mop and bucket -Drying rack (for clothes) -Toilet brush -Internet Modem

In case of damage, SNDVU will replace the couch, side table, television curtains, washing machine, gas cooker, refrigerator, microwave, modem, fuses (electric plugs). The other possessions should be replaced by the inhabitants of the houses.

Generally my informants were happy with a room in a shelter house. Some of them explain that SNDVU "saved their lives" and that they are so happy with "having an place of

their own to sleep". Coming from places like AZC (asylum seekers centre), NoiZ[3] or a detention centre, they are used to sleep with other people in the same room. They are even accustomed to sleep on the streets, so most of them are thankful for having a place to stay.

Me: "Where did you stay before you came to Utrecht?"
Hanad: "I stayed in AZC Groningen and Den Bosch."
Me: "How did you end up in Utrecht?"
Hanad: "I was in court for the statement of the judge. It was rejected.
Outside, I asked people where I could sleep.
Some man said that I could sleep at NoiZ.
I used to sleep there for two years, if there was place."
Me: "Where did you sleep if there was no place?"
Hanad: "On the streets, that happened very often because it was very busy at NoiZ. There were a lot of crazy people. They drunk a lot during the night".
Me: "How did you got into contact with SNDVU?"
Hanad: "By means of 'Stil'. I had Dutch lessons there and they contacted SNDVU to put me on the waiting list. December 5th was my first intake. I was very happy with the smallest room in the house, because outside it became too cold. I am living here since January 11th."

5.1.3 Personal belongings

In some of the houses, only basic living items are present. This is because clients do not care about home decorating or do not have enough money to buy stuff like that. Other clients however think it very important to make the shelter house a home of their own, by decorating the living room and their own room. This is also mentioned by Wolfshöfer and Bröer (2009). They argue that for example a private room gives space for personal belongings and contributes to having an identity. I noticed this in one of the houses of which I was mentor. Four women were living in this house. The walls were painted pink, there were two tables with chairs in the living room and in the corner of the living room was a big couch. At the table stood a vase with fake flowers and candles, which gave the living room a cosy atmosphere. Their bedrooms were full of beauty products, candles and small personal objects. Most of the time when I visited this shelter, incense was smoking which gave the living quarters a very intense fragrance. At first I thought that it was cosy because women were living here, until I visited another shelter house, where only men were living. In addition to

[3] NoiZ is a nightshelter, funded and managed by ex-homeless
http://www.ggzwegwijzer.nl/organisatie/department_detail.asp?id=3

the basic items of living, everywhere in the living room of this house paintings and photos were hanging. Besides the basic inventory a computer and some fitness equipment was present. The paintings were made by Sadou, who is going to art academy:

> "I like it a lot. I am very happy to go there. My grades are high too. There is a free mind spirit, everybody can do what feels right for them."

Sadou had the opportunity to go to the art academy because of his girlfriend who is a Dutch general practitioner and paying for his school. Many refused asylum seekers above eighteen do not have this opportunity.

Most of my informants argued that it is important to have things of your own, when you are living in a house which is formally not your own. Every informant I have spoken to had a bike, bought with help of a loan list from SNDVU or received from friends or other organizations. Likewise, everybody was having a mobile phone. One of my informants even has three mobile phones with different providers. Other things that were very common in the rooms of clients were computers or laptops, televisions, religious books (like the Bible and the Koran) in their own language, Dutch study books, photos of family members and clothing. Many of them also kept presents from friends or relatives inside their rooms.

5.2 HUMAN CAPITAL

The ability to develop a livelihood strategy depends for a substantial part on someone's skills, knowledge, the ability to work and good health. These resources and strengths enable refused asylum seekers to cope with being illegal and to mobilize social and economic resources (Crawley et al., 2011). It is clear that the psychological and emotional repercussions of illegality are experienced as strongly as economic hardships. Refused asylum seekers often face poverty while already carrying the heavy burden of past experiences. Many people suffered traumatic events before arriving in the Netherlands, including torture, violence, oppression and violent deaths or disappearances of relatives. Merging pre-existing trauma with the pressure of being illegal results often results in situations of high psychological distress. This section will give an overview of the health of refused asylum seekers, their knowledge and skills and their ability to labor.

5.2.1 Health

Due to their illegal position in society, refused asylum seekers are not allowed to get a health care insurance. Nevertheless, all doctors have a duty of care, so they are not allowed to refuse them on the sole ground of not having a residence permit or health care insurance (Utrechts Hulpverlenersoverleg, 2012). However, more and more medicines and necessities cannot be declared by CVZ[4] anymore. Therefore, clients have to pay themselves. Since for many of them it is not possible to pay by themselves, SNDVU has to use their own budget to pay (SNDVU, 2012).

Burgers and Ten Dam (1999), repeatedly interviewed people without documents between 1997 and 1999 and concluded that many of them deal with health problems, in which mental health problems are most common. Stress and depressions are most important health problems which worsen when refused asylum seekers stay illegal for a long period of time. In my own research, a lot of informants dealt with mental health problems, which like in the research of Burgers and ten Dam (1999) as well as in the research of Kox (2009) consist of mainly stress and depression, caused by traumatic events in the country of origin as well as in the Netherlands. Their problems influences the ways in which they are able or unable to act and to live their daily lives and the strategies they develop to cope with their situation.

Psychological problems are a toxic combination of trauma endured in their home country (Thomas et al.,2011), and trauma endured in the Netherlands. Many live in fear of being caught by the Dutch authorities. When they fled to the Netherlands they hoped to be prevented from persecution and the loss of relatives. Instead, a series of further blows have been dealt to them in the Netherlands, weakening them and causing them to lose hope for the future. Being 'illegal' as a separate factor has a negative impact on the mental health of refused asylum seekers. Restrictions, policies and laws regarding refused asylum seekers are barriers to participate fully in society. Gibril for example, a 29 year old men from Sierra Leone who has been in the Netherlands for thirteen years now, has to deal with stress on a daily basis. I visited him every week and when I talked to him on the phone, saw him at the office or visited him at his home, and I asked him "How are you doing?" he always answered the same: *"*Not too bad, I have a lot of stress.*"* In Sierra Leone, he was taken by the rebels

[4] The tasks of the Health Care Insurance Board (CVZ) include providing advice and implementing the Dutch statutory health insurance. CVZ has a major role in maintaining the quality, accessibility and affordability of health care in the Netherlands. CVZ's advice is based not only or care-related considerations, but also considerations relating to finance and society (http://www.cvz.nl/en/home)

and fought with them for two years. *"*There was no choice, you had to*"* he explains to me while we are talking about his home country. After two years, he was able to escape and fled, but *"*bad things happened during the war". He came to the Netherlands when he was beneath eighteen. In that time, he had the right to go to school and he had a lot of friends. After he turned eighteen, the IND decided that he could not stay.

> "Things went bad with the IND. My procedure was not good. There was a man and he offered me a job in France. That felt so good, that I was able to work. So I went there for seven years. After those years, I was dropped off in Utrecht".

Gibril was a victim of human trafficking and does not like to talk about that time. He explained to me that because he had been living for seven years in France, he forgot how to speak Dutch, the language he had spoken for years. Because of the stress he had to deal with every day, he was not able to learn Dutch again, although he really wanted to.

> "I'm too stressed. I want to learn Dutch again, but I'm too stressed right now you know".

Due to stress and concentration problems, many informants were not able to go school or to follow lessons. This is also the case for Samara. She repeatedly explained that she experiences "stress in her head". Furthermore, she says:

> "I am not ready for that (Dutch lessons). I will do it when I am ready".

Tenzin, who is normally going to school in preparation for another study, was having concentration problems and quitted school for a while.

> "I quit school for a moment, because I have too many troubles concentrating. It is boring being at home all the time, but there is no other way. I am thinking about my procedure all the time so I cannot concentrate on my study enough. Maybe in April I will start again, but I don't know yet".

The fact that being destitute is causing mental health problems, is also present in the life of Nasih, a 30 year old woman from Eritrea. In Eritrea, it is not allowed to confess particular forms of Christianity. Many people are persecuted for confessing the 'wrong' religion. For that, Nasih was caught by the Eritrean police and put in detention where torture was a very common phenomenon. When she got sick and went to the hospital, she escaped and fled to the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, she experienced detention twice. The first time reminded her of the time in prison in Eritrea. After her release, she had troubles with sleeping and

concentrating and was very scared to go outside on her own. After a while and with help from a psychologist from *Indigo*[5], Nasih recuperated. However, when she was released after her second time in detention, the symptoms of severe anxiety and depression became worse. Nightmares kept her awake: police men are running, trying to get her in prison. During the day, she sees guards looking through the window of her cell, locking the door with a key.

> "There are too many keys, I hear the sound of the keys all the time […] I feel like I'm a criminal. What's wrong with me. What's wrong with".

From the day of her release, Nasih stayed inside most of time and was not able to do all the things she did before. The only thing she was able to do was volunteer work at *Resto van Harte*[6], because it was very close to her home and she could go with her friend Aatifa, who is living in the same shelter.

5.2.2 Knowledge and skills

Although refused asylum seekers are officially not allowed to go to school above eighteen, some of them do have access to certain forms of education like Dutch lessons or specific other forms of study. Many informants used to have education in their country of origin. Although in various countries these forms of education differ, most of the informants went to primary and secondary and sometimes tertiary school. However, many of them were not able to bring diplomas in their journey to the Netherlands. Some of them did, but are not able to use these diplomas because they are denied the right to education.

> "In Somalia, I went to primary as well as secondary school, although it is not obliged to go to school in Somalia, like here in the Netherlands. I was four years old when I started primary school. I was smart enough to go to university, but I didn't. Universities in Somalia are not highly qualified, it is better to go to Sudan, to Dubai or Pakistan."

[5] *Indigo* offers short-term treatments through family doctors' practices, community centres, schools and the internet, so that everyone gets an appropriate form of support (Indigo, 2013).

[6] 6 "*Resto VanHarte* is a social-interest organisation devoted to increasing regional quality of life and dynamic community spirit. The guiding principle of *Resto VanHarte* is to bring people into contact with one another, regardless of their background, age or religion. *Resto VanHarte* sets up community restaurants, known as Restos, in which members of a community can meet over an affordable and healthy three-course meal" (Resto van Harte ,2013).

Certain others are able to go to school because one way or the other, they succeed to receive money or a study grant, but most of them are denied those rights. Therefore, most informants go to Dutch lessons, provided by charity organizations or volunteers.

5.2.3 Ability to labour

Even though refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands are officially not allowed to work, because they will not be granted a BSN and they are not eligible for a work permit either (Utrechts Hulpverlenersoverleg 2012: 24), some informants do get the chance to do volunteer work once or twice a week at the *Voedselbank* and *Resto VanHarte*[7]. The work helps them develop skills and knowledge about the Dutch language and it is an perfect way to meet various people to establish their social network. One of my informants told me that he worked illegally a couple of years ago with documents from a friend, but since new legislation was introduced, described in chapter 2, it became more difficult and the chance to be caught increased dramatically. Generally, informants do not work illegally because of the risk of detention or deportation:

> "I'm afraid to work illegally or to sell drugs for example. I won't do it, because I'm too afraid to get caught by the police. I do understand why it happens."

5.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is absolutely crucial in providing refused asylum seekers with the resources for their livelihood, not only for their physical existence but also to provide them with psychosocial resources such as support and empathy. Social capital means the social resources upon which people draw in when seeking for their livelihood outcomes, such as networks and connectedness (Narayan et al., 2000, 54). This section will provide information about the different social networks of my informants being refused asylum seekers living in shelters from SNDVU. I will describe their relations with relatives and family, friends and their various institutional contacts and networks.

5.3.1 Relatives and family

For most people in any given society family is a most important resource for their livelihood (Crawley et al., 2011) but for asylum seekers in general and specifically refused asylum

seekers in this research, having family or relatives around is not very common. During a visit on a Friday morning, I told Nasih that I was going to my parents for the weekend. I told her that my parents live in Ommen, a small Dutch village 'far away'. Two hours by train. Immediately after explaining this to her, I felt guilty, because several days earlier she had told me the following:

> "My father is still in Eritrea I think, but I haven't had contact with him for two years. I think about him every day. I'm worried."

Worries about relatives abroad have a great impact on the mental health of many of my informants. Besides their own problems, they are wondering about their family, or mourning about death family members.

> "I makes me think about my mother. I lost her when I was three years old you know. I can't remember. My dad died during the war. I also have a sister, but I don't know where she is. Everybody fled to different directions, so I don't know where she is. I came here on my own."

Some of my informants established a new family within the Netherlands. Mr. Ousmane who lost his child in Guinea and does not speak to his (former) wife anymore, met a new girl in the Netherlands, with whom he has a son now. Sadou also has a relationship with a Dutch women and Sankoh met his girlfriend in the Netherlands, but already knew her from Sierra Leone.

5.3.2 Friends

Since many refused asylum seekers are lacking family in the Netherlands, who can support them, it is important for them to have other forms of networks like friends. The extension of these networks of friends vary, because of the different histories of my informants. Kpaka's social network is very large. "Everybody knows me here", he says. "Surinam people, Antilleans, Africans". When I ask him where he met all those people he says: "I got to know them in the park, at school, in the café, in the disco, in the African shop and in the coffee shop." The coffee shop was a very important location to meet people:

> "I am a person who is not smoking cigarettes. Before I was smoking marihuana, yes. Because when you smoke marihuana, you feel more relaxed. Because of marihuana I made contact with people who were making music. Now I quit smoking marihuana, but the friendship still remain".

A lot of refused asylum seekers have various social contacts because of the many places where they have been living before they came to SNDVU. These contacts have been

established in public spaces like parks, in the shop or at school. For some of my informants, they lost contact with their social network during the time they became illegal. Gibril explains:

> "We lost contact when I went to France. I don't know their numbers and addresses. Of course I miss them. I had a best friend. We played tennis together and we swum. We were really good friends."

Moreover, the ability to build and maintain a network is a complex social skill at which some people are more competent or successful than others. Making friends and getting out were considered the best ways of meeting people who may be able to provide support. However, some informants mentioned that this could be very difficult if people were 'closed': either too traumatized by past events, or anxious to go outside (Crawley et al. 2011: 36). Moreover, having a social life is almost generally considered to be difficult in the absence of economic resources.

> "Now I just have a few friends…… Actually I have just one friend. I like to be alone you know. But it is good to have a friend around sometimes."

> "She (friend) is living in Overvecht. It is long time since I saw her. I know that Overvecht it not that far away, but I never go to her and she is never coming here, but we call each other many times. It is too difficult."

> "I'm alone. I am not with somebody. I cannot look back for somebody and ask 'do this, do that?'. It's difficult."

5.3.3 Institutional contacts and networks

Because of the fact that the SNDVU is part of the context in which my informants live, it is also part of their social network. Clients who do not have social and legal support from 'Ex-Ama team', have a contact person at SNDVU who helps them with medical care and social and legal support to create a humanely acceptable existence for them. These contact persons know the cases of clients, are in contact with lawyers and other institutions of importance. Support is carried out in consultation with the client. Together, they establish a support plan that is in accordance with the Board Guidelines. During the involvement of the SNDVU support is offered while a client works on returning to the country of origin, immigration or building a life in the Netherlands without the use of the facilities of the SNDVU (SNDVU 2013). Employees meet clients every Tuesday during consult, but also on regularly house

visits to have social contact. Volunteers working for SNDVU are buddy or house mentor (like I was myself) to improve the social wellbeing of clients. Since some of my informants were not having a large social network, I became part of their network while visiting them.

Apart from the employees or volunteers of SNDVU, my informants also established contacts with other clients. Some of them meet each other on Tuesday, when they have to come to consult. Very often, people who speak the same language or are from the same country have contact with each other on these days. Furthermore, some of them also visit each other in the shelter houses or are living in the same house. One of the women in the houses of where I was a mentor for example, was not able to communicate with me or the other women living in the house, since she only knows French. I hardly had a real conversation with her, although we both tried. When I saw her on Tuesdays, many times she was talking in French with other clients. For her, consults seemed to be important for the money and the support, but even more important for her social contacts.

Mr. Ousmane visits his friend whom he already knew from 'STIL in her shelter house. Since they live close to each other, that is very easy. Furthermore, he helps her with translation when she has an appointment with her lawyer or contact person. These contacts are really of value for both of them.

'STIL' is another organisation that aims to provide support to refused asylum seekers in Utrecht. 'STIL assists more than 1500 people each year on medical, legal and human grounds with structural solutions. They try to help refused asylum seekers by getting into contact with general practitioners, shelter and lawyers (STIL, 2013). Many clients from SNDVU also know STIL because of Dutch lessons the organisation provides or earlier support they received from this organisation. Many of my informants still have contact with employees of STIL and they meet other clients from STIL at their office or in the *Ubuntuhuis*, a place where homeless people can pass their days. In cooperation with STIL the *Ubuntuhuis* provides Dutch lessons.

For many of my informants a church or a mosque is an important place to go. It is a place to pray, which plays a big role in their lives. One of the most important resources provided by churches and mosques are the social events and networking opportunities that they provide. "These can be critical in securing access to social resources "(Crawley et al 2011: 33). This chapter described the different forms of capital refused asylum seekers living in SNDVU shelters have (access to). The next chapter will analyze how these capitals are used for daily coping.

6. COPING STRATEGIES

In the previous chapter, I showed (the access to) different forms of capital of refused asylum seekers. Bourdieu's work (1986) suggests how economic capital generates cultural capital (human) which in turn enables those with this capital to continue to secure their place in society. Analytically what we need is a sense of the mechanisms by which different forms of capital translate into each other; the extent to which one can substitute for another; and the ways in which they can run against each other or cancel each other out. In this chapter, I will analyse how refused asylum seekers in shelters from SNDVU use these different forms of capital to cope on a daily basis.

6.1 ECONOMIC CAPITAL

6.1.1 Money

Tenzin: "It (weekly money) is enough to buy food, when you bring it home and make it yourself. But if you want to buy clothes, it is more difficult. If you smoke, or want to drink alcohol, it is impossible."

Gibril: "Or you buy that, and don't have enough to eat."

Money is essential for several aspects of everyday life, and with limited economic resources it is difficult to cope on a daily basis. Therefore, many of my informants employ a variety of day-to-day strategies to navigate the shortage in or the lack of money including walking or cycling long distances rather than taking the bus, buying reduced items in supermarkets, buying at second-hand stores and buying or getting clothes second hand from a church relief organization, via SNDVU or other charity organizations. Many of my informants argue that it is difficult to manage with the money they receive for two weeks. Sometimes, the 100 euros they received are all gone after one week. Some clients then think it is worth a try to ask for more money, but rules are (generally) the same for everyone.

Another major reason to borrow money from SNDVU is to go to 'FitForFree', the cheapest fitness centre of Utrecht. Fitness [almost for free] is possible between 9 AM and 5 PM. SNDVU will pay ten euros for clients who like to sport. Only the fee for registration has to be paid by the clients themselves. Loans are important, because it helps to the SNDVU clients to obtain and use things they cannot pay with the money they receive for their basic needs.

Some of my informants used to have a bank account during the time they had a temporal residence permit and still have the card with them. Nevertheless, the eventual money on this account is not available to them, because they are not able to identify themselves and even risk the police to come when they try. Sankoh, a man from Sierra Leone who is in the Netherlands for thirteen years explains to me:

> "I have this card you see. I keep it with me all the time, because I still have 150 Euros at this bank account. I cannot get it because I forgot my password, it is a long time ago since I used it. Sometimes, when I am in the city, I try to remember my password again and try two different passwords at the cash dispenser. I try only twice, because when you fail three times, the card will be blocked. I cannot go inside the bank to ask for my money, because you have to identify yourself there. I only have this card (he shows his W-document[7]), but it is very old. I also keep this one all the time, just in case, so that I can show that before I had a permit. I cannot use it anymore as a valid card. It is very frustrating that I have a lot of money, which is my own money, but because I am illegal, I cannot obtain my own money."

Sankoh experienced detention in the time I began with field work. After a while, he got a letter from his lawyer, that his time in detention was unfounded. Therefore, he got a certain amount of money. Instead of keeping the money, he immediately went to the *Mediamarkt*, to buy a music installation. "That is my life you know, making music" he explained to me very often. He furthermore argued that with this music installation he was actually going to make money. It was sort of an investment, because many friends had promised him to make music at parties and he would get paid for this. Following him, it was a smart decision to immediately spend the money. It also show that for refused asylum seekers, who are dependent on gifts, money to live and do not have money of their own, it is important to use the money once you have it. It also allows them to do things that are important for them. Without money, it is difficult or impossible.

6.1.2 Shelter

> *It is Friday afternoon and I promised the women in the shelter house of which I am a mentor to come by. However, we did not make an appointment, so they do not know that I am on my way. It is almost four PM when I arrive at their house. The curtains are closed so I cannot see if they are at home. I ring the bell. Multiple times. Nobody hears me, or nobody want to open the door. When I ring the bell for the fourth time, I hear a sound in the hallway. I see through the dim glass in the door that it is Cascara, but I do not know if she also recognizes me. She walks to the door and stands still for a moment, like if she tries to figure out who is in front of her. Then she says: "Who is there?". I open the postbox in the door and answer: "Hi*

> *Cascara. It's Tamara, can I come in?". Cascara opens the door and says, "I did not know that you would come today, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid to open the door for strangers".*

Living in shelters from SNDVU does not mean that people feel safe. Although SNDVU has made arrangements with the municipality, clients have to be very careful. Therefore, most of them close the curtains, also during daytime, and when somebody rings the bell or knocks the door, they first want to know who it is. Some of them do not even open the door without an appointment.

Living in shelter houses also means that clients have to adhere to certain rules and when they do not, they risk leaving the shelter. Therefore, clients have to sign a contract to live up to the rules of the organization and the rules of the shelter house. Rules are important for living together, but also for their own safety. Causing trouble with neighbours or housing associations for instance may lead to a visit of the police and when they cannot show legal documents, there is a chance they can get taken from their homes. Most of the clients are really aware of this and adhere to most the rules because they do not want to risk any trouble. Wolfshöfer and Bröer (2009) call this strategy *conversion* in which clients act like ideal inhabitants to get more benefits. Some clients do not adhere particular rules. Although most informants are happy to have a place to stay, some use complaining as a strategy to gain benefits. Wolfshöfer and Bröer (2009) call this strategy *rebellion*. It means that the inhabitant acts against the system of the organization. A basic rule for example, is a maximum temperature of twenty degrees in the house. During my fieldwork, which I conducted in the winter, many heatings in the houses were far above twenty degrees, but when I came in the house, they rapidly shift the temperature. They all know about the rules, but also know that employees are not coming to check daily. When I asked about it, almost all of them were complaining about the cold in the Netherlands and therefore they needed it to be warm inside the house. Another rule that appeared to be difficult to adhere was the prohibition to let other people sleep in the room. Some clients were frequently warned but still, some of them risked these warnings and invited friends to stay over because they also wanted them to have a place to stay. Others relied on friends during the time they were homeless and wanted to do something in return now they had a place to stay themselves.

Sometimes there is no other option than sharing a room with another client in a house and some of my informants had difficulties with that:

> "It is always difficult to share a room, because you wake up when is a little noise. We also sleep at different times, so I'm happy that sometimes I have a room for myself, when Sadou sleeps at his girlfriend's place."

Nevertheless, sharing a room is always temporarily. SNDVU always strives to give their clients a room of their own, but when there are a lot of people on the waiting list it is better to share a room than living on the streets, especially when it is freezing. Mr. Ousmane had been waiting for a while before there was place for him. Because of the cold, he was placed in a room which he had to share with another younger man. The difference in age between them was 22 years. Mr. Ousmane has a snoring problem according to himself. So, he told the younger man with whom he was sharing the room to go to the office and complain about the snoring. Then, he said, they were separated and each got a room of their own. The younger man was too happy with the room to complain about the situation, since he was used to live on the streets. He was honest with the employees of the office about why he had to tell this story. He also told that it was not true, that he was not happy with the situation, but that he only had to complain because of the older man and his wish to have a room for himself.

In the end, Mr. Ousmane moved to another house, where he was having a room for himself. In his old room, there was place again for another younger men, who was waiting for a place for a long time. It is very common that clients move from one room to another, or even to another house.

> "First I was in this house with two other people. One man from Angola and one from Sierra Leone. The one from Angola got a residence permit and his own house. The other one didn't receive a status and I don't know where he is now. I started in the smallest room, where Lado lives. When the man moved to his own house, the man from Angola, I asked if I could have the big room and that was okay, so I moved. It is to the biggest room in the house."

6.1.3 Personal belongings

Like I mentioned before, most of my informants are having a bike. Having a bike in the city of Utrecht is very useful, since it most of the time faster than going with public transport. However, it is also a strategy to avoid costs on public transport. It is expensive to buy a bike and with the weekly money they receive from the SNDVU, it is not enough. SNDVU will lend money to clients if they want to buy something that it too expensive for them, but might contribute to their wellbeing. Another way to reduce the amount of money for public transport is by obtaining a discount card of the NS, also often obtained with the support of a loan list provided by SNDVU. Although refused asylum seekers do not have documentation, it is possible to arrange such a discount card for them, but because of the lack of an address of

their own, the card is sent to the address of SNDVU. Sometimes discount cards are difficult to use; a lot of clients get penalties because they fail to check in or check out properly, or they travel with discount when it is not allowed to use a discount card. For this again, there are loans to pay the penalties back every time they have to receive their money. Buying a computer or laptop for instance, can offer people with distraction like watching movies and listening to music, but can also give them the education they lack in their daily lives.

> "I watch tv, movies and read the news on my laptop. You can find anything on internet. I read a lot. I'm a clever man, so I want to read. When you are not able to go to school, it is important to have internet. There is a website on which you can ask anything, you ask a question and you get an answer immediately. That is nice. I learn a lot that way."

Zula, a female informant from Eritrea I once visited in her room, told me that her laptop was very important to her, because it distracted her from her daily stress. Most of the time, she is watching Christian movies and is listening to Christian music. This time, she was watching a Dutch movie. I asked her why she was watching a Dutch movie without any subtitles. She explained to me:

> "This movie is about a story of the Bible. Because I know the Bible very well, I can understand where it is about by just looking. I do not need the subtitles. Besides, I try to learn Dutch this way. It works, because I know the story."

Watching television and using laptops, computers and internet, can help people themselves, when there is no access to formal schooling. It is also a possibility to practice religious beliefs. Furthermore, laptops and internet are used to stay in contact with family and friends who are living outside Utrecht or in another country. However, the main benefit of having a mobile phone is to get into contact with friends within the Netherlands. Almost all informants have the same provider 'Lycamobile' which provides free calling to people who also call with this provider. Therefore, many of my informants call their friends instead of using public transport to see them.

6.2 HUMAN CAPITAL

In the previous chapter I described the various forms of human capital in the lives of refused asylum seekers. In this section, I will analyze how human capital is used for daily coping.

6.2.1 Health

Although many refused asylum seekers have to deal with stress, sleeplessness, depression and PTSD, and although they risk being caught by the police every day, for most of them it is very

important not to stay at home all the time, because it makes the situation only worse. During a visit at their shelter house, I talked with Tenzin and Gibril about stress and how they experience it. Tenzin explained that in the winter, he experiences more stress because he spends more time inside.

> "In summer I'm most of the time outside, that really helps". "

Gibril agreed with Tenzin on this:

> "For me it is the same. In the winter it is harder, but in the summer I also have stress. I was used to sleep at *NoiZ*, and in the afternoon I was outside a lot. I know all the parks of Utrecht".

During the conversation Gibril stood up, walked to the kitchen and refilled his glass with water. After he returns he said:

> "I always have this glass of water in front of me. They (general practitioner) checked my blood several times on diabetes, but they found nothing. Now they think it is a symptom of stress."

Many of my informants who were dealing with stress, depression, PTSD or the combination of these, told me that they believed it was important to get help. Nasih therefore, asked her contact person many times what she had to do to get the help she needs. It was hard to find help for her, but in the end it was possible to make an appointment for two intakes at *Altrecht*, an institution for secondary-level mental health care, which tends to welcome patients from all sections of society (Utrechts Hulpverlenersoverleg, 2012). After the first intake, Nasih was not doing volunteer work anymore. When I asked her why, she answered:

> "I only want to be better. All that matters for me now, is my health. They can help me".

After the second intake, Nasih was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For PTSD, there is a treatment called 'eye movement desensitization and reprocessing' (EMDR). It makes the patient think about the traumatic event like it is a movie. Because of the heavy toll it will take on patients, they have to live in a stable environment. That is where it becomes a problem according to *Altrecht*. They claimed that people who are living in shelters from SNDVU, are not having enough stability for the treatment. Besides, not having a health care insurance is also a problem. Nasih was advised to make an appointment with

Indigo again, which will help her to cope with her situation instead of treating her disorder.

The advice Nasih got from *Altrecht* is very contrary to the description that "they welcome clients from all sections of society", because it turned out that they were not able to help her, just because she is a refused asylum seeker. The cause of the problem.

Nasih however, was not the only informant claiming that professional help was the only important thing at the moment. Gibril, who also goes to *Altrecht* every month says:

> "I am not thinking about my papers. I am thinking about my health, about the stress. I have an appointment with a woman from *Altrecht* every month. My problems are still present but without *Altrecht*, I would be worse. I'm not thinking about papers."

Furthermore, I have spoken to informants who are in need for special medical care in the hospital or people for whom it is important to take their medicine daily. Even though refused asylum seekers have to deal with limited economic resources and mental health problems, almost all of my informants took care for their personal hygiene, cleaning of the house and clothing, shopping and cooking. Although buying clothes is expensive, some prefer to buy clothes themselves, rather than receive it second hand from SNDVU or other charity organizations or volunteers. For others, they rather receive clothes from friends. Many informants have second hand clothes and they are happy with it, because the money can be used for other personal belongings as well. Hair is also important for many. Some of my female informants were having hair braids. Beside the personal beauty aspect, it also had a social aspect. Especially in the case of my African female informants, doing each other's' hair is an important social aspect in their lives. The same is for cooking. Some of my informants cook and eat together, especially in the house where my informants from Eritrea were living. The women are close and cook and eat together many times *Injera*, their Eritrean food. Likewise, they cook for multiple days, because it is less expensive. Another informant told me that he do not like to cook every day. Since he is living with two others and everyone is cooking individually, he does not like to eat alone all the time. Therefore he cooks plenty, most of the time chicken with peanut butter, a lot of sambal and rice, and keeps the leftovers in the fridge. Sometimes he goes to Joy4U[8], where he can eat for free, does not have to cook, it is less expensive and there are other people eating as well. Having access to and use human capital for daily coping is many times interrelated with the social capital.

[8] "Joy4You" wants to help people towards the establishment a new future. First assistance in this are good, healthy meals for free within the ambiance of a restaurant.

6.2.2 Ability to labour

Informants who had the chance to do volunteer work, argue that the work keep them busy. Aatifa for instance, explains that doing volunteer work helps her because it is 'distraction from the head'. Kpaka, who is working at the *Voedselbank*[9] every Tuesday shared with me that some of his friends think that it is stupid that he is doing volunteer work instead of 'real' work. He does not agree:

> "I don't think it is stupid. By doing volunteer work, I learn to speak the language better, because I have to speak Dutch all the time. I also get to know a lot of people and I am able to help them. Look at my situation, I cannot work, but I am happy that I can do this at least."

At another moment, when we were talking about the *Voedselbank* he said that he was not feeling very well. When I asked him why, he said:

> "You know my situation, *toch?*. I want to study again. Before I can work or do something, I have to study first. I'm working at the *Voedselbank* for four years now and I like that, but is already four years the same situation. But I do not want to sit inside. That's not good for my brain".

Most of my informants want to keep busy, because it distracts them from their daily stress and thinking. Volunteer work is one of the things that makes them go outside of their house. It is an activity that makes them break the routine of being inside the house, sleeping and watching television. It makes them feel that they matter.

6.2.3. Knowledge and skills

Many refused asylum seekers have to deal with feelings of frustration because they are not allowed to work or study. One of the exceptions in this story is Omid, one of the refused asylum seekers living in the same house as Kpaka. He is doing an internship for his study. Normally, this is not allowed, but because of funding from UAF, he succeed in it. Feelings of frustration about this were very present in my conversation with Kpaka:

Me: "Is Omid at home very often?"
Kpaka: "No, he is busy with his study. An internship".
Me: "Why is he allowed to study and you aren't?"
Kpaka: "I don't know. Sometimes he (Omid) asks me, "why Kpaka?"

[9] Food distribution to poor people in the Netherlands

And I say, "I don't know". You can study, you can go to school. I tried, but it didn't work out".

Me: "I can imagine that it is difficult for you".

Kpaka: "Yes, that somebody wakes up and goes to school and that you have to stay at home all the time."

When I interviewed Sankoh about the same topic he explained:

> "I am really really frustrated, and really really mad. I'm in the Netherlands for thirteen years now. Everytime I got 'negative' and I was not allowed to study at all. Back in Eindhoven, there was not the opportunity to learn Dutch like here in Utrecht. That's why I try to learn now".

Refused asylum seekers are rejected a lot of times, which could make them passive, like in the above example. For others, it is just not possible because they are not feeling well. Nasih for example answers when I ask her when she will go to Dutch lessons again:

> "Next week I want to go to Dutch lessons if I feel better."

Because of getting 'negative' all the time, some people do not want to learn anymore. They do not see the need for that. For others, going to Dutch lessons is of high importance, because twice or three times a week, it breaks the daily routine. One of my informants was not willing to join the Dutch lessons given in her own shelter house, because it was not on her own level. However, being able to speak the local language strengthens their position in Dutch society. Kpaka explains that because of speaking Dutch, he is not afraid for the police:

> "Maybe people who do not speak the language are afraid for the police, but I am not. I can ask everything. I can explain everything. I live here for a very long time. Once I was cycling on the bike of one of my friends, and it turned out that the bike was not his own but I did not know. When the police stopped me to ask me about the bike, I explained to them that the bike was from my friend. The policeman was calling to the head office and when he finished the call he said that it was okay. My friend did also not get in any trouble."

6.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL

Having social networks like family, friends or institutional contacts, described in chapter four, is a very important aspect in the lives of refused asylum seekers. In this chapter, I will analyse how social capital is used for daily coping.

6.3.1 Relatives and family

Most of my informants lost their family and relatives in their country of origin and have to cope daily with feelings of guilt, grief and loss. These feelings have a large impact on their mental wellbeing which influences strategies for coping

For the ones who still have contact with family or relatives abroad, knowing that their family is still alive or doing well helps a lot, but it often difficult to have contact with them and they miss them every day. Although many refused asylum seekers use their phone to have contact with friends in the Netherlands instead of seeing them because it's cheaper, having contact with family or relatives in foreign countries is too expensive, both for my informants and their family:

> "I have contact with my uncle, every two or three weeks. I also speak to my parents every three months. My uncle tells me a lot about my parents. I call with him, but that is very expensive."

> "My mother calls me sometimes, when she has enough credits"

Some of my informants with a laptop use the internet for contacts abroad by through the use of email and Skype or similar other programs through which they can have contact for free, instead of making phone calls. Informants who established new families in the Netherlands have to travel a lot to see them, since their new family was not living in Utrecht. Therefore, they do not see each other very often. Mr Ousmane explained:

> "My girlfriend lives in Heerlen, with my son. Heerlen is far away and expensive by train. I have to get my son, bring him to Utrecht, bring him back to Heerlen and have to go back to Utrecht myself. That is difficult."

Sankoh explained that he is not with his girlfriend anymore, but does not want to make trouble with her:

> "My ex-girlfriend is living in Breda with my son. We have a healthy relationship but I did not want to be with her anymore. She was complaining about me sleeping and eating without earning money. It's my situation you know, and I cannot change it myself. I left her, but when we see each other it's fine because I do not want to lose my son. If I feel like she wants to argue on the phone I just hang up. I don't want to risk that she is going to make trouble. Because when we fight, she will. My son is the most important thing in my life. I don't want to lose that."

6.3.2 Friends

Although many refused asylum seekers experience having social networks as difficult regarding their situation, at the same time they claim that having friends is one of the most important aspects of their lives. Their friends live in the same house, next door, in another city and even in another country. Having friends to support them when they lack other forms of capital, is highly important.

One day, I went home by bus after a visit to one of the shelter houses during the evening. At the third bus stop, Kpaka came in. He took a seat next to me. Earlier this day, he was at the office to make a phone call to his coach from 'Beyond Borders'[10], the project he is joining. He wanted to cancel the meeting, because he was not feeling well. Furthermore, he desperately wanted to see his General Practitioner, but he did not have the money to make a phone call. I asked him how he was feeling. He explained to me that he was at his friends' house:

> "My friend made soup for me and also mint tea, because that is very healthy when you feel sick. It is nice to have friends who help me like this."

Having a social network for refused asylum seekers to rely upon when they need it most, is very important as most are lacking for instance money or family, and fear to go outside alone. Their friends are 'used' to cope on a daily basis:

> "That is important in relationships with friends and girlfriends. I have to look after you, and you have to look after me."

> "They are my friends. We care about each other. It's nice to know that they are there for you. Now I'm almost having a baby, I can't do anything, but they really help me. We help each other."

> "I am scared to go outside and I'm thinking. I'm thinking all the time. Aatifa got my medicine at *Amsterdamsestraatweg*. Last time Samara did. They help me very much."

Sankoh got a lot of help from friends during the time that he did not had a place to stay. For four years, he lived on the streets and did not receive any money. In that period, his friends helped him with food, clothing, money and a place to sleep.

[10] Beyond Borders tries to help young single asylum seekers between the age of 15 and 28 years with the development of their future perspectives (Beyond Borders, 2013).

> "In the time I did not had a place to sleep, I was with friends. Three days here, three days there, I did not want to be a burden to my friends. That's why I always carry different addresses with me, but I will only stay for a short time. I am happy that the *Noodopvang*[11] provides shelter and money for me. I do not depend on my friends all the time, and they can even come to this house".

Kpaka explained that he can always rely upon one of his friends who has a status and is living in the same flat (not the same shelter).

> "He is really a good friend. I also saw him yesterday. I see him every week. He gave me the key of his house, so if I need it, I can always come to him. He really is a good friend of me."

Although refused asylum seekers use their friends to cope with daily difficulties in society, they do not want to be a burden to them. Some of my informants do not want to receive friends in their shelter house, because they are ashamed to live in a house that is not their own. Many of them say that it is difficult to get help from friends when there is no possibility to do something in return. Therefore, it is easier to have friends within the shelters, because they experience the same situation. Most of my informants do not see their friends, who are living outside of Utrecht or foreign countries very often, because it is expensive to take the train or the bus. Instead, they use their phone to maintain contact.

6.3.3 Neighbours

Most of my informants do not have many contact with neighbors, because it is too risky if people know about their illegal status. SNDVU also gives them the advice not to be too loud and not to cause any trouble, so that people will not contact the corporation of the house. There will always be the risk of detention and almost everybody is really aware of this. They are always looking over their shoulders to avoid the police and to see if someone is following them. Once I was at one of my informants' house, the day that he was told that his roommate was caught by the police. He was very upset by this news and he was repeating that "It is always dangerous to go outside." The fact that his roommate was in detention now was proof for the fact that "outside was always dangerous" and that "everything can happen out there". I could see the stress on his face. While saying that it was "fucked up" he repeatedly kicked the table softly. "I'm not going outside anymore, you can see what will happen when I do so".

[11] SNDVU is called 'noodopvang' by my informants

6.3.4 Institutional contacts and networks

Churches and mosques, places where people can do voluntary work and SNDVU are important resources for refused asylum seekers to socialize and spend their days. When I am talking with Aatifa about her work at *Resto VanHarte*, she tells me that she can eat at *Resto VanHarte* the days she is working there, which helps her a lot because during those days she does not have to spend money on food. However, eating for free is not the most important thing to her:

> "I like to work at *Resto VanHarte* because I can help people. Furthermore, I get to know a lot of people here. Because I eat at different tables every time, I always talk to other people. I like that very much. There are also a lot of volunteers working at Resto. Some of them are working every week, but others do not work on a regular basis. I get to know a lot of people."

Furthermore, Aatifa explains that Nasih and herself received support from the church and because of this help, they are now working at *Resto VanHarte*.

Kpaka, who is working as a volunteer at the *Voedselbank* every Tuesday, also highlights the social aspects of his volunteer work. "I want to help people", he tells me when I visit him at his work:

> "People that come here are so happy with the food they get. They really appreciate it and that makes me happy. I see a lot of different people. Stressed people, foreign people. But what they have in common is the lack of money to buy enough food. I can deal with that. I even got to know a woman that wants to adopt me. The people who are working at the *Voedselbank* are like my family".

Kpaka is not the only one who portrays employees from the organization where he works with as family. Since most refused asylum seekers lack support from family, because they do not have family anymore, or their family is living abroad, they construct new notions of family among the people who support them. Nasih explains the same about employees of SNDVU:

> "In detention I cried and I cried. I was so scared and I thought that I was alone. Now I know that I wasn't. Everybody was thinking about me. Praying for me. When Dominque and Rana came to visit me in detention, I felt that they were my family. The *Noodopvang*, the women in this house, you are all my family"

This chapter provided insights in the way in which refused asylum seekers use economic, human and social capital to cope on a day-to-day basis. The next chapter will focus on how the use of capitals to construct livelihood strategies may influence future perspectives.

7. NAVIGATING FOR FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The various forms of capital of refused asylum seekers at SNDVU are used in a wide range of ways to cope on a daily basis, as was described in the previous chapter. In this chapter I will focus on the livelihood strategies of SNDVU clients for their future in order to answer the third sub question of my research: How does the use of capital for daily coping influence the future perspectives of refused asylum seekers? Although Dutch policy tries to make life for refused asylum seekers as difficult as possible in order not to let them think about a future in the Netherlands, most of my informants do persist on striving for a permanent legal stay in the Netherlands. Other informants try go back to their country of origin. Within the political context refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters navigate to influence their future perspectives. As in the chapters above I will elaborate on these issues by starting with the strategies linked to various aspects of economic capital and then continue with those of human and social capital.

7.1 ECONOMIC CAPITAL

In the previous chapter is described how economic capital is used for daily coping. This chapter will focus on how economic capital is used to pursue strategies that will influence future perspectives.

7.1.1. Money

Although money is highly important for daily coping, for instance to buy food, it becomes even more important in pursuing livelihood strategies to influence future perspectives. Money is needed for appointments with lawyers, visits to the embassy or the IND, since most of the clients have to take the train. Some of them have to go to Brussels, since there is no embassy of their country in The Hague, like those of Nepal and Guinea. SNDVU provides money for clients that have to make those journeys for appointments if they show the letter of invitation, since most of them lack the amount of money to travel themselves.

The importance of money became very clear to me when I joined Fartuun with his visit to the IND office in Hoofddorp, for his application to stay with his child who is already living in the Netherlands with his mother. They both received refugee status and live in the Netherlands on a legal basis. Fartuun had to pay a lot of money to arrange the application,

which is a difficult challenge when you only receive 50 euros a week. At first, he expected to pay 1250 euros, but when we arrived at the IND desk, he 'only' had to pay 250 euros at a desk from the IND. Since SNDVU was not able to lend him this amount of money, he had to borrow it from friends. Besides, during an interview with an IND employee it became also clear that having enough money for his child was a factor of big concern for this application:

IND employee:	"You do not have a lot of money, if I understand well. Are you able to buy things for your children at times?"
Fartuun:	"Yes I do. For instance clothes and food."
IND employee:	"You mean milk powder? In those boxes? Those are expensive right?"
Fartuun:	"Yes, 10,30 euros I believe?"
IND employee:	[Is nodding his head like he understands.] "Yes, I know", he says.
Fartuun :	"But anyhow, I think it is really important to be part of that, and to buy those things for my children."

After the interview with the IND, we waited almost two hours for the decision. Finally, we were taken to a room where another IND employee told us that the application was rejected. Fartuun lost the money he paid for the application and the chance of staying with his child in the Netherlands legally. The employee said that the aliens police wanted to talk to us after this conversation and that there was a chance that Fartuun could be deported. The aliens police came in, shook our hands and said: "The fact that I am shaking your hands, means that nothing wrong is going to happen." He furthermore told us that "there was not enough capacity to take Fartuun", so we were lucky: "This time you can follow your path."

Before Fartuun came to Hoofddorp, he knew that there was a chance that his application could be rejected and that the money would be gone if the application failed. He also knew that there was even a chance to be taken by the aliens police to be put in detention. However, he took the risk. For him, being reunited with his child in the Netherlands appeared to be most important.

7.1.2 Shelter

In the previous chapter, I argued that refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters pursue strategies to cope on a day-to-day basis. Rebellion and conversion (Wolfshöfer and Bröer 2009) are examples of strategies to gain benefits out of their current situation in shelter houses. Rebellion (acting against the rules of the organization) is generally not used for gaining benefits in the future, since there is a risk of withdrawal from the shelter. Conversion

is a strategy that is also used to influence future perspectives, because being an ideal inhabitant increases the chance to stay longer in the shelter. Having a place to stay gives more security than living on the streets. For clients with PTSD for example, it is important to live in a more or less stable environment for treatment. Having a place to stay is an important requirement for treatment

Regression is a common strategy in which clients withdraw themselves from the current situation (Wolfshöfer and Bröer 2009), both physically and mentally. Avoiding a certain situation according to Wolfshöfer and Bröer (2009) is merely physical. People go outside frequently or stay in their own room instead of the living room. Mentally some of them do not pay attention to what happens around them and do not feel attached to the environment that surrounds them. Staring and daydreaming are examples of regression. I will argue that besides regression as a strategy, it is also influenced by the mental health condition of many of my informants. Since most of them cope with depression, PTSD or other mental health problems, staring and daydreaming are symptoms of their illness and most of the time decreases improvements for the future rather than that is increases those

> "My head is somewhere else sometimes."

> "Sometimes when people talk to me, I don't even hear them because I am thinking about other things all that time."

Colonisation, a form of adaption (Wolfshöfer & Bröer, 2009) is also present in the lives of many informants. Some of them have been living in the shelter for a long time and in the meantime adapt to the current situation.

7.1.3 Personal belongings

Having a mobile phone plays an important role in the daily lives of refused asylum seekers, since it assists them to maintain contact with friends and family without making too many costs. Likewise, mobile phones are important personal belongings to stay in contact with lawyers, contact persons or other institutions regarding return or their procedures. Refused asylum seekers who are having a laptop, may use email to maintain those contacts. The Bible and the Koran, which many of my informants have, contribute to their hopes for the future. By praying and reading, many of them feel and have faith that "everything is going to be alright".

7.2 HUMAN CAPITAL

7.2.1 Health

(Refused) asylum seekers in the quest for asylum, are expected to reveal themselves, to narrate their histories and to display their wounds. Whether through modern torture or traditional law, the body has always been a fortunate site on which to reveal the evidence of power. But for the dominated, immigrants, and more specifically, refused asylum seekers, all of whom have to demonstrate their eligibility to certain social rights, the body has become the place that displaces the evidence of truth (Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005). Some of the interviewed informants are really aware of the fact that the steps they have to take are important for their future and that they can turn their body into a political resource.

Sankoh has HIV, which in the Netherlands can be treated very well. In Sierra Leone, it is likely that this would not be the case. Every month he goes to the hospital to check himself and every day he takes his medicine. When I asked him why it is so important for him to go the hospital he answered:

> "It is important because of my health. These medicines I get are really good and really important for me. But something else is more important"

"What is that?" I asked him.

> "It is important for my procedure. On medical grounds. It means that I have to prove that I go to the hospital every month".

His monthly visits to the hospital are important for his health, because HIV has to be treated with daily medicine. Moreover, these visits proof that he is really in need for these medicines. According to his lawyer there might be a chance that he can stay due to article 64 of the Aliens Act 2000, which means that deportation is not allowed because of his health. Therefore, he needs to proof that he is making use of health care in the Netherlands. His body 'has become the place of the production of truth' (Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005, p. 599). Even though this certificate has not replaced the necessity for an autobiographical account in which applicants for political refugee status try to meet the criteria of the 1951 Geneva Convention, it is demanded more and more often to verify the validity of that account.

Tenzin, a 25 year old man from Nepal had headache and pain in his neck all the time, every day. He had troubles sleeping and concentrating and did not want to go back to Nepal, because in his opinion, it is not safe enough in Nepal at the moment. In Nepal, he and his father were tortured by the Maoists. His parents, who still live in Nepal, fled to Kathmandu, because they are still threatened by the Maoists. They asked help from the Red Cross in Kathmandu. Tenzin went to his General Practitioner in the Netherlands a couple of times, who concluded that his physical pain may occur because of PTSD, caused by the traumatic events he experienced.

> "I was tortured a couple of days, but for a while I was unconscious so I do not remember everything. They (the Maoist) almost beat me to dead."

Despite the advice of his is contact person not to go, Tenzin wants to be examined by iMMO. iMMO contributes to the protection of human rights by examining victims of torture and inhumane treatments, specifically in the context of asylum procedures. During the examination, clients are asked to describe what has happened to them. Most of them deal with traumatic experiences which makes it very hard for them to talk about it. In some cases, further research is done to possible scarfs, fractures, burns and other physical signs of violence (iMMO, 2013). However, a medical certificate is never enough (Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005). This is also claimed by Tenzins contact person from SNDVU, who gives him legal assistance. If iMMO wants to examine him, proof can serve as additional information, but it is unlikely to lead to a new quest for asylum. Besides, an examination at iMMO can prove that he meets the criteria of the 1951 Convention for refugee status, but it does not prove that it is impossible to return to Nepal. The administrative concept of a 'secure country' carries far more weight than medical certificates (Fassin & D'Halluin, 2005: 604). Therefore, Tenzin needs an additional Red Cross statement that will prove that his parents are still in trouble in Nepal.

When I asked Tenzin about returning to Nepal he told me that he wants to go back to his parents, but for now he feels that it is not save enough. His physical pain reminds him every day of the torture and the fear back in Nepal. When he talks to his parents or his uncle on the phone, his fear is confirmed by the stories they tell him. Although authorities claim that it is save enough to go back to Nepal at the moment, Tenzin keeps saying that he wants to go back, but only when he feel that it is save enough.

> "They can give me a house, they can give me a car and a job, but I do not want to stay in the Netherlands. But for now, I cannot go back."

7.2.2 Knowledge and skills

Language abilities are particular important in cities, since these are characterized by a mix of people from different origins. Speaking the local, most widely spoken language is also important because it increases access to employment and the ability to engage in business, helps with protection (for instance when a refused asylum seeker is stopped by a police officer) and enables refused asylum seekers to join local organizations and networks (Jacobsen & Nichols, p. 2011).

Despite the fact that speaking the local language strengthens the current position in society it also influences future perspectives. Kpaka said that besides communication, he wants to improve his Dutch language skills because "that will influence a better future". The same is claimed by Hanad. During an interview with him I asked him why he thought that learning the Dutch language was so important for him. He answered:

> "Learning the language is important to communicate, with you for example. And for my future. When there is the chance that I can stay here, I would like to work. As a machinist. And maybe later, I want to go back to Africa. To South-Sudan. I will also ask my friends to come. The economy is growing there. At the moment, I have time to learn the language. If I get a job, I do not have the time anymore, that is why I study very hard. I go to Dutch lessons three times a week. I want to learn very fast".

7.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL

In the previous chapter is described how social capital is used as a coping strategy on a daily basis. This section demonstrates how social capital can used as a strategy to influence future perspectives.

7.3.1 Relatives and family

In the previous chapter I explained that most of my informants do not have family in the Netherlands and that some of them established new families here. Both could be important for future perspectives. In the example of Tenzin, whose parents are still in Nepal, they can help him prove that it is still not save enough for him. Furthermore, the loss of family members can also proof that they came on their own to the Netherlands and that there is nothing left for them anymore in their country of origin.

The establishment of new families in the Netherlands may contribute to positive procedures. For Mr. Ousmane, a DNA-test proved that he is the father of his son, which can be helpful in his procedure to stay in the Netherlands. Many refused asylum seekers try to

reunite with family members to get a residence permit like in the example of Fartuun I described in the previous chapter. Many try for these applications, although there is also a chance that the application fails. They have to prove to the IND that they see their children often and that it is important to be with them. Therefore, they have to collect for instance photos and important documents with signatures that proof that they bring their children to school, that they go with them to appointments in hospitals, that they do activities with their children and so on. Another common phenomena is pregnancy. However I do not know if the pregnancies of female informants were intended, it can be used to ask for a residence permit or it can have a positive impact on their current procedure. Having a Dutch partner, may increase this chance.

7.3.2 Social and institutional networks

Taking initiatives

One of the criteria that clients of SNDVU have to meet is having a perspective regarding their procedure for getting a permit for a legal stay in the Netherland or take initiatives to be able to return to their country of origin. Therefore, SNDVU itself plays an essential role in the lives of refused asylum seekers influencing their future perspectives. The majority of my informants receive support from social and judicial employees of SNDVU to gather evidence, to make appointments with lawyers, embassies, the IND or other organizations of importance for a new admittance procedure or proof that they cannot return to their country of origin. In chapter 5, I have described the visit to the IND with Fartuun, who tried to apply to stay with his child, to increase the change to stay in the Netherlands. The IND wants as many proof as they can get, and sometimes it seems that the gathered proof is never enough.

Generally, many informants went to their embassy many times to try to receive documents. However, many embassies are only willing to assist them when they can show legal documents. Exactly the omission of these documents was the reason for their journey to the embassy. The following letter was received by one my Eritrean informants after her visit to her embassy:

To whom it may concern,

Re: Ms.

The Embassy of the State of Eritrea Consular Section in the Netherlands presents its compliments to whom it may concern and has to honor to inform you that Ms. …… has been to our Embassy for assistance.

According to our respective procedures we are unable to assist her unless she is able to provide us with legal documents that can verify her Eritrean Nationality.

The Embassy of the state of Eritrea consular section in the Netherlands avails itself of this opportunity to renew to whom it may concern the assurance of its highest consideration.

With regards,

Embassy if state of Eritrea
Consular Section

Although the letter shows that the embassy does not want to assist people without legal documents, it gives my informant evidence that she did go to the embassy to ask for assistance. This is very important for her lawyers and for her future perspectives. The same is the case for several of my other informants. Certain clients who tried to go back to their country of origin, did not succeed because of the absence of legal documents. Without these legal documents returning is impossible, neither voluntary nor forced. This is also the case for Mr. Ousmane who tried to go back to Guinea after he lost his temporal residence permit in 2010. Although letters from IOM, the Red Cross and letters of the Embassy show his attempts to return, the Dutch authorities did not succeed in realizing his return and also did not provide Mr. Ousmane a legal refugee status.

Some of my informants had good contacts with two organisations specifically set up to support (illegal) migrants in the Netherlands. 'Beyond Borders' is an organization in the Netherlands that supports (ex)AMAs (single, under aged asylum seekers) to make plans for their future by offering workshops, training and a personal plan. The organizers of the project 'Beyond Borders' believe that having a plan for the future makes people stronger even when this future is not certain (Beyond Borders 2013). The organization 'New Dutch Connections' tries to bridge the gap between migrants and Dutch citizens in the Netherlands by means of theatre and expressive arts. Moreover, 'New Dutch Connections' provides training for migrants, schools and companies. My informants who participated in an empowerment training of 'Beyond Borders' and 'New Dutch Connections' were linked to a coach for a period of two months and came regularly together in meetings. They tried to figure out talents and dreams to improve their future perspectives. The project was finished with a 'talent

market' in EKKO Utrecht, on April 3th 2013. All applicants prepared a presentation to show their qualities and their future plans. Kpaka, who likes to make music, especially reggae, and to make pictures made a book with pictures which he showed during his presentation. He also made a song titled 'Never stop trying', which he presented at the end of the evening. Another participant wrote a note, which he gave to visitors of the talent market:

> "I am Fode. I am from Guinea in West-Africa and I live in the Netherlands for eleven years. My idea is to become a farmer. Before, I lived with my uncle in Guinea, who also was a farmer. I dream about being a farmer for a long time. I like to work with machines. I want to use the knowledge that I gained in the Netherlands, about agriculture and technique in Guinea. At the moment I work at *Volle Grond*, a biological horticulture project in Bunnik. I learn how to seed, compost, to adapt the ground and to work with small machines. I want to develop a farm business in Guinea and to import agricultural machines. I would like to get in touch with organisations and companies in the Netherlands who are working on sustainable agriculture in West-Africa. Could you please help me to extend my network?"

The goal of this particular form of networking, resulted in a wonderful evening, where a lot of contacts were established. These contacts helped young refused asylum seekers to feel more confident about their very uncertain situation for a while and, in some cases it helped them with for instance an internship or volunteer work in the sector of their talent.

<u>The other side of the coin</u>

Social networks consisting of friends and institutions are key in strategies for future perspectives. Besides the positive effects that social networks provide for the (social) wellbeing of refused asylum seekers, strong ties can also be dysfunctional, since these can lead to the exclusion of information and reduction of the capacity for innovation (Granovetter, 1973). Innovation in the case of refused asylum seekers at SNDVU, can be seen as 'new' developments regarding their procedure. Maintaining strong ties with a certain group of friends or institutional network, may result in different responses including avoidance, resistance or adaptation mechanisms regarding their future, leading to passivism, lack of agency and disempowerment.

The social network of Kpaka, which is described in the previous chapter, gives a good example of reducing the capacity for innovation. Kpaka is living in the Netherlands for twelve years, in the same shelter house for four years and is working at the *Voedselbank* for four years. He is accustomed to his situation. Although he really wants to get a status that gives him the right to act as a full member of society, he is not really busy to try new things regarding his procedure, also because there are not many things to try. It seems that he has to return to Sierra Leone, but he is not willing to cooperate on that. He wants to stay in the Netherlands, because he is here already thirteen years. Furthermore, he knows a lot of people

that received a residence permit and hopes that in the end, he will also receive one. Because of his access to a large social network consisting of friends, colleagues, his coaches from Beyond Borders and many other people, he has enough resources to cope with the daily difficulties in live. Therefore, adaptation to the current situation is highly present.

I noticed the same phenomenon in the life of Samara. She was told that one of her options left is to return to Ethiopia, her country of origin. Since she is not willing to do that, she just denies that some steps have to be taken to influence her future perspectives. She goes to the church where she knows many people, has very good contacts with the women living in the same house, and avoid to think about her future, since it is too hard to think about.

For Nasih and Aatifa, it is not sure what the future is going to bring them. Working at *Resto VanHarte* and going to church enriches their lives. On the other hand, it also makes them wondering if the situation will be like this forever. Due to these findings it can be concluded that refused asylum seekers with a large social network of friends and acquaintances and strong ties in these networks are using these networks not only in their daily live, but also to influence their future perspectives. Most of them want to stay in the Netherlands and the networks help them to continue with their denial, avoidance and adaptation strategies. It may not lead to positive outcomes, but it can buy time before SNDVU decides not to help them anymore. For those who wants to leave the Netherlands, there are many steps that have to be taken, and it seems that these steps are never enough.

This chapter showed how the use of capital for daily coping may influence the future perspectives of refused asylum seekers. For those who did not have concrete future plans, the dreams about their future remain, but more important for them is just to cope with their daily struggles in society. Bright O'Richards from *New Dutch Connections* who has a refugee history himself, noted the importance of empowerment of young illegal people, but he also shared his concern about the frustrating situation of being illegal:

> "We are here today, but I think about tomorrow.
> Where would these youngsters be? Maybe they are in prison.
> They (police) can do that. But they cannot take away the experience
> of the past eight weeks. They cannot take away their words.
> Many would believe that we are dreamers. I hope that dreams become reality."

8. CONCLUSION

The overwhelming impact of being an 'illegal citizen' in the Netherlands on refused asylum seekers and how they cope with it is presented in the chapters above, in which I focused on informants who were living in shelters of SNDVU (Stichting Noodopvang Dakloze Vluchtelingen Utrecht) in the town of Utrecht early 2013. The huge problems and challenges of refused asylum seekers in the Netherlands have been documented in various other studies (Van der Leun & Kloosterman, 2006; Engbersen & Broeders, 2009; Kox, 2009) but I hope to have contributed to the information about this group of people in our country by using a different perspective in my research and analysis, the sustainable livelihoods framework. The framework starts from the agency of vulnerable actors, but takes into account the context of globalization and national policies in which it contributes to the agency-structure debate. The actors use livelihood strategies directed to specific livelihood outcomes, for daily coping and for future perspectives. In doing so they have access to capitals, use these capitals and strategize with these. I have chosen to analyze economic, human and social capital since these capitals are highly interrelated to each other. Furthermore, the use of these different forms of capitals is influenced by the vulnerability context (caused and influenced by structures and processes) and the other way around. Livelihood outcomes again influence further use of capital. Hence, it is an ongoing and never ending process in which vulnerable actors would always try to navigate.

This thesis is focuses on a description and analysis of the livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in shelters from SNDVU, among which I did my research from January to April 2013. I was interested in the ways how these people cope with the consequences of their vulnerable situation, including loss and grief associated with the circumstances of their departure from their country of origin, guilt and fear about those who are left behind, and the challenges of adjusting to life in a new country. For doing so I constructed the following research question:

How do refused asylum seekers in Utrecht use economic, human and social capital to cope on a day-to-day basis and how do they pursue these livelihood strategies to influence their future perspectives?

To answer my research question I divided the problem the following three sub-questions:

- What kinds of economic, human and social capital do refused asylum seekers have?
- How do refused asylum seekers use these different forms of capital to pursue their daily coping?

- How does the use of capital for daily coping influence the future perspectives of refused asylum seekers?

I mainly used participant observation as a research method to gather my data. I visited many shelter houses, had lots of conversations with my informants and I worked at the office of SNDVU as a volunteer. I never interviewed my informants formally, since interviewing is a very sensitive experience for many of them. I wrote many notes and was reflexive about my own positions (fixed and subjective) in the field. I told all my informants that I was doing research for my study. However, my position as a volunteer was convert which helped me to take distance at times.

In chapter five I described the forms of capital available to refused asylum seekers. Economic capital include money to live, shelter and personal belonging which provide different livelihood options to them (Bourdieu, 1986; Rakodi, 2002, Jacobsen & Nichols, 2011). Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and their state of mental and physical health that together enable them to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives (DFID, 2000; Rakodi 2002; Jacobson and Nichols 2011). The third form of capital in my theoretical framework is social capital. In the context of the sustainable livelihood framework it means the social resources upon which refused asylum seekers draw in seeking for their livelihood outcomes, such as networks and connectedness (Narayan, 2000) including family, friends and institutional contacts and networks. Economic capital, according to Bourdieu (1986) is important since it is convertible into other forms of capital. However, refused asylum seekers who are lacking access to a certain form of capital are more vulnerable, because if one source is compromised, they have fewer to draw upon (Jacobsen & Nichols, 2011).

In chapter six, I focused on how refused asylum seekers had access to different forms of capital and how they used these capitals to cope with their daily struggles. Having a roof above their heads saved the lives of many. Shelter provides a more stable situation then living on the streets and also gives the opportunity to employ personal identities. Having a bike in the city of Utrecht was one of the most important personal belongings, since it gave them the opportunity to travel without costs. I found that although many of my informants cope with severe stress and anxiety, they are willing to keep busy. Even though for refused asylum seekers above eighteen it is not possible to have education, some of them managed to do so and many of them were going to Dutch lessons. Having a laptop or television contributed to the development of their knowledge and to communication with friends, family and relatives.

For many of my informants, their mobile phone was one of most the important belongings since it was an easy way to stay in contact with their social network. Refused asylum seekers are not allowed to work, but some of my informants did work voluntary. Going to their volunteer work distracted them from their stress and was helpful to establish social contacts. However, mental health problems like depression, stress and PTSD were also the main reasons for them not to go to Dutch lessons or to their work. Having a social network for support is very important, since all of my informants live in a uncertain and sometimes fearful situation. Knowing that you are not alone and that there are people who can help you when you need it gives a more secure feeling.

It is clear from the data presented in chapter seven that being able to construct livelihood strategies means more than simply being able to cope and meet the basic economic or material objectives of life. It also include access to capitals which open up opportunities and possibilities for the future (Crawley et al. 2011). This sense of future perspectives is central to the understanding of sustainable livelihoods in this thesis, and is reflected in the descriptions and explanations provided by refused asylum seekers of what it means (and feels like) to live in the Netherlands illegally. Although I have separated economic, human and social capital for analyses, I want to stress that the these three forms of capital are really interrelated and interacting since every form of capital influences another form.

Even though refused asylum seekers have agency and strategize their lives to cope with destitution, the political context of the Netherlands makes them more vulnerable and affects the way they cope with the situation. Because they were rejected for their quest for asylum many of them are uncertain about what will happen in the future and have deep concerns about being caught by the police and deported to their country of origin. Others are trying for years to go back, but many embassies are not willing to cooperate to give them the right papers. For them, the situation seems hopeless, since they are not allowed to be in the Netherlands, nor in their country of origin. However, I believe that there is no such thing as an 'end goal' in livelihood strategies, because people always navigate, adapt and always have agency in which situation they are, legislation regarding (illegal) immigration in the Netherlands do limit refused asylum seekers in using their livelihood capitals. Even those who are coping economically live with chronic stress, caused by fear of deportation and lack of security for the future. Furthermore, most feel that their mental and sometimes physical health is exhausted because of coping with being illegal. For refused asylum seekers, this concern is as great as, if not greater than, other dimensions of the sustainable livelihoods. Basically, the need to remain hidden and to avoid any risk of being deported affects almost every decision

made by refused asylum seekers and the strategies they adopt (Crawley et al., 2011).

I will argue that looking at marginalized groups such as refused asylum seekers through the sustainable livelihoods framework, gave me valuable insight in the daily lives of refused asylum seekers and a better understanding of the ways they cope and struggle for their lives in destitution. It furthermore aims to contribute to the current agency-structure debate. Livelihood strategies developed by refused asylum seekers raise certain worthwhile considerations regarding the meaning of protection and possibilities for solutions. I will agree on this, but will further argue that even in a legal and political vacuum of formal non-existence their ability to navigate the economic, social and human aspects of available protection space should not be underestimated.

8.1 Limitations

A possible limitation of this research is the scope of the study. Since I have chosen to focus on different forms of capital, I generated a holistic overview of the situation. On the other hand, it can also lead to too much generalizations by touching upon many topics instead of delving into a few more thoroughly. However, I believe that I needed this focus because of the complexity of the research group as well as their lives in the Netherlands. Only focusing on one capital would have made the research too narrow.

Another limitation is the length of my field work. Three months of volunteering at SDNVU, participant observation and many informal talks appeared to be not enough to grasp really the complexity of the lives of my informants. Although I concentrated my research on only fifteen refused asylum seekers, it really took time to build up trust and rapport.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that I talk in my data chapters often of ‘refused asylum seekers in SNDVU shelters’ while I ground my statements on data mainly collected among my fifteen informants. It was impossible to study all the clients within three months.

The last remark I want to share is that the quotes of my informants are my interpretations of their interpretations. I have been using their voices to make my own argument. This may have implications for the validity and reliability of my argument.

8.2 Further recommendations

The livelihood strategies constructed by refused asylum seekers are a consequence of the current asylum policy in the Netherlands (structures and processes), causing a vulnerable situation in which my informants have to navigate their lives. Hundreds of thousands of people rather live in poverty and in constant fear of detention and deportation, reliant on

social networks of friends and more institutional contacts rather than return to their country of origin. My research also shows that people who are trying for years to return to their country of origin are confronted with uncooperative governments and embassies. Both phenomena suggest the failure of the contemporary governmental policy in the Netherlands and of other countries. The data collected during this research thus, suggest the need for a new policy that will recognize both the human rights and human security of refused asylum seekers and also their right to be human. Being human means having access to the capitals needed to cope on a day-to-day basis with dignity. It also means having hope for the future. Because it is like Kpaka told me:

> "We have not chosen for this situation"

EPILOGUE

On May 6th 2013, a month after finishing my fieldwork, I heard that Mr Ousmane and Hanad, two of my informants were caught by the police and brought to detention center Zeist at May 4th. The day before 'Liberation Day'. The reason for this was that one of their roommates, which was also one of my informants, was making too much noise with his new bought music installation. The neighbors called the police after multiple warnings and by the time the police arrived at the shelter, the troublemaker was not even at home. The other men were caught one by one, because they could not show legal documents. One of them is set free, because the system of the police was telling that he was sick. My other two informants are still in Zeist, and I decided to visit them. A couple of weeks ago I was in the same detention center by means of a 'tour', to see where my informants were talking about. Now, I was visiting two of them. I talked one hour with each of them and I mentioned feelings of frustration. On the other hand, I was surprised by their strength and their positivism. Hanad told me:

> "This week or next week, they will set me free. I feel it"

Mr. Ousmane was very frustrated that he and Hanad were caught by the mistake of somebody else. He experienced detention earlier, but they could not deport him back to Guinea.

> "I don't understand why. I was here before, but they set me free. Now I'm here again, what is the difference. They can't deport me now either. We did not do anything wrong."

By now, it is almost two months from the day Hanad and Mr. Ousmane were caught by the police and although different parties try their best to change their situation, they are still in detention. I hope that Dutch authorities will recognize that detention of refused asylum seekers has to be a final resource when other resources do not work and that treating them as criminals is inhumane and against International Human Rights.

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