Refugee integration in Europe since the 'crisis' – a research scoping paper[1]

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Abstract

In this working paper we map the literature on refugee integration in Europe as part of our work for the GLIMER project which seeks to understand how localities are responding to the so-called 'refugee crisis'. We provide a presentation of trends in the literature by focusing on some of the outcomes and conclusions of a number of notable recent studies in an attempt to build a broad picture of research on refugee integration in Europe since the 'refugee crisis'. In order to do so, we made a selection of outputs that can be considered as some of the most salient recent approaches to studying the incorporation of refugees, particularly in a comparative perspective. We focus on the areas of housing, language, labour market and gender with the aim of not only providing a useful resource for fellow researchers working on this topic, but also provide a resource for policymakers and those dealing with refugees and integration on the ground.

Keywords: Refugee Crisis, Integration, Asylum, Housing, Language skills, Labour market participation, Gender

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Introduction

This working paper surveys the current state of the literature on refugee integration in Europe, with a particular focus on recent research that has emerged since the so-called 'refugee crisis'. The rationale for this endeavour is to map the state of the field as part of our work on the GLIMER project that compares how local integration takes place across four case studies.[2] To date there has been no attempt to discuss the state of play in this interdisciplinary and burgeoning field. This despite the fact that the 'crisis' has led to a surge in academic interest in refugees and asylum seekers. This explosion of new research is not limited to the personal journeys and experiences of the displaced migrants themselves but also takes into account the responses of local and national governments, as well as that of citizens. The focus on forced migration and asylum policies is a growing sub-field of migration studies and it is perhaps unsurprising that so many research outputs have been dedicated to the 'refugee crisis' and its aftermath including several journal special issues.[3] Due to the recent nature of the 'crisis', the number of monographs on this issue is still sparse (although we can expect many in the pipeline). Indeed, many of the books dealing with this issue are journalistic in nature (Betts and Collier 2017, Evans 2017, Kingsley 2017, McDonald-Gibson 2017, Trilling 2018). However, the number of articles on the topic seems to have increased exponentially.[4] The role of social scientific research in responding to the crisis is important as a means to 'accompany the design and implementation of policy measures for the integration of refugees and people in subsidiary protection' (Kohlenberger *et al* 2017). Issues of refugee reception and integration are understandably a key area of interest as countries deal with the new influx. It is therefore an aim of this working paper to not only inform fellow researchers

[2] Governance and the Local Integration of Migrants and Europe's Refugees (GLIMER) is a three-year project looking at how the local governance of new arrivals can secure successful integration across a range of indicators. Our cases include Cyprus, Italy, Scotland and Sweden with a particular emphasis on the cities of Nicosia, Cosenza, Glasgow and Malmö. For more information see http://www.glimer.eu/

[3] This includes several publications that do not normally focus on issues of migration. For example *The Journal of Global Ethics* ('Refugee Crisis: The Borders of Human Mobility', Volume 12, issue 3, 2016); *Global Social Policy* ('Global social policy and the 'refugee crisis', Volume 16 issue 3), *German Law Journal* ('Constitutional Dimensions of the Refugee Crisis', Volume 17, Number 6, 2016), *Human Geography* ('Geographical Perspectives on the European 'Migration and Refugee Crisis' Volume 9, Number 2, 2016) *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* ('The European Union and The Refugee 'Crisis': Inclusion, Challenges, and Responses' Volume 27, Issue 2, 2017) *Journal of Communication Management* ('The European refugee crisis: organizational responses and communication strategies' Volume 21 Issue 4, 2017), *Patterns of Prejudice* (Refugees Then and Now: Memory, History and Politics in the Long Twentieth Century Volume 52, Issue 2, 2018), *The Service Industries Journal* (Refugee Crisis and Human Exploitation, forthcoming 2019).

[4] The *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, the *Journal of Refugee Studies* and *Refugee Survey Quarterly* are some of the key outlets for this research but increasingly this work can also be found across journals in the social sciences as well as those in law, business, economics and health.

working on this topic, but also provide a resource for policymakers and those dealing with refugees and integration on the ground.

While 'integration' itself as a term is hotly debated, we would argue that some consensus has been achieved in the literature around the conceptual framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) and their four 'markers and means' of integration. These markers include Employment, Housing, Education and Health. In this particular review, we have subsumed the latter category within a discussion of gender and also focused on the issue of language learning within education. This choice reflects the four themes that are dealt with in the GLIMER project. The purpose of the review is not to provide an exhaustive list of all the published work on refugee integration. Rather, we have made a selection of those outputs, whether research reports or journal articles, that can be considered as some of the most salient recent approaches to studying the incorporation of refugees, particularly in a comparative perspective. We have purposely reduced the scope to work published since 2011, a date which could conveniently be seen as the start of the current 'crisis' in Europe.[5] 2011 is especially salient because after the 'Arab Spring' uprisings that year, the number of people coming to Europe to seek asylum – via Turkey, or across the central Mediterranean from North Africa – began to rise (Trilling 2018). This was also the year when a large number of North Africans arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa which led to the notion in the media that there was a 'migrant crisis' (McMahon 2012).[6] Indeed, since this time, using the word 'crisis' when describing migration to Europe became the norm in political discourse. The terminology used to describe this crisis changes depending on specific contexts but is invariably described as either a 'migrant' or 'refugee' crisis.[7]

We are cognisant of the dangers of using this language when reason and compassion should dictate that reference to a 'crisis' should actually describe the circumstances of 'those feeling devastation, or to those trapped in it' (Bhambra 2017: 395). Another drawback is that it can contribute to the idea that migration across the Mediterranean Sea into Europe is some kind of new phenomenon that

[5] Other start dates could have been selected. Mainwaring (2012: 692), notes that in 2008 Malta spearheaded an alliance called the Quadro Group (including Italy, Greece and Cyprus) that 'exploited the rhetoric of EU solidarity as the answer to the perceived immigration crisis they are facing'. Since this time Malta has repeatedly used the notion of a crisis in EU forums to argue that it is carrying a disproportionate amount of the migration 'burden'.

[6] Another significant watershed was the sinking of two vessels near Lampedusa on 3rd and 11th October 2013. These tragedies mark a decisive turning point as they motivated the Italian government's decision to implement its *Mare Nostrum* rescue operation (Musarò 2016), later to be replaced by Operation Triton, the border security operation conducted by the European Union's border security agency - Frontex.

[7] Goodman *et al* (2017) show how in the UK media, the terminology used shifted first from "Mediterranean migrant crisis" before becoming the "Calais migrant crisis" in which migrants were constructed as a threat to UK security. In a second phase it was constructed as a "European migrant crisis" before becoming a "refugee crisis", but only after photographs were published of a drowned child.

only began recently. Indeed, much media coverage tends to date the crisis from 2015, a time when the issue became a "perfect storm" with European political discourse centred on the number of 'irregular arrivals' to Europe.[8] The use of terms such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees also needs to be clarified, even if they are often used interchangeably in public discourse. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the generic term 'migrants' should be applied to those who have left their country primarily for economic reasons but not due to the threat of persecution. Refugees are persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution and are recognized as needing sanctuary elsewhere because it is too dangerous for them to return home. They are defined and protected in international law by the 1951 Refugee Convention which outlines the basic rights which States should afford to refugees. [9] Asylum-seekers have submitted applications for refugee status and sanctuary in a country but not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee. Terminology is important when discussing the fate of displaced persons, though ultimately 'legal categories and bureaucratic labels reveal more about the assumptions underpinning the politics of the time rather than the nature of migration patterns' (McMahon and Sigona 2018: 501). Indeed, the use of the opposing categories of 'refugee' and 'migrant' to establish the legitimacy of claims for international protection has featured strongly during Europe's 'migration crisis' and has been used to justify policies of exclusion and containment (Crawley and Skleparis 2018).

In order to gather data for this literature review, keyword searches were carried out across the databases of Taylor and Francis, Sage, Oxford Academic, Cambridge Core and Wiley-Blackwell with a filter of outputs produced between 2011-2017.[10] These searches included combinations of terms such as 'refugees+integration', 'refugees+housing', 'refugees+language', 'refugees+labour market' and 'refugees+women'.[11] After each search, a manual selection was made of those articles which were salient to the topic of refugee integration in Europe covering the areas of housing, education (in particular language skills), the labour market as well as those with a gender specific focus. This initial corpus was then complemented by consulting the reference lists of

[8] The year 2015 became emblematic because the issue of migrants crossing the Mediterranean became a major and recurring news item. The number of people arriving at the EU's external borders reached 1.8 million, six times the number reported in 2014, which was already considered to be a high point (FRONTEX 2016). In addition to the numbers of people making the journey to Europe, this moment marks an emergency because of a number of legal "events" such as the disruption of border controls, the de facto interruption of the Dublin regulation, and the disruption of the Schengen area regulations (Triandafyllidou 2018).

[9] See 'UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' – Which is right?' http://www.unhcr.org/55df0e556.html For a deeper discussion of terminology see Long (2013) and Cole (2018).

[10] This also captured articles that were already published online some of which may have been included in a certain journal volume in either 2018 or 2019.

[11] Other terms included in the search included: accommodation, education, employment, gender and female.

these articles in order to identify other works not picked up through the original search as well as related publications such as reports. While rigorous, we recognise that this methodology presents a number of potential flaws. It only picks up those publications where the specific keywords appear in the title of the article. It also does not cover the whole spectrum of journals and in particular fails to register any of the literature published in languages other than English. However, this is not designed as a systematic review and space constraints mean that not all selected articles could be discussed. It is rather a thematically focused discussion of available materials in order to provide a picture of what is being produced in order to identify certain trends. Before looking in detail at the results in the areas of housing, language, labour market and gender, we first offer an overview of the response of the EU and Member States and some of the more general approaches in the literature to refugee integration.

Refugee integration in the EU

The 'refugee crisis' is notable because of the political dimensions which engulfed the European Union (EU) and many of its Member States. The failure of EU policies to respond effectively to this increased movement of people across the Mediterranean was due to flawed assumptions about the reasons why people move, the factors that shape their longer-term migration trajectories and their journeys to Europe:

> The EU has focused almost exclusively on policies designed to contain refugees and migrants prior to their arrival on European shores, at the expense of addressing the reception and protection needs of those arriving from situations of conflict, persecution and human rights abuse. There has also been a failure at the national and EU levels to address the longer-term integration needs of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe (Crawley et al 2016: 60).

The lack of political consensus within and between Member States and the pressing nature of the crisis has certainly tested the limits of the EU's commitment to human rights norms (Barbelescu 2017). As such, some argue that refugee protection in the EU has now become deeply circumscribed where states are 'clearly content to maintain an asylum system that grants certain rights to the very few' (Stevens 2017: 188). This may be characterised as a form of 'biopolitical racism [that] redraws the boundary between 'valuable' (to be included) and 'not valuable' lives (to be excluded) according to the refugees' capacity to enhance the biological and emotional well-being of host populations' (Mavelli 2017: 812). There is a significant discrepancy regarding how Member States have responded to the crisis, particularly the plight of those fleeing Syria. Many Central and Eastern

European states have refused refugees altogether while Germany and Sweden initially took thousands of displaced migrants. These countries had never seen such high numbers of asylum seekers in their recent history while for many other countries, the numbers actually mirror previous peaks in the 1990s (Lucassen 2018). Amidst the height of the crisis in 2015 came the emblematic, and somewhat surprising, decision to welcome refugees by German Chancellor Angela Merkel which 'marked an important point in European solidarity' (Triandafyllidou 2018). Although Germany was held up as an example by Human Rights groups, this policy quickly changed and in 2016 Germany 'withdrew the automatic grant of refugee status to Syrians and replaced it with subsidiary protection, with consequences for family reunification' (Stevens 2017: 187).[12]

EU States have committed to establishing a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and 'have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring they are treated fairly and that their case is examined to uniform standards so that, no matter where an applicant applies, the outcome will be similar'.[13] Despite the ongoing process of harmonization of refugee and asylum policy in the EU, individual Member States still decide how they implement the CEAS. This means that it is impossible to speak of a genuine EU level policy on asylum and refugees. There is also relatively little by way of direct EU instruction on how member states should pursue the integration of displaced migrants. Beyond non-discrimination stipulations that flow from the ECHR and Treaty of Amsterdam, most EU policies on matters of integration and diversity have remained at the level of guidance.[14] The approach to the integration of displaced people once they have arrived and settled varies across countries, several of which have recently taken steps to 'elaborate and adopt national plans related to the integration of third-country nationals' (European Asylum Support Office 2016: 116). Much of the literature on refugee integration outcomes in Europe is still based on national case studies and the role of central government. However, a focus on local authorities and the specific urban context is becoming more common. Scholars such as Jørgensen (2012) and Scholten (2013) point to a 'decoupling' between the local and national, leading others to argue that 'local

[12] The zeitgeist of 'Refugees Welcome' in Germany was relatively short-lived (Funk 2016) and was followed by anti-refugee violence (Benček and Strasheim 2016). The increasingly harsh policy response across Europe has largely been dictated by a need to reassure the voting public that the situation is under control and fight off political pressure from radical right-wing parties with an explicitly anti-migrant agenda, some of which have which seek to exploit this issue for electoral gain, some of which The election of a number of governments in Europe since 2015 illustrates the salience of fears.

[13] See 'Common European Asylum System' https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en

[14] For example, the European Council agreement in 2004 on 'common basic principles' offered support to member states in educating immigrants on 'the host society's language, history, and institutions' (Modood and Meer, 2012: 57).

governments are shifting from a passive to an active role, not only in the sense of implementing policies, but also politically because they become the source of innovation and of new frameworks of relationship with other levels of government' (Myrberg, 2017: 324). Drawing on earlier work by Blank (2006), we might consider the extent to which cities and regions have (i) become bearers of international rights, duties and powers; (ii) are increasingly objects of regulatory efforts at the international level; (iii) come to have a stake in their enforcement and (iv) have shown a tendency to form global networks. This typology resonates with some recent research, including our own as part of GLIMER, which considers the response of localities to the issue of unexpected migration in 2015 and beyond. Drawing upon recent fieldwork in German cities, Mayer (2018: 234) maintains that:

> Even though cities are tied into the implementation of federal politics of migration control (through registry offices, social services departments, schools, etc.), and even though in most countries they do not have legal competence to care for asylum seekers and refugees, the recent scale of arrivals and the slow reaction of national authorities have often left cities at the forefront, forcing them to play a role without having either a legal mandate or any specific budget to do so.

In this respect, local innovation is therefore a profoundly important space and the relationship between civil society and governance become the vantage point to observe forms of social and other capital both in support of migrants and refugees as well as by migrants and refugees *themselves*.

Where national and supranational responses might be seen as wanting, the role of civil society is prominent in emerging research about how local actors are dealing with the influx of hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers.[15] Churches and faith-based organisations have also been instrumental within the refugee regime and it is clear to see that religious traditions and perspectives challenge and inform current practices and policies towards refugees in Europe (Mavelli and Wilson 2016). As Ambrosini (2017: 594) elaborates:

> What is important is that civil society organisations do not confine themselves to easing tensions between state sovereignty and the affirmation of universal human rights: the controversial issue of protecting irregular immigrants has in some cases given rise to forms of protest, advocacy movements, or mobilisations by undocumented residents themselves.

[15] In Austria, for example, civil society actors such as non-profit organizations played an important role in maintaining humanitarian standards and effective crisis management, although they were put under enormous pressure due to the scale of the crisis (Simsa 2017).

There is a degree to which we can also think about this development as part of what Brenner (2004) has previously characterized as the 'rescaling of statehood', reflecting the greater role of horizontal and not just vertical governance relations. In the present context, such rescaling is also set against a 'nationalist' tendency where certain European leaders point to a supposed incompatibility between the new arrivals, many of whom are from the Muslim world, and Europe's secular and/or Christian heritage (Ralston 2017, Lucassen 2018).[16] In either case, it remains the case that 'while local governments have more or less power depending on their national settings, they are subordinate' (Emilsson, 2015: 4).

Finally, it is worth reflecting on what can be considered as 'successful integration'. In much of the literature this is merely assumed but recent work suggests that this needs to be problematised. The study by Dubus (2018: 422) amongst social workers in several countries demonstrates the 'varying definitions of successful resettlement among some of the social workers and administrators in four receiving countries' and raises interesting questions regarding whether administrators and providers share the same goals for the services being provided. One of the key findings from this study is that 'differing conceptions of the goals and successful outcomes of resettlement can increase frustrations for providers and administrators, create conflicts between services provided and intended outcomes, and affect the provider's perceived effectiveness of the programs' (Dubus 2018: 425). It is thus worth bearing in mind that the efficacy of integration measures will always be a somewhat subjective measure. Likewise, efforts to facilitate integration will invariably come up against certain conundrums related to refugee settlement. While some may argue that refugees be placed in neighbourhoods where there are existing migrant communities in order to aid the settling in process, others could argue that this is detrimental to language learning and meeting people from outside the immediate ethnic community. In the following sections, we concentrate on a selection of research outputs that discuss specific cases of integration as it relates to the key areas of housing, education, the labour market and gender.

Housing

Having access to accommodation is foundational to the integration process as it clearly brings the other key markers of integration into play because 'the housing

[16] The statement, for example, from the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán that "we don't see these people as Muslim refugees. We see them as Muslim invaders" (Agerholm 2018) raises the spectre not only of racial exclusion, but a reminder of the challenge that refugee integration into the political life of a country will need to overcome a highly contested, migration focused, field of political discourse.

conditions and experiences of refugees clearly play an important role in shaping their sense of security and belonging, and have a bearing on their access to healthcare, education and employment' (Phillips 2006: 539). A number of recent European reports attest to the importance of accommodation in the integration process. Indeed, this is seen as one of the main challenges in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees due to chronic shortages. In a study of the integration of refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy (Samek Lodovici 2017), it is noted that first reception centres are often overcrowded and fail to provide adequate living conditions. The role of NGOs is crucial in filling the gaps due to the limited capabilities and financial constraints of local government:

> The capacity of municipalities in supporting accommodation is usually limited and varies considerably across the territory. Providing affordable housing for refugees is indeed extremely challenging for local authorities, especially in cities already facing housing shortages, with waiting lists for social housing and difficulties for vulnerable groups to access the private rental market. In addition, in these countries the [economic] crisis has forced municipalities to operate in the context of budget cuts (Samek-Lodovici 2017: 64)

Another report summarises the discussions of a Working Conference held in November 2016 in Amsterdam which aimed to find solutions to the problems relating to reception and housing (Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees 2017). Three key 'bottlenecks' are identified: 1) the shortage of affordable housing 2) the limited budget capacities of cities and 3) inflexibility of funding and the inability to access European funding programmes (ESIF, AMIF, ERDF). The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, an institution of the Council of Europe, also recommends giving local and regional authorities direct access to European Funds but offers little in terms of specific advice on best practice other than 'supporting housing solutions and initiatives that encourage mixing and positive interaction between refugees and host communities' (Illes and Renström 2017: 31). The report is, however, critical of the use of private companies in the UK to provide accommodation to asylum seekers and cites examples of potentially discriminatory practices. Indeed, the UK model of dispersal accommodation for asylum seekers, and its numerous shortcomings, is certainly the most widely studied (and critiqued) in the literature. The impact of being housed in often marginalised urban areas that suffer from social exclusion is viewed by many as being particularly detrimental to a person's eventual integration (Hynes 2011, Darling 2016, Meer *et al* 2019).

As with the UK, Austria also employs a dispersal policy and a similar process of exclusion has been observed, especially in economically deprived areas of the rural periphery (Rosenberger and König 2012). Unsurprisingly, this leads to

a situation whereby a majority of those who receive a positive asylum decision in Austria decide to migrate to Vienna, which already has a significant shortage of affordable housing. In her research on the city, Anita Aigner identifies four types of housing entry pathways where the intermediaries are either; migrants, helpful locals, estate agents or (in the case of social housing) social workers. She finds that voluntary support from local people has 'resulted in the formation of well-organized help-networks and online-platforms for housing mediation' (Aigner 2018: 21) leading to a civil-society rental submarket. On the other hand, new arrivals are essentially excluded from social housing due to strict access requirements and long waiting times. The problem of exclusion and restricted access to housing is also highlighted by Bolzoni *et al* (2015) in their study of Turin where the city council creates obstacles through both informal practices and administrative provisions. Accommodation provision in Italy for asylum seekers has been relatively comprehensive, with particular praise reserved for the integrated system of reception provided by SPRAR projects (Loprieno *et al* 2019).[17] There is less support for those who then acquire the formal status of a refugee and there is no official policy in place which supports refugees' access to housing. As a result of administrative hurdles, including the refusal of the municipal registry office to accept residency applications, many refugees in Turin have opted for squatting.[18] The role of the local is again highlighted because in this case refugees cannot experience the full enjoyment of their rights if local authorities deny them the necessary paperwork. Their analysis highlights a gap between the national legal framework and its local implementation which creates a major disruption for a successful path to integration in Italian society. More directly related to the 'refugee crisis', Hinger *et al* (2016) examine the response to the need for accommodation in the East German city of Leipzig which received 4,230 asylum-seeking persons and 680 unaccompanied minors in 2015. After instituting a policy of decentralization in 2010 by housing asylum seekers in apartments or small accommodation centres across the city, the city authorities were forced to resort to setting up emergency reception centres and then housing people in mass accommodation centres, including emergency tent camps, with the goal of accommodating as many persons as possible within the smallest possible space. The resulting downgrading of the quality of accommodation for those seeking asylum illustrates the financial pressures facing municipal authorities in responding to these developments.

[17] As a result of the 'Salvini decree' and changes to Italian legislation, asylum seekers will no longer have the right to this kind of accommodation and the SPRAR system itself is being overhauled (Peace 2018).
[18] This is replicated in many other major Italian cities, see Belloni (2016) on the case of Rome.

Local case studies of housing for refugees, such as those mentioned above, are in short supply but some comparative research is now emerging, particularly including Scandinavian countries. Borevi and Bengtsson find surprisingly strong differences in settlement policies between Sweden, Denmark and Norway. They note the 'tension between what housing standard newcomers should be granted, individually and collectively, and what autonomy they should have in their choice of settlement and housing' (Borevi and Bengtsson 2015: 2612) which runs through the housing policies for asylum seekers in the three countries. While in Sweden they have the right to arrange their own accommodation, and effectively decide where to live while waiting for a decision, in Denmark their choices are severely limited and effectively decided by the state. The Norwegian case constitutes a middle way but leans more towards the Danish system. Here too, the state authorities have the mandate to allocate refugees to municipalities around the country but give regional and municipal representatives the autonomy to decide whether to accept or reject this request.[19] The use of 'decentralized accommodation' in Norway, placing asylum seekers in ordinary homes rather than a centralized institution, has been viewed as a positive move towards integration by improving the well-being of the residents and reducing conflicts. Although Hauge *et al* (2017: 4) acknowledge that the buildings used by asylum seekers are 'often marked by a lower aesthetical and technical standard than their neighbours', there is some indication that the Norwegian approach could provide a model. They argue that using ordinary housing has many benefits for residents and that asylum seekers 'become more independent, active and more integrated when they are moved from an institutional centre to ordinary housing units' (2017: 16).

The debate between using large centralized reception centres and dispersal, and what works best in terms of eventual integration is tackled more directly by Bakker *et al* (2016) who look at different asylum support systems employed in the Netherlands and the UK, demonstrating a clear connection between the accommodation experiences of asylum seekers and their integration. Both countries have adopted 'deterrent approaches' to asylum support but while the aforementioned British approach is based on dispersal to deprived areas, the Dutch system favours the use of asylum accommodation centres. By looking at the ways in which asylum seekers are housed as part of the asylum support system and how integration is facilitated, the authors can compare two key integration outcomes: social networks and health. This is achieved through the use of quantitative data collected in state-implemented national refugee integration surveys to assess the relationships between individual characteristics, asylum practice and refugee integration outcomes in both countries. Although the composition of the samples is

[19] On the politics of these refugee resettlements decisions by Norwegian city councils see Steen (2016).

different, there are similar questions in the two surveys used which allows for a multivariate analysis of the answers to questions on social networks and health. The results show for both countries that having stayed in state-provided asylum accommodation is negatively related to both refugees' personal social networks and health. They suggest that the lack of privacy and autonomy in the Dutch asylum centres can negatively affect mental health and the poor conditions of accommodation in the UK can contribute to a deterioration in refugees' physical health. This contrasts with the experiences of those who lived in self-arranged housing. The finding that is particularly relevant is the importance of integration policy. The provision of integration courses significantly enhanced the health outcomes of refugees and language proficiency was correlated with positive outcomes in terms of both social networks and health. It is argued that 'the restrictionist turn in the Netherlands and the UK, which emerged after the implementation of the surveys, is likely to have had a negative impact on integration outcomes' (Bakker *et al* 2016: 129). Such research demonstrates a connection between the experiences of asylum seekers and their eventual integration. The key recommendation is for asylum support systems to be more inclusive with housing embedded in communities as a means to foster social integration in the longer term. Some have seen this as part of a new trend across Europe as evidenced by the systemic shift in the Italian system of reception from containment in reception centres to urban dispersal reception (Manara and Piazza 2018).[20] There is also a recognition that 'precarious housing (and the often associated lack of an official address) is a major obstacle to benefitting from labour market integration programmes' (Martín *et al* 2016a: 47).

Education and language skills

In terms of education, the importance of specific policies is demonstrated by research amongst the children of previous waves of refugees. In many cases, policies were not 'sensitive to or orientated towards the variable needs of second generation from refugee backgrounds' (Bloch and Hirsch 2017: 2144). Here again, the UK case is particularly rich with a variety of reports, some published prior to the start of the 'crisis', which focus on supporting the educational needs of refugee children (Arnot and Pinson 2005, Candappa 2007, Doyle and McCorriston 2008, Elwyn *et al* 2012, Doyle and O'Toole 2013). The largest cross-European study of refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational systems within the EU is the INTEGRACE project which sought to illustrate successful practices with the

[20] The most recent move in Italy to dismantle the SPRAR system and increase the amount of time people can stay in the emergency reception centres indicates that this policy was rather short-lived.

aim of facilitating the replication of these best practices in the area of educational integration (Nonchev and Tagarov 2012). Although various policy recommendations are put forward, a specific model is not advocated. In their overview of education for refugee children in Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey, Crul *et al* (2017) use some of the findings from the INTEGRACE project as well as smaller national and local studies to indicate that Sweden is doing the best job of integrating refugee children and providing them with equal educational opportunities. They point to the good practice of limiting the time in immersion classes and the transfer to regular education combined with continued instruction in the second language of the migrant. Second language instruction in Germany and the Netherlands is, according to the authors, poorly organized by comparison and there in an over-representation of refugee children in vocational tracks. This contrasts with the clearly stated ambition in Sweden to give refugee pupils an equal chance to achieve school outcomes on a par with children born in the country. However, they also note that in Germany there is 'a hopeful recent development of also accommodating refugee children in immersion classes in Gymnasium schools' (Crul *et al* 2017: 75). We can expect a new wave of research which looks at how schools, colleges and Higher Education Institutions across Europe are dealing with the current arrival of refugees, an issue that is particularly pertinent in those countries which have accepted significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers since 2015.

The situation is pressing in schools across Europe which must find ways to integrate refugee children despite significant linguistic barriers. As the report from the OECD indicates, early intervention in the education of young children is particularly important because 'their chances of doing well in school hinge on their ability to speak the receiving country's language' (OECD 2016:13). The educational integration of Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children is not only limited to language training, indeed 'the provision of intercultural education aimed at creating spaces for sharing cultural experiences and creating mutual respect and understanding between children with different background are also of key importance' (Nonchev and Tagarov 2012: 388). Refugee education also concerns contexts beyond school which may expand opportunities for meaningful learning as well as promote social inclusion (Pastoor 2017). Walker (2011: 219), for example, points to the importance of mentoring and befriending relationships between refugee children and volunteers that can 'act as a mechanism to overcome power structures and enable refugee children to access education and build up resilience'. Schemes to enable refugees to study at university have also been the object of study such as the now defunct Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) funded by the UK Border Agency, and which provided advice on

accessing further and higher education institutions (Gateley 2015). This particular scheme has since been discontinued due to funding cuts and the emphasis may now be on universities themselves as well as third sector organisations to facilitate access to higher education.

In response to the current 'crisis', a number of European universities have, in fact, initiated schemes to welcome refugees (European Commission 2015). Kontowski and Leitsberger (2018) provide an overview of the reasons why institutions across Europe supported refugees and present the results of an empirical study of Poland and Austria focusing on formal education, support for learning as well as awareness-building. They single out the Austrian MORE initiative for praise, which went beyond the mere provision of language courses and scholarships by also addressing academic preparation and building a network of social connections for refugees. The experiences of refugees at university has been an area of research that preceded the current crisis period (Morrice 2009) but has certainly grown since then (Elwyn et al 2012, Morrice 2013, Gateley 2015). There is now a distinct post-2015 literature emerging on this topic. In one study, researchers experimented with 'auto-ethnography' as a means to follow a refugee's journey at university and then co-produce this knowledge (Student *et al* 2017). Streitwieser *et al* (2017) critically examine the efforts of three universities in Berlin to address the "refugee crisis" by analysing how university administrators worked to implement programming for refugees. Interviews with these administrators were combined with meetings with representatives of federal ministries, foundations, professional associations as well as primary public data to provide a picture of how the HE sector has responded to such a challenge.

As noted in the Austrian case, student support services including mentoring, psychological counselling, and peer mentoring have been implemented at many universities which help refugees settle into university life. An important issue raised by several authors, which is also relevant to other public institutions, is how to manage the tension between providing access to education for new arrivals, particularly those deemed to 'show promise', and charges of bias and unfair favourable treatment vis a vis the existing population. Not only that, university administrators are confronted with difficult decisions regarding whether refugee students should take the place of other students (domestic or international) simply because of their refugee status. Research also highlights the disconnect at the institutional level between political strategy and the implementation of various programs and policies, demonstrating how local institutions must often find their own way of dealing with issues when national policy or sub-state policy is unclear. Because responsibility for education is devolved in many European nations, there are often very different experiences for refugees within the same nation state

depending on which region they find themselves in. The Refugee Council in the UK has, for example, urged policy on funding for those in the asylum process in England to follow the example of the Scottish government to increase access to further and higher education (Doyle and O'Toole 2013).

Adult education is also crucial, particularly in terms of developing linguistic competencies. Language skills are a key component of integration and refugees should benefit from language course participation not least because the ability to speak the language of the existing society has a key bearing on subsequent employment chances (Auer 2018). Linguistic competences are not just about getting on in life by, for example, being able to work. It is also a key step so that refugees and other migrants can feel accepted in society, it also adds to health outcomes with language proficiency being 'significantly associated with general and physical health and social networks' (Bakker *et al* 2016: 129). While the benefit of language learning is universally recognized, the efficacy of the language courses proposed has been called into question. Phillimore (2011a) finds major inconsistencies between the retention and success rates observed in UK monitoring data and those actually reported by tutors and refugees who claim that both retention and achievement levels are low with few refugees actually achieving their goals in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. This would suggest that ESOL is failing in its key role as a facilitator of refugee integration across the UK. On the other hand, the research report by Refugee Action (2016) on language provision in England argues that ESOL classes are fundamental in refugees' integration. It urges the government to invest in English language provision, arguing that this will provide social and economic benefits to the UK. The report also highlights that the devolved governments in Scotland and Wales both currently have comprehensive ESOL strategies. As well as formal language courses, related initiatives such as 'conversation clubs' (Sorgen 2015) have been shown to offer a key resource for both language acquisition and social interaction. Indeed, it is important to remember that informal and social learning opportunities are often as important because they involve being made to feel part of a community and valued by wider society.

In a different focus, Alencar (2018) looked at how social media networking sites have been employed in the Netherlands to help refugees acquire both language and cultural competences. Through a qualitative study with 18 recent refugees (living in the Netherlands for less than a year) from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan, she empirically examined how social media interacts with the key areas shaping the practices and outcomes of integration including employment, education, linguistic competence, cultural belonging, social capital and citizenship. This was carried out using in-depth interviews to provide information about

participants' experiences and the impact social media has on their integration. The findings revealed a preference for social media and high levels of its usage related to the amount of spare time refugees have while waiting for their applications to be processed. However, 'fewer than half of refugee participants mentioned that they use social media for acquiring information about employment, housing, personal health problems, training programs and the educational system in the Netherlands' (Alencar 2018: 1596). Individual and social connections were much more important in order to obtain relevant information although the internet and social media more broadly proved useful in learning the Dutch language and helping to coordinate intercultural meetings with Dutch citizens. These findings relate to a broader area of research characterized as the emergence of 'digital humanitarianism' (Benton and Glennie 2016) where the tech element of civil society has come to the fore in finding solutions to the 'refugee crisis'.[21]

Entry to the labour market

In the literature on migration, one of the key indices of defining integration is the degree of labour market participation. There is extensive research on the entry and performance of migrants (broadly defined) in national labour markets and its consequences from all over the world. This has focused on questions such as how migrants integrate into the labour force, how quickly they begin to perform in the economic systems of the 'host country' and whether this has any effect on the jobs, wages or education chances of the established groups (Zimmermann 2017). Yet compared to other migrant groups, refugees often face specific hurdles before they can find employment. As a vulnerable group, who are often victims of traumatic experiences, they may require more coordinated policy responses than those simply aimed at migrants. Many lack formal qualifications or hold those which would not be recognized in their new country of residence. In some cases, they are not even allowed to work while they are awaiting approval of asylum claims. One of the key factors that can affect labour market outcomes is the degree of access displaced migrants are given to this market on their arrival. The complementarity of language learning and employment prospects mean that the two areas are mutually reinforcing. Someone who has the right to work will have more motivation to learn the language and, once in a workplace setting, will have more opportunities to practice that language in a 'natural' environment with native speakers rather than the confines of the classroom. In some countries in Europe, clear distinctions are made between asylum seekers and refugees regarding their

[21] See for example the website of Techfugees https://techfugees.com/ and also the UNHCR page on connectivity for refugees http://www.unhcr.org/connectivity-for-refugees.html

right to work. In Sweden for example, asylum seekers have the right to work but only under the conditions that they can provide identification papers approved by the Swedish Migration Agency. In the UK, anyone given humanitarian protection status as a refugee is permitted to work but asylum seekers cannot lawfully do so while they are waiting for their case to be decided.[22]

Before 2015, most countries in the EU tried to prevent or delay the labour market integration of asylum-seekers but there is a recent policy trend to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into national labour markets with the UK and France as notable exceptions. Research by Hainmueller *et al* (2016) provides evidence about how the length of time waiting for a decision on an asylum claim can affect subsequent economic integration. Using data from Switzerland, they found that even only one additional year of waiting reduces the subsequent employment rate and that this effect is remarkably stable across different subgroups stratified by gender, origin and age at arrival. The clear message, which seems to have been heeded by many governments, is that reducing the asylum waiting period can help reduce public expenditures and unlock the economic potential of refugees by increasing employment. A similar study focusing on Germany carried out by Marbach *et al* (2018) provides further evidence of the long-term negative consequences, both for the receiving state as well as migrants themselves, of these employment bans which considerably slowed down the economic integration of refugees and reduced their motivation to integrate early on after arrival. Even once they have the right to work, asylum seekers and refugees face huge administrative obstacles before actually gaining employment linked to the structure of the benefits they receive, a lack of long-term residence permits, a need to implement tests before offering jobs and assignment to specific regions of residence. The latter issue reveals a 'mismatch between the geography of labour market demand and the territorial distribution keys of refugees and asylum seekers' highlighted in several countries such as Germany, Denmark and Austria (Martín *et al* 2016a: 44). Programmes designed to help those with refugee status into particular professional roles have been the focus of several studies such as the schemes for doctors and teachers. In her analysis of refugees re-entering both of these professions in London and Glasgow, Piętka-Nykaza (2015) reveals four main strategies that refugees use to challenge the barriers they encountered: 1) acceptance of the necessity for re-qualification and re-education,

[22] This restriction on working for asylum seekers has been in place since 2002. They can only apply for permission to work if they have waited for over 12 months for an initial decision on their claim although they are only allowed to do jobs on the "shortage occupations list". There is thus an inherent contradiction between integration strategies that focus on employment and the restrictive UK government policies that negatively affect access to the labour market.

2) compromise between professional aspirations and realistic results, 3) ambivalence about future career paths and 4) withdrawal.

Research on the labour market integration of refugees has consistently identified a 'refugee gap': the difference in labour market participation rates between refugees and other types of migrants (Connor 2010). Examining this issue in the Netherlands, Bakker *et al* (2017) demonstrate that there is indeed a substantial gap at the start of migrants' legal residency, what they call a 'refugee entry effect' as refugees start their legal residency in the Netherlands at a disadvantage compared to other migrants (even if this gap diminishes over time). Participation rates for refugees are substantially lower which can be ascribed to different migration motives (flight) and the context of reception (asylum procedure) which puts them at a disadvantage. The encouraging sign is that the 'refugee gap' narrows over a period of 15 years of stay and refugees are able to recover from their initial disadvantage and eventually catch up with other migrants. This is echoed in research on the UK where Ruiz and Vargas-Silva (2017) found that 8 and 15 months after the grant of protection, refugees had significantly worse outcomes than other migrants, including a lower likelihood of being in employment and higher likelihood of unemployment. However, 21 months after they receive their status, the labour market outcomes of refugees are not statistically different from those of other recent migrants. Cheung and Phillimore (2014) point to the important relationship between social capital and labour market integration in the UK with an absence of social networks appearing to have a detrimental effect on access to work. Language competency, pre-migration qualifications and occupations, and time in the UK are the most important factors for accessing work. Research on the Swedish labour market shows that family reunion immigrants move into employment faster than asylum claimants which in return have a faster employment attachment than resettled refugees (Bevelander 2011). Time in Sweden reduces drastically the number of days spent in unemployment, but refugees' levels of employment will lag behind that of natives for their whole lifetime in Sweden (Lundborg 2013).

The political significance of the high point of the refugee crisis in 2015 has led to a series of European-wide reports into the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers (Eurofound 2016, European Migration Network 2016, European Employment Policy Observatory 2016, Konle-Seidl and Bolits 2016, Martín *et al* 2016a, Martín *et al* 2016b, Adecco Group 2017, Eurocities 2017, Hooper *et al* 2017). The same issues which stifle this form of integration are consistently highlighted. Chief among these are a lack of language skills and the often long and complex administrative procedures to grant legal status or a work permit. The added administrative burden associated with hiring someone with

refugee status certainly does not encourage potential employers. There is broad consensus among those working in this field that providing quick access to the labour market is the most beneficial solution to integrate newcomers quickly and reduce the welfare burden, but this comes up against the political reality of governments wanting to decrease the attractiveness of their country as a destination for those seeking asylum. The hegemony of this pull-factor thesis has come to dominate policymaking despite being discredited by some researchers (Mayblin 2016). Even when asylum seekers have their applications approved, the asylum granted is often temporary which obviously weakens refugees' position in the labour market because it may deter employers from offering long-term contracts or investing in training. Despite these hurdles, there is already initial research focusing on how the most recent wave of refugees are adapting to and entering national labour markets. The exploratory work by Shneikat and Ryan (2018) on Syrians in the UK and Germany and their entry into the service industries highlights the importance of 'resilience' and 'adaptability'. Unskilled jobs such as porters, cleaners, transport drivers and warehouse personnel were seen as ideal because of the relatively low barriers to entry and service industries may also offer opportunities for new niche products and services. The importance of acquiring a job and the sense of independence it engenders was, for Syrian Refugees, an important means of not only acquiring self-respect but also engendered a sense of self-sufficiency and efficacy that further boosted the sense of 'being resilient'. Similarly, Gericke *et al* (2018) found that for their sample of Syrian refugees who had found work in Germany, different types of social capital offered different forms of support when entering the labour market. Vertical bridging social capital is a valuable source for securing adequate employment, whereas horizontal bonding social capital may more often lead to low-skilled work or underemployment. What this kind of small-scale research amongst Syrian Refugees shows us, which is perhaps less well reflected in larger quantitative studies, is the qualitative importance of finding employment as part of refugees' eventual integration and well-being.

Gender dynamics of integration

One notable aspect of the current 'crisis' is not only the sheer scale of the movement, swelled by conflicts in places like Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia, but also the increased presence of women and children on boats making the perilous crossings (Freedman 2016). The importance of gender in refugee reception and integration is clearly more relevant than ever. From a policy perspective, it is imperative to remember that policies that affect refugees (whether

at a local, national or supranational level) will impact differently on men and women. Already 20 years ago, Bloch *et al* (2000: 184) had noted that the responses of European societies to refugee women were 'homogeneous in their failure to provide adequate help and support to ensure that women have equal access to the asylum procedure and are not discredited or disempowered by gender-based cultural norms'. They called for a complete rethink of legislation and policy to ensure equal access for women to the asylum determination procedure and to the social and economic participation of refugee women. This call has also been echoed by others seeking to demonstrate the particularity of refugee women's experiences despite the gender dimension being overlooked in favour of a male-centred paradigm. The work of scholars such as Jane Freedman has been crucial in arguing the case for analysing in terms of gender, and the impact the relationship between men and women can have on the experiences of female refugees and asylum seekers. In a recent edited collection specifically on the Syrian Refugee Crisis, Freedman and her colleagues (2017) aim to shed light on the specific experiences of women during forced migration due to the conflict in Syria and the gendered nature of the insecurities facing these migrants.

Although it has taken a long time for the gender dimension to be acknowledged within research on refugee integration, the available evidence points to significant gender differences. Gender is a key variable impacting upon refugees' acculturation experience (Phillimore 2011b) and across a range of areas that affect integration outcomes - including social networks, language proficiency, health, education, employment and housing - women generally fare worse than men. Ruiz and Vargas-Silva (2018: 862) note that 'comparing across groups and genders it is clear that, for the most part, women who migrated to seek asylum are at a substantial disadvantage relative to men who migrated for the same reason and other women'. Using a longitudinal survey on refugees in the UK, Cheung and Phillimore (2017) conducted secondary data analysis to examine the factors associated with integration outcomes and found significant gender differences and some inequalities enduring or intensifying over time. By the fourth wave of the survey, women were more likely to be in education and training than men but less likely to be in employment. Indeed, all available research demonstrates that female refugees have significantly worse labour market outcomes especially in the short to medium run. Bakker *et al* (2017) are able to show this in their study of labour market participation of refugees in the Netherlands. The participation of refugee women is very low at the start, but the authors of the study do, however, note a strong increase in participation over time indicating that the 'refugee gap' can eventually diminish. The age of arrival is a crucial factor in explaining employment opportunities over time because those women who arrived as

adolescents are more likely to achieve a certain level of language proficiency and go on to obtain necessary qualifications. They also suggest that employment rates among women refugees can be explained by country of origin factors, indicating potentially different cultural views on performing paid labour outside the home for men and women. This has been echoed in Europe-wide reports into labour market integration which suggest that poorer labour market outcomes among female refugees 'might be partly due to cultural patterns as participation rates of women in their home countries are usually lower' (Konle-Seidl and Bolits 2016: 24). Refugee women often acknowledge themselves that life conditions in their native countries have created barriers to activity and participation but also see opportunities in the new country to learn a language, get an education, and find a job as a means of emancipation and gaining control of their lives (Werge-Olsen and Vik 2012).

Language acquisition is a key element in empowerment processes and yet, as Klenk (2017: 167) has remarked, 'few studies have explored the education-empowerment relationship from the perspectives of resettled refugee women, whose education in a new language and new sociocultural setting and whose experiences of forced migration present distinct circumstances and challenges that must be considered if they are to benefit from such strategies.' She argues that language learning is key to social integration but that educational policy and provision for female refugees needs to be more suited to their needs and aspirations. The study referred to above (Cheung and Phillimore 2017) highlights that it may be easier for female refugees to catch up in terms of language proficiency in comparison to their male counterparts. The differences between men and women in this regard disappear after less than two years, likely a result of women taking part in language programmes (which they are more likely to access later than men). They also find that 'language proficiency improves self-reported health which itself is positively affected by levels of education, the extent of formal and personal networks and lengths of residence' (Cheung and Phillimore 2017: 226). Indeed, health is another domain of integration where women face particular disadvantages. Evidence of poor health among refugees is mostly confined to maternity and mental illness outcomes (Bradby *et al* 2015). In their review of the health and socio-cultural experiences of refugee women, Shishehgar *et al* (2017) identify four categories that influence health outcomes. Cultural factors include a lack of proficiency in the country's language which reduces the chance of sharing burdens but can also lead to loneliness and depression. Social and material factors such as having a job and securing safe and affordable housing are critical for the mental health and wellbeing of refugees. Personal factors such as family separation and uncertainty about the condition of family members who have been left behind is also key source of distress. Yet their review also shows

that refugee women employ various strategies to negotiate new settings: 'spiritual fulfilment and social support are commonly used resilience strategies that help them maintain equilibrium in spite of their uncertain status and ongoing distress' (Shishehgar *et al* 2017: 969).[23] Recent individual studies also point to the importance of such resilience and coping strategies such as the qualitative study by Abraham *et al* (2018) among Eritrean female refugees living in Norwegian asylum reception centres.

Conclusion

This review of recent literature into refugee integration has demonstrated the rich scholarly contribution to the topic in the wake of the 'refugee crisis'. From this overview we can identify a number of trends. Research on education and labour market entry still dominate the field, perhaps because these are seen as the most obvious markers of both economic advancement and social integration into the host society. It appears to us that more attention should be given to the importance of housing and how this may affect integration outcomes, particularly in a context where states are making more restrictive choices in terms of who has access to this housing. We would also encourage a stronger emphasis on the gender dynamics of refugee integration. A gendered perspective is crucial for understanding how to provide more suitable avenues for refugee women and existing findings certainly illustrate the importance of undertaking a gender analysis of refugees' integration outcomes. Another key trend is that national case studies still form the bulk of the work on refugee integration and the majority of the literature still focuses on the role of national institutions in fostering integration. In terms of countries studied within Europe, we find a plethora of studies on the UK, Netherlands and Scandinavian countries. This may also reflect our methodological choices and the greater propensity to publish in English from scholars working in those countries. It was also evident that Germany features as a case study in much of the latest research, perhaps unsurprising given the watershed of 2015 in that country. We also found that comparative studies are becoming more common. This is important as it sheds light on what works, for example whether dispersal schemes should be favoured over the use of centralised reception centres. Comparing data across time and across countries when assessing labour market outcomes also seems to indicate that the 'refugee gap' has been shown to narrow over time.

[23] While much research has focused on the particular barriers and struggles that women face as forced migrants, there is also ample evidence of resourcefulness in adapting to and settling in the receiving society as well as assisting the development of support structures for future arrivals.

A final trend to note, with direct relevance for GLIMER, is the increasing number of studies on the local approach to integration. This is particularly encouraging as it is 'municipalities across Europe…who are responsible for planning, delivering, and, in some cases, financing the housing, education, and full integration of new arrivals' (Katz *et al* 2016: 29). Cities and local authorities are not simply backdrops where national-level processes and mechanisms unfold (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016), they have a key role to play and can, in fact, exert relative autonomy in designing (proactive) refugee and integration policies (Mayer 2018). Some would even argue that it is urban context, rather than national or regional governents, that shapes local integration policies (Graauw and Vermeulen 2016), and that 'whatever the national framework of immigrant incorporation policies, the urban level needs to be appreciated as a policy-making field in itself' (Ambrosini, 2017: 597). Indeed, cities themselves now recognise their important role in favouring integration and in light of the refugee crisis 'movements all over Europe such as the International Cities of Refuge Network, the Cities of Sanctuary, the Save Me campaign and the Eurocities network specifically assert the independent role and responsibility of cities in welcoming refugees' (Oomen 2017). The role of the local level in integration processes, and the contribution of local authorities but also civil society groups and even businesses is crucial but still potentially understudied.

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