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LEARNING IN DISPLACEMENT

Refugee Youth's Access to Education in Budapest

Linda Nagy



UCL

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Supervisor: Dr Johanna Waters

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the access to education of young refugees in Budapest, focusing on non-formal and informal learning and the role of civil society versus the state in service provision for refugees in Hungary. Drawing on concepts relating to displaced youth, formal, non-formal and informal education, and civil society, the research aims to contribute to literature on young refugees' educational opportunities and challenges in Hungary, particularly beyond formal education, and to connect the personal experience of a refugee student with the socio-political structures informing education provision. In particular, the circumstances of the age group between 18 and 24 will be examined, arguing for their unique position between learning spaces of formal education and the labour market to be conceptualised. Based on data from a total of 11 semi-structured interviews with one student, 10 NGO workers as well as field observations, the research addresses the practice and relevance of formal and non-formal learning opportunities offered to refugee youth, and considers additional factors beyond education influencing refugee youth's learning trajectories. Complicating the hegemonic view of education understood as formal schooling, this study highlights the value of non-formal education in addressing the educational needs of refugee youth, and concludes that wider socio-political processes in which learning takes place must be considered in order to better serve the educational and non-educational needs of young refugees in Hungary.

Keywords: *refugee, youth, education, non-formal education, civil society, Hungary*

Word count: 11,600

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMIF: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

CSO: civil society organisation

ECDL: European Computer Driving Licence

EU: European Union

HFL: Hungarian as a foreign language

NGO: non-governmental organisation

TCN: third-country national

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN: United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

Young people constitute about half of all forcibly displaced persons in the world (Wilkinson and Lloyd-Zantiotis,2017). However, the absence of exact figures, and the definition of youth fluctuating across different cultural and political spaces leave displaced youth conceptually, institutionally and operationally invisible (UNHCR,2013). Displacement for young people often inevitably means the disruption of their education and their chances of continuing learning differ depending on the circumstances in their places of settlement (Pastoor,2017). Education is vital for young refugees as source of protection, empowerment and enlightenment (UNHCR,2016), contributing to their personal and social development (Hek,2015), psychosocial well-being (Mosselson et al, 2017), and integration in the host society (Rossiter et al, 2015). Although the UN defines youth as aged 15-24¹, the focus of this study is 18-24-year-olds given that this age cohort falls out of the protection under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child², and is 'caught between' the formal education system and the transition into the labour market. In order to complement existing debates in this field that tend to focus on children under the age of 18, this research sets out to discover the specific needs of young refugees over that age to foster understanding of their educational needs, opportunities and challenges in the host location.

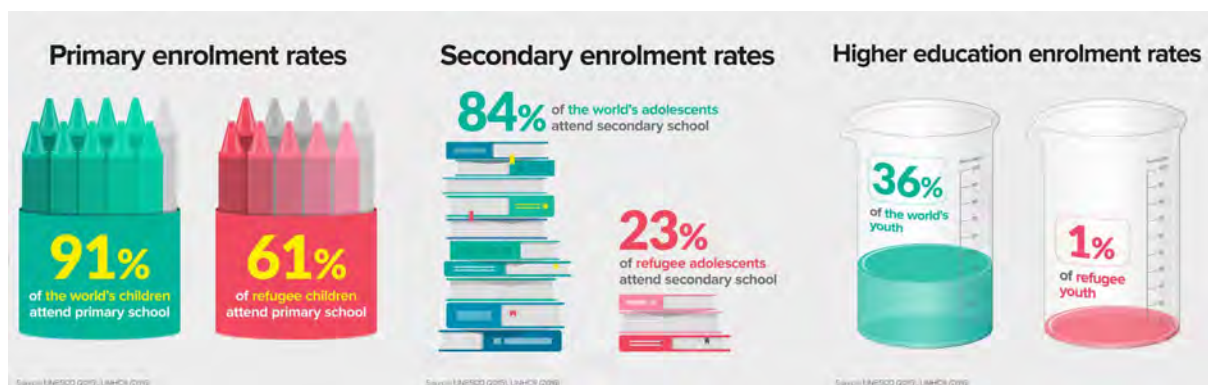
The right to education is granted to everyone in *Article 26* of the UDHR³, and to refugees in particular in *Article 22* of the Geneva Convention and Protocol. However, such international legal instruments are implemented by sovereign nation-states, thus are not universally adhered to and need to be examined in specific contexts. Hence, while international law requires education provision on paper, accessing education in practice is more complicated. According to the latest UNHCR (2016) report, refugee youth have relatively high access to primary education compared to global youth but this difference increases when it comes to secondary and tertiary education (Figure 1). The problem here is twofold: first, educational prospects of young refugees decline as they age; second, access to education is measured by

¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

² 'For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.' (CRC, Article 1)

³ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

enrolment rates. This not only reveals a significant gap in opportunity for young refugees to access education but also that learning taking place outside of the formal school system is not taken into account. Therefore, the role of non-formal and informal learning is crucial to consider as complementing or even replacing formal education for refugee youth. This study relies on the definitions of non-formal and informal learning as outlined in the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* by the European Commission (2000), based on which non-formal learning does not lead to formalised certificates, provided by CSOs or the workplace; while informal learning is considered as an often unintentional ‘natural accompaniment of everyday life’ (8).



(Figure 1: Enrolment rates of global youth and refugee youth, Source: <http://www.unhcr.org/left-behind/>)

Geographical foci of studies on refugee education tend to be major immigration countries such as US, Canada or Australia. However, the increased influx of refugees to the EU in the past 5 years calls for more enquiry directed at European host countries (McBrien et al, 2017). This study takes place in Budapest, Hungary for two reasons. Firstly, Hungary is ‘on the edge’ of the EU both as one of its border countries and due to its increasingly hostile migration policies and political climate towards refugees. Secondly, while only 3,344 asylum seekers were granted international protection status in Hungary between 2013 and 2018 (KSH, 2018a; 2018b) – nearly half of whom aged 18-34 (EUROSTAT) – low numbers should not reduce the gravity of the issue. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to this particular geopolitical context precisely because circumstances of smaller groups of refugees such as the one in Hungary are frequently overlooked. Refugees in this study will be understood as persons with

approved refugee status or subsidiary protection status⁴, as these are the two most common international protection statuses granted in Hungary. However, protection must be accompanied with services for displaced youth to safeguard their right to education, often relying on non-state actors such as CSOs.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to: I) contribute to literature on learning opportunities of young refugees over 18 in Hungary; II) examine the actual realities of education provision for refugee youth in Budapest; III) connect the personal experience of a student with the socio-political structures in which education provision occurs; and seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What forms of education are offered to young refugees in Budapest?
 - a. How relevant are these opportunities to them?
 - b. What challenges and barriers do they face in accessing education?
- 2) How can non-formal education address their educational needs?
- 3) What is the role of civil society in education provision for refugee youth in Hungary?

Questions will be explored by first reviewing relevant concepts and current debates relating to displaced youth, formal and non-formal education, and civil society. This will be followed by an explanation of the methodological decisions involved in planning and conducting the project. Subsequently, analytical chapters will present findings on the Hungarian political context in which education provision takes place; discussing the aims, practice and relevance of formal and non-formal learning opportunities offered to refugee youth; and considering additional, non-educational factors influencing refugee youth's learning trajectories. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn with recommendations for future practice and research.

⁴ Both statuses are understood here as defined in: EUROSTAT, *Glossary: Asylum decision*, Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Asylum_decision

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 (Refugee) Youth

Western societies create a dichotomy between children and adults, and reinforce ideas of difference through laws and practices specified by physical age, thus constructing a social order that neglects individual needs and competencies (Bourdillon, 2017). Recent conceptualisation of 'youth-as-student-identity' (Harlan, 2016:2) is rooted in the understanding of life as following cognitive and biological life stages, resulting in grouping young people based on age or grade level, which informs curriculum development, the organisation of public institutions, and teacher training. However, the life stage approach ignores youth in the present in their own right, reducing young people to 'unformed adults' (ibid:3) instead of recognising them as whole persons. Hence, youth learning needs to be understood in various contexts without assuming that their biology determines same experiences and needs (ibid).

In their seminal work in the study of global youth, Jeffrey and Dyson (2008) examine the various experiences of youth and their ways of responding to social, economic and political changes, pointing to the fluidity of the concepts of youth and adulthood with changing definitions, forms, experiences and meanings across spatial and temporal contexts. They argue that youth is often portrayed negatively in political discourse and the media, imagined either through political apathy or extremism. Particularly Muslim young men are increasingly frequent targets of stereotyping, which culminates in a climate that is suspicious of young men combined with religious and racial prejudices (Ibid). This becomes all the more topical with the increased securitisation of forced migration predominantly from Muslim-majority countries (Brigham et al, 2015), where asylum seekers are 'subjected to policies designed not to protect their human rights but to protect the public from them' (Fekete, 2001:31). Feeding into this theme is Doná and Veale's (2011) account on the 'product-threat dichotomy', which perceives children and young people either as vulnerable victims of violence or as its perpetrators, threatening the security and stability of the nation-state. Such conceptualisation of young people is especially applicable to refugee youth, who despite being forced to take on new roles during displacement often demonstrate resilience and agency in facing arduous situations and adapting in hope of a durable solution (UNHCR, 2013).

Their resettlement is often a long and strenuous process involving traumatic events such as losing their loved ones and lacking access to basic needs, disruption of education and/or employment as well as changing identities and roles (Rumsey et al, 2018). Studying the resettlement experiences of refugee youth in Canada, Rossiter et al (2015) note the specific educational, psychosocial, economic, linguistic, and cultural needs of refugee youth. At the same time, despite often difficult pre-migration or migration experiences, refugee youth are more frequently viewed as active agents demonstrating resilience (Ibid). Similarly, resettlement experiences and resilience in refugee youth is discussed by Earnest et al (2015) in the Australian context, who found that youth take on coping mechanisms and strategies upon resettlement including learning English, developing skills, seeking support and furthering their education in order to better their chances of employment. Thus, they conclude, that early support is crucial in helping refugees adapt and integrate in their new location (Earnest et al, 2015).

2.2 The Role of Schools

Schools play a vital role in the lives of young refugees in supporting their settlement, enhancing their sense of belonging, aiding their emotional and social development, and providing a routine and structure that was formerly disrupted by displacement (Hek, 2005). However, the main difficulties in accessing education for refugee youth defined by the literature include language barriers, lack of financial resources, irrelevant curriculum, lack of support to work through trauma (Bajaj and Suresh, 2018), as well as the lack of recognition of existing qualifications (Earnest et al, 2015). Exploring refugee education in Australian schools and universities, Naidoo (2015) establishes three fundamental aspects to be addressed by educators in order to support students' learning outcomes, these are 'prior life experiences, language development and the culture of learning environments.' (210). Some of the barriers she identifies as hindering access to tertiary education for refugee youth include lack of information about expectations, systemic disregard of individual cultures as well as psychological and cultural blocks such as language (Ibid). Thus, she suggests that educators need to intensify their knowledge and competencies in relation to educating diverse student populations to ensure awareness of the cultural aspects of their students' lives, which impact their learning (Ibid).

Researching the role of education in settlement in the UK, Hek (2005) emphasises the need to consider individual perspectives of refugee youth for accessible and relevant service provision for this group. Her interviews with students at two secondary schools in London revealed that students have various physical and emotional needs depending on arriving with their parents, other relatives, or alone but they must not be regarded as a homogenous group given their different experiences, needs and expectations. Besides, young refugees also bring skills, resilience and positive experiences, which schools can help amplify (Ibid). A good practice she found at one of the schools was including issues affecting refugees into the curriculum to make students aware of displacement and more understanding and accepting towards their fellow students (Hek, 2005). For this, students in her research identified various elements of support they would need, especially in the first stages upon joining school, including language support, school-wide sanctioning of bullying and a welcoming and encouraging school environment, where they feel valued, as well as more attention from teachers to individual situations instead of assuming that all refugees share the same experiences (Ibid). Another crucial aspect was the need to make friends with fellow young people from various backgrounds, also non-refugees in order to gain a sense of belonging in their place of settlement.

Thus, educational success among refugees also relies on 'relational supports' (Dryden-Peterson et al, 2017:1013) from family, teachers, and fellow students, while academic support involving tutoring, exam preparation, and general guidance are also beneficial, especially if encompassing social and emotional support (Ibid). Hence, schools are also understood as essential sources of contact with majority society and culture for young refugees, playing a decisive role in their integration into new communities and supporting their educational and social development (Rumsey et al, 2018). Thomas (2016) recommends three strategies for increasing social inclusion in schools: enhancing teachers' and social workers' training in areas of trauma, increasing the outreach to refugee families, and developing a peer mentoring program for students. Bajaj and Suresh (2018) focus on a good practice of a high school in California, US that offers a 'warm embrace' for immigrant and refugee youth through strategies of community and family engagement, trauma-informed approaches, and responsive curricula. Their case study is an example of 'a place of support,

and healing' (96), which becomes vital particularly in light of the increasingly hostile asylum and immigration policies globally.

Recent research on migrant and refugee education in Hungary has identified issues relating particularly to the language barrier in accessing education and teachers' attitudes towards refugee students. The majority of refugees in the Hungarian education system are in the primary school age group (in Hungary from age 6 to 14) but their presence is significant in kindergartens, vocational schools and secondary schools as well (Mezei,2015). Interviewing teachers, Balogh and Császár (2017) found that the difficulties in education provision are rooted in friction amongst students and within the teacher-student relationships, the lack of appropriate educational materials for teachers for addressing specific needs of refugees stemming from insufficient Hungarian as a Foreign Language (HFL) teacher training in Hungary, and the lack of or insufficient communication between actors surrounding refugee students including parents, social workers, psychologists, teachers and institution leaders. The findings of Lakatos and Pataki's (2017) research on schooling integration projects of migrant children suggest that institutional networks need to be strengthened through information sharing and state support in order to implement the phenomenon of migration into education in Hungary.

However, the review of these studies reveals that research on the education of refugee youth predominantly focuses on their experiences of formal schooling. Besides the practical ramifications of schools for refugee education, the wider theoretical implications of the role of formal education are important to consider. Geographies of education have traditionally focused on school spaces as sites of citizenship, identity and power (Pini et al, 2017). Critical geographies of education highlight the role of schools as sites of social and cultural reproduction, and education as an institution creating educational spaces as well as inequalities, where imagined political and economic ideologies form future generations into citizens (McCreary et al, 2013). Marxist critics emphasise the disciplinary aspect of schools perceiving students as future workforce, and instilling 'dominant class structures, norms, and values' (Ibid:255). For Foucault, power relations are present within and between individuals, groups, institutions and personal, political and economic structures, thus are central in the

theorisation of education (Ball, 2013), which in this view can be thought of as a way of constituting the self through processes of learning (Wain, 1996).

Connecting educational and political developments in Eastern European post-communist states including Hungary, Mincu (2009) argues that political ideologies are connected to and sustained by educational ideologies and myths, both sharing the illusion of a coherent narrative fuelled by emotional aspects providing an image of protection. The mythological bases of politics during Eastern European transitions dominantly focused on creating a superficial cohesion based on 'the ethnic roots of citizenship' (67), which informed post-communist nationalisms and resulted in the nationalisation of curriculums and the privatisations of educational systems. Thus, political ideologies tied to education serve to invent and reinvent the nation (Ibid:57). In a more recent US context, Barrow (2017) suggests that nationalism and patriotism are not new elements of citizenship education but argues that combined with ignorance of a world beyond the United States, curricula often become 'hyper-patriotic' (163) and fixated on US exceptionalism, particularly during perceived threats such as World Wars and 9/11. Such discussion of education and nationalism echoes Mitchell's (2001) account on the possibilities and challenges of education for a democratic citizenship, indicating 'both the difficulty of and the necessity to escape from the bounded contours and mentality of the nation-state' (71).

2.3 Non-formal and Informal Education

A shift from political-economic to social-cultural geographies of education considers a more diverse spatial context, including not only formal but also informal spaces (Holloway et al,2010). Two recent case studies apply non-formal education to young refugees and are exceptions in the dominant theorisation of refugee education taking place in formal institutions. Pastoor (2017) reconceptualises refugee education by considering diverse learning contexts outside of school in Norway, such as living in group homes, working part-time, or participating in shared activities with NGOs as providing opportunities for young refugees to improve their language skills and adapt to society. She calls for a holistic approach to the education of refugee youth, which understands resettlement as a two-way process involving the navigation of young refugees in gaining access to the necessary resources for learning and inclusion, and the structural conditions facilitating these (Ibid). Similarly,

Wilkinson et al (2017) explore non-formal spaces of learning for Sudanese refugee youth in the Australian context, suggesting that out-of-school networks such as faith-based activities, where 'an invisible level of socialisation and capital building' (211) takes place contribute to educational success amongst refugee youth. As a critique of the deficit approach, which focuses on the challenges and difficulties of refugee youth's resettlement, they adopt an asset approach reviewing what works and how, relying on Bourdieuan concepts of social and cultural capital – where the former is understood as networks and connections and the latter refers to the values and beliefs embodied in cultural practices – to understand school adjustment and achievement (Ibid).

Mills and Kraftl (2014) consider informal learning as 'an enduring and widespread facet of human experience' (3) and outline significant aspects of informal learning such as its roots in everyday concerns, its reliance on dialogue and conversation, and its political dimension. Informal education is mostly understood in relation to formal education. Smith and Philipps (2017) outline three divergences between the two forms: first, while formal education is preoccupied with theoretical learning, informal education takes on practical forms; second, informal education is less tied to certain places or institutions, and third, informal education is linked more to belonging to a local community rather than reproducing wider social norms or behaviours. However, they suggest that formal and informal education should be understood not as separated complete opposites, rather ideal types on a spectrum. Brigham et al (2015) explore informal adult learning as apparent in the workplace occurring hidden in everyday workplace activities. They emphasise the role of service providers in adult education, and how they can learn about the needs and vulnerabilities of refugees, albeit the efficiency of their work is limited by understaffing and hostile political climate in the US (Ibid).

This leads to another site of learning, which has not been discussed in the literature relating to refugee youth, that is labour. Education and work have been conceptualised in competing frames considering work either as harmful to schooling, or addressing the intersections of work and schooling (Abebe and Waters, 2017). However, work is a learning process in itself where knowledge and skills are acquired, especially for young people unable to benefit from formal schooling (Ibid). Enrolment in school is often understood as 'proxy for education' (Bourdillon, 2017:101), which can be impacted by work. For instance, working full-time

usually influences school performance but often completely keep youth away from school (Ibid).

2.4 Civil Society and the State

Education provision involves multiple state and non-state actors. Although the relationship between such 'providers' in the context of refugee education is largely overlooked in the literature, it can be relevant for examining how the education of refugee youth is structurally organised. While there are multiple definitions and civil society is often used interchangeably with voluntary organisations, non-profit or third sector, CSOs are understood here as a wider category: as a collection of non-governmental institutions (e.g. NGOs, community groups, registered charities, faith-based organisations, trade unions, social movements) powerful enough to serve as a 'counterbalance' to the state and preventing it from dominating the rest of society (Gellner, 1994:5). A common view of the relationship between civil society and government regards them as mutually interdependent insofar as they combine their strengths while complementing their limitations. On the one hand, the government can benefit from civil society as service providers originating and delivering goods; and on the other hand, civil society can rely on the government for generating revenue and granting rights to benefits (Salamon and Toepler, 2015). In the Hungarian context, the relationship between civil society and policy actors has been interpreted such that the state provides an operational context for CSOs, helping shape their opportunity structures and development, thus determining their influence (Cox and Gallai, 2014).

A recent study by Schmidtke (2018) brings together the themes of this dissertation – non-formal learning, refugee integration, civil society – and applies the civil society dynamic to the inclusion and empowerment of refugees in Canada's urban centres, conceptualising immigrant integration as a combination of spatial and political contexts. Focusing on Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver as sites of 'place-based governance' (149) largely run by immigrants and minorities, he highlights the role of these CSOs not only as networks and vehicles of civic skill-building providing resources to overcome social isolation; but also as a source of community engagement and wider democratic participation, demonstrating that through involvement in policy processes, CSOs can also have a positive political impact in reducing nationalist-populist approaches.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The epistemological and ontological starting point adopted in this qualitative research project is the premise that knowledge is not a given but is constructed through examination (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Thus, this study takes an inductive approach, generating propositions from the collected data through identifying regularities (Ibid), resting on the recognition that accounts are always partial and situated in a particular context (Mullings, 1999). Knowledge is understood here not as fixed but being constantly in flux, created, re-created and shaped by social processes and embedded in complex power structures. Hence, this approach is particularly useful for this study, aiming to reveal not only the personal motivations and challenges of young refugees' access to learning in Budapest but also the structural background and underlying power dynamics involving CSOs and the state in education provision. Additionally, as established in the previous chapter, understandings of concepts such as youth, refugee, and education fluctuate across socio-political, legal, cultural and geographical spaces. Therefore, in accordance with constructivist epistemology, this dissertation does not claim to be a repository of a single truth, rather a construction of knowledge that is context-specific.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection comprised of 11 semi-structured interviews with 10 professionals from 9 different CSOs and initiatives involved in supporting refugees in Budapest, and a young refugee student, who participates in non-formal education at one of these organisations. Despite requiring less immersion and creating a more artificial setting than participant observation, conducting interviews allows the researcher to gain insights into research participants' perspectives and their accounts of the world, producing rich data sources on their experiences, opinions and feelings (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Semi-structured interviewing was a suitable method for this study due to the flexibility it permits to respond to the impossibility of knowing beforehand the importance that participants place on certain questions or topics. In this interactive process, the researcher has a clear sense of the themes to cover and of the order in which to explore these but leaves enough room to follow alternative paths through the conversation by allowing interviewees to guide what is relevant

to them (Lindsay,1997). Starting from general themes then moving to more specific topics with a mix of descriptive, factual and more abstract questions helped explore the different angles of interviewees' experiences and opinions about aspects of education and training provision for refugees (Valentine, 2005). At the same time, the semi-structured interview style allowed enough flexibility to not necessarily stick to the written outline of topics but to adapt to the interview dynamic, changing the wording and sequence of questions (Ibid); as well as sufficient freedom of following up and building on the received responses (Brenner,2006). All participants received an information sheet explaining the aim of the research and their participation in it, and once they agreed to participate, a consent form was signed. All interviewees consented to being audio recorded and the average duration of interviews was 1 hour and interviews took place at the office spaces where participants work or come to learn, with two exceptions: one interview was conducted at a café as the interviewee was not working that day, and one using Skype after the researcher had already left Budapest. The interview with the student participant was conducted at a teaching room in the office building of the organisation where he regularly goes for tutoring.

Sampling

Research participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. In both methods, sample size is secondary (Lindsay, 1997), the weight is rather on 'information-rich cases' (Baxter and Eyles, 1997:513). Hence, my focus was on interviewing people with various perspectives and experiences in the non-formal education of young refugees in Budapest: people directly in contact with refugees via administering education and training projects; and refugee youth participating in such programmes. Participants on the service provision side were contacted directly via email. Interviews with them were followed by snowball sampling, relying on their networks and connections to put me in touch with further interviewees (Valentine, 2005). The roles of interviewees varied – from project manager, to social worker and teacher – as did the profiles of the organisations. Gaining access to young refugees participating in educational programmes was more challenging and relied on NGO workers who acted as gatekeepers in this process. A teacher at one of the NGOs helped recruit two of his students and arrange interviews with them. However, only one interview could be conducted as the other student did not attend the appointment and there was no opportunity for rescheduling.

Field observations

The missed appointment was a beneficial 'accident', as the time gained offered the chance to observe the physical spaces where learning occurs. Observation complemented the interview method with insight about the spatial environment such as the lobby and the teaching rooms of the organisations, the community house where social events take place and the neighbourhood these are located in. Taking field notes allowed me to combine empirical detail and personal impressions (Mills and Morton, 2013), and make sense of the spaces where human interactions occur. I also attended a roundtable discussion on *Migration and Party Politics*, where I observed as part of the audience. This was a public event organised by one of the NGOs supporting migrants and refugees, chaired by its director and featuring a representative of the current governing party as well as a representative of an opposition party. The Q&A session afterwards provided pertinent insight into dynamics between state and civil society agents in relation to service provision for migrants and refugees. In order to illustrate the wider political context in which education provision for young refugees takes place in Hungary, some relevant policy papers and pieces of legislation were collected as well. These are all public information available online, thus required no permission to access.

3.3 Data Analysis

Based on the audio recordings, interview transcripts were produced for analysis. All interviews were transcribed in full, 10 of the 11 interviews were transcribed in Hungarian and where verbatim quotes are used the text was translated by the researcher who is a native Hungarian speaker. One interview was conducted and transcribed in English. On request, transcripts were sent to participants for review and to make any changes before analysis. Transcripts and field notes were evaluated through an interpretative qualitative data analysis by searching for key themes in the data. Relying on open coding allowed to generate initial concepts from the data. This was followed by constructing typologies, searching for patterns, identifying processes in the data and developing explanations accounting for them. Finally, data had to be connected by making sense of the relations and interactions between emerging categories (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Data analysis and interpretation was a cyclical process of returning to data in search of coherence and reinterpreting meanings through newly developed insights (Brenner, 2006). It was an iterative process with continuously shifting focus, and data emerged to be clustered around three main themes: (1) the structural

background and socio-political context in which education in Hungary takes place; (2) the different types of formal and non-formal education provision for young refugees; and (3) the additional factors influencing the education and learning trajectories of refugee youth. Hence, the analytical chapters will offer a detailed discussion of these topics following this sequence.

3.4 Ethics and Limitations

Representation and Positionality

Inspired by Dávila's (2014) research with refugee students from Vietnam in the US, this study views 'representation as an act of caring' (30), which includes the responsibility of portraying participants and their communities in text. Instead of essentialising the experiences of participants, the research is based on the understanding that they have agency and are 'experts of their own lives' (26). For a researcher who is not a refugee, representing refugee students requires self-reflexivity and accountability for collecting, interpreting and presenting data; and the acknowledgement of the power imbalances between the researcher and participants and their communities (Dávila, 2014). Instead of aiming for objectivity and distance, this study seeks to build understanding through solidarity and engagement. I tried to avoid recreating an institutional interview setting, which asylum seekers have to face during refugee status determination procedures, and ensure that our conversation is 'a dialogue rather than an interrogation' (Valentine, 2005:111) to create a space safe for critique, which avoids pressuring the student participant into performing 'the grateful' for any support he might receive. Nevertheless, I am conscious that I directly benefit from this research, and that my knowledge, views and interpretations are always partial influenced by a blend of factors (Mullings, 1999). Being a white Hungarian woman, my own privileges and experiences in the Hungarian public education system through primary and secondary levels, and of higher education in the UK will inevitably impact research conduct and findings and serve as a lens for my thoughts and interpretations. Throughout the research it was crucial to adhere to certain codes of ethics such as obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation and option for withdrawal at any time without consequence (Winchester, 1996), to protect participants by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in handling data as well as to safeguard their physical, psychological and emotional well-being at all times.

Language

One of the greatest advantages of the interview method in general, and of interviewing young people in particular is that it allows them to speak for themselves, to voice their own opinions and thoughts directly (Eder and Fingerson, 2011), and describe themselves and their context in their own words (Dávila, 2014). However, not speaking the native language of the participant, the researcher is faced with the dilemma whether experiences can be fully captured in a second or third language (Ibid). Thus, it is crucial to reiterate that representation is filtered through my own understanding and language. Although the student participant chose to do the interview in Hungarian, me not speaking his native language required him to conform to speaking mine, which generates a power imbalance. After consulting with his teacher – who ensured the forms would be appropriate for his student’s Hungarian skills – and to avoid being patronising by giving him a simplified version assuming he would not understand the original, he received the information sheet and consent form in Hungarian. We spent some time talking about the research, and when he decided to participate he chose a pseudonym. Hereafter he will be referred to as Javed.

Access

Power relations have an impact on both the access to research participants as well as the interview conduct (Winchester, 1996). Although in academic discussion the researcher is often assumed to be in a position of dominance, research participants frequently control the researcher’s access to information and to informants (Valentine, 2005). Thus, establishing good rapport with respondents was key but establishing contact and scheduling interviews was time-consuming (Lindsay, 1997). My time in the field constrained to 3 weeks in June 2018, the lack of response to some interview requests, and occasional cancellations certainly limited the scope of the study. Relying on NGO workers as gatekeepers to student participants limited my access to interviewees and thus data collection. Therefore, numbers had to be adjusted to what was feasible but low sample sizes do not have to diminish credibility (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). While data gathered from only one interview with a student is obviously not generalizable in any way, learning is an individual process, thus a glimpse into an individual’s learning trajectory is limited yet valuable data in its own right. By no means is it an absolute account but one that can point to important themes for further investigation.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Political Context

4.1.1 Migration and Asylum Policy

Political discourse and decision-making in Hungary distinguishes between different types of migration, with intra-EU migration not even defined as migration by the government, rather as one of the four freedoms of the EU⁵. Similarly, ‘ethnic Hungarians’ gaining citizenship and migrating to Hungary from surrounding countries are not considered migrants⁶. This standpoint is rooted in the revisionist narrative based on the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, which resulted in 3.5 million left outside of the redrawn Hungarian borders (Waterbury, 2011). The current governing Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance party and its coalition partner, the Christian Democratic People’s Party (KDNP) largely based their election campaigns on such ethnic nationalism (Waterbury, 2011) and granted citizenship to ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries. TCNs could also gain residency and citizenship in Hungary by investment through the residency bond programme although this was suspended in March 2017. There is also an increasing presence of international students in Hungarian higher education, which is encouraged by the government through scholarships⁷, reflecting the view of educational spaces as ‘key sites of competitive knowledge economies’ (Holloway et al, 2010:590).

At the same time, the far-right discourse of the Hungarian government criminalises asylum seekers and migrants coming from countries with large Muslim populations, and portrays them as unilaterally dangerous others (Thorleifsson, 2017). While TCNs are accepted if they invest in the country or come to study, those seeking asylum are deemed as security threats. The securitisation of forced migration is based on the premise that asylum seekers are threatening the security, welfare and culture of the country and even Europe and Christian civilisation as a whole, thus serves to reinforce ‘the boundaries of an imagined Hungarian

⁵ Roundtable discussion on *Migration and (Party)Politics*, 26/06/2018, [Video recording available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-P65Z9Mk_UM&frags=pl%2Cwn]

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Interview 2, 11/06/2018

nation' (Thorleifsson, 2017:319). An argument often used by the government to legitimise its anti-immigration legislation and Islamophobic rhetoric is focusing on the perceived incompatibility of the Christian values and culture of Hungary and Islam, the religion of the majority of refugees arriving to the country. Thus, Hungary is imagined as a Christian nation that needs to be defended from Islam, and this assumed cultural threat culminates in a security threat associated with radical Islam and terrorism (Fekete, 2009). However, as expressed by an interviewee involved with a Christian denomination in his work, this argument is rather used to deceive the electorate by creating fear and moral panic:

'I have some doubts about the extent to which our culture is Christian. Just because we are writing it in our Constitution now, I don't think that the lying and fearmongering and stealing, which have become parts of our everyday lives, will stop.'

(Interview 6, 15/06/2018).

The security approach to asylum 'has become such an important political tool'⁸ that based on this narrative, the Hungarian government has implemented numerous policies restricting the access of asylum seekers to the country's territory such as building a razor-wire fence in September 2015 and increasing police forces to guard the borders and keep out asylum seekers (Simonovits and Bernát, 2016). Furthermore, since 28 March 2017, the two 'transit zones' at the Southern border with Serbia are the only places where an asylum claim in Hungary can be lodged⁹, where one person is admitted per working day and have to stay until their application is processed and a decision made.^{10;11} Despite government efforts to create the illusion that all refugees are kept out of the country, Hungary granted protection to 3.448 people between 2013 and 2018: refugee status for 897, subsidiary protection status for 2.447, and temporary protection status for 104 (KSH, 2018a; 2018b). 'It is not a coincidence that far more people get subsidiary protection status'¹², as unlike refugees, they do not have the same

⁸ Interview 1, 07/06/2018

⁹ Interview 1, 07/06/2018

¹⁰ <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/belugyminiszterium/hirek/a-hatarvedelmi-szervek-felkeszultek-a-megerositett-jogi-hatarzar-eletbe-lepesere>

¹¹ Since the time of the research, these 'transit zones' in Hungary have been closed following a European Court of Justice order that classified them as detention

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-05/cp200060en.pdf>

¹² Interview 1, 07/06/2018

conditions for family reunification¹³, which is an additional step of limiting immigration to the country. Refugee and subsidiary protection statuses are reviewed by the Immigration and Asylum Office¹⁴ every 3 years, while previously the refugee status was reviewed after 10 years, and subsidiary protection status after 5 years¹⁵. Those with protection status are relocated from the transit zones to a reception centre where they can stay for a maximum of 30 days, during which they are provided food, shelter and some assistance from social workers. Upon leaving, many of them go to Budapest to seek accommodation and employment as well as support from CSOs. Only unaccompanied minors under the age of 14 are housed at a state-run child care institution in Fót,¹⁶ while unaccompanied minors between 14 and 18 years as well as children arriving with their families have to remain detained in the transit zones while their application is processed¹⁷. Those turning 18 in Fót can stay in group homes until they reach the age of 24 if they are enrolled at school.¹⁸ This arbitrary categorisation of youth according to physical age reflects the life stage approach observed in the literature (Bourdillon, 2017; Harlan, 2016), which has real-life implications for young refugees determining their treatment in the asylum system.

4.1.2 State and Civil Society Relations

In order to put Javed's story into perspective and to better understand the challenges he and his peers have to overcome, the political backdrop against which this occurs must be illustrated. The Hungarian government's xenophobic hate campaign leading up to the parliamentary elections in April 2018 framed the migration crisis to be orchestrated by Hungarian-American Jewish philanthropist, George Soros (Thorleifsson, 2017), whose Open Society Foundations (OSF) funds numerous NGOs and initiatives aimed at providing services and advocating for refugees and migrants in Hungary and worldwide. One of the first explicit attacks the government directed at such NGOs was the Bill on Foreign Funded Organisations adopted on 13 June 2017, requiring NGOs to register themselves if they receive funding over

¹³ In the first 3 months after their status approval, refugees not have to prove ability of sponsorship of family members, which is not granted for people with subsidiary protection status (Interview 1, 07/06/2018)

¹⁴ Since 1 July 2019, the Immigration and Asylum Office has been renamed National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing

¹⁵ Interview 1, 07/06/2018

¹⁶ A town in the Budapest metropolitan area 25 km outside of Budapest

¹⁷ Interview 1, 07/06/2018

¹⁸ <http://www.wp.kigyk.hu/rolunk/angol/>

the yearly threshold and to label themselves as ‘organisation receiving foreign funding’ on their website and in all publications.¹⁹

This regime relies on the construction of a necessary ‘enemy’ as its power basis rests on unifying the population through defending their (the nation’s) interests (Kövéér, 2015). Such enemies are not only liberals, the EU, so-called ‘illegal migrants’ and Soros but most recently also anyone scrutinising and criticising the system, or advocating for and supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants including CSOs, human rights activists, academics and journalists. Hence, the Hungarian government does not only create external enemies but also internal ones. Civil society plays a crucial role in exposing and fighting power abuses, thus the regime has interest in its methodical harassment (Kornai, 2015). For example, through prohibiting NGOs from carrying out monitoring work in both closed and open institutions where asylum seekers and refugees are by limiting their space to operate and narrowing access to their clients.²⁰ Corresponding with the conceptualisation of Cox and Gallai (2014), the political system in Hungary as defined and imposed by the ruling elites in power heavily shapes and in this case, systematically limits civil society.

Besides the financial and operational limitation, symbolic tools of publicly discrediting NGOs are also utilised by the government. On 14 April 2018, *Figyelő* – a pro-government Hungarian weekly magazine – published a list of over 200 ‘Soros mercenaries’, including names of NGO employees supported by OSF, faculty of the Central European University founded by Soros, as well as human rights activists, investigative journalists and anyone considered to be a member of the Hungarian ‘Soros-network’ (Gorondi, 2018). Recently, members of KDNP, Fidelitas and IKSZ (the youth wings of Fidesz and KDNP) also placed stickers on the buildings of some NGOs reading ‘Organisation supporting immigration’ (Figures 2-4). Such listing and labelling actions remind of dark times in the country’s history as some of these buildings used to be marked by another symbol, the yellow star of David for housing Jews, who were persecuted and deported during World War II (Hungarian Spectrum, 2018). Furthermore, on 20 June 2018 – ironically on World Refugee Day – the Hungarian Parliament adopted a Bill

¹⁹ Act LXXVI of 2017 on the Transparency of Organisations Receiving Foreign Funds
<http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/MKPDF/hiteles/MK17093.pdf>, (Unofficial translation:
<https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/LexNGO-adopted-text-unofficial-ENG-14June2017.pdf>)

²⁰ Interview 1, 07/06/2018

changing the Constitution and adding the so-called ‘Stop Soros’ law package, which criminalises helping refugees and asylum seekers and regards even providing leaflets informing them about their rights in their native languages as ‘assisting illegal migration’.²¹



(Figure 2: Vice President of Fidelitas placing a sticker on the door of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Source: <https://zoom.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/DSZS20180627003.jpg>)



(Figure 3: KDNP-MP s placing a sticker on the door of Amnesty International, Source: https://civilhetes.net/sites/default/files/kepek/hollik-istvan_6.jpg)



(Figure 4: Vice President of IKSZ placing a sticker on the door of Asylum Foundation, Source: <https://4cdn.hu/kraken/image/upload/s--yVMLXb5A--/7AaGHnt0Zv34zwfls.jpeg>)

²¹The Hungarian Government’s Proposal on the Stop Soros Legislative Package, [Available online: <http://www.kormany.hu/download/c/9a/41000/STOP%20SOROS%20TÖRVÉNYCSOMAG.pdf>], (Unofficial English translation: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/STOP-SOROS-LEGISLATIVE-PACKAGE-PROPOSAL.pdf>)

4.2 Realities of Education Provision for Refugees

4.2.1 Formal Education

Over the past two cycles of Fidesz-rule, public education²² has become increasingly centralised with schools previously run by local authorities now controlled by a ‘bureaucratic giant mak[ing] staffing, curricular, and financial decisions for thousands of schools over the heads of teachers, parents, and local governments’ (Kornai, 2015:36). This obsession with centralisation is intertwined with nationalisation efforts (Ibid) in the ‘citizen-making machine’ (Nyíri, 2006:32). The National Core Curriculum serves as the foundation of the knowledge, skills and values to be acquired, according to which the aims of public education include developing students’ sense of national identity, patriotism and democratic citizenship²³. This demonstrates the role of education as commonly understood in relation to citizenship and nationalism, where educational and political ideologies connect (Mincu, 2009). In this framework, schools are sites where students learn to imagine and perform nationhood (Baumann, 2013:439).

Thus, formal education creates and reinforces a sense of belonging to a national union, but which is not attainable for everyone. Although national education policy grants refugees the right to participate in Hungarian public education²⁴, their inclusion is hindered by numerous barriers in practice. Firstly, the compulsory schooling age in Hungary is 16, hence those arriving as unaccompanied minors below that age are enrolled according to their age group in the district of their residence²⁵. Aligned with the findings of Earnest et al (2015), the first barrier for those above the schooling age in Hungary is also the validation of their experience or credentials. Due to displacement, educated youth often do not have their documents proving their qualifications, thus end up ‘lost’ in the system, similar to those who arrive

²² The Hungarian formal education system is organised into the following stages: primary education covering grades 1-8; secondary education covering grades 9-12 in secondary grammar schools or vocational schools; and higher education divided into colleges and universities (EACEA)

²³ Government decree 110/2012. (VI. 4.) on the issuing, introduction and implementation of the National Core Curriculum (effective from 1 September 2013)

²⁴ 92(1)(a), Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education; 39(1)(b), Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education

²⁵ Interview 8, 15/06/2018

without former qualifications.²⁶ For example, Javed finished school up to 10th grade in his home in Afghanistan before fleeing with his parents to Hungary but without documents he was unable to prove his educational background he obtained at home and was set back to repeat 8th and 9th grade in the Hungarian school system²⁷.

Secondly, a challenge young refugees all have in common, independent of educational background, is the language barrier. Hungarian is considered as one of the most difficult languages in the world for its complex grammar and lack of similarity with any other language. The education system in Hungary operates in a monolingual environment, which 'assumes that everybody speaks Hungarian'.²⁸ The language of instruction is Hungarian and even if refugees are fluent in English and attend a bilingual secondary school, some of the subjects will still be taught in Hungarian, thus learning it is a prerequisite for effective participation²⁹. To access higher education in Hungary, students need to pass the matriculation exam, which is obtained at the end of secondary school and comprises of 5 subjects³⁰ heavily relying on the Hungarian language as well. Although non-native speakers have the option to take the HFL exam, there are still other subjects taught and assessed only in Hungarian (even in bilingual schools), which creates a contradictory situation for refugee students: relief on one hand and barrier on the other³¹. Javed attends a Hungarian-German bilingual secondary vocational school, where he learns Mathematics, History and German Civilisation in German, all other subjects are taught in Hungarian³².

Thirdly, the attitude of educational institutions is another serious barrier to enrolment. Most schools are not welcoming towards refugees, especially if they are above the schooling age. This is partly due to capacity issues such as lack of HFL teachers and teaching materials to address the needs of this specific target group, including assisting with official paperwork and helping them deal with traumatic experiences (Mezei, 2015). Although HFL teachers are vital for young refugees not only to teach the vocabulary and grammar but also culture and

²⁶ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

²⁷ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

²⁸ Interview 8, 15/06/2018

²⁹ Interview 2, 11/06/2018

³⁰ Hungarian Grammar and Literature, Mathematics, History, a foreign language, and an optional subject

³¹ Interview 2, 11/06/2018

³² Interview 10, 27/06/2018

traditions, the government abolished the full-time HFL teacher degree in 2017 (Nádor, 2017). Therefore, in the absence of support from controlling institutions, schools are not equipped enough to teach those who do not speak Hungarian (Lakatos and Pataki, 2017). This is exacerbated by the widespread anti-refugee attitude in public discourse affecting faculty and students and often resulting in the marginalisation and bullying of refugee students (Balogh and Császár, 2017). An interviewee addressed the worsening attitudes of schools towards refugees as running parallel to the shift in political climate amidst centralisation and anti-immigration efforts, former partnering schools reduced refugee student numbers to avoid confrontation with the chain of command³³.

Therefore, only a narrow range of schools admit refugee students in Budapest. A secondary, vocational and technical school has the freedom³⁴ of offering a part-time adult learning programme to attain the 8th grade primary level qualification as a basis for continuing with secondary and vocational training. The same school also developed a foundation year for migrants and refugees only, which is a one-year preparatory class focusing on HFL teaching, after which they can begin 9th grade in integrated classes (Mezei, 2015). While these are useful for providing the necessary credentials, particular subjects and their vocabularies cause learning difficulties for students (Ibid). Comparable to students' perspectives in Hek's (2005) research, and the findings of Balogh and Császár (2017), Javed described attending this class for non-Hungarian speakers as a negative experience due to frequent violence and bullying amongst students, stemming from conflicts between ethnic groups. Upon finishing the foundation year, he switched schools and has recently completed 9th grade at a secondary school, where he is the only international student³⁵.

4.2.2 Non-formal and Informal Education

Accessing formal education is seldom a viable option for young refugees in Hungary for all these limiting factors outlined above, which align with the three areas of needs observed by Naidoo (2015) in Australian schools: pre-migration histories, language, and school culture. However, as established earlier, enrolment should not be treated as 'proxy for education'

³³ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

³⁴ This school is not run by the central authority but became a sub-institution of the Technical Vocational Centre of Budapest in 2015

³⁵ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

(Bourdillon, 2017:106) because it does not automatically lead to relevant education provision given the various educational histories of refugee youth that require diverse educational needs (Rossiter et al, 2015): while some have obtained formal qualifications in their home countries, others might have never attended school or are illiterate in their native languages. However, there are various spaces of learning available to be explored beyond formal schooling. Non-formal and informal educational opportunities for refugee youth in Budapest can be grouped into three broader categories based on the various needs they address: Hungarian language tutoring, skills training, and community building.

Firstly, given that the most common challenge for the majority of refugees in Hungary is the language, most CSOs offer some sort of *Hungarian language training*. However, these are not always effective enough because similar to schools, they lack the capacity to employ HFL teachers, so classes are mostly taught by volunteers. Unlike with teaching English or German as a foreign language, curricula and learning materials are not as well-developed for teaching Hungarian, particularly for refugees³⁶ (Mezei, 2015). Even if they are already advanced in Hungarian like Javed, making up for the lack of that ‘linguistic richness’³⁷ possessed by native speakers is a long process, which requires the help of professionals. Thus, one of the organisations runs HFL classes taught by HFL teachers, as well as a course for illiterate adults³⁸. Those enrolled in school can also benefit from individual tutoring adjusting to their own needs. Javed participates in the programme and meets with his tutor three times a week after school for a 60-90-minute session, which he describes as very helpful for practicing Hungarian and assisting with his homework in various subjects³⁹.

Secondly, CSOs also provide other *skills training* aimed at contributing to refugee’s labour market access. An organisation specialising in adult education was founded by a former refugee who arrived in Hungary in 2001. Having gone through the asylum system he had first-hand experience of the needs and saw education as the solution for many of the problems refugees in Hungary faced.⁴⁰ After benefitting from a computer course and earning an ECDL

³⁶ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

³⁷ Interview 2, 11/06/2018

³⁸ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

³⁹ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

⁴⁰ Interview 11, 13/07/2018

certification, he realised the need for introducing this course in refugee camps, where it served as a tool of conflict resolution giving people not only relevant job market skills, but also a productive focus to ameliorate the feeling of uncertainty (Thomas, 2016). Over the years, his private initiative grew into an organisation, the flagship service of which remains the ECDL course. However, new course additions including crafts, child- and elderly care, driver's licence, and a web development class seek to match the needs by directly reaching out to various employers to enquire about current labour market demands, and through actively engaging with their participants to understand their needs.⁴¹

This leads to a third aspect of non-formal education provision focusing on *community building*. One such initiative is a community programme established by an intercultural foundation with a wider profile than some other organisations, working not only with migrants and refugees but also with disadvantaged youth, vulnerable groups and minorities⁴². This community consists of people from varied age groups, nationalities and statuses, and provides the framework for multiple activities supporting the social inclusion of refugees and migrants. Their *learning programme* includes language and IT classes, which besides skill-building also create opportunities for refugee participants to take on leading roles through teaching their native languages or giving a workshop sharing their skills with others. Thus, apart from learning relevant skills, the emphasis is also on balancing the unequal positions of 'provider' and 'recipient' of education, instead involving participants in planning and implementing activities. A group of active members – including refugees, migrants and Hungarians of various ages – established 'the Council' to plan events and activities with support from the programme coordinators:

'we would like if this programme wouldn't be one where middle-class university student girls volunteer to teach refugee boys, but [...] where the overarching question is what kind of world we would like to live in and we would think about and work towards that together.'⁴³

⁴¹ Interview 11, 13/07/2018

⁴² Interview 7, 15/06/2018

⁴³ Ibid

They also run a *mentoring programme*, in which refugee participants are allocated a Hungarian mentor and meet weekly to work towards refugees' personal development together. This provides an informal way of learning through participation, addressing the navigation of 'everyday life' (Mills and Kraftl, 2014) through conversing in Hungarian or English, paying bills, going shopping, or cooking together. The aim is to follow the needs and interests of mentees and establish supportive personal connections in the local community to foster refugees' sense of belonging:

'to have a Hungarian [...] who is friendly, who one can call, who one can count on, and who in a way can anchor them here, so someone who can be a link in this world'.⁴⁴

Another form of community building is run by a grassroots initiative⁴⁵, which began with a graphic designer and her architect friend implementing a project with refugee youth living in group homes in 2013, using a *social design* method. This is a creative problem-solving and designer approach following predetermined steps from planning to execution with the aim of everyone equally participating in each step⁴⁶. For instance, during the renovation of indoor and outdoor communal spaces they decided what purpose spaces should have, collected materials, painted walls, made items together (Figure 5). The emphasis is on forming a community including refugees of different ethnic groups, local and international volunteers via a shared learning experience through creative activities.



(Figure 5: Renovated communal area of a former outdoor swimming pool,

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/OpenDoorsHungary/photos/a.218134905008829/226717377483915/>)

⁴⁴ Interview 7, 15/06/2018

⁴⁵ They are a working group of a national voluntary organisation, which is part of an international peace movement (Interview 9, 26/06/2018)

⁴⁶ Interview 9, 26/06/2018

The two organisations and communities recently joined forces to open a community house, which serves as a meeting point for their participant groups and is a versatile space accommodating various activities from concerts, yoga classes, crafts workshops to intercultural evenings and film screenings.⁴⁷ This space is located near Ferenc Square in the 9th district of Budapest, a residential area housing many international families that is becoming increasingly gentrified attracting various groups. As a result, indoor and outdoor community events create inclusive spaces for (young) refugees, migrants and Hungarians alike, allowing a less formal, more organic way of reaching out to members of society who normally might not have contact with each other.⁴⁸ Similar to Schmidtke's (2018) observation of the spatial context of immigrant integration, this highlights the importance of the physical spaces in education opportunities, which can enhance inclusion in the way they are used. Bringing support services closer to those the programmes are aimed at is crucial, as Javed would have to otherwise take public transport to reach most of the places where he can participate in these activities.

4.2.3 Discussion

The typological distinction between various kinds of formal, non-formal and informal education merely serves an analytical purpose, in practice these are much more interweaved. They are part of a learning continuum in which various degrees of formality and informality can be recognised (Smith and Philipps, 2017). While non-formal education by definition does not normally entail certification, in the Hungarian context this is a central aspect of non-formal training. The struggle to validate their skills often results in refugees thinking they lack skills⁴⁹, whereas they often already obtained⁴⁹ qualifications and worked in different roles to adapt to various labour market dynamics in their home countries but lack documented proof of them. Hence, some of the skills training offered at CSOs (e.g. language, vocational) are accredited courses to meet the need of credentials as well as to build the confidence of refugees, giving them a sense of accomplishment.⁵⁰ Connected to this is an informal aspect of young refugees' learning process, the engagement with official administration, its

⁴⁷ Interview 7, 15/06/2018; Interview 9, 26/06/2018

⁴⁸ Interview 7, 15/06/2018

⁴⁹ Interview 11, 13/07/2018

⁵⁰ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

structures and institutions as coming from countries with different bureaucratic systems they need to learn the requirements of Hungarian bureaucracy for enrolment in school or the recruitment process for jobs.⁵¹ This learning takes the form of directed information sharing on what needs to be done and how⁵² in order to live and succeed in their new environment. However, as this is not supported by the government, organisations are limited in their outreach and often information is only passed on through word of mouth. Javed says he also hears about different opportunities through social media or from his friends. Formal and non-formal education also intersect in his own educational experience, which highlights that being enrolled in school does not encompass or substitute other ways of learning. On the contrary, the tutoring he receives at a NGO is essential for his success in formal education, enhancing the efficiency of formal education but also valuable in its own right, indeed for many of his peers even replacing formal education.

In a Foucauldian sense, because power relations are 'everywhere' as a shifting force, power does not always dominate and subjugate but can also be productive and is a strategy embedded in complex relations rather than a fixed structure (Ball, 2013). Therefore, it can be argued that non-formal and informal learning complicate the power imbalance imposed by exclusionary formal structures, via providing people the opportunity to learn and advance through other means beyond the school system. Besides, the equal participation aspect of projects that allow refugee students to teach classes themselves and engage in decision-making about activities blurs the boundaries between provider and recipient roles in learning and treat it as a collaborative process fostering exchange. A reversal of such roles is also apparent in the example of a former refugee benefiting from non-formal education later establishing an organisation providing non-formal education to others.

Based on Freire's understanding of education as a form of raising consciousness of the oppressed, Mills and Kraftl (2014) highlight the value of informal education as a way for disenfranchised groups to overcome dehumanising social relations. This is pertinent to the ways refugee youth exercise agency in navigating formal systems and building networks

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Interview 3, 12/06/2018

amongst themselves, which are vital sources of informal learning through information exchange. For example, Javed's friend who already had refugee status in Hungary and has been living there for years helped him with enrolment to school and directed him towards some of the NGOs that offer support, and before our interview, Javed was providing translation assistance to an acquaintance⁵³. This coincides with the asset approach to refugee youth focusing on their abilities and resilience (Wilkinson et al, 2017) instead of their vulnerabilities and challenges. Thus, it must be recognised that 'hegemony is never complete, and resistance constantly emerges' (McCreary et al, 2013:258), that despite structural barriers, learning is continuous and necessary (Brigham et al, 2015).

Although the role of CSOs facilitating some of that learning is fundamental, a common structural barrier of non-formal education provision is the lack of resources, mentioned by interviewees from all CSOs. Their funding sources include EU, OSF, UNHCR, private foundations, partnering churches mainly in Western Europe, corporations and private individual donations. However, the majority of the projects are funded by the Asylum, Migration Integration Fund (AMIF), an EU fund distributed nationally by Member States,⁵⁴ which the Hungarian government suspended and no new call for tenders has been announced, hence a lifeline is cut both for organisations and their refugee participants.⁵⁵ While having provided essential financial resources, tenders restricted projects relying on AMIF funds, thus limit a holistic view of education by compartmentalising the needs of refugees into housing, labour market integration, school integration, community programmes among others and results in failure to cater to certain groups (e.g. women, highly qualified persons). For participants, like Javed, a result of the lack of funds and fragmented nature of programmes results in having to piece together different services and learning opportunities from different providers, which often require not only money but also extra time and energy. He says because he often cannot engage and fit all these activities into his daily life so he has to prioritise his language skills and homework⁵⁶. Thus, NGOs are looking for alternative unrestricted funding, some also aim to become more financially sustainable by

⁵³ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en

⁵⁵ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

⁵⁶ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

transforming into social enterprises⁵⁷, and there is also a recognised need for diversifying funding sources to avoid depending on one funder⁵⁸.

4.3 Beyond Education

4.3.1. Immediate Needs

Education does not take place in a vacuum but is a process influenced by various factors that determine the access to and the outcomes of learning opportunities (Rossiter et al, 2015). Without meeting the immediate needs of refugee youth such as adequate accommodation and livelihood, education will be difficult for them to begin or resume in the host location. Hence, it is crucial to consider what support is available to provide these conditions for them to actually be able to participate in education and learning. A major struggle for refugees above 18, after leaving the reception centre, is finding accommodation. Due to the lack of state support, they can only rely on their savings (if any) or assistance from CSOs. A homeless shelter provides temporary accommodation in Budapest⁵⁹, which can be a first point of call but not a long-term solution. For those arriving with their families, such as Javed, searching for accommodation might be less of a burden on them than on their parents or older relatives but impacts them as well. Issues such as increasing rent and the reluctance of local homeowners to rent their properties to refugees makes it more difficult for them to find accommodation.

The *crisis housing programme* provided by the diaconate of a Christian Church aimed to meet the immediate need for accommodation after leaving the reception centre ‘to fill those first few months of total disorientation’⁶⁰. This low-threshold service (independent of status) also covered additional needs such as food stamps, shopping vouchers, medical supplies, legal assistance, and psychological support. Housing was guaranteed for 1 month, which could be extend for another month, after which they tried to allocate people to housing services at other organisations. Although the project ended after a year, the need is still there so the

⁵⁷ Interview 7, 15/06/2018; Interview 9, 26/06/2018; Interview 11, 13/07/2018

⁵⁸ Interview 11, 13/07/2018

⁵⁹ Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and its Institutions

⁶⁰ Interview 6, 15/06/2018

initiative aims to keep providing housing but seeks to secure funding first⁶¹. Another service provided by an NGO is a *housing integration programme* offering flats for families and flatshares for single young adults.⁶² Besides housing it also includes an adult education component facilitating language training, 8th grade qualification, vocational training, aiming to prepare clients to enter the labour market as soon as possible and become self-sufficient to be able to rent accommodation on their own. These complex programmes reflect the interconnected needs of young refugees, which should be approached jointly.

4.3.2 Labour Market Access

In order to be able to afford housing, refugees must have an income. They used to be eligible for integration aid for up to 2 years as part of an integration agreement with the Immigration and Asylum Office but this was abolished in 2016⁶³. Although, young people usually want to work right after receiving their status, partly because work was already part of their pre-migratory lives (Wagner, 2017), and they might also be pressured into caretaker roles in their families⁶⁴. Thus, for many young refugees, especially without the support of relatives, finding paid work takes priority over education, or is practiced while being enrolled in school.⁶⁵ Their entry to the labour market is predominantly through the catering industry at various food outlets⁶⁶. While long working hours and no holiday exploits their time and energy that they could spend on education, the relatively high wage makes them reluctant to give it up and puts them at risk of becoming trapped in low-skilled work for several years⁶⁷. This creates a protracted state of 'timepass' for young refugees, delaying 'meaningful futures' (Wagner, 2017:118). Javed tells me that because he is still in school, he cannot work full-time but struggles with finding more flexible weekend-only jobs. Instead, he is using his summer holiday from school to work at a restaurant, and also wants to learn how to drive, starting his driving lessons soon⁶⁸.

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Interview 5, 14/06/2018

⁶³ This was paid monthly at different rates for single adults and adults with families, with lowered rates after every 6-month period

http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=960&Itemid=1587&lang=en

⁶⁴ Interview 8, 15/06/2018

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Interview 2, 11/06/2018

⁶⁷ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

⁶⁸ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

For youth above 18, age is not limiting them anymore in finding work⁶⁹ but their issues of accessing the labour market are similar to their challenges of accessing formal education. Firstly, the language barrier, especially in navigating through the bureaucracy of the recruitment process⁷⁰. Secondly, credentials do not translate into the Hungarian system, as a result of which those with qualifications experience de-skilling (Morrice,2013). Thirdly, the anti-refugee approach of many employers significantly hinders their access to jobs despite recent labour shortages.⁷¹ To address these challenges, some organisations specialise in labour market integration programmes. One of them encouraged entrepreneurship by supporting participants to realise their own business plans but despite refugees being included in the target group, the project was more relevant for TCNs with long-term goals to stay in Hungary instead of refugee youth.⁷² Another programme focused on recruiting refugees for low-skilled jobs at partnering companies mostly in the catering and hospitality industries, and providing one-on-one mentoring throughout the recruitment process⁷³. However, as expressed by a mentor, young refugees usually did not return after the first consultation about job opportunities partly because they tend to be more qualified and mobile to look for employment themselves. They can also exercise more agency in making decisions about their prospects than those who arrive with families and dependent children⁷⁴, and might resort to the so-called 'black market' or 'grey economy' or leave the country as survival strategies (Abebe and Waters, 2017) in hope for better possibilities:

'Everyone leaves because they want a better life. Pay is low, if I earn 700 Euros a month, 500 is for rent, and 200 is for food.' (Javed, 27/06/2018).

'They can decide easier knowing they would have a monthly net income of [£275], everyone immediately exchanges it to Euros, they know exactly what wages are like in Western Europe and the international laws regarding their employment are not really a deterring force.' (Interview 3, 12/06/2018).

⁶⁹ Interview 2, 11/06/2018

⁷⁰ Interview 4, 14/06/2018

⁷¹ Interview 5, 14/06/2018

⁷² Interview 4, 14/06/2018

⁷³ Interview 3, 12/06/2018

⁷⁴ Ibid

4.3.3 Wider Society

Most educational opportunities encountered during this research are aimed at some form of integration of refugees, either into school, the labour market or wider society. While education can serve as a tool for integration (Rossiter et al, 2015), educational systems are reflections of the societies they emerge from, thus educational inequalities are inseparable from social inequalities and must be addressed together (Reay, 2012). As widely argued in the literature, integration must be regarded as a two-way process (Pastoor, 2017), not only involving the adaptation of refugee youth but also the acceptance of their educational spaces and broader environment (Naidoo, 2015). Hence, to be able to make use of the knowledge, skills and experience young refugees already have and gain through the various learning opportunities, an inclusive environment is essential (Thomas, 2016). Services of CSOs thus also include reaching out to and educating the wider society by raising awareness and advocating for refugees, training educational institutions and workplaces to be more inclusive. They used to do more of this work in previous years, when interest was also present in schools and other institutions⁷⁵. However, in light of the absence of a state integration strategy, the deliberate elimination of existing support systems, and the increasingly hostile political discourse towards refugees, this is becoming increasingly difficult. The most frequently mentioned challenge interviewees see as impeding their work besides lack of funding is overcoming the government's anti-immigrant propaganda aided by the media, which serves as a 'collective mouthpiece for the government' (Kornai, 2015:40). Javed also addressed the hostile socio-political climate in Hungary, sensing a change in the behaviour of people particularly around the time leading up to the latest parliamentary elections on 8 April 2018, and described an experience of being verbally harassed by an elderly Hungarian man at a shopping centre:

'They have become a bit more direct. The propaganda has succeeded very much. It succeeded.'⁷⁶

'I was wearing a backpack and he said "What's in your bag, migrant? A

⁷⁵ Interview 7, 15/06/2018

⁷⁶ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

bomb?”. I said no. The security guard came and asked what the problem was, I said nothing, I go home and that’s it. [...] I don’t care [...] I’m not as stupid as them.⁷⁷

Thus, integration for refugees comes with a burden of representation, they are expected to conform to the written (legal) and unwritten (socio-cultural) rules, and display an example of the ‘foreigner’ worthy of being accepted and not feared or discriminated against. This is especially true for young Muslim men, who are essentialised as security threats based on racial and religious stereotypes (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2008). According to some NGO workers, the real security threat is granting protection status without providing services and marginalising young refugees that way and pushing them into further hardship.⁷⁸

Regarding future prospects of young refugees ‘in a nation-state whose public education, as the state itself, has little interest in the ‘integration’ of non-natives’ (Nyíri, 2006:32), the outlook of interviewees is rather pessimistic, for good reason. Most respondents agreed that in the current securitised approach to migration and asylum in Hungary, it will be increasingly difficult for asylum seekers to even enter the country and receive protection status. Javed also fears that ‘there is no chance’ for others seeking asylum in Hungary to even enter the country in the future because ‘there is a fence’⁷⁹. Talking about his own future, he highlights learning as the most important thing – he aspires to study to become an engineer and eventually work in the automotive industry designing cars. Refugee youth already settled in Hungary, like Javed, who benefit from support systems are on a relatively good path to succeed but they need continuous support. However, the temporal uncertainty, an inherent part of displacement can become a significant issue. For many young refugees, Hungary is a transit country, and emigration is common especially in this age group, which raises the question whether integration into Hungarian society is an aim at all. Unpredictability regarding the political climate makes planning ahead also difficult for CSOs, some might even be forced to suspend their services due to lack of funding. The paradox is that refugees in Hungary comprise a very small group, which could allow for individual needs to be addressed,

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Interview 5, 14/06/2018; Interview 6, 15/06/2018

⁷⁹ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

at the same time, decreasing numbers aid the political will and deflect attention from such groups, and legitimise cuts in financial support for service provision.

Therefore, a return to the starting point reveals that refugee education in Hungary is framed by the political background including increasingly restrictive migration and asylum policies coupled with racist and xenophobic public discourse as well as the systemic debilitation of civil society. These processes seem to filter into every layer of the learning opportunities of refugee youth: influencing their access to formal education, the non-formal learning opportunities CSOs can offer to them, their access to housing and the labour market, and their relations to the wider population. However, instead of compartmentalising young refugees' lives into such categories, they need to be viewed as a holistic process taking place in different spaces but ultimately serving the same goal: inclusion.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to investigate young refugees' access to education in Budapest, with a particular focus on non-formal and informal learning opportunities and the role of civil society versus the state in education provision for refugee youth in Hungary. Examining the aims, practice and relevance of various kinds of education, the study found that enrolment in schools is rarely an option for refugee youth in Hungary due to the schooling age, the language barrier, validation of existing qualifications and the unwelcoming attitude of most schools. However, complicating the predominant understanding of education as formal schooling, it was argued that non-formal and informal learning are valuable not only to provide refugee youth the opportunities to complement formal education by learning Hungarian and building vocational skills but also to exercise their agency and actively participate in a wider community.

The research also demonstrated the interrelations between formal, non-formal and informal education, particularly in relation to acquiring credentials, and learning to navigate the Hungarian bureaucratic systems often through their own informal networks. Furthermore, the study identified non-educational factors influencing the learning trajectories of refugee youth such as housing, labour market access and the attitude of wider society. The role of

CSOs in providing relevant learning spaces for refugees is fundamental, albeit heavily constrained by lack of funding and the hostile anti-migrant environment fuelled by the government. Thus, structural changes are necessary to create a more welcoming environment to accommodate the needs of refugee youth and support them in all aspects of their lives.

To my knowledge, no previous study has interrogated the non-formal and informal educational spaces for refugee youth in Hungary, particularly considering the role of CSOs as service providers for this group. However, Hungary is an important case study due to its geopolitical context, with low immigration rates as opposed to some of the major immigration countries with more established educational infrastructures and an increasingly hostile socio-political climate towards migrants and refugees. Portraying refugee education as framed by wider political dynamics such as the centralisation and nationalisation of the school system, the securitisation of migration and asylum, and the systemic restriction of civil society highlighted the need to situate the personal experiences of young refugees in the structural background in which their education plays out, as it impacts all levels of young refugees' lives.

Ultimately, this study provided a snapshot of the current educational landscape of Budapest with regards to refugee youth and is by no means an all-encompassing representation. While beyond the scope of this research, it would be useful to gather more perspectives from young refugees in Hungary on their educational experiences for comparison and to map out potential ways forward for policy-making. Although Javed's story is only one of many, it demonstrates the need to consider the individual educational histories and needs of refugee youth, all of whom have skills, experiences, aspirations and potential. What they need is opportunities to realise that potential. On this note, I would like to give the last word to him:

I: Te mit hoztál magaddal otthonról?

J: *Magamat.*

[I: What did you bring from home?

J: *Myself.*]⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Interview 10, 27/06/2018

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