

Citizens of Nowhere
in a Landscape of Boundaries

Displacement and Belonging
among Young Refugees in Denmark

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Abstract

The imaginary of globalization is obsessed with mobility and wandering and in the global space, people cross borders routinely. At the same time, the ones who are actually forced into transit by travelling outside law often ignite discomfort, if not despise, among the passport-approved 'global' citizens. Through ethnographic qualitative fieldwork among a group of young refugees in and around Copenhagen, I explore how displacement and belonging are reflected upon and expressed among these actors. As non-citizens and as youth, the refugees are confined to a doubled liminal zone which intrigues my study: If we build our knowledge and understanding of the world from our place in it, how is this experienced when one does not have a juridical right to belong to the place one inhabits, as in the case of the refugee? I guide my research focus on how these young refugees reflect upon and express a sense of belonging, while negotiating with the boundaries that confine their daily living in the Danish asylum system, through the concepts of belonging, displacement, boundaries and *natio-normativity*, a term I introduce to address how belonging is framed as a normative rationality in the modern nation-state bound to national territory and citizenship. My empirical findings show that activity, freedom as well as social and lingual connection with their Danish surroundings are central factors for my informants' ability to belong to a place and 'localize' in Denmark. While belonging to their Danish setting is a repeated will and wish for my informants, their confinement within the asylum system as well as their continuous forced displacement around the country severely disrupts this process. Reflecting upon the refugee's liminal position as a form of abnormality produced by the nation-state that defines us as citizens before human beings, I use the concept of *natio-normativity* to understand how refugees' movement does not transcend borders, but rather is chained within them. Thereby, I take the case of young refugees in the *natio-normative* landscape of Denmark to argue how movement in a globalized era simultaneously enforces and challenges national boundaries.

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1. Research Purpose

Through ethnographic qualitative fieldwork among a group of young refugees in and around Copenhagen, I want to look into and understand how displacement and belonging are reflected upon and expressed among these actors. My focus is anthropological: I explore how these refugees negotiate and establish a sense of meaning in their daily lives, while living in a doubled, liminal zone. As refugees, they are waiting to be granted residence in a foreign country and unable to return to their countries of origin. While continually building a network and daily habits as well as learning lingual and cultural codes in Denmark, they are non-citizens and thus legally 'belong' to nowhere. In addition, they are in a special phase as young refugees - young enough to establish a new life in a changed 'locality' yet old enough to remember what they left behind. This liminality intrigues my objective: If we build our knowledge and understanding of the world from our place in it, how is this experienced when one does not have a juridical right to belong to the place one inhabits, as in the case of the refugee? This leads me to the following research questions:

- How do my informants reflect upon and express a sense of belonging?
- How do my informants react to and negotiate with the boundaries - structural, cultural, lingual - that confine their daily situation?

I guide my analysis through the concepts of belonging, displacement, boundaries and *natio-normativity*, a term I introduce to address how belonging is framed as a normative rationality bound to national territory and citizenship. Consequently, I use *natio-normativity* as a tool to understand how in a world of nationals and nation-states, there is no place for the non-citizen¹. While I interpret displacement and boundaries primarily in the physically or structurally experienced sense in this context, I argue that belonging is as much bound to a place as it is constructed, negotiated and contested through social interaction. As will become clear through my informants' narratives, their ability to belong or localize is tightly intertwined with their daily resistance to and negotiation with the forces of displacement and isolation that bound their living. In my analysis of the refugee's place and sense of belonging, I draw on theories of the nation-state as both 'imagined community' and an embodiment of boundaries. Reflecting upon the refugee as a form of abnormality produced by the nation-state that defines us as citizens before human beings, I use the concept of *natio-normativity* to understand how refugees' movement does not transcend borders, but rather is chained within them. Thereby, I take the case of young refugees in the *natio-normative* landscape of Denmark

¹ For definition of my use of the terms refugee, non-citizen and global citizen, see *appendix 1*.

to reflect upon how movement in a globalized era simultaneously enforces and challenges national boundaries.

2. Background

In Denmark, there are a couple of hundred young refugees aged between 17 and 22 living in asylum-centers (cf. Red Cross, 2010). Most have arrived alone, some in company of their family. Some have lived in the country for years and speak Danish, while others are newcomers. Most of them are male and far most are from Afghanistan, yet nationals from the Middle-East, Russia and Africa are well-represented, too. The refugees are all in a process of applying for asylum in Denmark, but at different phases: Some are in phase one, waiting for response on their first application from the Danish Immigration Service.² Some are in phase two, waiting for response on their second application from the Danish Refugee Board, which may take years. And yet others, the ones I have talked to, are in phase three, which means that they have applied up to three times for asylum but have been rejected each time and are now at a risk of being deported back to their countries of origin. The refugees in phase three are still offered school service and residence at the asylum centers, but their cases are closed and Red Cross does not grant them free legal service at this stage. While struggling to resist their legal rejection and stay in Denmark, the refugees in phase three continue to study at Red Cross' HCØ-school³ in Copenhagen. For most, this demands a 3-4 hours travel every day. Once the refugees have graduated the courses at this school and reached a sustainable level of Danish, they are transferred to the VUC-school⁴.

Red Cross Denmark has been responsible for the daily maintenance of asylum seekers' housing and education since 1984. While they can - and sometimes do - advice the government on asylum policies, Red Cross has no juridical or political say in the actual process of asylum application and their asylum work is budgeted by the Danish state. The daily facilitation of the refugees' situation is separated from the governmental process. I have adapted this separation in my study and focus on the refugees' lives. The governmental

2 What my informants refer to as 'Udlændingetjeneste', see *appendix 2*. While I use footnotes in this thesis partly to comment on the text, partly to supplement with citations relevant for the discussion, I refer to the appendix for more elaborate background information.

3 See *appendix 2*.

4 See *appendix 2*. Since many young and adult Danes take courses at VUC, the school presents the refugees' first entry into meeting Danes outside of the asylum system. Combined with the high level of Danish demanded at these courses, the entry into VUC is an important status-marker among the young refugees, as I will show in my empirical discussion.

asylum policies are brought in only in the extent that this has been relevant for my informants, as I focus on how my informants are affected by, reflect upon and negotiate the consequences of these policies. As noted earlier, this micro-perspective turns ‘macro’ since I use the case of refugees in Denmark to discuss a global phenomenon of how migration simultaneously threatens and enforces nation-state borders⁵.

3. Methodology and the Ethnographer’s Vantage Point

This leads me to some points about my ethnographic vantage point. As a Danish citizen, I have chosen Denmark as my field primarily for practical reasons. I gained easier access to the asylum system by knowing the responsible organizations and most importantly, my fluent Danish granted me lingual freedom to speak with refugees still struggling with the language. I have however not felt ‘native’ in the field, since I have moved far beyond my everyday surroundings in this study, literally as well as metaphorically. The asylum system is completely isolated from the rest of Danish society to a point that makes most Danes unaware of the actual situation and policies. I wanted to enter this close-off scene and build my own perception of the asylum system and, primarily, of the refugee, not as a concept but as a human being.

Although I often felt on foreign ground while conducting this field study, my Danish background can of course have restricted our conversations circling on the negative aspects of Danish society - I believe it sometimes has. But the practical significance, which is a theoretical point for me as well, namely our lingual and cultural encounter through Danish weighs heavier than this problematic. Besides, and this may be relevant too for my choice of focus, I am no stranger to living in new terrain⁶. My familiarity with the sometimes overwhelming struggles of ‘fitting in’ elsewhere gave me a significant and beneficial distance to Danish society. At the same time, I tried to lessen my talks on travels abroad. The paradoxical inequality between my self-chosen nomadic lifestyle, sparked by curiosity, and my informants’ forced *refugium* became crystallized in our encounter. I was the ‘global citizen’ because I already belonged to a place, legally and literally, whereas my informants

5 Note further that while I encounter my informants in the larger area of Copenhagen, their cases are not particular to this local terrain but tell a narrative of the general asylum policies in Denmark, since they have all been placed around the country and thus experienced the national asylum system as a whole. Hence, I refer to my informants in the title of this thesis as refugees in Denmark, not merely in Copenhagen.

6 Having resided the last five years outside of Denmark, in places ranging from Tanzania over Syria and Lebanon to Sweden, I found a common denominator with my informants, both literally, sharing cultural familiarities, and mentally, in conversations about attaching to a place.

struggled to claim their right to any place. Because they did not belong to the nation-state, they could neither wander in the global space nor settle in a chosen locality. This is a crucial insight for my theoretical reflection on belonging and natio-normativity, and something I will return to in my concluding remarks.

This concern highlights some relevant points on power and agency, as well. My informants, the young refugees, are completely marginalized in terms of their very existence as *non*-citizens. They are subjected to discrimination in every sense of the word on a daily basis and victims of structural, symbolic, and often physical violence. Having said this, I find that addressing our informants as victims rather than as actors in a way dehumanizes them, as it places them within a conceptual framework as ‘the refugee’. I follow in the footsteps of anthropologists (Clifford *et.al.*, 1986: 7) who argue that we as ‘writers of culture’ conduct a certain power which we must be conscious of and try to limit. Issues of representation, position, ethnographic validity and power must be attended to. The informants’ voices must be included, not only in the field but in the written product as well. Yet, informants are never powerless before the fieldworker. The informants are ‘Exotic Others’ to me, but I too am an Exotic Other to them and this is partly how I got their attention. As much as our mutual exoticness constrains our interaction, it also established it in the first place. If this study will not exactly lead to an all-together ‘empowerment’ of these individuals, I do however wish to include their voices in a critical discussion of the refugee’s place in a natio-normative landscape of boundaries.

4. Implementation

I have been living in Copenhagen throughout this research period and conducted my field-study through semi-structured interviews (Dewalt, *et.al.*, 2011: 139) and participant observation with the group of five informants that I have contacted through Red Cross. My informants are: Merwan, Aazif, Keicha, Haider, and Yamin⁷. To ensure my informants’ privacy, and in some cases their safety, I have altered their names in my final writing. I have moreover been keen on explaining to my informants their completely voluntary participation in this study, in correspondence with McCracken’s ethical advice (1988: 69), and have

⁷ For a closer description of my informants, *see appendix 3*.

throughout my fieldwork tried to balance my own curiosity with respect for the emotional rupture my questions may provoke⁸.

I met with each informant at least twice and kept a regular contact throughout my fieldwork. The first meeting with each was established as a somewhat formal, though loosely semi-structured interview, where I had prepared an interview guide of topics and specific questions. The interview was conducted in Danish and I asked the informant for permission to tape-record beforehand. I transcribed each interview afterwards. I held three of the first interviews in my own apartment in Copenhagen. Despite my initial reluctances, grounded primarily in that my however humble housing facilities would still exhibit the inequalities between my freedom and their restricted living, I found that this setting provided us a much calmer ground for a long, confidential conversation than could be established at a more public place⁹.

In our second meetings, we followed up on our initial conversation in a more relaxed format. I visited several of my informants at their homes or centers, whereby I also met their families and friends. I still had questions prepared, but in a more flexible manner, and in most cases I kept notebook and tape-recorder away to avoid any disturbances. Besides the general participant-observant atmosphere of these meetings, I joined various activities for refugees hosted by Red Cross Youth and the Trampoline House¹⁰ along with my informants. Inevitably, my participant approach has obstructed me from recording some interesting conversations in detail, as I have relied on recording field-notes afterwards instead. I sensed however that some conversations would not have occurred in the same manner with a tape-recorder present, and was confirmed in this when I did bring up my tape-recorder after all^{11 12}. Despite the friendly

8 Note that in my empirical discussion, I weave in their different narratives in correspondence with the subthemes our conversations circled on and thereby present my informants more as a group or 'pool' than as separate life stories. I found that this not only ensures my informants' privacy, but also corresponds better with the conversational tone of our meetings, as well as with the theoretical focus of this thesis. I have however taken my informants' different backgrounds into account in my presentation of their narratives.

9 This was confirmed when I did choose to base a meeting at an office I borrowed at HCØ. Our conversation was repeatedly interrupted and at the end hastily shortened, and I found myself literally on foreign ground trying to balance our difficult conversation meanwhile staying on good terms with the staff.

10 The Trampoline House is a user-driven culture house for asylum seekers and volunteers working for a just asylum system, located in Copenhagen.

11 When I visited Keicha and asked if we could "record a bit", she responded, half-jokingly: "*Again? Are you from the secret police or what?*" Likewise, when asked to reflect on our initial interview form, Haider articulated any anthropologist's nightmare, saying: "*I'm used to this, it's just like talking to the police*".

12 When the educational leader at HCØ told me that their students sometimes felt like "living in a Zoo", I realized she had been right in more than one sense. The young refugees are cultural objects for the anthropological eye, but subjected to surveillance and investigation from the police and state administration, as well.

and genuine contact I established with each informant, it was obvious that the ethnographic project was still a main focus for our encounter. I was far from the ‘invisible observer’, since I arranged our meetings and asked most of the questions.

5. Previous Research: Theorizing the Refugee’s Place in Anthropology

The refugee as analytical object is no foreigner to anthropological investigation. I place my study within the vast literature of ‘the refugee’, as concept, body and individual, in relation to spatiality: The global space, the nation-state territory and the locality produced from these spheres.

Liisa Malkki discusses at length how the refugee has been approached in most anthropology as a sort of abnormality in a world of nations. National, cultural and ethnic identity is conceived as *rooted* to a territory, a specific place of origin, which makes people and place indistinguishable. Malkki (1997: 31) links this naturalization of the nation-state to our *sedentary* way of thinking, which can turn moral, even metaphysical: people are linked to the nation as though born from its soil. As Giorgio Agamben (1996: 20) notes: “Nation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty”. The vocabulary of ‘roots’ has been well-applied for the study of indigenous people and so-called ‘natives’, who “are thought to be ideally adaptable to their environments” (Malkki, 1997: 29). This form of eco-materialism or, to borrow Malkki’s term (1997: 30), “magical naturalism” not only romanticizes rootedness; it *heroizes* it.

The Norwegian philosopher Jakob Meløe is a case in point. Focusing on Saamis in Northern Norway, Meløe (1988: 387) discusses the embodied relationship between landscape and people as conducted through daily activities: “Our concepts of the world come from our common activities in the world”.¹³ As intriguing, even convincing, Meløe’s conceptualization of actor and world as one is, I find it weakly translatable to ‘landscapes’ that contain peoples and activities. To twist Meløe’s argument, when people are in the process of *waiting*, as refugees in asylum centers often are, and their main activity is not what they ‘live by’, how does the link between praxis and place play in? What is the landscape that the refugee has

¹³ In a vocabulary closely familiar with Bourdieu’s use of ‘habitus’ as embodied praxis-knowledge, Meløe (1988: 400) further argues that “a landscape belongs to those who belong to it and, consequently, “we are foreigners to this landscape” (ibid), since our activities are not embedded in it.

“wedded his life into” (Meløe, 1988: 388)? In the age of global fluxes and formations, can we morally speak of a landscape as ‘bound’ to ‘its’ people?¹⁴

In opposition to ‘rooted’ people, the refugee becomes the disordered ‘Other’. To cite Mary Douglas’ famous image of society as body writ large (Douglas, 1966: 44), the refugee is “matter out of place” - dirt and danger in the landscape of bounded national territory¹⁵. Hannah Arendt argues that since the language of rights is bound to the language of nation-states, the greatest danger is to be “only human” (Arendt, 1967: 299), as this implies that you belong outside of any category through which to reclaim these rights. Agamben (1996: 20) describes how the refugee’s status as non-fixed disturbs the nation-state as it reveals its internal paradox¹⁶. This articulates well my image of the natio-normative society in which the refugee exists as a permanent, internal danger, produced by the nation-state that rejects it. As Valentine Daniel (2002: 274) argues, “the refugee is defined by the nation and unimaginable without it”.

Since danger always lurks at the margins, as Douglas (1966: 152) reminds us, the refugee is (dis)placed in the spatially defined camp which, interestingly, presents a new form of embodied soil. This is often where anthropology encounters the refugee. Exemplifying with the case of Hutu refugees in Western Tanzania, Malkki (1997: 35) shows how group identity in the camp is constructed in terms of their collective exile. In this landscape, ‘refugee-ness’ is a valued status, as it implies a right to belong and return to somewhere *else*. Displacement in this case forms a new ‘locality, to draw on Michael Lambek’s term (2011: 8)¹⁷, - another belonging that is however bound to a collective memory of what was. The refugee camp becomes a re-territorialized, forever temporary stand-in for the ‘lost land’ (Malkki, 1997: 35)¹⁸. Embodying a national “technology of care and control” (Malkki, 1997: 34), the camp

14 In the context of refugees in the global space, this rationale can lead to what Malkki (1997: 33) terms an “internalization” of the refugee’s problem, which detangles displacement from its sociopolitical context.

15 Although, as Ernest Gellner (1983: 49) reminds us, “nations are not inscribed into the nature of things” but socially imagined, in the modern nation-state, as Benedict Anderson (1983: 5) famously described this, it is presumed that “everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender”.

16 “*If the refugee represents such a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state, this is so primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the ordinary fiction of sovereignty to crisis*” (Agamben, 1996: 20).

17 Lambek (2011: 216) refers ‘locality’ to time and context and argues that in light of global and transnational movements, the ‘local’ is as much a sentiment, expressed through human activity and practice, as it is a place.

18 Arjun Appadurai (1996: 193) describes the quasi-permanent refugee camp as the starkest example of the “conditions of uncertainty, displacement, and despair under which locality is produced”.

allows the nation-state to govern, very much in the *Foucaultian* biopolitical way, the refugee as a depersonalized body.

In contrast to the refugee camp identity which mirrors rather than opposes the sedentary logic of nation-states, Malkki brings in the case of Hutu refugees in urban Tanzania who negotiate their national identity in different terms. For this group, “exile was not a moral trajectory, and homeland was not a moral destination, but simply a place” (Malkki, 1997: 36). Their lives are located in the present rather than in the past. This ignites Fredrik Barth’s theory (Barth, 1969: 28) of ethnicity as not only ascribed but also achieved, chosen, performed and contested. Barth argues that ethnic identity is as much tied to people’s homeland as it is renegotiated in their new cultural setting through social interplay. As a challenge to cultural and national essentialisms, this case may apply better for the young refugees in Denmark who long to connect with their surroundings outside the camps. The struggle of indigenous people, diasporas and other minority groups against the domination of the nation-state is thus not directly translatable to the struggle of the individual, young refugee in a world of nations. Whereas defined groups have a shared belonging linked to a specified territory, the young refugee’s struggle is not *against* a certain hegemonic, national belonging, but rather to be part of a general, legal belonging. The individual refugee is perhaps less searching for a cultural identity ‘to be contained’ than for a country to contain him or her. This is a point I return to in my final discussion.

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul” (Simone Weil quoted in Malkki, 1997: 24) - and yet, in a global reality of disjuncture and rupture, what does it mean to be ‘rooted in a place’?¹⁹ Indeed, *land doesn’t move – people do* (Lambek, 2011: 205). This demands an analytical move away from the relativist understanding of cultures as enclaves (Gupta, *et.al*, 1992: 10), isolated and ‘whole’, towards a perception of the local as constructed, negotiated and re-created in new forms in the present. We can relate to different places at different times - I certainly do -, and our sense of ‘belonging’ can thus be de-centered, processual and mobile, negotiated through interaction and context²⁰. As people move, *so do roots*. But place remains, and is embedded in this changing flux of locality and belonging. Memory and imagination of place are embedded in one’s acclimatization to a new locality. This illustrates a hermeneutic circling in the encounter

19 Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992: 8) argue that space is not naturally a place of belonging or locality but becomes so through collective construction, interaction and imagination.

20 This draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the *rhizomatic* individual, who consists of multiple attachments and places (in: Malkki, 1997: 37).

of old and new cultural baggage in the changed setting. Although land hardly moves, it does change over time, yet the development of a new spatial expression is always conducted in relation to the past.

To sum up, in a time of global movement, *place still matters*. The imagined ‘homeland’ is thus not *imaginary*, and national boundaries are no more constructed than they have a highly real impact on private lives. When refugees cross national borders, they remain transgressors and, as liminal personas, are chained in the bio-political zone of care and control - the camp. This is where I encounter the young refugees. Faced with the cultural and structural boundaries of a natio-normative society which isolates them in a waiting zone and displaces them within and across national borders, the refugees continue to live. My main objective with this study is to look at the human agency that comes about while responding to and incorporating the larger struggles in the course of daily life. How do my informants deal with and negotiate their situation? Can the boundaries that confine them be resisted and played with, if not broken? Despite of their constant displacement, in memory of what was and in longing for what may never come, can these young refugees find zones of belonging?

6 Empirical Results

In the following six subchapters, I discuss belonging, displacement and boundaries by tracing my informants’ narratives of their daily lives in Denmark. Focusing on their reflections on friendship and family, cultural and national identity, homeland and ‘place’, and their resistance to the asylum system, I weave in the refugee’s liminal position in the natio-normative space as a corresponding subtext to these narratives.

6.1 Coming of Age in the Asylum System

Though raised in the system as ‘people in transit’, my informants expressed most concern about being chained to a place ‘doing nothing’. In our conversations circling on everyday life in asylum, they emphasized activity as a central factor for their well-being. Most complained that their long journey to school each day is time-consuming, boring and restrictive, because they have to plan ahead. Merwan said that he was happy to move out of the asylum center and elaborated: *”It was really hard to live at the asylum center. 300 residents from different countries, different cultures (...), all living there as guests. You get sick from living there, (you) become like animals: eating, sleeping, eating, sleeping. Can’t do anything”*. Similarly, Aazif complained that life at Avnstrup asylum center is boring because there is *“nothing to do*

there". He plays computer every day, often until late at night, and rarely joins the social club that volunteers at the center run in the evenings. The same concern is raised in Gillian Mann's study (2008: 54) of young refugees in the Tanzanian asphalt jungle Dar Es Salaam, in which she found that activity was a central factor for the youth's senses of belonging to their surroundings²¹. Aazif mentioned that life at the center in northern Jutland was better, because he went to a normal secondary school with Danish students and played in a football club. The same narrative was repeated by Haider, who stressed how he missed the asylum center in Mid-Jutland where he spent one year: "*I know all the places there. I travel around, I have many friends in different cities. In Copenhagen (Avnstrup), I just stay at my room. It's a problem. But what should I do outside? Nothing. I have no job, just school and home and sleep. I become fat here*".

With this in mind, I was fairly surprised at my first visit to the center in Avnstrup. Placed between fields, quite a long bus ride from the station, the two large buildings reminded me of an old school with long, empty corridors. However an interior designer's nightmare, the center surely offers space for activity. In fact, if there is anything you could do there, it is to spend your time outside. I came on a sunny day and the field had two big yards with football and tennis facilities, and a playing field. All was empty. The only children I saw that afternoon ran up and down corridors inside the building. When I asked Aazif why he did not gather some friends at the center to play in the football yard, he responded "*It's not a good yard*". Consequently, I wondered if activity is perhaps intertwined with belonging in a doubled way: The informants, indeed most of us, need to "do something" in a place to connect with it, but they also need to activate themselves in a meaningful sense. While my informants are in a prolonged process of waiting, well-aware that they can be deported at any time, wasting time 'doing something' might correspond just as well to doing nothing.

Besides from activity, language was another central factor that my informants brought up in our conversations on belonging to a place. Haider said: "*It's difficult at the school. I don't have a lot of friends there. We speak Danish only 2-3 hours in class and outside we only speak dari*." Aazif raised the same concern. Keicha and Yamin stressed that they learned Danish fast by speaking with each other. Merwan said that he learned the language much faster by living with his Danish girlfriend. Both Haider and Aazif emphasized the importance of learning Danish fast to be transferred to VUC, not least to meet Danish friends. Most importantly, they all stressed, is to keep on studying.

21 This draws back to Jakob Meløe's praxis-landscape theory.

6.2 Shifting Landscapes, Altered Localities

At a volunteer-meeting I attended at the Trampoline House, one of the activists noted that the continuous displacement within the asylum system is particularly dismantling for children and youth, since their relations to other people are repeatedly destructed by this. In correspondence, my informants often raised concern about feeling isolated from the Danish society and losing their social network because of displacement. Commenting on her life in Denmark, Yamin said: *“As if we live here but we don’t really live here, because we only stay with other foreigners”*. Most of Yamin’s friends have already obtained residence in Denmark and moved out of the center. Her narrative of feeling lonely at the new center is similar to Haider and Aazif’s experience of being displaced from their previous center, where most of their friends live.

In our talks on belonging, all of my informants stressed the need to connect with society and avoid physical isolation. Aazif complained repeatedly about living so far off, and wanted to move outside of the center and closer to the city. Haider said: *“I like being in Denmark, but it’s tough if you stay at the center. One month, two months, that’s okay, but after two years, you get problems. I used to remember. Now, I forget everything (...) I forget even who my mom is”*. Since there are many young residents and (sometimes) social activities at the centers, I wondered if it is necessarily better to live outside. To this, Keicha responded: *“It depends on where you live. In this area (Helsingør), there’s no one my age”*. Yamin raised most concern about feeling distanced from the Danish society: *“I live in a forest, far from everything. You feel really isolated from society, and it’s difficult to connect with people outside”*. Aazif said that even though he had more friends in Jutland, he did not want to move back there. He preferred big cities, like Copenhagen, with *“many people and activities (...) In Jutland, I only saw other refugees. In Copenhagen, I see Danes”*. Keicha said: *“I like to walk around Copenhagen, it reminds me of my homeland where there is always movement and people”*. In Helsingør, she said, *“it is so empty and quiet”*. In a similar tone, Merwan said that he could never move to the countryside: *“Sometimes I think Denmark is just Copenhagen”*. Haider, on the other hand, preferred the countryside and wanted to move back to Jutland because he missed his friends there: *“Copenhagen is okay, but if you don’t know anyone here, times passes very slowly”*. Similarly, Keicha said about life in Helsingør: *“When you don’t have any friends here, it’s just boring”*.

In these cases, physical isolation was tightly intertwined with mental isolation. When I asked what or where ‘home’ is to him, Haider mentioned two towns in Jutland where his friends live, and then said: *“I like to live with friends or family. That’s home. An apartment,*

that's not home. Home is family". Several of my informants equally linked belonging to social company. Talking about 'home', Yamin said: *"If I get residence here, I want to live close to Keicha, because she is my friend and we know each other well"*. Keicha elaborated: *"For me, home is to live with family. When I'm with someone close to me, and I feel satisfied. In a place where I am free and independent, no matter where."* I asked if she feels free in Denmark: *"Yes, I'm free here, I'm home (...) Even if I don't have residence, it's still better here, because I have my family."*

Freedom was repeatedly brought up as a crucial factor in our conversations on belonging. Merwan said: *"Even if you don't have residence permit, you are still freer here than in Iran. I had that kind of freedom in Iran: passport, housing. But I was not free to live well. Here in Denmark, what I lack is a nationality."* When I asked Keicha if citizenship matters for feeling 'Danish', she replied: *"It gets important at some level, when you want to apply for a job, or you lack ID. It becomes a boundary then, that's the problem. You can feel happy until you start thinking, 'I want to go to school, but I can't go to school because I don't have money. I can't get money, because I'm not allowed to work'. That's when it gets difficult"*. Equally, she said at one point: *"I'd like to live by myself, be independent and be free to do stuff I can't do at my parent's place. But first I need my papers"*. Nationality was at once 'just an ID' and a direct access to freedom for my informants, since without it, they were stripped of their rights²². Citizenship was important to my informants because it mattered to the society they were placed in²³. My informants here expressed the same challenges of natio-normativity that I have outlined: Belonging was for them relational and indeed possible in the Danish setting, but the structural challenges played in and obstructed them in creating these relations due to their forced isolation as refugees. As Keicha noted, the demand for national citizenship bounded her at a daily basis.

Besides from the ability to decide the direction of their lives on free terms, safety was another factor my informants often pointed to in relation to belonging. Yamin linked freedom directly to physical safety: *"I feel free here. Even though we live in the center, we are not in danger here. In my homeland, I always worried about my mother, if she would be safe"*. The importance of safety and comfort in a locality was clear in my informants' ambivalent attachments to homeland, as shown below.

22 As Hannah Arendt notes, cited above.

23 Jakob Meløe (1988: 393) writes that "in a world where no one is seeking shelter, in that world there is no shelter": that is, the existence of any object is always constituted by the practice that shapes it.

6.3 Homeland (Un)wanted

Conversations about homeland were filled with traumas of escaping violence. Aazif left Afghanistan with his mother and three siblings after his father was killed there. He would like to return if there is peace one day, but not now. At my visit at their center, I asked Aazif's mother and sister if they missed Afghanistan and they refused. "*In Denmark, women can walk freely by themselves on the street*", his sister replied. When talking about Afghanistan, Haider said: "*I know everyone and we all speak the same language. It's better for me there. But it's dangerous for me to be there. I'm afraid of Afghanistan. If I go back, I might be beaten.*" Similarly, Keicha said: "*It's nice, fun to live in Congo, but when there's war, everyone just runs in different directions. It's terrible. Chaos. (...) I was 6 years old when the war started. I stayed at the boarding school and my family disappeared and met later in Denmark. I don't know how they ended up here. I keep asking them, but it's so difficult to understand.*"

Merwan told me that in Iran, the police feed the youth with drugs "*to quiet them. (...) Even in the mosques, it's full of drugs*"²⁴. Merwan described how his friends in Iran would write to him: "*Don't come back, stay in Denmark' (...) I don't want to think about what will happen if I go back there. Some of my friends are still in jail. I was in jail in Iran for 15 days. It was really tough*". I noticed however that Merwan often mentioned Iran in our conversations, and asked him if he would miss Iran if his mother did not live there. He replied "no", and elaborated: "*You can't decide your own life in Iran. When I go to the toilet, when I eat, (...), I have to think about religion all the time*".

That attachment to homeland was closely linked to memories of family was equally illustrated by Haider: "*In Afghanistan, before my father died, we had a car and a nice house. Now it's all gone. Where is my dad, where am I, where is my mom? I heard she was in Pakistan, but I lost her phone number two years ago*". At the end of our talk, Haider told me that he did not like to think about his family: "*I laugh on the outside but I cry on the inside*".

6.4 Fitting into New Shoes

Most of my informants rejected having felt discriminated by Danes. Merwan and Keicha mentioned however a sense of discrimination in their attempts to establish a Danish network. Keicha found it "really difficult" to get Danish friends at VUC. Most of the other students there are older than her and "very reserved". Merwan said about meeting Danes: "*Even in you*

24 The experience of state corruption was narrated too by Yamin's mother, who was jailed and had to flee Burma because of her political activism. At my visit at their center, she told me: "*In Burma, you can steal, you can do drugs, nothing happens...but you can never do political work!*"

talk with them at a party, you can't make close friendships. They are reserved and a bit afraid at first". Merwan mentioned that he knew refugees in Sweden who had a much easier time finding Swedish friends: *"You are faster accepted in their culture. Here in Denmark, some are afraid [of migrants], they think everyone makes trouble"*. When Keicha told me that her class is *"full of Muslims"*, I mentioned that a lot of Danes are hostile to Muslims, to which she commented: *"Because a lot of them come from countries with so much trouble and conflict, so maybe some Danes think they will make trouble here too"*.

In our conversations on daily challenges, Keicha said that winter was the worst thing about Denmark: *"Then I just want to go back to Congo and return in the summer"*. Merwan commented too on Danes' seasonal shifting mood: *"In bad weather, you don't wanna ask a Dane for direction!"* Besides the weather, Keicha mentioned people's behavior as the hardest part of living in Denmark. *"People stare at me on the street without saying anything. It feels weird, I preferred if they'd say "hey black girl!" instead of just looking, because I don't know what they're thinking"*. When I visited Keicha at her family's place in Helsingør, she told me that they never talk to their neighbors. *"In my homeland, you can visit you neighbors whenever you want. We eat together, sleep together, and hang out. The door is always open. But here you have to be careful. People are busy with work and children, and everything is planned."* Keicha often said that she felt different than most Danish youth. She goes to a catholic church every Sunday with her family in Helsingør, and told me about the ceremony: *"It's not the same ritual as in my homeland, where people sing, dance, pray. A lot of things happen in the church, but here it's quieter. And there are only old people in the church. In my homeland, it's the opposite: full of youth and people of all ages."* When I asked her to elaborate on this, she said: *"The youth have a lot to do here, like partying, so maybe they don't want to go to church on Sunday mornings. And maybe because there are not the same problems here as in other countries. You have everything here. In my homeland, you have to pray for many things, such as work, children. (...) But I prefer the church mass in Congo, because you really believe there. You can wake up at 5AM and pray until midnight without eating, because you are in a situation where you need to believe, you need to pray, otherwise you'll die. You actually get to believe that"*. Keicha stressed that she had never discussed dating and partying with her family; *"In Africa, you don't talk about that stuff with your parents"*. Yamin commented that she hoped her mother would adapt to Danish culture and maybe be more understanding about these issues.

Responding to what it takes to become 'Danish', Keicha said: *"It depends on the person...whether you feel integrated or you want to live like you do in your homeland"*. When

I asked what she meant by 'integrated', Keicha explained: *"To live like a Dane, do Danish things (...) My parents are half-half. They eat Danish food, they have Danish friends, they speak Danish. When they are with Danes, they feel fine, and when they are with Africans, they feel fine as well. But sometimes we live like we do in Africa, when we are alone"*. At one point, Merwan and I fell into a similarly intriguing conversation about nationality and culture. *"In the Middle-East, they say stuff like, 'Turkish people are good, Danes don't want us here.' Even if only 5 % actually think so in Denmark"*, Merwan said and elaborated: *"You know, you can't say 'people have this or that culture'. People are culture. Look at me, I am Kurdish, I grew up in Iran, my mother is Turkish. I visited my girlfriend's family on Funen and the first thing they asked me was: 'Are you a Muslim?' I said I have a Muslim culture but I don't believe in God. They did not understand that"*. Similar to my conversation with Keicha above, I asked Merwan if he could ever 'become Danish': *"No...Because, I don't care about nationality. Humans are just humans. Nationality is just an ID so they can say, okay, you are Danish, you are... I think all people are the same, but they become affected by what they experience in their families and what they learn by their parents, and become like that. Because, I am from Iran and I had a Danish girlfriend and we could still get along...sometimes [laughing]. I want to take some good things from Denmark in my culture and blend it with good things from Iran."* When I asked what those good things included, he said that from Iran he would take the *"friendly and generous atmosphere towards other people, even strangers"* and from Denmark, he would include *"respect for people's freedom"*.

Both Merwan and Keicha express here a very conscious and discursive approach to cultural identity. The notion that one can 'take a bit of both cultures' links back to my point about the hermeneutic encounter of new and old cultural knowledge. One is not born in a certain cultural identity, but constructs and contests this in correspondence with time and context²⁵.

Despite their hardships and cultural clashes, my informants kept stressing that they wanted to stay in Denmark. Aazif said that he *"loves Denmark"*, and connected his sense of belonging to his experience of displacement: *"I spent five months in Germany, and they were racists there. They didn't want to talk to you, only if you spoke German."* Aazif stressed that he had never experienced that in Denmark. Haider told the same narrative: *"I'm happy in Denmark. If I leave, I become like...another person. Now I'm here, I speak a bit Danish, if I go to*

25 Although Merwan was critical towards migrants who did not try to 'fit in', he at the same time critiqued the ones who became too assimilated. Joking about a well-known Syrian liberal-conservative politician in Denmark who supports a tough immigration policy, Merwan told me that the Arab community in Copenhagen refers to him as "Nargil", which means 'coconut' in Arabic: *"Because he is brown on the outside, but white inside"*.

another country where I don't speak the language, I have to start all over. Denmark is good, not like Germany. If you have problems there, no one will talk to you. Everything is in German. I spent 2 months there, it was tough, and I could never sleep. Always thinking about outside, about Denmark, about my mom". He continued: *"If I stay in Denmark, I want to keep studying, and maybe find a job. Live like a Danish person. Go to work, come back, not fight other people".* This points back to what I mentioned above, that my informants repeatedly linked belonging to a sense of connection, through language and activity, with their Danish surroundings. Belonging was for them relational and constructed through social interaction, and continuous displacement obstructed this process because it, logically, displaced them from people.

6.5 Contested Communities

Although my informants stressed that ethnicity was not a decisive characteristic for friendship, they did comment on cultural differences among residents at the center. The Burmesian Yamin narrated an incident at the asylum center in which an Afghani guy had grabbed her and she got "very scared". She argued that Afghanis and Arabs may think that they can "touch" girls outside of their own ethnic communities easier. Although this incident is particularly gender-inscribed, Haider said similarly: *"Every day at the center, people fight each other. Young, old, everyone gets crazy."* When I asked why he did not play football at the center, Haider showed me a scratch on his foot from an old match, and said: *"I'm afraid of the other guys, the Africans, when they play football. They are violent and I get hit"*. Commenting on her close friendship with Yamin, Keicha said: *"It's easier to make friends with other foreigners, we share the same culture and we understand each other better"*. This exemplifies well Fredrik Barth's important reminder, as discussed earlier, that ethnic relations are not necessarily bound to a specific place, but can be constructed in the shared context. The girls' joint situation of living as young females in a chiefly male-dominated asylum community may play in as a common denominator between them, as well.

Merwan was especially vocal on the topic of cultural difference and described daily clashes between residents at the asylum center. He mentioned that during the Ramadan residents would get angry when he ate. Merwan told me that he has cut much contact with friends from the asylum network because they were *"too much, calling me late at night, asking me for help with all kinds of things (...) I meet people who have lived here for 10 years and still don't speak Danish. They don't want to go to school, and really, I feel sorry for them. I've had a hard time in Denmark, but I still went to school and I learned so much here, about culture,*

about my future". When asked why he did not join the social clubs offered for asylum seekers, Merwan was first reluctant, but then talked about the cultural difference between Afghans and Iranians, and said that Afghans still have much to learn about "culture and freedom": "You should not move to Denmark if you are religious. Then you should better stay in Iran. They (Muslims) have to understand that we do not live in Muhammad's era any longer". At another point, he said: "You should hear some of the terrible things they say in the centers. Some get really racist about Danes. Because they have had bad experiences with asylum, they think everyone here is like 'Udlændingetjeneste'". Keicha commented equally on the topic of negative integration: "When you're young, you're full of ambitions: You want to work, go to school, learn and build a good life. But when you're old, you don't have the same energy. Some foreigners spend a long time in Denmark but don't have the energy to learn Danish well or engage in society. Perhaps they have already seen or experienced enough in their homeland, too many negative experiences, and they don't need anything but safety, food, housing and such at this point"²⁶.

Although Haider and Aazif complained repeatedly about living among other Afghans as this restricted them from learning proper Danish, I sensed that these 'ethnic enclaves' functioned too as a comfort zone for my informants. At my visit in their class, I noticed that the Afghani students used Dari as a 'secret code', but also as a way to help each other translate Danish words²⁷.

6.6 Resisting Displacement

It became clear through our conversations that my informants' frustrations about Denmark were tied more to the asylum system than to Danish society or Danes in general. When I asked what was most difficult about living in Denmark, Aazif responded: "I have no problem with Denmark. Asylum is the problem". Similarly, Merwan replied: "Being an asylum applicant. Just that. Because you can't do anything, you just wait, you get to believe that you have an uncertain future, you wait, you don't know what will happen tomorrow, you get hope, but one day you get tired of hoping, and you get psychological problems (...) You become

²⁶ Keicha's parents, however, have done well in Denmark. Both have fulltime jobs at the hospital, live in a big house in Helsingør and speak Danish well.

²⁷ That the local community-feeling at the asylum center worked both as a safety zone and a restriction in my informants' connection with their Danish surroundings was lively illustrated with Aazif's family who watched Afghani TV the whole day while complaining about their poor Danish, while Yamin's mother zapped through the TV-channels at the center, all in Arabic, Afghani and Persian, complaining that she had to read the Danish or English subtitles.

active once you get it (the residence). But when you don't get it, you become so sad". Yamin told me: "When I first arrived here I was happy, but now I often feel angry". Responding to what would make their situation easier, Aazif said: "Not living in the asylum center". And Merwan said in a similar way: "Being free. Being able to work and live freely, like any normal person". Keicha said: "We just want residence here. That's all we want. (...) If I could just go to school, have a place to live and have other hobbies. Not have to think about asylum all the time. (...) That was what I expected when I came here, to get residence and live a normal life".

My informants' experience of being locked in transit continued in their encounter with Denmark, as they have repeatedly been displaced around the country. The lack of personal control or predictability of their situation creates an atmosphere of anxiety at the asylum centers, as Yamin described it: *"I hear some residents at the center yelling and screaming when the police pick them up late at night or early in the morning. So the first time I had a meeting with the police, I was so afraid".* When I asked Haider and Keicha what they feared the most in Denmark, they both replied, independently of each other: *"The police. I'm afraid that they will deport me back".* Yamin said: *"I have lived in three centers, and we never know why we move. One day, we just get a letter and the next day we move - no explanation."* My informants' frustration about life in asylum was often tied to this lack of control. Keicha, who has applied for humanitarian residence in Denmark because she suffers from a blood disease that she cannot be treated for in Congo, narrated her experience with the asylum system: *"First, they told me to wait 2-3 weeks. Then they asked for a doctor's note. Then, after 2-3 months, they asked for another doctor's note. And on and on. I have sent them five doctor's notes, and still haven't got an answer. It's been two years now. They keep asking me the same questions, over and over again, that I have already explained them. Udlændingetjenesten wants to send me back, and my lawyer can't do anything. So now, I'm just waiting for my next doctor's note".* In a similar way, Yamin explained that she was *"tired of just waiting for good or bad news"*.

Whether residing at the asylum center or outside, my informants have to attend to the asylum center for a weekly 'check-up', and for picking up their pocket-money. This form of bio-political control was a stress factor for several of them, who complained about having to schedule their lives after these rules. As Merwan said, *"they can't send me back to Iran, but they can force me by stop giving me money"*. Merwan argued that the asylum system places the camps far from the city *"...because they are afraid. If refugees live like in Sweden or*

Norway, close to the city, they can easily find their way. Some live here for two-three years in the asylum center and they don't know how to withdraw money from a bank"²⁸.

The young refugees reacted to their forced isolation with general distrust towards the system, in particular towards the deciding institution 'Udlændingetjeneste' and the police. Merwan mentioned that the lawyer who had conducted his case had been "*destructive (...) She works for 'Udlændingetjeneste', not for me*". When I asked why he was not granted asylum, Merwan replied: "*They think I'm lying. They don't say it directly, but that's what they mean*". Haider has had problems with his case, because the police believe he is two years older than he says he is²⁹. "*The police decide how old I am, I don't decide that myself*", he said. About his repeated rejection, Haider said: "*Udlændingetjeneste decides (...) they say, you can live in Afghanistan but I cannot. What should I do there? I came here because I have problems, but they just send me back*". Likewise, Keicha said: "*They told me that my case was not 'deep' or... 'strong' enough*". Yamin commented: "*Yes, 'strong', that's what they told me as well. I don't understand how they can interpret what is strong or not strong. Maybe it doesn't matter to them, but it matters a lot to me*". Keicha argued that a lot of Afghans and Iraqis had been granted residence permit "*because we always hear about conflict in their countries, but we never hear about Congo. Maybe that's why they just reject us. I think they should go there and see for themselves*". The sense of distrust towards the system was made explicit by Merwan's comment on the application process: "*It's like jackpot – some get it, some don't*".³⁰

Faced with this daily pressure, the young refugees expressed remarkable persistence in resisting the decline from the asylum administration. On the prospect of displacement, Aazif said: "*The police just told us to wait. Maybe they will send us back to Afghanistan. But we can't go back, and we can't go somewhere else. We're tired of moving*". Haider said: "*I hope I can stay in Denmark. Maybe they will send me back, maybe not. If they do, I will have to go to another country. I can't stay in Afghanistan.*" Keicha commented on the possibility of finding asylum elsewhere: "*It's like I have to go through the same process over and over again. Come*

28 This comment illustrates well Agamben's image, as discussed earlier, of how the nation-state isolates its refugee-Other in a bio-political space, the camp, in order to assure its own safety.

29 Which means, according to the authorities, that Haider was 18, not 16, when he arrived in Denmark. Applicants under the age of 18 can easier get residence than adults.

30 In opposition to the deciding institution and the police stood Red Cross, whom my informants repeatedly complimented. When asked what made her feel comfortable in Denmark, Keicha replied: "*Knowing that Red Cross helps us and pays for our school and health. We can talk to them when we have problems. That helps a lot*". Since the Danish state has hired Red Cross to carry out this task, this summons all too well Malkki's note, as cited above, of how the nation-state renders the refugees technical through a combined use of 'care and control'.

*to Denmark, learn Danish, go to Sweden, learn Swedish. Where next - go to Norway, learn Norwegian? I hope it can end now so I can stay here”.*³¹

The confinement of refugees in the centers not only isolates the refugees from the rest of society, as my informants repeatedly express frustration about in our talks. Their experience of exile and displacement continues in the new setting, which profoundly disrupts their process of localization. As these narratives show, the nation-state does not simply ‘remove’ the refugees but rather sent them down a spiral of displacement and isolation undermining their ability to attach to a place and establish sustainable social relations and daily routines³².

7 Concluding Reflections: Non-Citizens in a Natio-Normative Landscape

My empirical findings have shown that the psychological consequences of growing up in asylum are profound. In particular, my informants express deep frustration of the lack of activity and freedom – free movement and free choice – provided in asylum life. When my informants do however express a sense of belonging to an asylum center or another place in Denmark, they link this primarily to social company and their ability to move outside of and connect with the surrounding Danish society through school and other activities. This also helps them improve their Danish language skills, which is another emphasized factor for their ability to belong. My informants express great concern about their isolation within the asylum system’s bio-control, as this directly obstructs their process of attaching to and localizing in Denmark. The refugees’ cultural clashes with local norms are sparked by their chained isolation from Danish society. ‘Doing nothing’ is thus far more obstructive for the refugees’ process of belonging than their ‘non-nativity’ or cultural inheritance. Interestingly, my informants’ emphasis on language and activity as ‘pillars of belonging’ to a place in a way confirms Jakob Meløe’s thesis, as discussed above, that we habitually attach to a landscape through embodied activity. At the same time, their strong ability and willingness to belong to a new setting challenges that this activity demands a certain nativity or that it has to be inscribed from birth. In effect, their ability to attach to Denmark breaks with the rationale on which natio-normativity rests.

31 Merwan said that since Iran had not issued any official ‘deal’ with Denmark, he could not be physically deported. Meanwhile, he planned to find a part-time job besides his studies and apply for residence permit through this instead. Aazif’s older brother fled with the family to Denmark, but after they were repeatedly refused asylum and sent to Germany, he chose to leave the family and find asylum elsewhere.

32 In his recent research on European ‘borderscapes’, Martin Lemberg-Pedersen (2012: 171) similarly concludes that borders are not “static”, but work in a fluid, yet highly structured way, by continuously displacing refugees across transnational as well as within national borders.

The imaginary of globalization is obsessed with mobility and wandering and in the global space, people cross borders routinely. At the same time, people who are actually forced into transit by travelling outside law often ignite discomfort, if not despise, among the passport-approved global citizens³³. When refugees cross borders in the natio-normative space, they do not enter a free-zone and they do not break with the boundaries that confine them³⁴. Through a doubled process of chained isolation and rapid displacement, the nation-state obstructs the refugees' ability to learn language and cultural habits fast. As much as they struggle to integrate, continue a daily living despite the structural discrimination imposed on them and resist the nation-state's rejection, the young refugees are placed in a liminal zone they cannot transcend. They are kept as refugees, even if they continue to wander, and at the same time they are restricted from growing up in free terms, as the uncertainty of tomorrow directly obstructs their possibility of planning ahead. The young refugees represented in this thesis have not crossed borders to resist the existence of a nation-state on some higher ideological ground, or to keep on moving. They have moved in escape of violence and in search for a place to settle. These young refugees struggle to belong, legally, to their new national setting and build a life there. They aim not to deconstruct the national boundaries *per se*, but rather to participate actively in a national landscape that includes them.

All this talk of the global space – the plural, the transcendental, the non-bounded, expressed in flux and fury – should thus not blindfold us into believing that the nation-state is a post-paradigmatic phenomenon, or that we all wander on equal terms. Global movement does not transcend natio-normativity - rather, it enforces it.

33 Commenting on Haider's narrative of his exhausting journey from Afghanistan to Denmark, I said "you've travelled far" to which he responded, laughing: "*Yes, original tourist! No passport, no ID*".

34 Yet bound to a natio-normative space, none of us ever move freely. The global citizen's wandering routes are constituted by a national passport, whereas the nomadic refugee is forced into transit and chained to isolation.

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Appendix 1

Defining the Refugee

In this study, I refer to my informants primarily as ‘refugees’, vastly entitling, in relation to Valentine Daniel’s definition (2002, 271), people displaced from home, in transit, and in search for permanent shelter. I thereby consciously diverse from the distinction used by some (cf. Hartling, 1987; Zolberg, 1989, 33; Lemberg-Pedersen, 2012, 10) between refugee, asylum seeker, and illegal immigrant, since I find this somewhat paradoxical: The refugee is always illegal to begin with and registered as asylum seeker once detained, meanwhile the state of *refugium* lingers on. When I refer to my informants as ‘non-citizens’, well aware that they are still or at least have been legal citizens in their countries of origin, I address their present status as refugees in the Danish-European landscape. Following the rationale they themselves advocate that return is not a possibility, I thus interpret my informants’ status, metaphorically and materially, as citizens without shelter, hence the ‘non’. When I oppose their status to that of the passport-holding citizens, whom I term ‘global’ merely to address nationals of all countries who share the benefit of travelling freely in the natio-normative space, I assume this opposition in the legal sense.

Appendix 2

Translation

HCØ-school: Red Cross' school for asylum-seeking youth and adults, located at H.C.Ørstedsvej (hence its name, 'HCØ') at Frederiksberg, Copenhagen. The school offers classes in Danish, English, and Mathematics. Red Cross calculates that there are around 160 young refugees at HCØ, separated from children and adults. This number varies, as some might disappear suddenly, while others arrive within a day's notice.

VUC-school (*Voksen-og Ungdomsuddannelsescenter*): Danish Educational Center for Youth and Adults, offers preparatory courses for high school and university, located in central Copenhagen.

Udlændingesservice (*from 2012 called Udlændingestyrelsen*): Danish Immigration Service

Appendix 3

List of Informants

Merwan: 25-years old Kurdish-Iranian male.

Studies at VUC. Left Iran alone at the age of approximately 17, spent four years in Turkey, then travelled through Europe and came to Denmark as a refugee, where he was later joined by his brother. Merwan moved out of the asylum center one year ago to move in with his Danish girlfriend in Copenhagen. They split up recently, and he now sleeps temporarily at a friend's room in an asylum center in the southern part of Copenhagen. He has relatives in Denmark, Sweden, England, Turkey, and Iran, and keeps a very regular contact with his mother who lives in Iran. His father is dead.

Aazif: 17-years old Afghani male.

Studies at HCØ. Left Afghanistan with his mother and siblings at the age of approximately 14, and came to Denmark as a refugee. He and his family has moved in and out of various asylum centers since their first arrival, and now live in Avnstrup asylum center, a small province on the Western part of Zealand. Aazif has an older brother who fled alone and whom they have lost contact with. His father is dead.

Keicha: 20-years old Congolese female.

Studies at VUC. Left the Democratic Republic of Congo alone at the age of 18 years, and joined her family (mother, father, siblings) who had already lived in Denmark for several years. Because she had reached the legal age at her arrival, she could not apply for residence as part of her family, but had to apply individually of them. Keicha has been living with her family in Helsingør, on the northern tip of Zealand, since she arrived. She has a room in Sandholm asylum center 'for control check', but never sleeps there.

Haider: 18-years old Afghani male (Danish police has determined his age to 20 years).

Studies at the VUA-school. Left Afghanistan alone at the age of approximately 14, travelled one year through Europe and came to Denmark as a refugee. He has lived in four different asylum centers in Denmark, been sent to Germany and back, and now lives at Avnstrup center. He has no contact with any family member and his father is dead.

Yamin: 20-years old Burmese female.

Studies at VUC. Left Burma with her mother at the age of approximately 18 and came to Denmark as a refugee. She and her mother have lived at various asylum centers and now stay at Avnstrup. Her father is dead and her brother has disappeared.

All five informants have been living in Denmark for approximately two years, have been rejected asylum at least twice and are now at a risk of being deported. I met Aazif and Haider when I participated in their class at the HCØ-school. Since far most of the students at HCØ are Afghani males, I sought to diversify my informants, and a teacher at HCØ kindly helped me with contacts for Merwan, Keicha and Yamin. Since they study at VUC, their level of Danish is significantly higher than the two other informants which proved beneficial both for their ability to express themselves in our conversations and for providing a different ground for reflecting on asylum in Denmark. Likewise, Merwan's higher age proved an interesting diversity, and considering that he has been 'on the road' since his early youth and still lives in asylum, I found that his situation matched with the other informants.