# REFUGEES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT;
## "TOWARDS A MERGED AND MOBILE APPROACH"

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# Abstract

*This thesis aimed at developing a merged and mobile approach towards two current issues of migration in Europe, namely (1) the high influx of refugees fleeing war and persecution in Africa and Asia and (2) the population decline of some rural areas in Europe due to urbanisation, which poses major complications to its communities. An assessment of the impact of the refugee crisis has shown that the influx of over one million migrants and refugees in 2015 has challenged European leaders, policymakers and citizens to a great extent, together with the coherence of the European Union and its position in the international sphere. As most refugees arrive in urban areas, where a high pressure on the housing stock and employment rate are often already evident, interest is rising for accommodating and integrating refugees in particularly declining rural areas to partially counter urbanisation and the loss of facilities, services and labour that result from rural outmigration. Experiences in the Netherlands and Sweden have shown that integration is a two-way process in need of involvement of both locals and newcomers through a sensitive, holistic and territorial approach. To foster long-temt settlement of refugees in declining rural areas, investment in the region is needed to create employment, social inclusion and to maintain vital facilities and services that all contribute to a sense of belonging. In a nutshell, this thesis calls for the need to adopt both immigration and rural development policies from a mobile and human rights based approach, which would secure the rights of refugees and local rural development in a mutually sustainable way, in order to facilitate a successful accommodation of refugees in particularly declining rural areas of Europe now and in the future.*

***Keywords***: *European Union - refugee crisis - rural development - migration - mobility - integration - human rights*

# Table of contents

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# 1. Introduction

*In this chapter the subject of research will be introduced. First of all, the problem statement will clarify the need of research on the relation between refugees and rural development, followed by the theoretical framework which frames the research within existing concepts and theories and within a specific scope. Then, the social and scientific purpose of the study will be elaborated, followed by the research questions and design.*

## 1.1 Problem statement

**The impact of Europe's refugee and migrant crisis**

Ongoing conflicts and persecution in Asia and Africa have increased the amount of forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2015 to over 65 million, the highest level recorded since the second World War. In 2005, the rate at which people were fleeing conflict was 6 per minute, whereas in 2015 this rate increased to 24 per minute, which means it has quadrupled within 10 years (Edwards, 2015; UNHCR, 2016). Despite the fact that developing countries are mostly affected by these current migration flows, many policymakers and leaders in Europe have described the situation within their region as a crisis, posing major challenges on the coherence of the European Union regarding its humanitarian response (UNHCR, 2015; Veebel & Markus, 2015). One result is that the outer borders of Europe have been the scene of many human tragedies, such as the drowning of approximately 3000 people in the Mediterranean Sea. (European Commission, 2016; Seymour, 2016). The "refugee and migrant crisis" started in 2015, when over one million migrants and refugees entered Europe (BBC, 2016; ENRD, 2016). Although it is difficult to determine the migrants' motivations to move, the greatest driver remains conflict, which means most of them are forced migrants or refugees who flee war and persecution, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (UNHCR, 2015; ENRD, 2016; HRW, 2015). The European countries had a hard time dealing with the influx, posing a great challenge on its leaders and policymakers (Park, 2015; Politico, 2016). Tensions arose as there were big differences in ideas around relocating people EU-wide and because of the unequal division of people, where some countries received much more refugees than others. Relocation of a substantial share of the refugees has been part of the EU policy to deal with the tensions and to "share the burden" (BBC, 2016; Politico, 2016). There has been a lot of criticism on the EU's response to the influx and human toll of the dangerous journeys, as being more focused on protecting its outer borders against illegal immigration than on the rights of refugees (HRW, 2016; Seymour, 2016). On the left an illustration is presented which illustrates the struggles to enter the EU and the many ongoing relocation schemes, which are at the center of the current debate on the European refugee crisis (Cartoon refugee crisis by Gatis Šļūka). As concerns about Islamic terrorism are also on the rise,

due to recent acts of terror in Europe, xenophobia is increasing and the question remains whether European countries are able to implement lasting immigration reforms and are able to take their humanitarian responsibility (Park, 2015; HRW, 2016). In the first half of 2016, the numbers of migrants entering Europe declined, which means the "crisis situation", is coming to its end. The reasons for this is not a decline in the number of displaced people by war, but merely a growing sense of the difficulties making the journey as well as the constant relocation and long process of waiting for asylum, reducing the pull factor to move to Europe. Furthermore, many governments are focusing on preventing illegal migration and some even stated the possible use of armed forces to protects its borders (Urban, 2016). Seymour (2016) argues it seems the EU is determined to not be a destination for refugees, by its "Fortress Europe" policy that is designed to make the travel and asylum process as difficult as possible. Although states can determine their own border policies, in the European Convention on Human Rights it was stated that "collective expulsion is prohibited", but still Europe and Turkey agreed that "all new irregular migrants travelling from Turkey to Greece would be returned to Turkey", which suggests a violation of Human Rights (Seymour, 2016). Although the flow of people has recently thinned, this does not mean the problem is anywhere near solved. Many refugees have yet to undergo the lengthy process of waiting for asylum and seeking sanctuary in Europe to start a new life in absence of armed conflict (HRW, 2015). The refugee crisis is, therefore, in my eyes, still highly relevant for further research in order to develop accurate policies in this regard and to enhance the quality of life of forced migrants. This paper intents to contribute to this cause by analysing the impact of the refugee crisis In Europe in order to understand the need of accurate response on local, national and European level.

**Refugees & rural development**

Current European policies adopted a proportional scheme on relocating refugees, which means refugees would be spread over a country in proportion to the size of the existing community (Clahsen, 2016). However, as most cities are already growing and facing high pressures on the housing stock, some suggest to accommodate more refugees in particularly declining rural areas where populations are decreasing, which poses several threats on its communities (Bloem, 2014). Rural flight (or exodus) is a common feature of particularly declining rural areas in Europe, which are migration flows of urbanisation seen from the rural perspective, which poses major threats to rural communities as populations are decreasing and ageing, together with a loss of facilities, services and employment (Perz, 2000; Bloem, 2014; Bianco, 2016). The rise of interest amongst researchers and policymakers for accommodating refugees in rural areas of Europe is founded in the idea it would tackle two migration problems at the same time; (1) the high influx of refugees into Europe, mostly into cities where there is already a lack of housing and (2) the population decline in rural areas, which is accompanied by high vacancy rates and loss of services and employment, posing several complications to these thinning communities (UNESCO, 2007; Bloem; 2014). Forced migration can have a great impact on rural development, but our comprehension of these impacts, both on the short term and longer term is yet the be properly explored (Lucas, 2007). Many rural areas face depopulation as their young people settle in urban areas and many displaced refugees are seeking asylum in Europe (HRW, 2015; Bloem, 2014). People's mobility for temporary or permanent labour purposes is a routine part of agricultural activity, according to Mendola (2006). Although mobility, also irregular and temporary mobility, have always been an inherent part of human history, its linkages to rural development have yet to be properly explored within the context of the current refugee crisis. Little has been written on the opportunities and threats mobility poses towards rural development, especially on the role of refugees in this regard. There are, however, some hesitations towards the potential success of such policy, as there is no certainty they will find a job in the sparsely populated area and the chance remains they will later move to a bigger city and will only stay a very short amount of time (Clahsen, 2016). I intent to explore and analyse differing approaches to and experiences with accommodating refugees in particularly declining rural areas to contribute in enhancing rural and refugee policies in a comprehensive manner that supports the rights of refugees and rural development simultaneously.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework

*The keywords and most important concepts which are central to this paper will be defined in order to frame the research within existing theory. Typologies of migration, the notion of "mobilities", and clear definitions of "rural area", "rural development" and "refugee" will therefore be presented.*

**Typologies within migration studies**

Migration has always been part of human history as a key response to environmental, social, political, and economic changes (Aydiko, 2015). The recent increase in migration flows worldwide is one of the most evident features of global transformation, according to Alonso (2011). As this particular research stems from a problem within the field of migration, looking at migration studies and the different typologies of migration that are relevant to this study are the main points of entry. The study of human migration is a rapidly growing field of science with many theories that try to explain why people move. Many migration theories like the Neoclassical Economic Theory, the Dual Labour Market Theory, the Relative Deprivation Theory and the World System Theory are based on awareness of income differences between countries and based mostly around economic incentives to move and focus on pull factors of developed countries, trade and globalisation (Jennissen, 2007). There is no single overarching theory that fully captures the complexity of migration and there will probably never be one, neither would it be desirable (Castells, 2008; King, 2012). Van Hear (2010) argues that the search for a comprehensive theory of migration has gone hand in hand with an increase in diversity of migration flows, resulting in something he calls *"mixed migration"*, which refers to the varied nature of migration flows and the various incentives in many individuals, such as the migrating student/worker (King, 2012).

Despite the fact that it is difficult to distinguish several types of migration in practice and movements are usually not as simple as a step from A to B, King identified several typologies used in migration studies, that are useful within this thesis. "*Onward migration"* - first moving from country A to B, which is followed by a move to country C (King, 2012) - is one of the forms of migration that is seen within Europe as refugees enter through one country, but try to settle in another. "*Transit migration"* - when migrants aiming to move from country A to B get stuck in one or several countries that are situated in between (King, 2012) - is similar to onward migration, but stresses the importance of the intervention of national policies which can lead to (forced) immobility. King offers further typologies of migration, mainly based on what he refers to as migration dichotomies. He stresses that the use of these dualities should be with caution and the borders should be deconstructed. Examples are: *internal vs. international*, *temporary vs. permanent, and regular vs. irregular migration* (King, 2012). Several examples clarify why these dichotomies are difficult in practice. When we look at Europe, one could say that migration between countries is *internal* in the space of the EU, but one could also call this *international* migration. *Temporary* migration can turn into *permanent* settlement, when a return to the country of origin is postponed until it does not happen at all. *Irregular* migration can become *regular* through regularisation that legalise the migrants. The other way around is also possible when regular migrants have expired permits or when a long time passes before they can get a new one (King, 2012). Although the complexity of migration studies has been made visible, the existing dichotomies as used by King will be used in this thesis to describe certain types of movements or migrants, while bearing in mind that the situation is mostly not that black and white. The introduction of some recent concepts towards the movement of people, such as the *"mobility paradigm"* and *"transnationalism"*, has broadened the view on migration with new insights. Framing international migration as a transnational process is at the core of these new insights, which means migrants feel connected to both the nation they originate from and the nation they moved to. Although one has to keep in mind that not all migrants live transnationally, this new perspective does broaden migration studies, because it rejects the previous linear model of migration and integration, questioning recent policies and practices in this regard (King, 2012).

**The mobilities paradigm**

As the term *'migration'* implies permanent or long-term settlement, this does not incorporate the thinking beyond borders of this age and small scale short-term movements that also delineate our contemporary world (Castells, 2008). Although labour migration and other forms of migration are an inherent part of rural dynamics, the mobilities paradigm, especially in regard to the potential role of refugees in rural development, is yet to be properly explored. The *"mobility turn"* within the social sciences was a reaction on the traditionally static character of the field, ignoring the significance of the (systematic) movement of people. The mobilities paradigm is a quite recent aspect of social sciences that incorporates anthropology, geography, migration, science and technology, tourism, transport and sociology to explore the movement of not only people, but also information and objects (Sheller & Urry, 2004/2006). As these movements also bring social implications, the paradigm incorporates power asymmetries, identity formation and the micro geographies of daily life. The mobility paradigm looks at the movements itself, but also the driving forces, the effects of those movements and the constraints these movements imply, resulting in relative *"immobility"*.

The mobilities paradigm is different from migration studies as it attempts to incorporate various scales of movement simultaneously (Cresswell, 2011). Castells (2005) argued that the *"space of places"* is overarched by a *"space of flows"* where the movement of people, information and objects is analysed within his framework of the *"network society"*. This theory can be embedded in movements on a large international scale, but also on a small scale, looking at local and daily movements (Creswell, 2011). The mobilities paradigm can be used for interdisciplinary solutions towards social issues, as it breaks down the walls between different fields of science, illuminating the connections between topics and scales and opening up possibilities for experimental research and policies within the contemporary world. The mobilities paradigm also incorporates the politics of mobility and could potentially enhance public policies in a wide variety of fields, as it is relevant in addressing many issues and concerns or urgence, like refugee and border politics (Amoore and Hall, 2009; Mountz, 2010). This paradigm is highly relevant for this thesis as I intend to connect two topics of migration towards a mobile and comprehensive approach to deal with the current refugee crisis and the rural exodus in some parts of Europe simultaneously, in order to develop new policies and practices in this regard that combine several fields of science (as the mobility paradigm highly supports). A merged and mobile approach could lead to experimental solutions to the social issues discussed in this paper.

**Different types of migrants**

When we want to analyse the consequences of migration and start, for example, with the number of immigrants, a clear definition of "*migrant*" is important to be able to count and form an image of the impact of movements. However, there is (as with many words) no single, universally accepted definition of a migrant, although there are widely accepted possibilities, such as being born in a foreign country, crossing a national border or staying for a while or long-term in another country. Usually migrants are defined as people that stayed in another country for over a year, but definitions still vary greatly amongst researchers, policymakers and within law. This, of course, means that different people would count different amounts of migrants when examining the impact of migration flows. In the public debate 'migrant' is used as a very broad term when speaking of immigration concerns and ethnicity and asylum issues. As some migrants are not under immigration control and legislation, is it difficult for policymakers to develop an accurate policy in this regard (Anderson & Blinder, 2015). There are three main groups distinguished when it comes to migrants; temporary labour migrants, settler migrants, and refugees. New types of migrants have developed in what is referred to as the *"age of migration"*, such as residential tourism and climate change migration, which continuously broadens the study of migration with more and more complexity to be explored (King, 2012). According to King (2012), one important divide within migration studies is that between '*voluntary'* (economic) and '*forced'* (refugee) migrants. These categories are useful in the regard of the migrants' motives to move, but in practice they are difficult to use, because the divide between the two is not always that clear or simple.

The most important type of migrant that will be used in this report is the *"refugee"* or *"forced 'migrant"*. The definition that UNHCR uses is as follows:
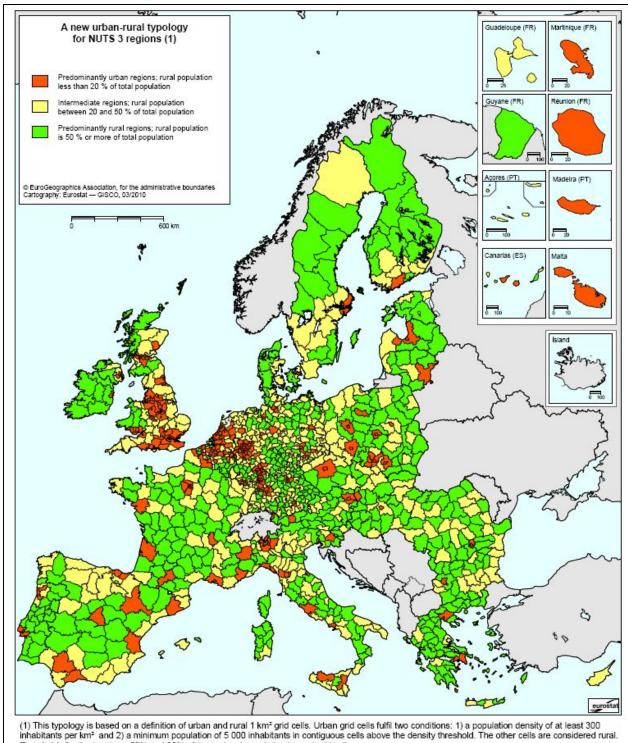
> *"Refugees are people fleeing conflict or persecution due to race, religion or political beliefs. They are defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk" (UNHCR, 2016).*

Sales (2007) argues that a distinction between economic migrants and refugees fails to admit the fact that conflict can also devastate the economy of a country, which forces people to move, although this does not comply with the definition used by the UNHCR, which focuses on fear of persecution in racial, religious or political sense. Conflicts can break down entire state structures and therefore political and economic motives to move can be deeply connected (King, 2012). It is, therefore, important to keep in mind that even though international law makes a clear distinction between refugees and other migrants (with very different treatments involved in the two), this distinction should be nuanced in practice (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015). In this thesis the UNHCR description of refugees will be used, while bearing in mind the fact that refugees can have economic incentives intertwined with fleeing persecution and conflict.

**Rural definitions & development**

As this report will elaborate the situation of particularly declining rural areas in Europe, before discussing the experiences with accommodating refugees in these areas, a definition of the term *"rural"*, will be presented. *'Rural'* and *'urban'* are two key concepts when talking of specific geographical locations and communities, which are widely used by policymakers, researchers and NGO's. Generally, the public understand these terms quite well within their national context (Dijkstra & Poelman, 2014). However, there is no clear definition or consensus on the international level, when it comes to these concepts, that serves all policy purposes (Coburn et al., 2007). Data that is published often relies solely on national definitions, which make these datasets difficult to compare on larger scales. The UN has stated a global definition is impossible due to these different perceptions of urban and rural across the globe (Dijkstra & Poelman, 2014). Usually, definitions of rural areas depend on several geographical units. Some of the most commonly used classification systems provide very distinct areas which are referred to as rural, varying greatly in size. When, however, rural definitions are incorporated within demographical and economical characteristics of an area one can form accurate policies and programs in this regard. Rural indications can, namely, change according to changes in population or geographical boundaries. The availability of data is an essential factor in determining an accurate rural definition and identifying rural people and places within the complexity of societies (Coburn et al., 2007).

In Europe there is a comprehensive urban-rural typology, which stems from an OECD methodology, that makes comparison on the EU level possible. It starts with identifying urban areas (with high population density and a certain minimum of residents) whereafter all areas left are referred to as rural. Within this methodology there are three typologies that come to the fore; (1) predominantly urban, (2) intermediate and (3) predominantly rural (ILO, 2013; ). In order to clarify this methodology, an illustration is presented on the next page that shows the typologies in colors with an explanation of how they are calculated. In this paper the term "rural area" will be used in accordance with these European definitions. Particular attention will be given to marginal (or remote) rural areas, which often face population decline due to the widespread process of urbanisation. There are several theories within rural development that are relevant for this particular research. The *'territorial approach'* promotes endogenous growth with the area's resources and community as the starting point. This approach is also adapted by many policymakers in European rural development in will therefore be used in this paper. The *'local approach '* introduces social capital as a legitimate element of rural development policies and builds on the territorial approach (Hodge & Midmore, 2009). Both rural development theories are relevant in the light of the current refugee crisis as social inclusion will prove itself an important factor (later in this paper) when it comes to successful integration.

A new urban-rural typology for NUTS 3 regions (1)

Predominantly urban regions; rural population less than 20 % of total population

Intermediate regions; rural population between 20 and 50 % of total population

Predominantly rural regions; rural population is 50 % or more of total population

© EuroGeographics Association, for the administrative boundaries
Cartography: Eurostat — GISCO, 03/2010

(1) This typology is based on a definition of urban and rural 1 km² grid cells. Urban grid cells fulfil two conditions: 1) a population density of at least 300 inhabitants per km² and 2) a minimum population of 5 000 inhabitants in contiguous cells above the density threshold. The other cells are considered rural. Thresholds for the typology: 50% and 20% of the regional population in rural grid cells.

**Scope of the study**

In broad terms, the area of the research is Europe, but specific attention will be given to the cases of the Netherlands and Sweden, due to the relative high availability of sources on the relation between refugees and rural development in these countries and the short time span of this conducted study, which makes it inevitable to curb the study. Comparing these two countries is interesting because of the different characteristics when it comes to the amount of rural areas in both countries and the number of asylum seekers per 100.000 locals. As illustrated on the previous page, Sweden is considered highly rural (more than 80%) and the Netherlands is mainly urbanised (less than 2% considered rural), which implies different rural policies within these countries (European Commission, 2016). These rural policies will be elaborated in chapter three. Another remarkable  difference lies within the ratio of migrants per 100,000 locals. In Sweden this number is very high (second highest in Europe, only Hungary has a higher number), while in the Netherlands this number is much lower (Bunic 2016, BBC 2016, Euracademy, 2016), which will be elaborated in the next chapter. The rural population growth in Sweden in 2014 was -0,1% and in the Netherlands -5,8% (Trading Economics, 2016). The  rural population in the Netherlands declined from 40% in 1960 to 10% in 2015, while in Sweden the rural population declined from 28% in 1960 to 14% in 2015, according to the OECD (Worldbank, 2016), which imposes a much bigger decrease in the Netherlands within the last decades. All the above presented noteworthy differences make these two countries highly interesting for a comparison in regard of both rural and refugee policies on the national and local level.

## 1.3 Social and scientific purpose

As illustrated in the problem statement, the refugee crisis in Europe, despite a decline in influx, is still highly relevant for further research in order to develop accurate policies in this regard to cope better with refugee influx, immigration and asylum policies now and in the future. As particularly declining rural areas in Europe face many implications caused by population decrease due to urbanisation or rural exodus, a possibility to tackle two migration problems simultaneously offers an opportunity to combine two separate policy areas into an inclusive, comprehensive and mutually reinforcing policy. The aim of this paper, within the context of the current refugee crisis in Europe, is therefore twofold to some degree. First of all, presenting existing knowledge and experiences on the the impact of the refugee crisis and the situation of particularly declining rural areas in Europe will enable to form a holistic image of the current events and, secondly, enhancing existing approaches towards rural development and refugees with the notion of mobility and from a human rights perspective will help policymakers in dealing with the current refugee crisis now and in the future. There is little literature on both the accommodation of refugees in rural areas in Europe and on the role of mobilities in rural development and this study intends to partially close that knowledge gap. Literature is analyzed in order to provide a clear image of the current refugee crisis, policies regarding rural development and discrepancies between authors, which highlight the debate and complexity of the problem. This paper builds on existing theories and concepts as an entry point, as described in the theoretical framework, but the main aim of the research is to enhance policies on rural development, refugees and immigration. This thesis will explore how rural and refugee policies need to be adopted in order to contribute to a successful accommodation of refugees in marginal rural areas of Europe. In a nutshell, the main aim of this thesis, within the context of the current refugee crisis, will be to include mobility within current approaches to refugee policies and rural development in order to enhance our understanding of the potential role of refugees in particularly declining rural areas and enhance policies in this regard that mutually sustain one another.

## 1.4 Research questions and design

*Combining the brief problem statement, theoretical framework and social and scientific purpose of the study, the following main and sub research questions were developed. The main research question will be answered by combining all sub research questions into a coherent image of the situation. The first two sub questions will explore the current refugee crisis and situation of marginal rural areas in Europe. The last two sub questions will combine this knowledge in order to elaborate a comprehensive policy that tackles two problems of migration simultaneously.*

Main research question:

- ***How should current approaches to rural development and immigration policies be adapted, within the context of the current refugee crisis, to contribute in the successful accommodation and integration of refugees in particularly declining rural areas of Europe?***

Sub research questions:

1. *What is the general impact and relevance of the current refugee crisis and immigration and asylum policy within Europe?*

2. *What is the current situation of marginal rural areas in Europe in terms of vulnerability, mobility and rural development policy?*

3. *What are the policy arguments for and experiences with accommodating refugees in particularly declining European rural areas thus far?*
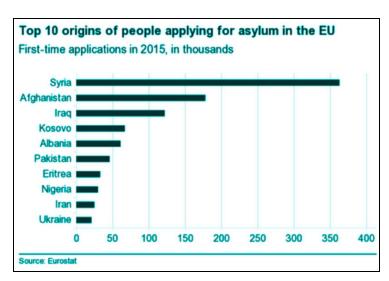
**Research design and structure**

This research is based on a literature study of academic sources and secondary (or grey) literature from newspapers, government documents, NGO's and other sources of valuable information. The literature is analyzed in order to provide a clear image of the current refugee crisis, policies regarding rural development and discrepancies between authors, which highlight the debate and complexity of the problem. The chapters of this report follow the structure of the sub questions, starting in chapter two with the impact of the refugee crisis. In this chapter the current refugee crisis will be analysed in terms of its scale, causes and effects on European receiving countries in order to understand its general impact and relevance for further research and immigration policy development. In chapter three the situation in European rural areas and rural policies in the Netherlands and Sweden will be elaborated. In this chapter the effects of increasing spatial disparity and vulnerability of rural areas with population decline will be discussed, in order to understand the need for new approaches in this regard. In chapter four policy arguments for (and experiences with) accommodating refugees in marginal rural areas will be discussed, in order to understand the current debate in this regard. In this chapter Sweden and the Netherlands will be compared as well. In the conclusion the main research question will be answered, according to the answers of the subquestions combined. Here, rural and refugee policies are combined within the context of mobilities and human rights. After the conclusion one can find a personal reflection on the creation process of this thesis.

# 2. The impact of the refugee crisis

*In this chapter the general impact and relevance of the current "refugee crisis" in Europe will be analysed in terms of its scale, duration, causes and effects on receiving European countries, including the tensions between several nations around quota and resettlement programmes, in order to understand its general impact and relevance for further research and policy development in migration and particularly refugee policies.*

## 2.1 Drivers and effects of the refugee crisis

**Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU**
First-time applications in 2015, in thousands

| | |
|---|---|
| Syria | |
| Afghanistan | |
| Iraq | |
| Kosovo | |
| Albania | |
| Pakistan | |
| Eritrea | |
| Nigeria | |
| Iran | |
| Ukraine | |

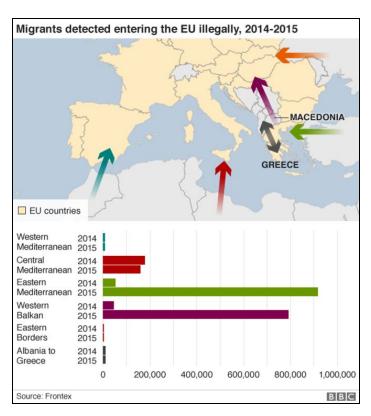0   50   100   150   200   250   300   350   400

Source: Eurostat

The recent scale of forcibly displaced people worldwide has definitely put the 1951 Refugee Convention and its concomitant international protection regime to the test, revealing multiple failures in Europe's ability to respond to its humanitarian responsibility, stipulated in the convention. (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015). Europe has a rich history of significant migration flows, such as those caused by war and persecution in the previous century. However, Europe's current migration challenge is of a different scale, with a much wider variety of reasons to move, routes and countries of origin (ENRD, 2016). Since 2000, the amount of immigrants within the European Union has risen by 30% (Euracademy, 2016). According to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), more than one million migrants and refugees entered Europe through land and water in 2015, which means the total of 2014 has quadrupled. Furthermore, over 3700 refugees died or went missing in the dangerous crossings over sea, as a result of the European foreign and security policy (ENRD, 2016; BBC, 2016). The high influx of 2015 migrants from areas of conflict in the Middle East and Africa into the EU had reached a point where politicians started talking of a 'refugee crisis' in political and humanitarian terms (ENRD, 2016; BBC, 2016). Although the scale of the migration flows is indeed large, one has to remember that Europe is by no means the most affected region in the world, as almost 90% of the refugees moved to developing countries, such as Turkey, pakistan and Lebanon (UNHCR, 2014).

This year, significant numbers of people are continuing to migrate to Europe, with over 75,000 asylum seekers recorded arriving in the first part of 2016 (Reach, 2016). In 2016, a survey amongst a variety of migrants has cleared out some of the main reasons for their migration to Europe. The most important push factor to leave the country of origin was insecurity, violence and the presence of armed conflict for almost three quarters of the people who were asked. The pull factors to come to Europe reflected these the push factors mentioned; security and safety, mentioned by 60% of the migrants, followed by family reunification in second place, mentioned by 22% of the migrants. These answers apply to refugees from Syria and Iraq, as these answers were not given by migrants from other countries. For people from other countries the main pull factor to come to Europe was based economic incentives, such as access to better jobs, which was mentioned by 11% of the total (Reach, 2016). Although some migrants have economic reasons for their move, this should be understood by far as a refugee crisis, where most of the migrants were fleeing conflict and came from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (HRW,

2015; UN, 2016), which is displayed in the figure on the previous page. Despite the clear distinction in sorts of migrants the legal systems of nations demand and into which people are shoved for their convenience, individuals do have intertwining motivations for leaving their home country that defies these simple typologies (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015). The challenge presented by the refugee crisis varies greatly across the EU. The impact is most dramatic at the points of entry where people arrive to start their transit journey, with Greece particularly affected in terms of scale as the main point of entry (Archink, 2016; Bunic, 2016, European Commission, 2016). Other countries, such as Hungary, Sweden and Germany have had to deal with high numbers of asylum seekers (Euracademy, 2016). Many refugees enter Europe in a physically and mentally bad shape after enduring dangerous journeys and exploitation. This large-scale emergency situation has put regional and local authorities and their resources under great pressure. Together with volunteers amongst local people, many international and national humanitarian aid and refugee organisations, such as NGO's, have responded to the crisis with humanitarian support. The organisations include United Nations bodies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, UNFPA, WFP and nearly all international humanitarian aid organisations. The initial response was focused on emergency aid; including food, medical attention, security, warm clothing, hygiene and temporary shelter (Euracademy, 2016; Bunic, 2016). Psychological first aid and psychosocial support to the most vulnerable such as children and sexual and gender based violence victims followed the first material help. Currently the task in front of the NGO community is to find innovative solutions for the livelihoods and resilience of refugees and the host community (Euracademy, 2016).

## 2.2 Migratory routes & European tensions



Migrants detected entering the EU illegally, 2014-2015

Source: Frontex

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than one million migrants arrived by sea in 2015, and almost 35.000 by land (BBC, 2016). The main migration flows traverse the Balkans and Mediterranean, through Turkey, with asylum seekers reaching the EU mostly through Greece, from which most travel further to the north, primarily aiming for Germany (Reach, 2016). The figure on the left illustrated the migratory routes, excluding those who entered the EU undetected, as monitored by EU's external border force, Frontex. (BBC, 2016). Next to Greece, five EU countries have been entry point in the recent migration flows, namely Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Malta and Cyprus. The amount of arrivals have been distributed very unevenly between these countries, with over 80% entering through Greece and 15% through Italy. On the level below national aggregates, certain areas within Greece and Italy are specially affected, namely; Islands as Sicily and Lesvos (Bunic, 2016).

Most refugees seek to continue their journey after entering *"Fortress Europe"*, which poses challenges to refugees and countries that function as *"transit territory"*, which creates tensions as much is demanded from local authorities. The great majority of the refugees do not apply for asylum in the first European country they reach. Often they seek family reunification or a country with better economic prospects than the one they entered. Such a transit journey can take upto two months when controls at national borders are very time consuming or access to transport is poor. The ongoing blame game of pointing at one another has created a deep divide between EU member states. In Hungary and Croatia new frontlines have emerged including barbed wire fences to block transit. EU-wide national and local systems seem to be collapsing under high pressures and great demands, while trust and solidarity on the international level, between EU countries and within EU countries (between the government and the public) are eroding (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015). In 2016 new border policies were implemented in both transit and receiving countries, such as tightened identity checks and sending more and more people with putative fake documents (or no documents) back to the last border they crossed. These measures have resulted in more and more people experiencing delay in transit or even complete immobility by being "stranded and not able to continue their journey (Reach, 2016).
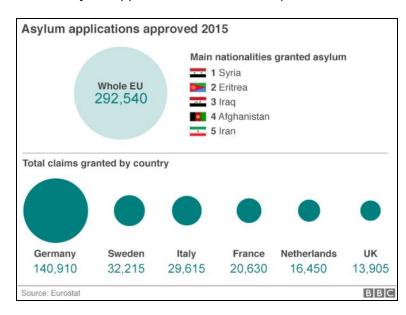
## 2.3 Asylum applications & immigration policies

The majority of the refugees entering Europe apply for asylum (BBC, 2016). As the amount of asylum seekers has reached a new record in the EU, many nations have shown being incapable in their ability of dealing with all the asylum applications. (Banulescu-bogdan & Fratzke, 2015; Connor, 2016). Germany received, by far, the most applications in absolute numbers, namely over 467,000, in 2015 (BBC, 2016). However, over one million immigrants have been counted in Germany, including the ones not seeking asylum (Bunic, 2016). Second in place is Hungary, which received over 177,000 applications of people arriving through Greece and Eastern Europe (BBC, 2016). When we look at the amount of asylum seekers as a proportion of the native population, Germany has the tenth place (Bunic, 2016). Hungary has the highest amount of newcomers according to its native population (1,800 per 100,000), even though the country closed its border with Croatia (BBC, 2016), as you can see in the figure on the left. In relative numbers, Sweden follows up and the Netherlands is just above the EU average. Sweden is considered highly accommodating in both of the measures used; it accepts many refugees in absolute numbers and has a high proportion of immigrants per capita (Bunic, 2016; Euracademy, 2016) and seems to have the most open border policy of all EU member states. In all of Europe, the number of the asylums granted was far lower than the number of asylum applications (BBC, 2016). Almost 85% of the asylum seekers originates from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, where conflict and repressive governments are found. More than 50% of the asylum seekers in the EU in 2015 came from Syria alone (ENRD, 2016). There are several views on the current situation of refugees in Europe. Urban (2016) argues that the numbers of influx are rapidly declining across Europe. Bergman (2016) However, stresses that the end is not yet in

sight as she points at the fact that the situation is not yet under control as many countries still struggle with the asylum applications and relocation policies.



Asylum applications approved 2015

Whole EU 292,540

Main nationalities granted asylum
1 Syria
2 Eritrea
3 Iraq
4 Afghanistan
5 Iran

Total claims granted by country

| Germany | Sweden | Italy | France | Netherlands | UK |
|---------|--------|-------|--------|-------------|-----|
| 140,910 | 32,215 | 29,615 | 20,630 | 16,450 | 13,905 |

Source: Eurostat                                                    BBC

The response of Europe to the current refugee crisis has shown multiple fault lines in taking its humanitarian responsibility (Cetti, 2016; Maric, 2016). Older member states seem to be more willing to accept asylum applications and to cooperate in EU-wide policies. Newer member states seem to be less prone in this regard, which creates tensions and threatens the unity of the EU (Maric, 2016). There is a constant friction between EU institutions and national sovereignty, with the first trying to facilitate collective action and some of the latter trying to control the migration flows on a national level as they are concerned about their lacking capacity to host and integrate such high amounts. Within countries, many citizens are taking matters in their own hands, as they oppose their government's actions, by developing civic platforms to support refugees (Maric, 2016). The *"shame and blame game"*, as Hercigonja (2016) calls it, may result in even deeper divisions and fragmentation of the EU institutions and immigration policies. One of the major issues is the proposed quota system which was not received with much enthusiasm by some countries in Central and Eastern Europe. This internal affair, together with the poignant images of how refugees are treated, will erode the EU's *"soft power"* and position in the international sphere. One of the causing factors of the current refugee influx turning into a European-level crisis situation is to be attributed to the Common Foreign and Security Policy which inefficient and shows defects. This means that new cohesive policies should be developed to adequately address current migration issues on the European and national level (Hercigonja, 2016).
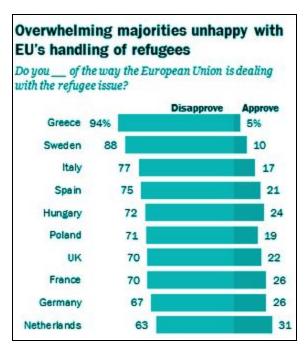
## 2.4 Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and Mobility

All nations in the EU have the right to determine their own border and security policies (OHCR, 2016). The 1951 Refugee Convention, designed to protect the rights of refugees and ratified by all EU member states, has actually resulted in these national-level based immigration and asylum policies, as only access to a certain state provides the right to claim asylum (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015; Euracademy, 2016). States are often more focused on controlling and preventing migration flows between countries and dealing with illegal immigration instead of focusing on their humanitarian responsibility (Scalettaris, 2009; Cetti, 2016). In most cases migration and asylum are treated as separate policy areas and states are unwilling to create multilateral agreements for the sake of self-determination in the regard of controlling immigration flows. As refugees are considered in lack of agency and in need of special protection, states make exceptions for this particular group of migrants (Scalettaris, 2009). In order to qualify for international protection, one is in need of recognition of the refugee status through Refugee Status Determination (RSD). This system is based on the assumption there is a clear distinction between forced and voluntary migration, but as already discussed in the theoretical framework; these typologies are blurred in practice, which makes this system a bit arbitrary (Scalettaris, 2009). Another factor that makes refugee policy hard to define is that states have national and international legal systems that coexist, as within the EU, which often results in the fact that the legal status of the refugee in one country or another is not always clear. Since the 90's, the Dublin

system for allocating refugee determination processes has ensured that EU members can send someone that applies for status determination back to the point they entered the EU. Gilbert (2015) argues that this is merely states of the north trying to make sure refugees stay in the east and south, despite the fact that these parts of the EU are less capable in hosting many newcomers.

Although it is important to identify refugees in the beginning of their movements, from their perspective registration can result in relative immobility. When identified, illegal movement is not legitimate for them anymore, while before their identification it was tolerated to move illegally as someone in need of protection. Therefore, for some it is a mobility strategy to be low on the radar to be able to reunite with family, access better labour markets or move to a country with more favourable protection standards. This has resulted in many people postponing their recognition and being undetectable for as long as possible, even demolishing official documents (Scalettaris, 2009). According to Scalettaris, the mobilities paradigm has been considered as incapable of providing sustainable solutions for urgent issues such as great flows of forced migrants (as seen in the current refugee crisis), as they all result in permanent settlement in the country they came from (repatriation), they are now (integration) or they will be deported to (resettlement policy). This implies immobility as the and result of a mobility issue. However, Scalettaris argues that mobility in itself is already a solution as mobility and transnational networks have proven to be accurate livelihood strategies with multi directional mobility flows.

## 2.5 A human rights based approach



Overwhelming majorities unhappy with EU's handling of refugees

*Do you ___ of the way the European Union is dealing with the refugee issue?*

| | Disapprove | Approve |
|---|---|---|
| Greece | 94% | 5% |
| Sweden | 88 | 10 |
| Italy | 77 | 17 |
| Spain | 75 | 21 |
| Hungary | 72 | 24 |
| Poland | 71 | 19 |
| UK | 70 | 22 |
| France | 70 | 26 |
| Germany | 67 | 26 |
| Netherlands | 63 | 31 |

The vast majority of European citizens does not agree with the way the EU has handled the refugee crisis, as one can see on the left. Many critics of Europe's way of handling the refugee crisis agree that Europe has failed to act according to the Human Rights institutions and is systematically violating them. Many policymakers, NGO's and citizens call for Europe taking its humanitarian responsibility towards the situation (Park, 2015; HRW, 2016; Cetti, 2016). A human rights-based approach to refugees would place them at the center of immigration and asylum policies and governance at the European and national level. This approach would support refugees being included in national action plans on topics such as social housing and combating xenophobia. Brasseur (2015) argues that migration is not threatening societies but intolerance so much the more. Combating terrorism is by no means the same as combating asylum seekers (Brasseur, 2015; Council of Europe, 2015). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states states that everyone has the right to seek asylum, which means blocking borders with wired fences violates that right (Gilbert, 2015). Despite the fact that countries do have the right to develop their own immigration and asylum policies in international law, they are also responsible to protect and fulfill basic Human Rights within their territory and beyond (OHCHR, 2016). European collective cooperation and action in the line of human rights obligations and based around solidarity could ensure an effective integrated policy dealing with the current refugee movements (Muižnieks, 2015; Council of Europe, 2015, Vimont, 2016). (Gilbert, 2015).

## 2.6 Conclusions

The first sub question, *"What is the general impact and relevance of the current refugee crisis within Europe?"*, can now be answered.

In 2015, with an influx of 1 million migrants and refugees in the EU, a humanitarian and political crisis began, referred to as the refugee crisis. Although these migrants had several incentives to move, this should broadly be understood as a refugee crisis, where people flee persecution and war, mostly from Syria. Pull factors to move to Europe have mostly been; security, safety and family unification, but also economic prospects. Many NGOs have provided refugees with much needed emergency aid in the form of medication, water, food and winter clothes and many civic platforms have been developed to support refugees, besides national government initiatives. Despite the chaos this situation has caused in Europe, this region is not the most affected by the global refugee crisis. Developing countries have hosted much more people. As a transit country, Greece was most affected in terms of scale. Germany has received most asylum applications in absolute numbers. Relative to population size, Hungary and Sweden have received the highest amount of asylum applications. The refugee crisis has caused a fragmentation of EU immigration policies and threatens the unity of the Union as some members are more in favor of hosting newcomers than others. Europe has seen major reinforcements in the border policies as identity checks became more extensive and tight and the amount of people sent back to the previous country increased, resulting in delays in transit and many people being "stranded" and forcibly immobile. State systems came under great pressure and trust and solidarity eroded between states, and within states eroded tremendously. The EU's soft power and position internationally has diminished as it has become clear that the foreign and security policy are dysfunctioning. Tensions between countries and within countries (between governments and citizens) are rising as there is much criticism on the way Europe handled the high influx. The current scale of immigration has tested the 1951 Refugee Convention; showing many fault lines and failures in the European ability to respond to its humanitarian and political responsibility. Self-determination or sovereignty of states has translated into national immigration and asylum systems. Within states migration and asylum policies are treated separately, with refugees provided special protection for which they need to be recognized in the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) system. Scalettaris (2009) points at the implications of the refugee tracking system as it results in relative immobility. The mobility paradigm struggles to provide sustainable solutions for the refugee crisis as all of them imply permanent settlement, but the mobilities paradigm together with transnational networks has accounted for many durable livelihood strategies. A human rights based approach towards refugees would place them at the center, with inclusion in national action plans and the discouragement of xenophobia as a result. One may conclude that the impact and relevance of the current refugee crisis in Europe are both high and were beyond prospect.

# 3. European rural areas & development

*Before the arguments for and implications of accommodating refugees in rural areas will be discussed, we will zoom in on marginal rural areas of Europe. In this chapter the effects of increasing spatial disparity of rural areas with population decline, together with an analysis of the current rural policy in European rural areas, will be presented in order to understand the need for new approaches in this regard, which will be discussed in chapter 4. Special attention will be given to the rural policies of Sweden and the Netherlands as they differ greatly in ratio of rural and ruban populations.*

## 3.1 Rural exodus, overcrowding & counterurbanisation

Since 1950 metropolitan settlement leading to urban aggregation was the main form of growth in the world, with migration from rural to urban areas as the engine. This trend has, however, also gone the other way around in the 20th century. Demographic and economic change, in stead of stability seem to be at the core of rural areas all over the globe. In most developed countries, especially in Europe, the current urban-rural distribution is at 75 - 80 percent urban to 20 - 25 percent rural. The most important factor supporting rural-urban migration is rural unemployment which is partially attributed to higher fertility rates in rural areas, where populations grow faster than employment, which triggers migration. Although growth of urban areas is linked to economic growth at a national level, problems might arise when urbanisation happens so fast that urban governments cannot provide accurate housing, sanitation, public safety, employment and other services in accordance with the growth (Keller, 2001). The abandonment of the countryside has gone hand in hand with industrial revolutions during the 19th century in England and later in France and has been a gradual process ever since in Western Europe (Bianco, 2016). Many rural regions in Europe are confronted with population decline and concomitantly aging of the population, a decline in facilities such as shops, banks and post offices, as well as basic services such as education, health care and public transport (de Vries et al., 2016; Hedberg & Carmo, 2011). In Europe, Italy and Germany have the highest rates of depopulation, ageing and a decrease in young people in rural areas. As population decline refers to some degree to deterioration, it is a term some do not like to use. However, abandonment and vacancy can also occur in urban areas due to economic crises, so depopulation is not always due to population decline per se. Also solely the ageing of the population can mean schools have to close, although the population is not declining in numbers. Therefore, it is not always clear if population decline is a cause, effect or intervening variable. Population decline and ageing are, however, two common features of marginal rural areas in Europe (Hospers & Reverda, 2015). These areas are mostly defined by their demography, but in many cases, it would be more accurate to speak of an unbalanced (or unstable) population instead of population loss because out-migration may happen at the same time of immigration by, for example, refugees (Bock, 2016).

The process of depopulation (*"rural flight"* or *"rural exodus"*), meaning people moving from rural areas to urbanised ones (Bianco, 2016), could be described as being urbanisation seen from a rural view and is linked to industrialisation but also to globalisation as this process leaded to the use of more capital and less labour to increase competition on global markets (Perz, 2000). Rural exodus can become a vicious circle of outmigration when depopulation and ageing starts to result in a decline of facilities, services and employment, which in their turn results in more and more people leaving the countryside to seek those features in the city. The out-migration is determined by various push and pull factors, which can be real of perceived (Weeks, 2012; Harris, 2014). Some examples are the idea or reality that (1) there are less economic opportunities in rural areas than in urban ones, (2) the government invests less in rural areas, (3) in urban areas there are greater education possibilities and (4) in urban areas there is a higher social tolerance towards different kinds of people (Weeks, 2012). However, when many people follow the flow of urbanisation it could create overcrowding in certain urban areas and unemployment issues on a national scale, which is referred to as over urbanisation (Gugler, 1982).

Migrant networks between people that have already settled in cities and people who plan to have created a process of chain migration, where newcomers receive assistance, which lowers the barriers to make the move (UNDP, 2005). Sometimes rural exodus is determined by social factors, such as family unification, marriage and attending an educational programme (Hassan & Khan, 2014). Most of the people who leave the countryside are young, as moving to the city to find good fortune is sometimes perceived as a way of growing into an adult (Harris, 2014). The process of rural flight can make a rural area unattractive to move to, which would compensate the depopulation. The narrowness of the rural economy, lack of  job opportunities, decrease in services, the ageing of the population and social exclusion among ethnic minorities can mean certain groups of people would not want to move there (Moore & Dower, 2015). Of course this does not mean all rural areas are marked by the process of rural flight or urbanisation alone or at all. As with every trend, this trend also has a counter trend known as counterurbanisation or de-urbanisation; meaning the movement of people from cities into rural areas (often known for their tranquility, beautiful landscapes and positioned near the city to have the best of both worlds). The processes of urbanisation and de-urbanisation often happen at the same time, where some people leave and others enter (Bock, 2016).

## 3.2 The importance of a rural policy in Europe and beyond

The European Union Rural Development Policy, aiming at improving the EU's rural areas as a whole (in economic, social and environmental sense), is an important policy domain, as almost 60% of the EU territory is considered to be rural in the OECD methodology, where almost one quarter of the total EU population lives (European Commission, 2008/2016). Within the EU territory, there are major differences in rural-urban proportions from country to country, where some countries are considered predominantly rural (for example; Sweden) and others predominantly urbanised (for example; the Netherlands), which is shown in the OECD methodology figure on page 10. The rural development policy of the European Commision is tackling various challenges in a seven-year period (the current one running from 2014 to 2020). This rural policy is divided in national and regional rural development programmes (RDPs) to facilitate territorial or local development practices that take each regional context into account (European Commission, 2008). As almost 15% of the rural population in Europe lives under an employment rate lower than half of the EU's average; the creation of new employment, economic activity and the improvement of overall local development is considered very important (ENRD, 2016). *"Inclusive growth"* (where a high employment rate and social cohesion are mutually sustainable) is considered one of the key concepts in the European Union Rural Development Policy (ENRD, 2010). As this policy document was written before the refugee crisis, this problem is not taken into account in the document in terms of particular measures, but promotion of social inclusion and development of the rural economy, which are some of the six targets, are highly interesting in the regard of accommodating and integrating refugees in particularly declining rural areas of Europe (European Commission, 2016).

Although the attitude towards rural development differs greatly between developing and developed countries, it still is  an important policy area worldwide. Developing countries tend to focus on these areas as most poverty is concentrated there, while in developed countries rural areas are often neglected in national policy (Bulte, 2016). Some scholars say it is time to look at development more holistically, acknowledging that rural development and urban development are not mutually exclusive, as each needs the other. On the global level urban and rural development policies of one country can affect the other, because when effective rural policy is lacking in one, persistent poverty will result in not only urbanisation but also migration to another. Nwanze (2016), therefore, argues that neglecting rural areas in terms of policy and development on the global level directly affects the progress of developing countries negatively instead of positively, due to great flows of immigration.

## 3.3 The micro-regional LEADER approach

LEADER ("Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale") is a modern local development mechanism (and governance-type) which promotes local actors to develop their territory by using its endogenous development potential (ENRD, 2014). EU's LEADER is regarded as one of the central tools for bottom up rural development with participation and social inclusion as cornerstones. At the centre lies the formation of partnerships at a sub-regional level between the public, private and civil actors and the development of not only in economic sense, but also with regard to the environment, cultural and social issues. However, LEADER has yet shown little success in the inclusion of socially excluded groups (Granberg & Andersson, 2015). Resource allocation within a specific territory is an important cornerstone of the LEADER approach, which promotes local empowerment. Via the use of local representatives in Local Actions Groups (LAGs) the LEADER approach is implemented in a bottom-up design of decision-making, where strategies and priorities are set simultaneously by local actors of the population, economic and social interest groups and representatives of public and private institutions (ENRD, 2014). This way, LEADER builds on local expertise on how to develop a certain area with a participatory democracy. The area-based approach is used to select a coherent territory characterized by a shared identity, common traditions and a sense of belonging. Social cohesion and common needs and expectations are considered very important for policy implementation. When an area is chosen or defined, a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) reveals the endogenous potential and the possible bottlenecks of development in the specific territory (ENRD, 2014). There are, however, some conditions for an area to be included in the LEADER programme. The area should have clearly defined geographic borders. This does not mean they have to align with administrative borders, but merely functional ones. The area must also have a certain minimum of available human, financial and economic resources to support a development strategy, which meets the critical mass criteria (ENRD, 2014).  A micro-regional scale is often perceived as ideal as it is saal enough to have a shared identity which creates social coherence and large enough to contain resources to support development (Lukesch & Schuh, 2007). The development of LEADERs practices build on inter-territorial and international cooperation (ENRD, 2014).

## 3.4 Social innovation and rural development

The LEADER approach makes use of *"social innovation"* in their local development mechanisms. Social innovation is a term that is increasingly used in political and lay discourses of the rural, within the neoliberal thinking, which is envisaged as an effective solution towards measures taken by governments to reduce spending (e.g. austerity politics) (Bock, 2016) and as a way of dealing with the *"Grand Challenges of this century"*, such as ageing of many populations, security issues, global warming and the scarcity of resources (Neumeier, 2016). Social innovation can , therefore, be a way to facilitate local development without the direct need of governmental resources and participation as local residents and businesses are the actors of their own development process (Bock, 2016). This approach is especially useful in the regard of local rural development as a driver of change, where other approaches are lacking in effectiveness or resources (Papageorgiou 2011). Even though much attention has been given to define the meaning of  the term *"social innovation"* itself, little effort has been put in defining the mechanisms that shape this term. Neumeier (2016) stresses that this is particularly important in the regard of local neo-endogenous rural development, as described in the Europe 2020 strategy, because knowledge of the mechanisms that bring social innovation about are important points of entry if one wants to develop accurate policies that include social innovation processes. Neumeier (2016) distinguishes between two important characteristics that elaborate social innovation. The first one is that social innovation can be divided in two dimensions; (1) the process dimension and (2) the outcome dimension. The process dimension consists of allocating resources and facilitating local actor's participation and the outcome dimension consists of new types of governance and new ways to act in collaboration. Neumeier admits that these dimensions are linked to each other and both equally important to the effectiveness of social innovation. Empowerment of local actors and learning abilities are, therefore, considered as both resource and outcome, contributing in communities

responses to local issues, be it environmental, economic or social, in a sustainable manner, through active citizen participation (Neumeier, 2016). The other important characteristic of social innovation is the fact that it always contributes in the formation of (new or enhanced) *"social capital"*, which can simply be described as one's' social relations. This is not a *"tangible outcome"* itself, but might result in tangible outcomes after all, which implies that social innovation places the focus on asset building instead of the actual needs that are formed in the process (Neumeier, 2016).

## 3.5 The rural policy in Sweden and the Netherlands

As rural policies in the EU mostly work on the national and regional level, two countries will be compared that have differing characteristics in terms of rural-urban proportions, namely (predominantly rural) Sweden and the (predominantly urban) Netherlands, starting with Sweden.  The urbanisation rate in Sweden is not as high as in some other European countries, but still over half of the communities are declining, partially because of rural exodus. Sweden is considered to be nearly 80% rural, with over 3 million hectares of farmland, which is around 8,5% of the total land area and 70% consisting of forests. The contribution of agriculture to the national GNP is below the average of the EU, despite the size of the area (European Commission, 2016). The current rural development policy of Sweden is focusing mainly on balancing and harmonising agricultural and forest ecosystems for preserving biodiversity and facilitating good water management in rural areas. Some other main objectives include development of (better access to) infrastructure and services and facilitating (social) innovation and local development through 50 Local Action Groups (LAGs) implementing the LEADER approach with local and endogenous strategies (ENRD, 2016; European Commission, 2016). The development of infrastructure and services and their accessibility will make the rural areas involved more attractive to move to and work in. The rural development policy is expected to support new economic activity in the areas by creating new jobs outside the agricultural sector.The social inclusion and local development will ensure that the local community is involved and are at the core of development processes in their territory; fostering *"inclusive growth"*. Hopes are that the LEADER local development strategy will be beneficial for half of the rural population (ENRD, 2016; European Commission, 2016).

As the Dutch countryside is densely populated, has a well-developed road network and high levels of personal mobility, it is not population decline itself which has contributed most to a decline in rural facilities; it is mostly attributed to increased mobility of citizens and economies of scale which have played a more important role, according to de Vries et al. (2016). Although the Netherlands is highly urbanised and fully embedded in a highly industrialised area of Europe, population decline is a feature of some rural areas here as well (Bock, 2016). The Netherlands is considered to be less than 2% rural, with some forestry and 19.000km2 of agricultural land (of which around 60% is arable). The agricultural sector provides 2% of the GNP, which is higher than in Sweden (European Commission, 2016). The rural development policy of the Netherlands is aiming to create new economic activity and employment in rural areas by implementing local development strategies of LEADER through LAGs. Specific attention is given to the relation between rural and urban areas and farmers and citizens as in the Netherlands rural areas are rapidly declining and distances between rural and urban areas are generally small. The local development programmes of LEADER will be community-led and socially inclusive in order to foster territorial development that stems from endogenous resources, creating new economic activity, employment and innovation; improving the living conditions. Hopes are that this programme will be beneficial for over half of the rural population if the Netherlands (ENRD, 2016; European Commission, 2016).

What we see here is that although a very small proportion of the Netherlands is rural, the primary sector still accounts for a larger share in the economy than in Sweden where almost 80% of the land is considered rural. The size is therefore not determent in its use or contribution to the economy. The countries also differ in terms of focus in their rural development programme. In Sweden the creation of jobs outside the agricultural sector, the preservation of biodiversity and development of

infrastructure and services are important goals, while in the Netherlands the infrastructure is already well developed and specific attention is given to the relation between rural and urban areas and farmers and citizens. In relation to mobility, and specifically the immigration of refugees, social inclusion and local development are high priorities in both countries, which are important factors in making rural areas attractive to move to and to integrate in. Both countries adopted a territorial or local approach towards rural development implemented by the LAG's of LEADER, which highlight endogenous development and social inclusion, which can be beneficial for integration of refugees in these areas.

## 3.6 Conclusions

The second sub question, *"What is the current situation of marginal rural areas in Europe in terms of vulnerability, resilience and mobility?"*, can now be answered.

Rural exodus, an important characteristic of particularly declining rural areas of Europe, is urbanisation seen from the rural perspective, which is characterized by population decline, loss of services, facilities, ageing of the population and loss of employment and high vacancy rates. Various real and perceived social and economic push and pull factors are involved in these migration flows, such as better job prospects. When urbanisation exceeds the economic growth of urban areas, over urbanisation occurs, which can create problems such as high unemployment rates at a national level. Of course there are also people that move from urban areas into rural ones, which is referred to as counterurbanisation or de-urbanisation. Rural development policy is, therefore, a very vital policy area in Europe. Almost 60% of the continent is considered rural, where almost 25% of the total population lives. There are great differences between countries, whereas Sweden is considered highly rural and the Netherlands highly urbanised. The European Rural Policy is divided in seven-year programmes, tackling rural issues on the local, regional and national level. A comparison between Sweden and the Netherlands has shown that the size of rural areas does not determine the importance of the area in economic terms on the national level. Both countries have adopted a local and territorial approach towards rural development, which builds on endogenous resource allocation and social inclusion and participation. The LEADER approach builds on the same cornerstones and is perceived to be the best local solution to development issues from a bottom-up approach, where participation and local empowerment are key. It has been difficult to include socially excluded groups in the past within this programme as the programme builds on a shared identity and a sense of belonging which, for example, refugees might lack. Social cohesion, clear geographical borders and a minimum of resources to work with are important conditions for a territory to be included in the LEADER programme. A micro-regional scale has been considered an ideal project size and international cooperation creates learning communities to share knowledge. Social innovation promotes citizens to be self reliant in any development process with increased social capital as one of the outcomes. In short, the answer to the second sub question would be that declining rural areas face many challenges due to urbanisation, but local development and social innovation, together with a mobile approach to rural development can create opportunities for revival.

# 4. Accommodating refugees in rural areas

*After gaining insight in the current situation of particularly declining rural areas in Europe, this chapter will present several arguments for and accommodating refugees in these areas, together with experiences so far in Europe, with particular attention given to the Sweden and the Netherlands, which both carry different features when it comes to immigration, asylum and rural development policy.*

## 4.1 Rural "laboratories of integration"?

Accommodating refugees in European rural areas is a subject of major discussion since 2015. Not only the location of people with asylum, but also of the asylum centers where people wait during their application is something in which opinions differ greatly (Bock, 2016). There are several views on distribution of people amongst urban and rural areas, but when there is acute distress, any empty space is put into operation to accommodate forced migrants, either in rural or urban areas, especially when it comes to their first accommodation during the process of asylum application. Current policy is designed to divide refugees proportionally over a country, which means the biggest cities accommodate most people. In urban areas with a dense population, however, already exists a lack of housing, whereas asylum seekers raise the pressure on the available housing stock when accommodated here (Clahsen, 2016). Furthermore the prices in urban areas are often rising, while in areas with population decline many houses are empty and without purpose. Accommodating refugees in rural areas with population decline would therefore be more efficient and could potentially revitalize the rural communities in many ways. Shops, schools and associations do not have to close their doors if there are enough residents present and new businesses might start (Clahsen, 2016; Bloem, 2014). Accommodating refugees in remote rural areas with population decline could therefore be an instrument to contribute to two causes; (1) providing refugees with social housing and (2) reduce the vacancy rate and disappearance of services in rural areas (Braanker, 2016; Bloem, 2014).

Rural areas can be a *"laboratory of integration"*, as the prices of living there are low and communities are usually tight-knit, which means social interactions happen naturally and frequently. Social cohesion in rural communities is mostly fostered by associations in which most residents are involved. The tranquility of many rural areas can also be an attractive feature for refugees having fled war and persecution. This does not mean that rural areas and refugees are a match made in heaven per se. In remote communities some facilities and services can be hard to reach or at a long distance and entrenched social structures with very distinctive norms and values, might cause xenophobia and *"latent racism"* (The Local, 2016). Although refugees can be assigned to a certain location as long as the process of asylum application is running, as soon as they are granted asylum they are free to go as they please. In many cases this means they will move to bigger cities to find co-ethnic residents or better economic prosperity. This is why municipalities have to provide clear incentives for refugees to stay in rural areas, by investing in the development of the rural economy and social inclusion (ENRD, 2016; The Local, 2016). In doing so, it is important to keep the interests of the native inhabitants in mind and to assess whether villages have enough economic resources to support the accommodation of refugees (The Local, 2016).

## 4.2 Three arguments for rural integration

This thesis presents three major arguments for accommodating refugees in rural areas that are accompanied by particular policy approaches. The first one is that we have to *"share the burden"* both on the European and the national level (Bock, 2016). This means that within Europe refugees should be resettled towards equal distribution amongst the member countries and within a nation refugees should be divided according to the population size and density of a city or village, which means the

division of refugees would be proportional (Braanker, Clahsen, 2016). This approach is used in for example Germany, Scandinavia and the Netherlands and within this approach, in some cases, a special attention for declining rural areas is found (Bock, 2016). Another important argument for the accommodation of refugees in rural areas is that integration would be easier and more successful in rural areas than in urban ones as interaction between neighbors and agencies is more natural and daily in small communities than in big cities (Larson, 2011; Bock, 2016). Also the prices of living are much lower and as vacancy rates are often high in these areas, a place to live would be easy and quickly arranged (Platform 31, 2016). Living in the countryside would also fulfill the need for safety, security and tranquility that many refugees experience after fleeing war and persecution (Bock, 2016). The last important argument for rural accommodation that will be discussed, is that refugees can be a source of revitalisation for particular declining rural areas where high vacancy rates and a thinning population threat existing services to extinction (Bock, 2016; ENRD, 2016). With the influx of new residents new jobs are created, schools and associations do not need to close down, and new businesses and other economic activities are developed. However, new influx also poses a big pressure on the services structure and supply and demand of employment is often far from perfectly aligned (Platform 31, 2016). Plus, refugees often stay for shorter periods in rural areas to later move to cities. The idea that refugees are a source of revitalisation is gaining ground in across Europe, but the degree of success of integration in rural areas is depending on various economic and social factors in need of investment that would indeed turn rural areas in more favourable areas for integration (Bock, 2016). Providing asylum alone is not the way forward in this regard. The current wave of people seeking refuge and new lives in Europe, is provoking thought and action within rural communities. Many rural areas, particularly those with declining population, may be well placed to welcome refugees and other newcomers. But the welcoming process must include the necessary investment in housing, services, infrastructure and job creation (Moore & Dower, 2015). Stimulation of entrepreneurship is needed to revive the economic dynamics in the area. In order to promote the social cohesion and inclusive economic growth, enabling migrants to become productive, self-reliant citizens, it is vital that immigrants are effectively integrated into society (Euracademy, 2016).

## 4.3 LEADER supported integration

While immigration policies are assigned to European and national-level authorities, the LEADER programme, particularly its LAGs, can support the process of integration on the regional and local level within rural development policies ones asylum is granted. LEADER aims at a sensitive and cooperative approach towards integration practices, which are beneficial for natives and newcomers simultaneously, keeping in mind that mistakes could lead to an increase in xenophobia amongst the local community (ENRD, 2016). Supporting positive public perception is therefore a very inherent part of the approach, which is facilitated by focusing on the the ways refugees can revitalise rural communities. However, the voice of the local community stays at the center of this approach, as social inclusion is a core value, which means they are themselves creators of their own development processes; also integration. LEADER recognises that the process of integration should be in accordance with both the refugees and the local communities wishes, already from an early state in the programme. Integration is seen as a multidirectional process that demands sensitivity and a holistic approach which is context based and looks at long term effects (ENRD, 2016). Familiarisation with the new living space seems to be an important factor in successful integration as newcomers need time to get to know their new environment. According to the OECD, clear communication between various levels of governance is important in making sure activities are divided properly, not overwhelming some local communities. The last and crucial stage of integration is the phase where LEADER considers itself to be especially useful in effectively facilitating a mutually supportive interaction between refugees and locals, beneficial for both. Refugees can be supported by rural development policies of the LEADER programme in terms of investment in services, business start-ups, and supporting and facilitating meetings between the local community and newcomers, which makes LEADER a very potential instrument to effectuate the rural integration of refugees (ENRD, 2016).

## 4.4 Swedish experiences

A great concern in Sweden when it comes to immigration is that the majority come to live in the few urban areas of Sweden which, as processes of urbanisation are evident, challenges housing stocks and employment rates in these areas that are already growing, which could lead to overcrowding and economic consequences at the national level. As rural areas are facing loss of facilities, services and employment due to urbanisation, the idea to socially include refugees in these areas was born (Euracademy, 2016). In Sweden many rural areas are declining, while at the same time refugees are underrepresented in the primary sector of the nation and in current rural development policies. The Rural Network of Sweden is therefore aiming at the inclusion and integration of refugees in particularly declining rural areas through citizen-led development programmes that focus on public opinion towards foreigners and informing refugees on the possibilities of participating in rural communities. The current action plan entails the identification of potential areas, language courses, employment and business support and social housing (OCDE, 2015; AEIDL, 2015; SIC Europe, 2015). Most refugees seek permanent asylum in Sweden, but some are planning to return to their roots as soon as the situation there allows it or to move to several European countries in an onward journey. Engbersen et al. (2015) found that this onward migration can not be fully attributed to chances on the labour market as studies have shown that most immigrants that choose to continue their journey are highly educated and well paid. Of course there is also a group that does travel further for better job prospects, but this is certainly not the majority (Engbersen et al, 2015). Wernesjö (2014) found that the form of housing that is available to newcomers, together with experiences of social exclusion in rural areas of Sweden can erode a migrant's sense of belonging, contributing to onward migration. On the other hand, good social relationships and access to facilities and services can promote a sense of belonging, contributing in successful integration (Wernesjö, 2014). With these findings in mind it becomes clear that policies aiming at contributing in refugee's social and economic integration can have differing outcomes; (1) they can result in stronger integration in the community and lower the chances of leaving or (2) they can attribute people with better resources, which could lead to better possibilities for onward migration (Engbersen et al., 2015).

Together with integration efforts it is important to meet the challenges of decreasing populations, to maintain vital services and the to counter the problems of employment shortages in different sectors. Commitment and engagement are needed from inhabitants, NGOs, the business sector and municipalities to counter ethnic prejudices (Mohamoud & Lagerroth, 2016). Asylum seekers that enter areas with a low unemployment rate and a high demand in unskilled labour have the biggest chance in finding paid work (Engbersen et al., 2015). In Sweden there is a big market for local produce and handicrafts, which provides opportunities for newcomers. Rural development practitioners can support accurate matching of immigrants and their competences with the Swedish market, raise awareness amongst employers in rural areas and actively support refugees into the labour market. In some cases fears exist in hiring foreigners, especially when they do not speak the language of the country they moved to (yet). Civil society organisations can also have an active role in integration practices. One example is the Swedish Football Association which is situated in most communities and actively tries to support immigrant integration in rural Sweden. The Swedish Rural Development Programme has invested in training and employment projects across the country providing immigrants a job in an industry within their own community. A major strength and unique approach of the integration policy in Sweden is that work is a vital and first target during the process, where newcomers are immediately enrolled in programmes that provide job training. When asylum is granted in Sweden, the national public employment service (instead of migration officers or municipalities) is the organisation that supports the immigrant within their new surrounding, starting with a job. This way, refugees do not spend much time in language courses before enrolled in the labour market; this all happens simultaneously (Euracademy, 2016).

## 4.5 Dutch experiences

Last year less communities than the year before in the Netherlands saw their population decline, which has partially been attributed to the arrival of refugees. In 2015 one quarter of the communities in the Netherlands had to deal with population decline, while in 2014 this was 40% of all communities. Especially the rural communities on the edge of the borders were still declining last year. These figures do not suggest the problems of declining rural areas are solved at once by the influx of refugees (BNR, 2016). In the Netherlands there is increasing interest in accommodating refugees in some of the more marginal rural areas, although current policy is aimed at a proportional division according to population size. Governance on several levels, from national to local, work together in a set of agreements to facilitate resettlement and housing programmes. As the numbers of asylum seekers have increased since 2015, the high demand for acute measures has caused many delays in the accommodation of refugees within the initial centres and also outplacement to new locations for permanent housing after being granted asylum. Many people who were granted asylum by authorities are still within these centers, waiting for a new home (Engbersen et al., 2015). The problems with the housing are caused by several factors, including the shortage of homes in some regions (especially social housing), the time-consuming administration process and the presence of groups with special demands or priority and long waits for housing allowance. A survey amongst several Dutch municipalities has shown that once migrants find a home, no cases of social resistance have been found across communities. Many respondents emphasize that most worries and resistance stem from large scale emergency accommodations where people are waiting for a granted asylum (Engbersen et al., 2015).

Municipalities have mentioned several important factors to foster successful housing and integration, namely (1) a spread of migrants among different municipalities, (2) small scale housing, (3) spread across neighborhoods and (4) informing the community and involving them in the process. Large scale locations that are only meant for status holders are rejected by all respondents of the study, as this could lead to a sense of being outside the society. Another bottleneck of the accommodation of refugees in marginal rural areas is that connecting demand and supply of labour is often not taken into account as much as desired, meaning labor market prospects are overlooked. Therewithal, many migrants are considered unplaceable in the labor market because of their poor grasp of the Dutch language. This has caused many municipalities to focus on integration courses before one looks at labor market prospects, meaning much time passes before active support towards the labor market is put in practice (Engbersen et al., 2016). There are, however, some potential downsides of living in rural areas when it comes to promotion of integration as refugees lack co-ethnic friends, family or peers and solitude and isolation could arise from being the only ones really different from the rest. Distrust and racism could also occur in areas where people are not used to ethnically diverse communities yet and the pressure to assimilation can be very high and constant (Bock, 2016). Also lack of proper employment, services and mobility poses threats on the integration (Platform 31, 2016). These findings suggest that besides housing, investments in further development of the region in social and economic terms is needed in order for this location scheme to be successful for all parties involved. If economic activity increases, so does the quality of life, Braanker (2016) stresses. Clahsen (2016) believes that grounding will be easier in smaller communities, as in bigger cities the sense of community tends to be lower. Other voices point at the fact that in bigger cities the population tends to be more multicultural and that in remote rural areas the hesitation towards newcomers might therefore pose a threat to the success of grounding (Bock, 2016). In a study in the province of Friesland, situated in the North of the Netherlands, amongst rural residents and their opinion in what facilities and services are important, it was found that residents worry most about the future loss of semi-public facilities, such as the primary school and the community centre, whereas the loss of private services is tolerated and understood. Therefore, it is important for the state and municipalities to make sure these are maintained by efforts of development practitioners, municipalities and local communities (de Vries et al., 2016).

## 4.6 Conclusions

Now, the third and fourth sub questions can be answered; (3) *"What are the policy arguments for and experiences so far with accommodating refugees in marginal European rural areas?"* and (4) *"What does the above mean for current approaches to rural development and immigration; how would they need to be adapted within the context of the current refugee crisis?"*.

Three arguments were discussed for accommodating refugees in particularly declining rural areas. The first one is to "share the burden" nationally, the same way the European vision is to share the burden from country to country. A proportional division of refugees according to existing population sizes is implemented across Europe, including both Sweden and the Netherlands. The second argument is that the integration process would be easier in rural areas than in bigger cities, as safety and security are often higher in rural areas and social interaction is more likely due to the small scale of communities. The third argument is that refugees can be a source of revitalisation in particularly declining rural areas, to counter the urbanisation flows and to save facilities and services and bring new economic activities. This last idea is gaining ground in, especially, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. The successful integration of refugees in rural areas for revitalisation the declining communities is attributed to several factors and investment in social and economic sense are needed to facilitate development for the existing community and newcomers. Rural regions could be a laboratory of integration, but long distances to certain services and "latent racism" (fear of otherness) can pose threats to successful integration. Therefore, refugees need good reasons to stay in rural areas, which can be provided by municipalities, the local community, development agencies and national governments. Integration is a sensitive two-way process, which should be approached holistically and with good coordination between different levels of governance. LEADER support can be very useful in this regard. Experiences in Sweden and the Netherlands have shown the complexity of promoting development for refugees and local communities simultaneously. 60% of all municipalities in Sweden are decreasing. In Sweden a high priority within the Swedish Rural Network has been given to the inclusion of refugees in rural action plans. The current policy is focused around investment in the rural economy, language courses and the creation of new jobs; increasing employment. Labour market matching is a important part of the rural refugee policy and Sweden uses a unique approach in the sense that work is one of the first goals when supporting refugees. However, many refugees stay only short amounts of time in the same community, which can not be fully attributed to chances on the labour market. Proper housing and social inclusion are very important factors in promoting lasting integration, creating a sense of belonging. Commitment across different levels of governance is needed to support this development and to counter ethnic prejudices. In the Netherlands many people that are already granted asylum are still waiting for housing in asylum centers. These centers have created a certain degree of social resistance amongst local communities, but ones these people receive housing no resistance was recorded amongst various municipalities in the Netherlands. A survey has shown that important factors that contribute to successful integration are a good spread, small scale housing and involving the community in the process and development. The approach towards integration in the Netherlands is different from Sweden in the sense that first focus is solely on language courses, before support towards the labour market is provided. This means that a long time passes before refugees find a job in the Netherlands in contrast to Sweden. A study in Friesland, the North of the Netherlands, has shown that most worries amongst rural residents of particularly declining rural areas are in the regard of the loss of semi-public facilities and services, such as schools and community centers. This is especially difficult for people that are less mobile for various reasons. Investment and maintenance of these facilities and services is, therefore, vital in promoting counterurbanisation and making rural areas more attractive to stay or move to.

# 5. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the possibilities of tackling two current issues of migration in Europe simultaneously - namely; (1) the high influx of refugees from Asia and Africa since 2015 and (2) the implications rural flight poses to particularly declining rural areas - by analysing the opportunities of accommodating and integrating refugees in particularly declining rural areas of Europe and what this means for current policies in this regard. The research was framed within the recent mobility turn in the social sciences, which provides a new perspective on movement of people, by looking at movements itself, the driving forces behind it and the effects and constraints or *"immobility"* these movements imply. The mobility paradigm promotes cross-disciplinary solutions to social issues, enhancing public policies in a wide variety of fields, including refugee and border politics. A merged and mobile approach towards both refugee and rural policies was elaborated on the basis of three sub questions; first exploring the impact of the refugee crisis and Europe's policies in this regard, then clarifying the spatial disparity of rural areas in Europe, after which experiences with accommodating refugees in rural areas were analysed.

A study on the way Europe has handled the current refugee crisis has shown multiple fault lines in responding to its humanitarian responsibility, stipulated in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), refugee policies need to be adapted in order to place refugees at the center of current European, national, regional and local policies of immigration and asylum. *"Fortress Europe"* has received much external and internal critique as being more focused on preventing illegal immigration and *"sharing the burden"* instead of the rights of forcibly displaced people, for which a high human toll has been paid in the Mediterranean Sea. A human rights based approach would not only place refugees at the center of immigration policies, but would also contribute in developing a more mobile perspective on rural development policies and practices, be it by governmental or non-governmental organisations. Chapter three has shown that *"rural flight"* can become a vicious circle for some rural areas as a decline in population can go hand in hand with high vacancy rates and a loss in facilities, services and employment, which in their turn support more out migration in the area. This trend could partially be countered by accommodating refugees in particularly declining rural areas to save facilities and services and to create new economic activities. This thesis argues that governments, rural development practitioners and local communities need to take active measures to support the accommodation and integration of refugees in local rural communities to create durable solutions towards both rural out migration and refugee immigration.

In chapter four, this argument was reinforced by experiences in Sweden and the Netherlands. The current national immigration policy in both countries on the national level is proportional to the size of existing communities, but increasingly special attention is given to higher rural inclusion. In rural areas, integration can be more successful due to small-scale tight-knit communities and tranquility and relative high safety. Refugees can prove to be a source of revitalisation for rural communities, partially countering urbanisation flows to save facilities and services and bring new economic activities. Rural regions could be a *"laboratory of integration",* but long distances to certain services and xenophobia can pose threats to successful integration. Therefore, refugees need good reasons to stay in rural areas, which can be provided by municipalities, the local community, development agencies and national or European-level governments. This thesis argues that Integration is a sensitive two-way process, which should be approached  holistically and with good coordination between different levels of governance. LEADER support can be very useful in this regard, as this programme is perceived to be the best bottom-up and endogenous approach towards local and socially inclusive rural development. Experiences in Sweden and the Netherlands have also shown the complexity of promoting development for refugees and local communities simultaneously and differences in approach.

In Sweden a high priority within the Swedish Rural Network has been given to the inclusion of refugees in rural action plans. The current policy is focused around investment in the rural economy, language

courses and the creation of new jobs; increasing employment. Labour market matching is an important part of the rural refugee policy and Sweden uses a unique approach in the sense that work is one of the first goals when supporting refugees, in contrast to the Netherlands. However, many refugees stay only short amounts of time in the same community in Sweden, which can not be fully attributed to chances on the labour market. Proper housing and social inclusion are very important factors in promoting lasting integration, creating a sense of belonging and thus, development practitioners should focus on these areas, with commitment across different levels of governance needed to support local development and to counter ethnic prejudices. In the Netherlands population decline has become less of an issue due to refugee influx. Many people that are already granted asylum are still waiting for housing in asylum centers. These centers have created a certain degree of social resistance amongst local communities, but once these people receive housing no resistance was recorded amongst various municipalities in the Netherlands. A survey has shown that important factors that contribute to successful integration are a good spread, small scale housing and involving the community in the process of integration and development. A study in the North of the Netherlands has shown that most worries amongst rural residents of particularly declining rural areas are in the regard of the loss of semi-public facilities and services, such as schools and community centers. This is especially difficult for people that are less mobile for various reasons. Investment and maintenance of these facilities and services is, therefore, vital in promoting counterurbanisation and making rural areas more attractive to move to and stay in. The approach towards integration in the Netherlands is different from Sweden in the sense that the first focus is solely on language courses, before support towards the labour market is provided. This means that a long time passes before refugees find a job in the Netherlands in contrast to Sweden. This thesis supports the Swedish approach which focuses on labour market support, although language skills are also crucial in the process of integration. Setting up meetings between natives and newcomers is a very important start in the integration process, followed by long-term investments in the rural economy which will not gain immediate pay-off, but will be a durable solution.

Combining the arguments from all chapters; the main argument arose that a merged and mobile approach towards immigration and rural policies would support a human rights based approach (which places the refugees at the center of national immigration policies) and endogenous, socially inclusive rural development in a mutually sustainable way on many levels of governance across Europe. A common sense of solidarity and humanitarian responsibility should be at the core of any policies regarding immigration, asylum and accommodation of refugees, be it on the European, national or local level. Mobility has proven itself to be an effective livelihood strategy for refugees and could be the key in addressing several issues of the movement of people in terms of policy and practices not only in Europe, but across the globe. Local and territorial approaches towards rural development can be enriched by the mobility paradigm to support experimental and cross-disciplinary tailor-made solutions towards social issues. As we are still in the middle of the current migration issues as discussed in this thesis, I call for further investigation on the matter as there is much room for improvement within both immigration and rural development policies within Europe, but also across the globe, in order to support sustainable development with human rights at the core.

# 6. Reflection

My personal interest in migration studies and rural development made that I applied for a Bachelor thesis vacancy concerned with the current refugee crisis in Europe within the context of urbanisation and rural development. The broad concept for this report was already externally set, which helped me tremendously at finding a direction for my thesis, as I have a very indecisive mind. Although I was very enthusiastic to work with a very current issue, it has been difficult to find a wide variety of sources on my particular subject (besides newspaper articles) because of the fact it is such a fresh topic. I can imagine many people writing on the same issue at this very moment, just like me, which means the future will hold much more information on the topic, as with any topic I suppose... When I look back at the months I have been working on this document, mixed feelings arise. Some pieces of text and particular skills were easily facilitated, while others needed much energy and effort. As a research is never finished, I believe the hardest thing for me was to stop all the reshaping, adding, removing and adjusting and to basically let go of the research, daring to say; "this is the end result".

One thing I have struggled with was the structure of the paper. It has changed many times during the writing and it was difficult even up to the very end to make up my mind and stick with a certain structure. Another thing that has proven itself to be difficult for me was the tone of some pieces of text. I intend to write other people's ideas down as if they are mine or as if I thoroughly agree with them, while this is not always the case. It has also been quite confronting to see the differences between how I interpret my text and how other people perceive my words. While most things seemed to make sense to me, a fresh look by my supervisor made me understand that it is very important to make sure someone that did not do the research can make sense of all sentences. This however remained an obstacle throughout.

Another difficult thing for me was to set myself to work on the document on a regular (and healthy) basis. Some days I would continue hours after hours till deep into the night, without much food and water and some days I would barely write one coherent sentence and get distracted by basically everything that moves or produces sound. My lack of discipline and procrastination have always been an issue when it comes to managing deadlines and organizing my own time, but the fact that my supervisor has provided me with some flexibility in this regard, has meant the world to me. I felt like I was empowered to define my own schedule, which was very much appreciated, keeping in mind progress has to be made. I did however still have difficulties with sending pieces of text to my supervisor in time as I intend to wait until the last moment (with unprecedented stress levels) before I make myself useful and put myself to work.

As with almost any topic, I, of course, have a certain (sometimes fierce) opinion on the matter. When it comes to the rights of refugees I can become very normative and idealistic, which made it difficult at times to be as objective as possible during the research. Although this is not helpful in academic skills, my passion for the topic has been useful in the sense that working on the thesis was always from the heart, as I would love to contribute in a cause I feel for.

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