Introduction: Reconstructing Life, Place and Identity

This book focuses on the process of reconstructing life, place and identity. It examines how refugees, understood as social actors, make and remake their lives in new sociocultural environments. In this book, I explore the lived in worlds of refugees by focusing on the different types of connection, emerging forms of interaction, and networks of social relations through which they forge a place for themselves in a new society, create meaning and form attachments. Discussion in this book is embedded in the understanding that a sense of place is developed through various forms of social relations and tied through the interaction of structure and agency. In the following pages, I uncover and examine how real people navigate through the difficulties of their *dis*placement as well as through numerous barriers to and scenarios of their *em*placement, the intersection of which is central to our understanding of what it is to be a refugee.

The term refugee here signifies forced migrants, understood as people forced into decisions to leave their homes and continue their lives elsewhere irrespective of the legal label they might carry. Because labels such as 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' relate to the legal processes of granting or denying certain aspects of citizenship rights, they indeed affect how and under what circumstances the lives of individual people or entire groups originating from the same country will unfold. This book examines the relationship between specific contexts of reception and how people go about their lives in new sociocultural settings. It explores how they set up priorities and develop strategies to overcome their predicament. My analysis therefore acknowledges the role of dominant institutional structures in determining one's rights to establish a home. My interest is however to uncover how people organise their experiences in different contexts and in relation to their individual biographies and life circumstances in order to negotiate a place for themselves in the new society.

This book is based upon my empirical research in Amsterdam and Rome exploring the experiences of refugees from the successor states of Yugoslavia who were struggling to make a new place for themselves in the Netherlands and in Italy.1 It is also inspired and generated by other types of encounters I have had with people who are struggling to 'nest' themselves in new socioeconomic and cultural environments. For the past two decades I have been involved, both professionally and personally, with people who were forced by political upheavals and socioeconomic turmoil to make decisions to leave their places of origin.

In Toronto, where I lived, studied and worked for a period of time, I met many people who, like myself, left Yugoslavia and went into 'voluntary' exile in the early 1990s. Dissatisfied with the political, social, and economic situation in the country, which was caught in the turmoil of rising militant ethnonationalism, we went in search of a place which would offer 'a minimal condition for some kind of democracy of selves' (Cockburn 1997). Unlike us, who still had our family, friends and physical homes to return to, there were also many who fled to save their lives in a literal sense of the word, whose loved ones might have been killed, and homes destroyed. Their choices about when, how and where to go, and decisions to stay or leave, were of a different character, much more limited and coerced. This firsthand experience of displacement and of the struggle to emplace myself professionally, socially, culturally, and legally, prompted me to question many of the concepts and much of the knowledge produced about refugees. It made me aware, for example, how the notion of 'community', to which, somehow, all people coming from the same country naturally belong , or for which they strive, can straightjacket our understanding of the processes of nesting of refugees who may have, and often do, different ideas about connecting and belonging.

In the case of people coming from Yugoslavia and its successor states, the understanding of community also had specific connotations. The conflict brought to the attention of the international media, public, political, and academic realms the issue of ethnic difference, the grievances, and animosities within the region. As a consequence, interpreting and understanding these differences and constructing the 'identity' and the community' of those labelled by their ethnicity became central to approaching people from the war-torn country as well as to creating knowledge about them. This experience made me particularly sensitive to the processes and consequences of labelling people who were forced into decisions to flee their homes, the processes associated with institutional and legal systems, as well as those relating to public discourses and professional/academic settings.2

In Belgrade, where I did my research with and about refugee women and various autonomous women's groups, working with them in the mid 1990s, I met women who became refugees in a place and country that not long before their flight they had considered their homeland. At the time of my research however it had become a contested place for many of them.3 This experience made me aware that displacement and emplacement are equally complex and challenging experiences, even in contexts in which there is hardly any cultural or language difference to speak of.4

In London, where I teach in the Refugee Studies MA Programme at the University of East London, I continue to have close contacts with students who are also refugees. Witnessing and often actively supporting their struggles in learning to live with their experiences of displacement and how to emplace themselves is a constant reminder of the importance of the different contexts, backgrounds and histories of people on the move and how they shape their lives and emplacement strategies.

Through these experiences, professional and personal, I have learnt that to understand the reasons for and patterns of movement, and the future orientation of people who were forced into decisions to leave their place of origin, one needs to focus simultaneously on aspects of agency, structures, social positioning and everyday practices. All these elements intersect in specific contexts resulting in complex, varied, and dynamic effects and outcomes. In other words, rather than emphasising boundaries and territories, focusing solely on the states and examining normative models of integration and acculturation of the 'immigrant' or the 'refugee', this book offers insights into ideas of individual people and their orientation to connecting and belonging in specific contexts and points in time.

Problems with Centring on the State

Scholarly literature as well as policy documents focusing on the process of economic, social, political and cultural inclusion of refugees of immigrants overwhelmingly emphasise the agency of the structural and institutional domains of the receiving societies. Terms such as integration, incorporation or settlement have been used by different authors as well as by different (state) actors involved in researching, conceptualising, regulating or supporting the process of social inclusion and adjustment of refugees and other newcomers.5 Theories of citizenship have often been used to outline frameworks of meaning of the process of integration. Because citizenship guarantees legal, political, and socioeconomic as well as cultural and religious rights, it is centrally linked to social inclusion.6 When social inclusion is viewed from the perspective of citizenship, conceptualised as a set of rights associated with its different aspects (e.g. Penninx, 2004a), then increasing social inclusion becomes an issue of developing instruments to facilitate access to these rights. These instruments of access and related policy approaches to integration depend on how the membership of the political community is conceptualised. Cross-country comparisons distinguishing between different national 'models' demonstrate that integration can be

understood as assimilation or multiculturalism, or increasingly as a mixture of assimilationist tendencies and elements of multiculturalism (e.g. Bauböck et al.1996; Brubaker 1992; Castles 1995; Favell 2000; Soysal 1994). Hence, these and other studies document that the meaning of integration is differently defined in different states. For states promoting assimilation, it means socioeconomic and cultural cohesion based upon a quest for homogeneity. States allowing for multiculturalism understand and promote integration in terms of overcoming barriers to socioeconomic inclusion of ethnic minority groups, including refugees/immigrants. Some authors are however becoming increasingly aware that this overemphasis on the national unit results in overly abstract national- level models of integration (e.g. Soysal 1994). In recent years proposals and attempts have been made to focus more on the local / city level at which integration actually occurs (e.g. Favell 2001; Pennix et al. 2004). Regardless of these differences in meaning, approaches, and levels of analysis these conceptualisations of integration have one thing in common – the agency and instrumentality of the receiving state and its structures are at the centre of attention and inquiry.

Studies examining immigrant adaptation within the framework of acculturation represent the only exception to this emphasis on the receiving state, placing the migrant/ refugee at the centre of analytic interest. The concept of acculturation has been widely used in cross- cultural psychology (e.g., Sam and Berry 2006). It refers to the cultural and psychological processes and outcomes of 'intercultural contact', and focuses on how refugees and other immigrants resolve dilemmas and difficulties involved in such contact (Berry 1997: 8). The negotiation of the relationship between retention of cultural identity and motivation to reach out and seek positive relations within the larger or dominant society will determine whether the annual outcome of the process of acculturation is assimilation, integration, separation/ segregation, or marginalisation (Berry 1997).

Regardless of the scope and comprehensiveness of Berry's analysis, the model he proposed has been criticised by many. His critics argue that his acculturation model provides a framework for static and structural analysis, rather than for analyses of concrete individual or group differences in goals, beliefs, and coping skills (Lazarus 1997). They also point out that Berry's model does not adequately address the complexity of modern societies, and does not recognise and capture the range of different spheres of acculturation to some of which refugees and other immigrants chose to adapt more than to others. Instead, the model implies the assumption of a single monolithic majority society consisting of fixed dimensions along which immigrants move during the process of cultural transition (Horenczÿk 1997: 35-36).

Berry's critics also argue that the model fails to take into account changes in the newcomers' construction of their social and cultural worlds. They emphasis that during the process of acculturation the culture of origin often becomes reinterpreted or reconstructed without any change in intensity and extent of alliance to it. However, by linking the weakening of prior cultural alliances to the adoption of norms, values and behaviours characterising receiving societies, Berry's model treats culture as a monolithic and fixed concept, and therefore it is not capable of capturing and incorporating these complexities (Horenczÿk 1997: 37-38).

Very importantly, Berry's model of acculturation is limited to the consequences of intercultural contact and does not allow for a fuller analysis of elements associated with adjustment to life in a new society that are not necessarily acculturation phenomena (e.g., acquisition of new skills). Adaptation and adjustment to the receiving society is much more than 'shedding culture' (Lazarus 1997). Finally, the model does not reflect the fact that the social practices of migrants are increasingly multi-sited and not confined to nation-state borders. Their sociocultural identities are becoming increasingly embedded in transnational social spaces. Their transnational practices allow them to experience the reality of movement and attachment simultaneously (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). The realities of transnational processes do not correspond to the notion of acculturation understood as a choice between adopting a new 'national culture' or rejecting it.

Outside cultural psychology literature, however, institutional arrangements within the receiving society remain at the centre of attention. This is because they are seen as determining the opportunities and scope for action, although immigrants, as individuals and groups, with their 'efforts and adaptation' are recognised as one side of the integration process (Penninx 2003). This further leads to a proliferation of (empirical) research on how immigrants/refugees adapt functionally by 'measuring' their integration in terms of language proficiency, housing, education and employment as well as showing some interest in their sociocultural adjustment approached analytically in a variety of ways. These studies assess how or whether refugees 'fit in' in the state defined modes of integration and thus they approach the approach integration as a top-down process of adjustment. Not surprisingly, these studies show that the outcomes of integration are not uniform. Indeed there are differences among different immigrant groups within the same country/ policy/ context, as well as in how immigrants from the same country of origin adjust and attempt to incorporate themselves in different countries/ contexts.

There is no doubt that immigrants, and indeed refugees, and receiving societies are unequal partners. Conditions of entry, that is, to the reception process and to membership, are critical for how immigrants become incorporated into receiving societies. In the case of refugees and their incorporation in new societies, these conditions are alarmingly and continuously deteriorating, leaving these people with fewer right-based and provision-based options concerning where and how they can make 'home' for themselves.7 However, the primary focus of academic inquiry on the agency of the receiving state and its institutional mechanisms leaves us without much insight into how the people who are 'managed' and 'guided' by the receiving states actually 'nest' themselves in their new sociocultural environments; how they strategise and negotiate between continuity and change, existential needs and longer term life plans, old loyalties and new identities. This leads to the processes of bureaucratic, legal, and public labelling of newcomers in general, and refugees in particular. As a result they are often sympathised with or pitied, increasingly also feared, but seldom understood.

Rethinking Refugeehood: Focusing on Processes, Intersections and Agency

Debates on 'the refugee' as a category, and how refugees are to be distinguished from other migrants, are longstanding and ongoing.8 One of the elements used in defining refugees is the involuntary character of their movement, prompted by political violence either perpetrated by the state or segments of the population, resulting in the breakdown of a society, armed violence, and dislocation of populations. Targets of this violence can be either individuals or groups considered opponents of the political elites, or other target groups, such as ethnic or religious groups. Conflicts of the 1990s also produced many unselected victims of the generalised violence characterising these 'new wars' (Kaldor 1999). Because of the international, national, transnational, and global character of the socio-political causes of refugee movements (Zolberg et al. 1989) and the resulting processes of (mass) victimization of local population, including those on the move, refugees are very often approached and represented as victims, traumatised, passive and helpless, rather than as people who actively struggle to overcome their victimisation. These notions, devoid of agency, go hand in glove with the emphasis on the involuntary character of movement, implying a lack of choice and decision. Its link with contexts of socio-political turmoil, most often accompanied by physical, armed violence, constructs the flight as a life-preserving endeavour that is in opposition to life- betterment efforts.

This type of representation of refugees is often prompted by the need to speak for or on behalf of refugees to secure their protection. A longstanding, highly politicised, and often heated debate on asylum rights in many parts of the world revolving around the issue of 'bogus' versus 'genuine' refugees seems to generate further the need to essentialise refugees and represent them as 'ultimate victims', hence, deserving international (state) protection. Refugeehood and victimhood are consequently often seen as one and the same. This fits well with the discourse surrounding the debate on 'genuine' refugees. In the current political and public climate 'genuine' refugees are only those fleeing for their lives, hence, acting upon instincts rather than any other human, moral, social or political need. If they strive for better lives they are not 'genuine'.

These essentialist notions of refugeehood are also linked to the concepts and experiences of terminal loss bereavement and disempowerment. Refugeehood and the experience of life away from one's 'true home' (Said. 1984) or native place and culture is often described as 'the saddest of fates' caused by an 'unbearable rift' between peoples and their native places (Said 2000 [1993]). The loss of place, or displacement, regarded as an abrupt loss of basic material sources of livelihood as well as a radical challenge to one's sense of identity and belonging, has become central to the notion of refugeehood. There is no doubt that dislocation caused by flight, and the struggle to regain control and re-establish one's life, cause, as Eastmond (1997:11) has put it, 'a social disruption at structural levels which leaves no domain of social experience untouched and a grave sense of loss.

Becoming and being a refugee, however, is a transformative experience and practice, a process, rather than a set of static (disempowering) structures. This process also entails empowering experiences. It opens up new social spaces and opportunities for refugees, it also offers 'a plurality of vision', because new life circumstances allow for the awareness of 'two' homes and cultures which are occurring together contrapunctally (Said 1984:35; emphasis added). This is because displacement or a loss of place, in specific circumstances and concepts, can be experienced as freedom from the pre-established sociocultural norms of the native society and country that often constrain individual behaviour and actions. For many women, for example, exile opens up their gender space by providing new opportunities linked to the process of reshaping gender roles within and outside the household (Eastmond 1993; Friere 1995; Korac 2004; Matsuoka and Sorenson 1999; McSpadden 1999). That forced movement and refugeehood are not only about loss of place and disempowerment, but should also be considered as the process of place making, of regaining control and establishing oneself in new life circumstance, has been increasingly emphasised in

studies about refugees, diasporas and transnational communities. Malkki (1995:517) was one of the first among refugee scholars to point out that emplacement is the flipside of displacement.

This call to rethink refugeehood by acknowledging it as a process entailing both disempowering and empowering experiences and structures is not another of many attempts to introduce a binary logic or opposition to the refugee studies discourse.9 Nor is it indeed intended to undermine the plea of refugee advocates for the right of forced migrants for protection. Rather, the emphasis on displacement and emplacement is to make analytical distinction between experiences and practices that occur simultaneously and intersect as a function of the interaction of structure and refugee agency. By pointing to this distinction, we can move away from the hegemony of victimhood in the refugee studies discourse, while still acknowledging that victimisation, loss and disempowerment are some of the central characteristics of refugee experiences. Both displacement and emplacement are critical for our understanding of refugeehood, which implies simultaneous experiences of victimisation and practices of overcoming it; experiences of grave loss, sever disruption of life, and radical challenge to identity, as well as processes of regaining control of life and reconstructing place and identity. In other words, agency and victimisation intertwine, constituting experiences of individual refugees. Because of a dynamic and dialectic relationship of these varied experiences and different practices, the notion of refugeehood becomes inseparable from the agency of people experiencing forced dislocation.

The recognition and creation of opportunities, however limited they may be within the context of forced migration, and the capacity to make individual decisions in specific situations, locations, and points in time, are all related to refugee agency. The focus on agency in approaching refugees enables us to perceive them as people like us, who have agency, sound judgement and reasons for action embedded in their past, politics, experiences of flight, and life way away from home. The notion of refugeehood devoid of agency effectively dehumanises people who are forced into decisions to migrate (Malkki 1996). It prevents us from understanding and approaching refugees as 'ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances' (Harrell-Bond 1999: 158) who need and indeed deserve our support in their struggle to regain control over their lives. The emphasis on refugee agency, hence, is a call to dissociate refugeehood from victimhood by exposing and subverting practices within scholarly and other writings, through which refugees are constructed as powerless and incapable of making any decisions about their lives.

Refugees make decisions about their flight, however coerced they might be, and they create opportunities within the limitations of their predicament. This process is influenced by the intersection of micro and macro factors. Individual and group social positioning and local dynamics intersect with structural and global dynamics in different ways in specific contexts. This process is critically shaped by refugees themselves through their needs and aspirations. These are negotiated at different levels and scale of organization through networks of relations with various actors, including governmental and other institutions. Agency is hence 'embodied in social relations' (Long 2001: 15).

Researchers are increasingly emphasising the importance of agency for studying the experiences of people fleeing their places of origin and their forced dislocation (e.g. Essed et al. 2004; Korac 2005, 2003a; Turton 2003). The notion of refugees and other migrants as social actors who have the 'capacity to process social experience and devise ways of coping with life' even under th most extreme forms of coercion' (Long 1992:22) has been introduced into the field of (forced) migration with the application of Gidden's concept of structuration to migration (e.g. Richmond 1993). Giddens (1984; 173) pointed out that social structures not only constrain behaviour and people's social lives, but also enable their actions. While he argued that the constitution of social structures cannot be understood without allowing for human agency, he viewed agency as embedded within institutional structures and processes (Giddens 1984: 11). This should not imply however that an actor 'follows a pre-given ideological script' (Dissanayake 1996:8, cited in Long 2001:15). Social actors and their agency are guided by both reflexivity and motivation. Turner (1988), among others, argued that a theoretical interpretation of social action must go beyond cognition and consciousness to include perceptions of security, trust, group inclusion, intersubjective understanding, and symbolic as well as material gratification, as important factors shaping agency.

Liminality and Refugee Agency

As social actors, refugees are continuously creating 'room for manoeuvre' (Long 2001) in the context of severely limited options and choices associated with forcible dislocations. They are actively engaged in confronting liminality. Turner (1967: 93) defined liminality as the phase 'betwixt and between', a state between separation from one social situation or group and reincorporation. As such it is characterised by uncertainty and improvised existence based upon ad hoc short-term strategies at best, or day-to-day survival at worst, the liminal character of refugee existence is a

consequence of the separation that is inherent in forced movements and therefore is part and parcel of the very nature of the experiences of forced migrants. It is also produced and reinforced by a variety of policy 'solutions' to the refugee 'problem', which keep people fleeing their countries of origin in situations of prolonged insecurity concerning their legal status and social rights. Bauman (2004) points out that in the current political climate refugees have become 'human waste', outcasts of modern societies. Reflecting upon the number and the situation of refugees in camps, as well as upon the consequences of restrictive admission policies in most countries of the world, which are forcing refugees to 'settle' in places that 'appear on no maps used by ordinary humans' (ibid: 80), he argues that refugees are never to be free from the growing sense of transience and provisional nature of any settlement.

While liminal existence is indeed a severely disempowering experience, it is also a condition that refugees actively confront in a variety of ways in their search for and creation of solutions to their predicament. In this sense their actions should be considered proactive and goal-oriented. This does not imply that refugees always have clear views of how their perceptions of reality are formed, and thus, that their strategies and actions are based on rational decisions and/or options.10 As Long (2001) points out, choices, strategies, and behaviour of social actors, as individuals or groups, are shaped by 'larger frames of meaning and action' (ibid: 14) formed through the links between the 'small' worlds of actors, and larger scale 'global' phenomena and structures (ibid.). In uncovering the complexity of factors involved it is crucial, he argues, to contextualise actors' strategies through a systematic ethnographic understanding of the lived experiences of the variously located social actors (Long 2001:14-15). Without this type of contextualisation, the notion of refugee agency is as abstract as is the notion of victimhood.

Lived in Worlds of Refugees: from Contexts to Processes

The centrality of context in approaching refugees as social actors enables us to uncover differences in their experiences and learn how they confront liminality in specific situations, define and redefine their goals and expectations. Contextualisation, hence, makes it possible for us to understand how structural elements intersect with the social positioning of individuals or groups and everyday practices. It allows a more complex and dynamic understanding of forced migrants as real people, thus deconstructing essentialist ways of thinking that refugees are essentially this or essentially that. The importance of an in depth understanding of the lived in worlds of

refugees understood as social actors is twofold. It can contribute further to the conceptualisation and development of our understanding of refugees, who as actors are agents of social change. It can also advance our thinking on how to develop and implement effective policies and assistance to refugees.

Emphasis on the delivery of experiences involved in forced migratory movements sits uneasily with the bureaucratic need for standardised categories and with one-size-fits-all policies. Many authors have already criticised the way in which refugees are helped in camps and countries of (re)settlement. Because of the lack of appreciation of difference among refugees, the assistance provided is uniform and rigid. Much of the service provision, as research demonstrates, is based on approaching refugees as a universal category, denying them individuality, past life experiences and future aspirations. The recognition and link between these represents, however, the basis upon which refugees themselves may rebuild a meaningful place and life for themselves (Daniel and Knudsen 1995:5). For many people who flee conflicts constructed as ethnic or religious strife, for example, the experience of displacement or of loss of place, and a range of social ties and meanings attached to it, often begins long before they actually dislocate. Their flight and subsequent experiences of displacement further challenges their identity. A significant part of the individual identity crisis experienced by people forced into decisions to leave their places of origin is linked to the process of becoming a refugee. It centrally involves confronting the stereotyping powers of bureaucratic notions rooted in institutional knowledge about who is 'the refugee' and how s/he is to be helped.

Policies and provision developed in response to the construction of 'the refugee' as a universal category are also not gender neutral. They most often reflect gender bias and unequal gender relations of power among aid workers and service providers, often resulting in non-recognition of the differentiated needs and problems of women and girls, and men and boys, or misguided interventions into gender relations of power within refugee families, households and groups. This is turn leads to the escalation of gender-based tensions among refugees, cutting through all segments of their life and undermining their coping strategies and well-being (Hyndman 2000).

The hegemony of the notion of victimhood associated with refugees, which denies them agency and voice, leads to a paternalistic type of assistance for refugees, approaching them as passive recipients of aid who are prone to prolonging their dependency on organized forms of assistance (Harrell-Bond 1986; 1999). Although it is overwhelmingly assumed that refugee assistance is motivated by 'compassion' and

'altruism', suggesting the absence of any obligation and/or expectation, critics have demonstrated that the link between humanitarianism and paternalism is producing an overwhelming feeling of indebtedness and obligation on the part of the beneficiary (refugee) (de Voe 1986). Not surprisingly, these types of refugee assistance and aid often result in a range of psychosocial problems as well as in how refugees become incorporated in receiving societies or how they cope with their 'temporary' stay in refugee camps. Studies show that post-flight situations are equally, and often even more stressful and traumatic than those associated with the pre-flight and flight experiences of forced migrants (e.g. Gorst-Unsworth and Goldenberg 1998; Lavik et al. 1996). Contextualising experiences of displacement and their meanings for specific people in specific circumstances can help bring about much needed awareness among policy makers and aid workers that refugees are not an undifferentiated category.

A call to contextualise the lived experiences of the variously located social actors through systemic ethnographic research of refugee situations is also a call to emphasise the importance of understanding how specific contexts shape the social positioning of forced migrants as well as their everyday practices. They also shape migratory processes, from global migration patterns to the social organization of migration and issues of incorporation. The emphasis on contextualisation is to highlight the importance of a shift from the state-centred to the refugee-centred approach to examining and understanding the processes as well as the consequences of forced movements of people. In this book, the call for a refugee centred approach is to focus on how they organize their experience, form connections, reconstruct their social world, and create meaning through differently situated everyday practises and actions. The examination of the intersection of these emplacement experiences in specific circumstances and locations allows for a more complex and dynamic understanding of the processes of incorporation than a focus on the state and its intervention alone. In this sense, contextualisation serves as a microfunction of mezzo and macro-processes.

The experience of becoming and being a refugee in Amsterdam and Rome for the people in this research have been somewhat different, engendering different types of responses to their displacement and strategies for emplacement. In both contexts, however, the people whose accounts are presented in this book, although victimised in some substantial ways, were also agents or aimed to be agents of their own past, present and future lives.

Policy 'Solutions' and types of Agency They Engender

Government programmes pertaining to refugee assistance and local support structures in receiving places play an important role in how the lives of refugees unfold, as many authors have already pointed out (e.g., McSpadden 1999). Refugee incorporation has become a much debated issue in the past decades. The reception and integration of policies of European states vary widely, from highly centralised state sponsored programmes to the provision of minimal and decentralised assisitance. Regardless of these differences however, a prevailing concern within the EU has been how to facilitate the decision making process on asylum claims and how to deal with the 'mechanics' of settlement in order to meet the immediate and pressing needs of refugees.

European governments are increasingly opting for the establishment of specialised reception centres for the new arrivals (European Commission 2001). These centres are seen as an effective response to the growing number of people seeking asylum in the EU. They are regarded as an adequate 'solution' to the matters of security and provision of accommodation and other basic needs of forced migrants during the determination process, as well as for the management and deportation of those who are not granted permission to stay. Other measures relating to the functional aspects of settlement in receiving societies include policies and programmes offering access to retraining and education to enhance employment opportunities, access to health and other social services, and in some cases, the ability to participate in local decision making processes. The level and character of these forms of assistance depend on the character of the welfare systems of the receiving societies, which tend to influence policies of integration. The effects of these policy approaches for the incorporation of those who are granted asylum are seldom examined, despite a growing realisation among researchers and practitioners working with refugees that such policies may effectively facilitate their long-term dependency, social isolation and stigmatisation.

The Netherlands and Italy represent contrasting types of policy approaches to admission, reception and integration of refugees. The Dutch system is state controlled and embedded in a so-called welfare model of assisting refugees, while the Italian model is lacking an overarching strategy and is embedded in an ad hoc approach to refugee assistance.

The Dutch Rules

The Dutch model of refugee integration is based on a number of measures and interventions by the state intended to meet the immediate needs of refugees and to facilitate their graded structural and institutional incorporation in Dutch society. The main goal of the Dutch integration policy is to 'activate citizenship' by enhancing the opportunity of individual migrants to exercise the responsibility involved in membership/citizenship in Dutch society (Lechner 2000). The emphasis on responsibility has led to a contractual relationship between the refugee/immigrant and the government /municipality as a basis for policy. The rights and obligations of both parties are guaranteed. The government/municipality is obliged to provide an integration programme, including language and retraining courses; the newcomer is obliged to complete the programme successfully within a specified period. If the newcomer fails to meet requirements stipulated in the contract/policy, the government might reduce his/her social security benefits or penalise those who receive income from other sources.

This policy is embedded in the country's well-developed welfare system and provides a considerable level of social benefits and services for refugees. The system is therefore favourable for those fleeing with children and the elderly. However, to protect the welfare system from abuse, the government introduced restrictive admission and reception policies. At the time of my research (2000-2001), those seeking asylum in the country usually experienced a tow-stage admission and reception procedure involving a stay of up to forty-eight hours in an investigation centre (OC), and a stay of several months at a reception centre (AZC). The length of their stay at one of the reception centres depended on the duration of the determination process. If the outcome of their asylum application was positive, refugees were offered housing in one of the municipalities.

The Dutch reception system offers a well-developed system of housing refugees, dating back from before the introduction of reception centres and the new Integration of Newcomers Act. These were the times when, as Muus (1998) remarks, there was an overly strong emphasis on housing, to the point that it could be argued that all integration efforts were about accommodating refugees. Under the system in operation during my research, refugees could benefit from subsidised housing arrangements with municipalities after status acknowledgement. Only those who came before the stay in reception centres was obligatory had to make their own housing arrangements. Those whose status was acknowledged were also required to

undergo compulsory language training, and had a possibility of retraining to enhance their prospects of finding employment.

For some people, however, in cases where a provisional permit to stay ('F' status) was granted, the reception procedure involved an third stage. This stage usually lasted up to three years and involved provision of housing and a modest allowance, but no provision directed at integration into Dutch society, such as compulsory language training, or the right to retrain and work. This phased state-led settlement process may therefore last for years. A relatively relaxed naturalisation policy at the time of my research meant however, that most of those who were allowed to stay in the country could obtain Dutch citizenship relatively soon after this period. Consequently, almost all of the people I met in Amsterdam were Dutch citizens.

Although the national government devises integration policy, the local municipalities and the NGO sector implement it on the ground. The Dutch NGO sector, whose work with refugees goes back to the 1970s, is well developed and funded. Traditionally, it relies heavily on volunteers, who are directly or indirectly associated with the Dutch refugee Council (VVN). They offer specific forms of help to the newly arrived refugees during the initial phase of their stay, such as orientation in the new environment /society, including practical information and some language tutoring. Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a tendency to involve more professionals in work with refugees.11

The Italian Way

Italy lacks the legislative framework that could form a basis for social policy pertaining to the reception and integration of refugees. The reasons for this are twofold. On the one hand, Italy was until relatively recently a country of emigration and a transit country through which refugees and other migrants only passed on their way to other European and overseas destinations. By the end of 1998, however, there were over one million foreigners in Italy, making it the country with the fourth largest number of resident foreigners within the EU, after Germany, France and the UK (Pittau 1999). Although the situation has changed, the experience of previous decades still shapes the institutional memory of many governmental bodies. They still find it difficult to acknowledge that many of the refugees and other migrants actually come to stay. On the other hand Italy's welfare system is relatively underdeveloped, which

has led to a corresponding approach to assistance available to those seeking and/or granted protection. The assistance is minimal, because it is assumed that those needing support will resort to self help within refugee and migrant networks. It is expected that this will encourage them to become self-sufficient in a short period.

Despite the fact that a new Immigration Law, enacted in 1998, stated that asylum seekers were to be accommodated at government-run centres, few such centres were established at the time of my research, in 1999- 2000. Moreover, although the new law was enacted in 1998, corresponding legislation concerning asylum and temporary protection status had not been introduced at the time of this research. Italy also does not judicially recognise humanitarian refugees, but refers solely to the Geneva Convention. Consequently, populations fleeing the general violence and armed conflicts of the 1990s, for example Albania and the Yugoslav successor states, were granted temporary resident permits to stay, based on specific government decrees.

The people I me in Rome were granted temporary permits to stay, based on such a decree introduced in 1992. These ad hoc measures were effective between 1992 and 1997, resulting in 77,000 temporary residence permits granted to people fleeing the regions affected by the conflict.12 This temporary status was usually granted without any lengthy determination procedure and included the immediate right to work and study. Because their stay was classified as temporary they did not qualify for permanent resident status which would eventually give them the opportunity to apply for Italian citizenship. Only those married to Italians had it, and some also had time-limited work permits, renewed every four years.

While the humanitarian permit to stay in Italy allowed refugees to work or study, it also meant that the vast majority received no assistance to settle in the country. Thus, the system was not favourable for the settlement of those with (small) children and the elderly. Humanitarian (temporary) status also does not allow family reunification, resulting in fewer families settling in Italy. The government established fifteen reception centres for those fleeing the region. Their gradual closure began at the end of 1995; at the time of this research, these centres were closed. The centres could accommodate up to two thousand persons at a time. The exact number of those accommodated at such centres was not available, but there is a well founded indication that the number was not much greater than a couple of thousand (Losi 1994).

Additionally, the NGO sector also initiated forma of assistance to refugees fleeing Yugoslav conflicts. The organization Consorzio Italiano di Solidaritá, founded in 1993, was particularly active. From 1993 to 1996, the organization helped approximately two thousand people fleeing the post- Yugoslav states. It helped in providing accommodation to these refugees through its own network of local organizations or volunteers primarily in smaller industrial towns in northern Italy. Initially, refugees were accommodated with Italian families, were helped to enrol in language courses and in some cases to find jobs. The regional governments financially assisted these programmes. In 1996, the organization started providing assistance for people fleeing other troubled regions of the world.13

The Italian NGO sector with a mandate to assist asylum seekers and refugees is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon. Most of the organizations were founded at the beginning of the 1990s. Some of these organizations have often innovative programs aimed at employment and/or organizational needs of refugees, but due to their lack of organizational and financial capacity, they remain only small projects, inadequate to meet the needs of a growing refugee population in the country. Moreover, NGOs are unevenly spread across the country and less numerous than church organizations which offer assistance to the destitute in general, including refugees. Church organizations and NGOs provide various types of assistance, ranging from emergency accommodation and free meals to language courses. However, the assistance they offer is scarce, particularly accommodation, and cannot meet the needs of a growing number of asylum seekers and refugees.

A Note on Method: Focus on Refugee Voices

As this book is committed to refugee-centred approaches to examining the processes and consequences of forced movements of people, its focus is on refugee voices. Because of its endeavour to reconstruct the actors' point of view in the variety of situations that they encounter in their everyday life this research is based on the methods of ethnographic research and case study. Research strategies to reveal the subjective world of the actor's experience are considered more appropriate for gaining knowledge about problems of displacement and the processes of emplacement than the social mapping of numerical data and statistical methods favoured by governments in examining different aspects of settlement and in evaluating outcomes of integration policies. Social surveys tend to generate structural models, as Wallman (1986) suggests, based upon 'categorical markers' or 'a once-for-all typology of

people'. Such models as she pints out, present a 'tidier than life' account of social reality, in which the question of 'whether, when and how far the actor identifies with those who share the same categorical status' is never proposed (Wallman 1986: 223-24).

Throughout the book I refer to experiences of displacement and emplacement of refugees from the Yugoslav successor states who were granted asylum in Italy and the Netherlands. Data for this qualitative survey was collected during eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Rome (1999-2000) and Amsterdam (200-2001), where there was a considerable concentration of people who were forced to flee the war-torn country. The study is based on different kinds of data obtained from refugees, NGOs, governmental and community organizations, and matched by participant observation in various contexts of social interaction.14

Emplacement is a process that can take a lifetime, so it is important to specify the time span to be examined, as well as the main unit of analysis. This study examined the situation of refugees from the successor states of Yugoslavia who arrived in Italy and the Netherlands between 1991 and 1995. It was considered that after six to ten years in exile these people were able to come to terms with some of their losses, to refine the perception of their situation in Italian/Dutch society, and to formulate their goals. My research focused on individual refugees, understood as agents who were actively involved in confronting liminality and in creating a meaningful place for themselves. It was envisaged that the analysis of individual cases and experience of displacement and emplacement would point to the factors that facilitate or hinder interaction within and outside the group of compatriots and the role of such interaction(s) in the process of emplacement as defined by refugees themselves. Hence, this study is not an investigation of the situation of 'refugees from the former Yugoslavia' in Rome or 'Bosnian refugees' in Amsterdam understood as an 'ethnic' or 'refugee community'. Rather, it is an endeavour to grasp the 'everyday praxis of group formation in its variability and context dependency' (Wimmer 2004: 4). Although the focus of the enquiry is refugee as individual, every effort was made to collect individual accounts of all family and household members, as it is acknowledged that families and household units are often the basic units of survival shaping the individual choices, strategies and goals of their members.

Qualitative methods were used in this study for several reasons. Their use is linked to a critical view of a 'top-down' or normative approach to integration adopted in this study and its aim to give refugees a voice. Qualitative interviewing is considered as an important way of learning from refugees, and crucial in addressing

the problem of 'asymmetry of power and voice' between the state and the refugees (Indra 1993). Robinson (1998: 122) has argued that 'since interrogation is individualised, contested and contextual it requires qualitative methodologies which allow the voices of respondents to be heard in unadulterated form.' Further, qualitative methods help to avoid treating refugee subjects as 'data-gathering' objects, because they better address the exploitative tendency of unequal power relations embedded in the research process. Their use secures active involvement of refugees in the construction of data and knowledge about their lives. In this sense, qualitative methods are suitable for studies acknowledging research subjects as 'everyday theorists' (Cresswell 2004: 79) and legitimate 'agents of knowledge' (Harding 1987:3).

This book does not aim to produce ambitious generalisations. Rather, it seeks to offer insights into the complexity of the process of emplacement based on an in-depth knowledge of a small 'slice' of reality. The empirical relevance of this research is enhanced by its comparative nature and its focus on the situation and accounts of refugees from a single country of origin in two different cultural and policy contexts. It was considered that people coming from the successor sates of Yugoslavia bring to the receiving societies similar 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1984). They are of a similar background in terms of a social upbringing rooted in the shared socioeconomic system of their country of origin, the educational system and the system of values, together with some elements of shared traditions and culture. The ways in which this accumulated set of conditions of life position the refugee in a particular relation to others importantly depends on the policy and country context of receiving societies. Thus, the narratives of the people in Rome and Amsterdam collected for this study do not claim to be representative of the situation of all refugees in the two cities and countries. They are, however, demonstrative of the issues and problems involved in the processes of emplacement confronted by similarly positioned individual refugees in different country contexts. Further, the accounts of people in this book clearly point to the fact that refugees are not a homogenous category of people whose needs can fit a single so-called integration model.

During the field work in Rome and Amsterdam, I established around 180 informal contacts with people who fled one of the successor states of Yugoslavia (around 120 and 160 contacts respectively). These contacts were useful for collecting general information about people's situation in Italy and the Netherlands. As these interactions were usually not a one-to-one basis and, therefore, not suitable for collecting more personal data, I chose forty refugees in Rome and twenty in Amsterdam for formal, in-depth interviewing. In addition, I tried, as much as possible,

to share day-to-day lives with refugees in both study sites and made every effort to participate in their social life. When the circumstances permitted, I visited them at work, at home, and took pert at many social gatherings involving my respondents and their friends, who were either also refugees or people they met in exile. This enabled me to gain a more in-depth understanding of their social situation.

My principle concern in selecting interviewees for this study was to ensure they came from different networks in order to cover a variety of refugee situations, and avoid a danger of interviewing people with similar experiences (Bloch 1999). Contacts with the NGO sector, statutory agencies and community organizations in Italy and the Netherlands, as well as my own contacts with people living in the two cities/counties, assisted in making initial contacts with a number of refugees. These initial contacts facilitated the development of a web of informal contacts with people who were refugees in Rome and Amsterdam. Theses informal contacts were important in establishing a relationship of trust, which facilitated the process of identifying interviewees. This was important in addressing the problem of refugees often being intensely suspicious of institutions, government(s), and individuals representing these bodies, including researchers, the distrust being rooted in their experiences of exile (Moussa 1993: 36). Acknowledging the complexities, sensitivity and often insecurity of their situation in the receiving societies, interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality,a nd assured that the names of places and institutions that could identify them in either their place of origin or Rome/Amsterdam, would be omitted. Therefore, the names that appear in the book are pseudonyms and the names of the places they came from or currently live and work are omitted.

The fact that I as the researcher come from the same country as the people involved in my study, meant that we shared the language and to some extent the sociocultural background as well as the experience of life 'outside homeland'. These shared experiences and features of our identities were important in developing a mutual understanding and trust with the people in my study. However, our life circumstances were in most cases substantially different and these differences were aggravated in those cases in cases in which our socioeconomic background and education were radically different. Edwards (1993: 18) argues that factors such as race, class and other social characteristics place both the researcher and the subject within the social structure and therefore are relevant to all social research. In order to reduce the problems in understanding which were embodied in these different locations, I often repeated to the refugees, in my own words, what they had said during the interviews, to see if they agreed with the interpretation. In this way, an effort was made to overcome barriers in understanding the words of the interviewees because of a 'lack

of shared cultural norms for telling a story, making a point, (and) giving an explanation' (Kohler Riessman 1989: 173).

My methodological approach to doing this research was importantly informed and enhanced by writings of feminist standpoint theorists who argue that knowledge is situated (e.g. Harding 1987) and can be gained through a dialogical process, which is the way to approximate truth (e.g., Stoetzler and Yuval-Davies 2002). My own location and experience regarding the problems with ethnicity in the context of a conflict constructed as ethnic strife were radically different from the experiences of interviews who were a minority population in their places of origin. However, the research process revealed that because we shared to a certain extent the system of values rooted in our social upbringing, it was possible to negotiate any differences in how we viewed the causes of the conflict and experienced its consequences. In a few cases in which the initial contact indicated a possibility of misunderstandings, distrust or even tension, subsequent communication focussing more on elements of the past life and experiences we shared proved to be invaluable for the development of mutual understanding and trust during the interview process. Through this type of interaction we were able to situate ourselves within our respective contexts, to reflect upon our individual (and group) positioning and experiences, and establish a dialogue.

I sought to interview people of different age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, parental status, education, region and place of residence before flight. The profile of the group of people in my research reflects the characteristics of the refugee population from the Yugoslav successor states in the two cities.15   People in Amsterdam were older and of moderately lower educational level than those in Rome. Most importantly, however, practically all refugees in Rome were employed, except for a few young adults still living with their parents. Furthermore people in Rome were overwhelmingly single or cohabiting, without children, and without family networks in Italy. In Amsterdam, parents or siblings of the overwhelming majority of those who were single were also refugees in the Netherlands. While intermarriage or cohabitation with native population was present in the group in Rome, it did not exist among my interviewees in Amsterdam. Finally, the overwhelming majority of interviewees in Amsterdam had Dutch citizenship, while the majority of those interviewed in Rome still had temporary, humanitarian refugee status. In terms of the ethnic background of the people in this study and the region/state they originate from, for example, Bosnis-Herzegovina, croatia or Serbia, the interviewees in both Amsterdam and Rome were overwhelmingly Bosniaks or of an ethnically mixed background from Bosnia-Herzegovina.16 While the number of people belonging to these two backgrounds were identical among the interviewed in Amsterdam, the

number of those from an ethically mixed background was somewhat higher than Rome.17

An Outline of the Book

Chapter 1 provides a discussion of theoretical and conceptual concerns relating to the concepts of 'place', 'home' and 'transnationalism'. It challenges the centrality of 'origin' for understanding refugees as well as the notion of sited identities. Approaching refugees as people who have agency and who establish and develop social relations and ties according to their individual and group histories, cultural and political codes, as well as priorities and plans for their future can also help deconstruct the related 'naturalised' notion of 'community'. By emphasising the importance of examining emerging forms of interaction and networks of relations that refugees establish in exile for their emplacement this chapter also offers a framework for analysis of the 'voices' and experiences of refugees in this study.

The displacement of peoples from war-torn Yugoslavia is placed within its historical and sociopolitical context in Chapter 2. The social and political turmoil of the late 1980s, characterised by the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism that led to the creation of ethnicised forms of statehood in the region, is the context in which local populations were brutally victimised. Territories and regions which were most ethnically mixed, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, were the most affected by radical nationalist claims for 'ethically pure' territories. Many of those labelled as the Other in various regions of the once common country, either because of their ethnic background or politics, were forced to flee their places of origin. Chapter 2 examines the interplay between force and choice shaping the individual decisions of refugees in this study on when, how and where to flee. Experiences of war and accounts by refugees of the 'decision making' processes will point to some general features of the exile experiences of so-called spontaneous refugees, as well as the variations. I argue that in conceptualising forcible migratory movements it is critical to emphasise the centrality of people's agency in making decisions to move from their places of origin. This can bring into focus the exploration of how forcible migratory processes actually work in specific historic, political and other individual circumstances of the people on the move. By exploring the actual reality of the decision-making process of forced migrants we can begin to address the problems of what has been termed 'management of (forced) migration' and a range of policy issues associated with it.

Chapter 3 outlines the transition experienced by people who fled from their places of origin in war-torn Yugoslavia to Italy and the Netherlands. This chapter presents individual experiences of arrival and of the first years in Rome and Amsterdam, by focusing on the transition from being 'ordinary people', who actively shape their lives, to refugees, a dependent, undifferentiated group without clearly defined social and legal status in the receiving society. The discussion reveals that refugees, although victimised, are far from being passive victims prone to dependency. They are survivors, actively seeking solutions to their liminal existence caused by displacement. Central to their place-making strategies developed upon arrival is their search for opportunities of support which allow for active participation and access to greater control over decisions about their lives. In searching for opportunities they focus on negotiating aspects of their past and possible options for their future, and actively develop strategies to confront their present, liminal condition. The chapter provides a commentary on the role and effects of different types of institutional support structure in facilitating the functional aspects of refugee settlement through which they start to regain control over their lives. It analyses two contexts of exile, one centralised, providing uniform and phased forms of support, which cause difficulties for refugees in their effort to tackle the state of liminality caused by their displacement. The analysis also reveals the connection between assistance strategies, the structural constraints they embody and the types of human agency they engender.

While Chapter 3 examines the processes of regaining control over life in exile through functional adjustment to the receiving societies, Chapter 4 explores other important components of the processes of emplacement. By pointing to the importance and complexity of the interplay between continuity and change for the process of restructuring life in exile, the discussion examines the role of minority, or 'ethnic', and majority social networks in fulfilling these two important needs of people who are negotiating and developing their strategies of emplacement. The chapter explores the 'bonding' links between 'ethnic' networks and the need for continuity as well as the importance of the type and quality of social networks established, both bonding and bridging, is centrally linked to the type and character of the policy context in the receiving society. It points to the importance of formation and consolation of both 'ethnic' and minority-majority social networks for the process of emplacement. The discussion reveals the centrality of bridging social networks, those between refugee and the majority groups for refugee notions of belonging to their new sociocultural settings, as well as their general satisfaction with the quality of their emplacement in receiving societies.

The book concludes by exploring transnational dimensions of emplacement. By examining the emerging pattern of transnational lives of refugees and their effect on notions of belonging and the meaning of return, Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the changing meaning of citizenship and role(s) it has in the process of emplacement of refugees whose life trajectories are presented in this book. The analysis demonstrates that the sense of belonging to a community and notions of 'home' are reconstructed in new societies in a variety of ways, many of which correspond to neither local or national borders, nor policies which reflect notions of territorial and sited identities. Transnational place-making strategies therefore challenge the dominant conception of membership, integration and belonging linked to a single unitary realm of nation-state, transnationalism, transnational links and strategies, have deconstructed it in some important ways, making citizenship no longer the main locus of identity for many refugees/immigrants. While the acquisition of formal citizenship rights is essential for the establishment of transnational place-making strategies, it appears to be less central to the notions and meanings of belonging of refugees in this study. The discussion in this book also reveals that social relations and connections that refugees make, become part of or strive for, occur both as localising processes, thus within a nation-state, as well as transnational processes spanning state borders. While bridging social networks help refugees to 'nest' into specific localities and become 'of place', 'ethnic' networks tend to span across local/national borders and 'nest' them in transnational social spaces. The dialectic relationship of these processes is continually negotiated through the place-making strategies of refugees developed in particular contexts and in specific points in time. Their emplacement, based on these strategies, will always lead to some other level of pluralisation of identities, solidarities and membership forms.

Notes

[1] Most of the funding for this research came from the Lisa Gilad initiative. Additional funding was provided by the European Commission through the European council for Refugees and Exiles, as well as The British Council, the Heyter Travel Fund and the Oppenheimer Fund.

[2] For more labelling refugees see Zetter (1991;2007).

[3] This research formed the basis for my PhD thesis, entitled ' The Power of Gender in the Transition from State Socialism to Ethnic Nationalism, Militarization and War: The Case of Post Yugoslav States', Faculty of Graduate Studies York University, Toronto, 1998. the thesis yielded several publications, two of which are particularly relevant for some points of discussion in this book (se Korac 2004; 2006).

[4] For more on these types of settlement problems and their meanings see Žmegač (2005).

[5] For a more detailed discussion of different terms used in both theory and policy see Castles et al. (2003a)

[6] The majority of scholars in the field do not include gender rights as an important aspect of citizenship. However there are authors who recognise it as central to the differentiated positioning of individuals vis-à-vis citizenship (eg. Castles and Davidson 2000; Kofman et al. 2000)

[7] Arendt (1966 cited in Xenos 1996:243) has long pointed out that the problem of refugees in the modern age is not the loss of a particular place, but the possibility of finding a new one.

[8] One of the recent debates on this issue includes exchanges between Adelman and McGrath (2007); Cohen, (2007); DeWind (2007); Hathaway (2007a; 2007b)

[9] Refugee scholars are increasingly calling for analyses to overcome binary logic in conceptualising refugees, some extending this call to distinctions between displacement and emplacement (e.g. Doná 2007).

[10] There have been different attempts to theorise migratory movements based on rational choice models, for example those based on a 'place utility' (Wolpert 1965) or on a 'value expectancy' (De Jong and Gardner 1981).

[11] The information on volunteers and professionals working under the umbrella of the VVN was provided by their representatives during my exploratory visits to the Netherlands in September 1999 and September 2000.

[12] Data provided by the Ministry of Interior during an exploratory visit to Rome in November 1999.

[13] Information and data obtained from the NGO representatives during and exploratory research visit to Rome in September 1999.

[14] The information about refugees interviewed and community organizations contacted is given in Appendices 1 and 2, respectively. The list of governmental and non-governmental organizations contacted is given in Appendix 3.

[15] Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 4 show the social characteristics and legal status of the refugees interviewed.

[16] *Bosniak* refers to a Bosnian-Muslim; this is the official term used by the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[17] Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 5 show the ethnic background of the refugees I interviewed.