A COMMUNITY IN TRANSIT: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF NON-SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF ERITREAN URBAN REFUGEES INTO THE ETHIOPIAN HOST COMMUNITY IN ADDIS ABABA

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Abbreviations

AAU: Addis Ababa University

ADP: Amhara Democratic Movement

ARRA: Administration of Refugees and Returnees Affair

CRRF: Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

EPRDF: Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPLF: Eritrean People's Liberation Front

IDPS: Internally Displaced Persons

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OCP: Out of Camp Policy

ODP: Oromo Democratic Party

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SEPDM: The Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement

TPLF: Tigray People's Liberation Front

TRAFIG: Transnational Figurations of Displacement

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Eritrean friends in Addis Ababa, who have trusted me with their stories filled with anger, sadness, frustrations, but also with hope and kindness.

Abstract

Ethiopia is a popular destination for Eritrean refugees, due both to its close proximity and its since 2010 implemented progressive policy allowing Eritrean refugees to reside out of the camps and in its cities, such as Addis Ababa, granted they would be self-sufficient. However, this scheme did not allow refugees to work. As a result, in 2016, the country vowed to increase its commitment and pledged to improve refugee laws by providing education, employment rights, and basic services. It was thought that Eritrea and Ethiopia's historical relationship and cultural similarities would support the socio-cultural integration of Eritrean refugees into the Ethiopian host community. However, in reality, the level of integration amongst Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa is still relatively low. To investigate this phenomenon, the following research question is proposed:

> "*Why are many Eritrean refugees not socio-culturally integrated into Ethiopian host community in Addis Ababa?"*

This paper uses a qualitative approach to illustrate and analyse the ethnography of Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in two areas in Addis Ababa, *Bole Arabsa* and *Mebrat Haile Gofa*. Data was gathered through informal, open interviews and participant observation. A thematic approach was also used to draw conclusions from the data, to engage with the topic in new way and lastly, it offers valuable insights into the socio-cultural integration of Eritrean urban refugees within their host communities. The study's findings indicate that language plays a key role in the overall process of integration, however, in the case of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa, many do not feel incentivized to learn the local language, which is Amharic. Furthermore, refugees' knowledge of another language spoken in Ethiopia, Tigrigna, leads to discrimination by other ethnic groups. A review of past theoretical approaches to this topic suggests that religion is another key facilitator for integration. However, even though both Eritreans and Ethiopians hold similar religious beliefs, their religious practices are entirely separate. The same holds true for food and coffee ceremonies, to a large extent. This is caused by the marginal interaction between the two communities, leading to both living entirely separate and in parallel to each other. Social integration is made even more complex by the poor treatment of refugees by local authorities, as well as general mistrust from both sides due to a further consequence of their historical past, which still has a significant impact today. More importantly, access to the local economy is close to non-existent for Eritrean refugees and are therefore dependent on remittances from abroad for financial support. Moreover, this paradigm creates a circular problem, as remittances further limit their involvement in the local economy. Lastly, as Ethiopia is a transit destination, refugees are further disincentivized from staying in Addis Ababa.

Chapter One: Introduction

Why this fieldwork?

The Horn of Africa is the location of one of the world's largest refugee and migratory flows, with many travelling from conflict zones into Ethiopia and Uganda, which respectively accommodate the largest and second-largest numbers of refugees in the region (UNHCR Ethiopia 2018). Most of the refugees in Ethiopia are located in the Tigray, Afar, Somali, Benishangul- Gumuz and Gambella Regional States (UNHCR 2020a). UNHCR data from 2018 shows that almost half (47%) of refugees originate from South Sudan, while 28% and 19% originate from Somalia and Eritrea respectively (*ibid*).

The cause for Eritrean citizens to seek asylum can be traced back to its acquisition of *de jure* statehood in 1993, which later resulted in compulsory and open-ended conscription into national services, religious persecution and political suppression (Kibreab 2014, 15).

By the end of December 2018, Ethiopia's open-door policy toward refugees had resulted in approximately 173,879 Eritrean refugees having settled in the country (UNHCR 2020a), representing approximately 5% of the latter's total population in 2018 (Worldometers 2020).

As the number of refugees in Ethiopia continues to grow, the Ethiopian state has been gradually moving away from its open-door policy toward one of camp-based assistance. Under the Refugee Proclamation of 2004, an encampment policy was introduced that left many in a state of limbo with regards to their resettlement rights (UNHCR 2019). Encampment precludes refugees from developing any meaningful sense of livelihood, which leads many having little to no autonomy with regard to their livelihood and personal development (Samuel Hall Research 2014). Now the emphasis has shifted toward enabling refugees to be self-sufficient by allowing them to contribute to the host country (Samuel Hall Research 2014). Through the establishment of the 2010 refugee scheme, which provides Eritrean refugees with 'Out of Camp' status, Eritrean refugees have been granted the opportunity to live in any Ethiopian city of their choice, granted they meet certain requirements (*ibid*). These include having Eritrean refugee status and having an Ethiopian sponsor.

At the Leader's Summit on Refugees and Migrants in New York In September 2016, Ethiopia made a series of pledges to incorporate the status of refugees into its national development plans (UNHCR 2018a). This included allowing refugees to gain work permits, facilitating local integration to those in protracted situations, providing access to irrigable land, increasing access to health and education, and earmarking a percentage of jobs within industrial parks (*ibid*). Known as the 'Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)' this was officially launched in February 2017. Additionally, Ethiopia adopted further revisions to the refugee law in January 2019 (UNHCR 2019). The openness of the host community is a precondition for the integration of refugees (*ibid*). It is of pivotal importance not only to consider integration from the perspective of Eritrean refugees, but also from that of the host community because they can have a positive or negative effect on the integration process.

As part of my internship at Addis Ababa University (AAU), I have been involved in a field research project on long-lasting displacement situations at multiple sites in Asia, Africa and Europe, with the objective of finding options for improving the lives of displaced persons. AAU is involved in the revision of Ethiopia's policy and legal structure for *Transnational Figurations of Displacement* (TRAFIG), which aims to solve protracted displacement situations in Ethiopia and collects empirical data on Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia (Etzold et al. 2019, 3).

The main objective of AAU's field research project is to find and develop solutions for vulnerable and immobile refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who face continuous cycles of displacement, dependency and a lack of durable solutions (*ibid*). The project is based on five main themes, one of which deals with building alliances-integration and intergroup relations between refugees and hosts (Etzold et al. 2019, 29-31). Reports written by the AAU state that refugee and host communities have mutual and robust relationships which, when combined with a shared language, history and culture helps refugees to overcome considerable hurdles to their integration (Adugna et al. 2020, 16).

However, my own ethnographic research in both sites in *Arabsa* and *Gofa* showed a different picture. My onsite observation showed Eritrean participants living in segregated areas far away from the centre of Addis Ababa and had little overall interaction with the Ethiopian host community. In restaurants, cafes, bars in the areas, both communities sat separately. In both areas, Eritrean refugees lived in groups with other refugees in condominium housing blocks. Most of the Eritrean individuals I interviewed reported not having any sort of employment

rights, instead spending their days going to churches, eating, drinking, talking or playing games together. More importantly, most of them were waiting in transit in Addis Ababa for a better life elsewhere.

This led me to formulate the following principal research question of this study:

> *Why are Eritrean refugees not socio-culturally well integrated into the Ethiopian host community in Addis Ababa?*

Conceptual Framework

To answer this question the following section provides the conceptual approaches which inform this study. It examines concepts such as integration by analysing different perspectives put forward in the corresponding literature, exploring definitions of "integration" or "non-integration", and examining the various components which make up integration. This will be used to create a theoretical perspective from which the barriers to understanding the socio-cultural integration of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa can be understood.

Integration

The meaning of the term "integration" is controversial. Robinson describes it as "a word used by many but understood by few" (Robinson 1998, 118). According to Alencar and Deuze, despite significant steps having been taken towards establishing an empirical method of research in the field, there is still a lack of consensus on what the concept of integration actually refers to (Alencar and Deuze 2017, 2). While qualitative methods do shed some light on the situation, without quantitative data, no precise measurement can be used to determine the degree to which an individual has become integrated into a new societal context (Favel 2003, 13-14).

Rinus Penninx defines integration broadly as "the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups," whereby "society" refers to a group of people with shared values, language, history, customs and traditions within a specific territorial sphere (Penninx 2009, 5-6). In this definition people of a nation also share a culture, a set of ideas and signs connected to that community (*ibid*). Penninx suggests that integration is a process of a person becoming part of a national society. Nonetheless, this is not to say that there should not be any distinction between an integrated foreigner and a national (*ibid*).

In the past, assimilation into a nation was seen as the primary goal of the process of integration; in other words, the "full assimilation of migrants into the new culture (Alencar and Deuze 2017, 2-3). According to the logic of assimilation, an individual must abandon their own ethnic, cultural or religious aspects of identity in order to become integrated in the dominant culture (*ibid*). This is controversial, as it also assumes that immigrants need to rescind the cultural identity of their country of origin and adopt one which corresponds with a wider national identity (Sam 2006, 12). Another issue with assimilation is that it incentivizes refugees - or any other individual living in a foreign culture - to abandon their native identity due to the perceived value of reinforcing their relationship with the dominant society (Berry 2006, 35). As Bhatia and Ram argue, this should not be the goal of integration, which should instead comprise a constant negotiation between cultures and contexts, present and past, the country of refuge and country of origin (Bhatia and Ram 2016, 120). Within this interaction between the two groups, identity is contested and continuously revolving (*ibid*).

According to Ager and Strang,

> "Its wider utility and explanatory value now need to be tested in diverse contexts to gauge whether the proposed structure captures key elements of stakeholder perceptions of what constitutes integration in an appropriately broad range of settings and timeframes" (Ager and Strang 2008, 185).

In other words, Ager and Strang suggests that integration should be studied in different places from different perspectives (e.g. cities and rural areas) in order to limit ambiguity and inconsistency in the process of integration.

Stubbs provides an example of refugee integrative processes:

> "Integration refers to … a sharing of resources—economic and social, an equalizing of rights—political and territorial, and the development of cultural exchanges and new cultural forms, between forced migrants and all other members of a society. At the local level, the process of integration involves all sections of the community in minimizing social distance and facilitating communication and co-operation through creative negotiations which produce new social meanings" (Stubbs 1995, 36).

This approach is unique, as the refugee communities observed during this study share both the language and history of their host community in former Yugoslavia (*idem*, 1-6). This is

divergent from most of the research published by western scholars, which typically relies on the presupposition that there are distinct linguistic, cultural differences between incoming persons and the host community (Stubbs 1995, 36).

It is thus important to conceptualize the idea of integration and examine it from a local perspective as it is considered a durable solution for refugees particularly in urban areas (UNHCR 2018b). UNHCR defines local integration as a complex and gradual process with legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions that requires the effort of both refugees and host societies (UNHCR 2005).

For legal integration, host states provide refugees a wide range of entitlements and rights (Crisp 2004, 1). These include the right to seek employment, to engage in income generating activities, to freedom of movement and to access education and public services (*ibid*). Kostakoupoulou puts forward a theory of social integration based on the process by which minority groups identify with the common culture of the nation-state in the public sphere, while simultaneously maintaining their own cultural difference in the private sphere (Kostakoupoulou 2016, 6). Moreover, this process also encourages social capital, as both communities build relations and experiences through collective behaviour and adhere to pre-defined rules and regulations in order to pursue sustainable livelihoods (Portes 2000, 46). In order to integrate into the local economy, refugees must no longer rely on humanitarian assistance, take an approach toward problem-solving based on self-reliance, and contribute to the local economy, all of which effectively makes them economically equal to natives in the host country (Mekuria 1988, 149). Cultural and social integration take place once refugees live with the host community without fear of exploitation and discrimination (Crisp 2004, 1). Therefore, once refugees become socially interlinked to the host communities, they start to feel like they belong to the national community of the host country (Jacobsen 2001, 9). Socio-cultural integration is essential for this thesis and will be explained in more detail in later chapters.

This section has laid out the conceptual framework of this thesis and has discusses general understandings of ‘integration’ in the literature. However, in the following, this study focuses on the socio-cultural integration of Eritrean refugees. The subsequent chapters therefore draw on concepts of cultural and social integration theories to explain why Eritrean refugees are not socio-culturally integrated into the Ethiopian host society in Addis Ababa. As such, it will be shown how these theories interplay with the empirical data.

Research Questions

The main research question of this thesis is:

> *Why are Eritrean refugees not socio-culturally well integrated into the Ethiopian host community in Addis Ababa?*

Based on the conceptual framework mentioned above five sub-questions are identified to help answer the main question:

1. What are the perceptions of Eritrean refugees of language, religion and food in conjunction with their integration process in Addis Ababa?

2. What are the perceptions of Eritrean refugees with regards to their social capital in Addis Ababa?

3. What are the challenges for local integration that Eritrean refugees face?

4. What are the perceptions of Eritrean refugees with regards to their social networks in Addis Ababa?

5. How does the local Ethiopian community perceive the socio-cultural integration of Eritrean refugees?

Outline of the Chapters

This study has five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction of the topic, research questions and an overview of the conceptual frameworks to be applied. Chapter Two outlines the methodology, while Chapter Three describes the historical ties between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Chapter Four and Five present the overall findings of the research and offer an analysis of the data focusing on socio-cultural factors impacting the integration of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa. This will be achieved by considering cultural integration in terms of language, religion and food. Social integration concerning segregation, violence and theft, mistrust, ethnic vs national identity and social networks will be examined. The conclusion offers a short overview of the main findings and provides an answer to the principal research question.

Chapter Two: Entering the Fieldwork of Study

Introduction

> "*The ethnographer not only observes a social group, setting or subject matter*, [but] *engages in the participation actively with a general commitment to observing everyday social life*." (Reeves et al. 2013, 1367).

The following chapter provides an overview of the various methodologies used to collect, assemble and analyse the data during and after the fieldwork in Addis Ababa. Its main purpose is to examine how Eritrean refugees are integrating into the host country from their perspective. This can be achieved through ethnography, a qualitative research method that guides the researcher to understand experience, phenomena, and other processes essential to the social world (Dawson 2002, 14). As Limb and Dwyer (2001) contend, qualitative research methodologies can

> "explore feelings, understandings and knowledge of others through various means. They also explore some of the complexities of everyday life in order to gain a deeper understanding into the processes that shape our social worlds." (2-3).

From a personal perspective, I also wished to use this method in order to study the issues at hand in a more realistic setting, as well as to get a first-hand look at the ways in which people deal with and thrive in their respective local environments as they go about their daily lives.

The goal of this research is to use qualitative research to bring forward the lived experiences and stories of individuals from a humanist perspective, i.e. one that does not merely represent them as anonymous numbers. An inter-subjective and in-depth approach was therefore the logical choice for this study. The bottom up approach through which refugees reflect and recount their views and experiences has helped me understand and assess specific opportunities and constraints of refugees and host communities alike.

For this research, I have collected data from both primary and secondary sources, the latter comprising journal articles, reports, books, and newspapers. The purpose of these sources is to build an historical and political background on the research topic, as well as to help develop the conceptual framework. My methods for collecting primary data include ethnographic research and participant observation in the form of collecting data from the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in Addis Ababa (i.e. *(Bole) Arabsa* and *(Mebrat Haile) Gofa.* Ethnographic research has allowed me to witness and be actively involved in the various

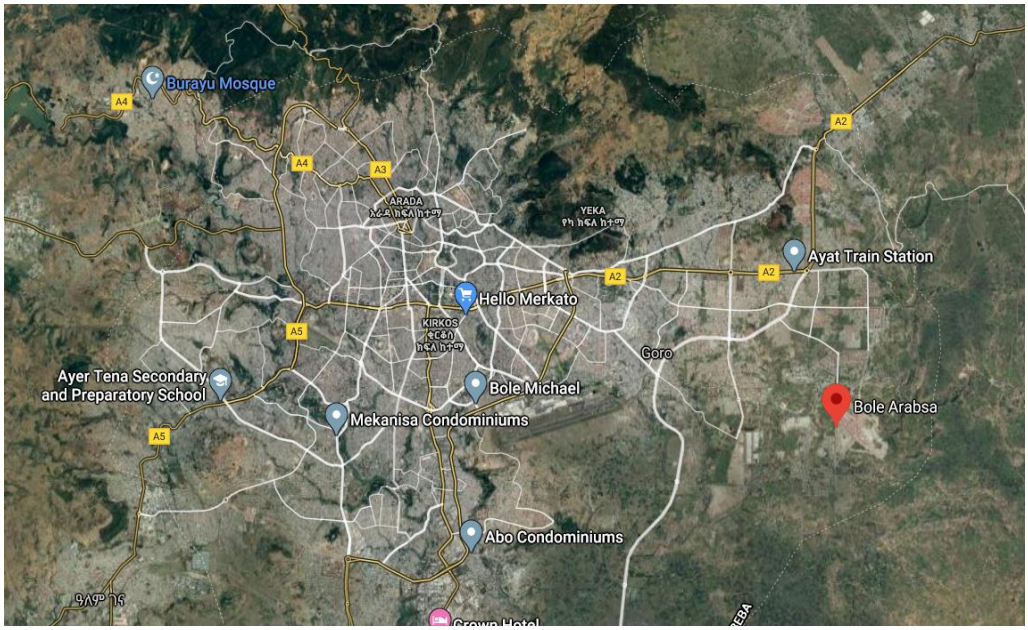
activities which make up the daily routines of local inhabitants. This is effective because, as Dewan asserts, participant observation allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the lives and experiences of the people s/he is "studying" (Dewan 2018, 195).

The master's in African Studies at Leiden University provides its students with a multidisciplinary approach to consider through multiple perspectives: cultural, historical, literary, economic, and political. This is done to comprehend and analyse the larger picture from these various angles. Likewise, this thesis also takes an interdisciplinary approach that utilizes concepts from the field of anthropology, history, politics and culture.

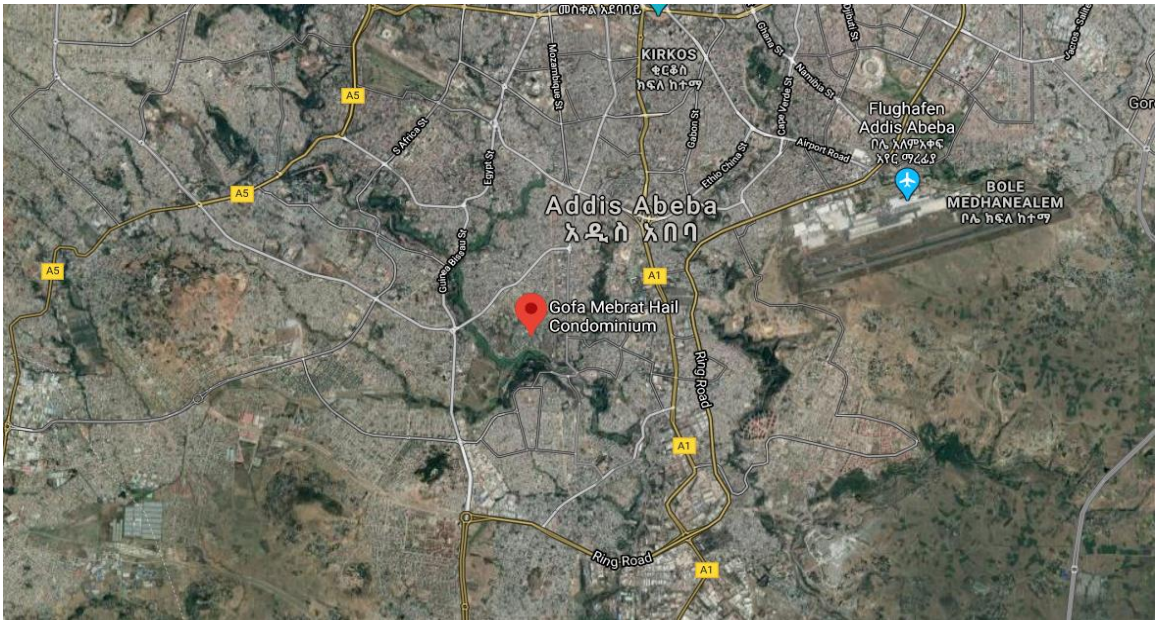
Field sites: *Bole Arabsa* and *Mebrat Haile Gofa*

This study was conducted in the period between January and mid-March, during which I also undertook an internship at Addis Ababa University. During the first few weeks, I went to two areas called *(Bole) Arabsa* and *(Mebrat Haile) Gofa* for informal interviews. In *Gofa* there were Eritreans that had settled in the area for the second time, having previously been deported during the civil war between Ethiopia and Eritrean between 1998-2000. Upon returning to Addis Ababa, they could make use of their already established social networks. In *Gofa*, some shop, café and restaurant employees were identified as Tigray, an ethnic group whose native language is the same as Eritreans making it easier to communicate with natives of the area. In this area, some Eritreans were able to find small jobs, such as making and serving coffee. Finding informal jobs is more difficult in *Arabsa*, which lies in the periphery of the city and where there are more affordable rental prices for Eritrean refugees.

Map of Bole Arabsa (Google Maps 2020)



Arabsa condominium blocks (2020)



Map of Gofa Mebrat Hail (Google Maps 2020)

Gofa condominium blocks (2020)

Reflection on Navigating Positionality

During and after my fieldwork, I kept a reflective journal in which I could record my experiences, reflections upon my role as a researcher and my personal interaction and interpretation of the collected data. I was incentivized to constantly reflect about my position as a researcher and as an Ethiopian. My biggest fear was that I would unwittingly affect the results as a result of unconscious bias. I knew that it was not possible to deliberately escape this problem, so instead, I endeavoured to rigorously check my assumptions: *am I posing the right questions? Have I adequately explained my background? Which of my personal experiences and subjectivity could impact the results of this study?*

Researchers are human beings; therefore, our work is undoubtedly influenced by our life experience. According to Chabal, our training, vision and prejudice affect the lenses through which we examine the world, and as a result, we should strive to acknowledge these aspects rather than try to actively obscure them (Chabal 2009, 174). In other words, as Bolton contends, we simply cannot detach ourselves from our research (Bolton 2018, 16).

As individuals involved in the production of knowledge, it is crucial that we, as researchers, reflect on our positions and limit the inevitable influence of our own perceptions on the studied social setting. As the research presented in Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt (2008)

demonstrates, how researchers view the social world plays an essential role in the collection and analysis of data (10).

Being an insider and researching at "home" has its advantages, such as the building of a rapport between researcher and participant, one in which trust can be forged more easily due to a mutual cultural understanding and affinity (Flores 2018, 2). As a speaker of Amharic, my ability to communicate with the Ethiopian participants in their own language was therefore a great help in gaining their trust. These interviews were then translated into English to analyse and present the findings here.

I was born in Addis Ababa and I am still linked to the country by language, culture, and family ties, my personal background helped me to be perceived by the Ethiopian participants as an "insider." However, as I started the fieldwork, I started to realize how I was holding the research back as a result of having rigid assumptions about certain things. For example, I had assumed that, given their shared language, culture and religion, refugees and local communities would live in peaceful coexistence. This assumption was very much ingrained in my personal perspective on integration rather than on its observation in practice. The lack of local integration of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa has shown me that these commonalities, amongst other things, are not a universal basis for integration.

While there are certain factors which helped me to be perceived as an "insider," to the Ethiopian participants, there are equally as many which would identify me as an "outsider": I am an Egyptian-German-educated, westernized woman who left Ethiopia more than 23 years ago. Also, the Eritrean participants not only saw me as an outsider to them but an insider to the host community during our initial interactions. This made the research considerably more difficult for me. The lack of trust between the two communities was also one of challenges I faced when trying to gain access to Eritrean participants and it later became one of the keys elements to understand why refugees do not integrate into the Ethiopian host community.

Insights that shaped the Methods

At the beginning, the Eritrean participants seemed to not trust me, seemed suspicious of my intentions and were reticent to provide me with answers. They were very cautious because they took me for an Ethiopian, so they tailored their answers to avoid potential conflict with the host community to whom they assumed I belonged. They would tell me that they live amongst Ethiopians, with whom they hang out and interact daily. According to Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, an ethnographic approach that is based on participant observation can aid

researchers by comparing what interviewees say against what they actually do (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt 2008, 12). My participant observation data showed a clear separation between what was being said and what was being done; the little interaction that did not match with what they were telling me about their harmonious coexistence. This ran the risk of collecting heavily biased data (Dewan 2018, 187).

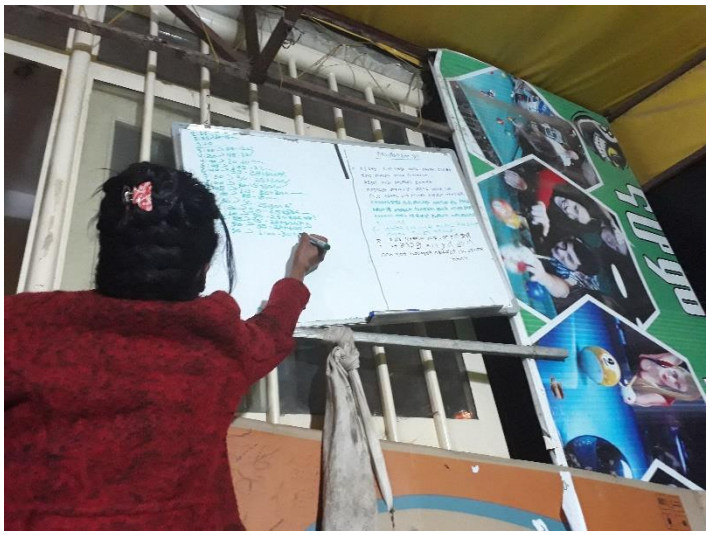
I therefore quickly realized that it was essential to first gain the participants' trust. This proved to be a significant challenge. According to Dewan there are two stages that a researcher should follow in order to access the fieldwork: "getting in," i.e. gaining physical access to the field site; and "getting on," i.e. attaining social access to participants (*ibid*).

With this in mind, I decided that the best solution would be to actually live within the same neighbourhood as the Eritrean participants and engage in daily contact with them in order to overcome this barrier. More importantly, this would provide insight into why this barrier existed in the first place.

This move eventually helped shape my methodology, as I had to invest much more time to gain the participants' trust. The most important step I had to take was to discuss myself, my upbringing and my experiences in Ethiopia, Egypt, Germany and the Netherlands with the Eritrean participants. It was important that I talked about my family's initial move from Ethiopia to Egypt, as this provided a common ground between us: the necessity to move to another country in order to search for better opportunities. Although my family were not refugees, the Eritrean participants and I could identify with one another based on this necessity and helped pave the way to discussions of integration by comparing my integration process into different communities with their own.

I lived in *Arabsa* for 3 weeks. During this time, I visited a number of cafes, restaurants, and pool bars in both areas. Here, I met with some Ethiopians from the area who introduced me to one Eritrean named Robel, a former stage manager and singer. When the government wanted to force him into military service, he fled to Sudan and then to Ethiopia. Through him, I gained wider trust amongst the community via his social circle. Once the others saw me spending time with him in the neighbourhood, I was able to gain more insight from others independently. We would spend 8-10 hours together daily. Our daily routine consisted of meeting in the morning to have coffee at Mulu's, whom I met in the first week of my arrival and spent time with regularly during my fieldwork. Mulu is the mother of a 7-year old daughter named Desta. Since Mulu would be busy working most days, Robel and I would help Desta with her homework.

Mekdes worked in a café/game bar in *Arabsa* as a waitress. She is a witty politics enthusiast, who often enjoyed providing her viewpoint on the current national political situation. She is originally from *Adama* and had to move to Addis Ababa to search for a job. Most of my Eritrean participants spent their day at Mulu and Mekdes's workplace, which is also where I interviewed them in between games or coffee. We played dominoes or pool games and had lunch in the restaurants in the area. I also met Woinsehet, the owner of a restaurant which caters primarily to Eritreans. Thanks to Mulu, Mekdes and Woinsehet I was able to be to find Eritrean and Ethiopian frequent guests to interview in their safe space. Additionally, this also allowed me to observe the interaction and dynamic between Eritreans and Ethiopians.

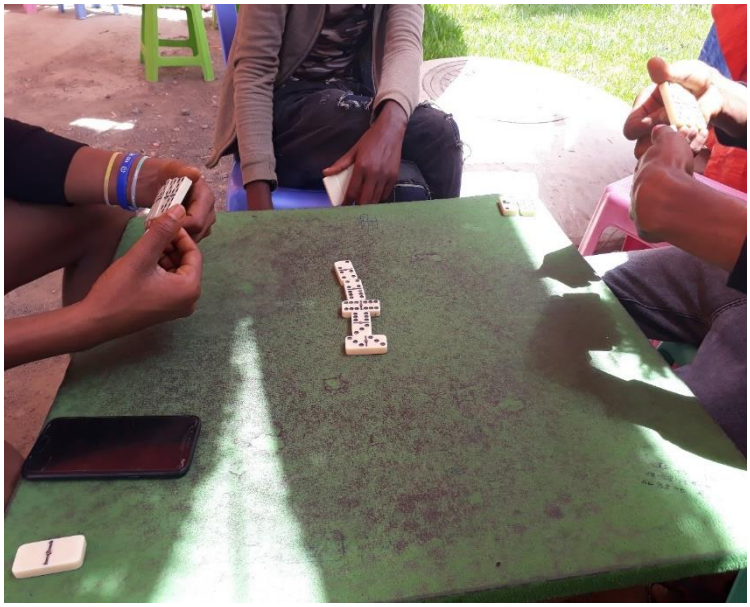


Mekdes keeping score of the games in Arabsa (2020).

Mulu making snacks and coffee in Arabsa (2020.

Chatting with my participants at Mulu's in Arabsa (2020)

Playing pool with my participants at Mekdes's in Arabsa (2020)



Chatting and playing dominoes in Arabsa (2020)

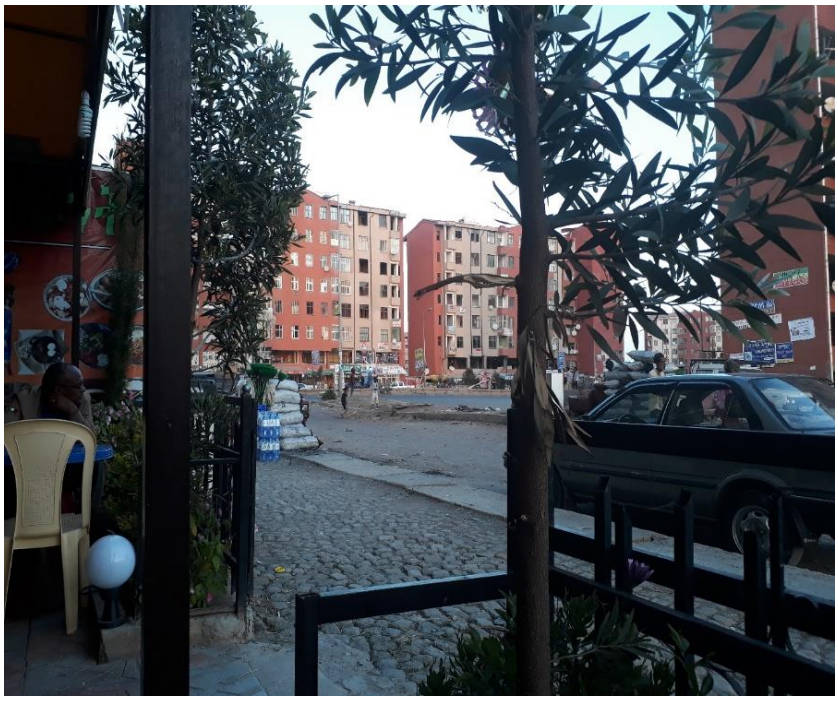
I went to *Gofa* daily for two weeks. Here, I met Salvatore through a researcher at Addis Ababa University where I was an intern, who introduced me to his friends and showed me around the area. He currently works several small informal jobs to sustain him and his wife, with whom he hopes one day to resettle in Canada. Although he gets by on what he earns, leaving is the only way out for a better future, one with financial stability for his family.

In *Gofa*, I was able to go to hairdressers, kiosks, cafes, and restaurants. Salvatore, Dahlak, Aklilu and Helen would normally be the ones to show me around and would often take me to their regular hangout places. As opposed to seeing me as an interviewer, this provided them with a sense of control and helped to put them at ease around me. This was an effective strategy as it let them choose and organize their environment as they pleased, helping to put them at ease (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 37).

In some cases, Faven and Hirut chose their homes for our conversations, which I found to be very effective and seemed to confirm that they trusted me. I was also able to accompany Almi and Robel to Saint Merry and Gabriel churches. My Eritrean and Ethiopian participants were Christian Orthodox, and one was a member of the Ethiopian Pentecostal church. There is no specific reason why I did not investigate other religions - it just happened to be that most living in these two areas were from either one of the two denominations.

Although at first the lack of trust made it more difficult for me, it gave me the first insights into the difficult relationship between the Eritrean refugee and Ethiopian host community.

During one of my visits to Saint Merry Church in Addis Ababa with Almi. (2020)



One of the hangouts: a restaurant in Arabsa (2020)

Our conversations were informal, free flowing and based on reciprocity. In between talks I had time to write down my daily observations and notes about my surroundings, both of which are important techniques of data collection. Most of the data was collected informally: I had a note-book where I wrote down details about our conversations, and in some cases I made a note about an important topic and then I would sit down and ask them to talk about it again and record it on audio. As a result, I acquired more than 24 hours of interview recordings, which I later transcribed.

I conducted 11 informal- in-depth interviews with Eritreans, from which I picked out four people to really get to know through deeper multiple conversations and eight informal in-depth interviews with Ethiopians. Additionally, I held one focus group discussion with the members of the Ethiopian host community.

The participants had been living in Ethiopia for between 2 and 15 years. Informal and open-ended questions allowed for free-flowing conversation and also helped the participants to talk openly about their experiences. Although the interviews were unstructured, I did write down questions for myself as a guideline and to not lose track of my research. This allowed me to engage the participants according to the thematic ranges.

When I returned from the field work, I first translated the data into transcriptions that made it easier to identify and analyse themes (Hennink et al. 2011, 109). I then read and re-read the data, looking for similarities and differences in the themes. I also made note of additional topics and themes that the participants made me aware of.

Table 1: Overview of Participants

First name	Sex	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Location
Abel	M	28	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Arabsa*
Aklilu	M	43	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Gofa*
Almi	F	59	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Arabsa*
Dahlak	M	35	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Gofa*
Faven	F	22	Eritrean	Small informal jobs	*Arabsa*
Helen	F	22	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Gofa*
Kidane	M	47	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Arabsa*
Robel	M	26	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Arabsa*
Salvatore	M	47	Eritrean	Small informal jobs	*Gofa*
Tesfaye	M	44	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Arabsa*
Winta	F	28	Eritrean	Unemployed	*Gofa*

Hirut Tesfaye	F	27	Ethiopian	Kiosk employee	*Gofa*
Martha Hailu	F	63	Ethiopian	Housewife	*Gofa*
Mekdes Girma	F	24	Ethiopian	Waitress	*Arabsa*
Mulu Abebe	F	26	Ethiopian	Coffee maker	*Arabsa*
Nati Asfaw	M	24	Ethiopian	Restaurant owner	*Arabsa*
Rebecca Legesse	F	26	Ethiopian	Waitress	*Gofa*
Senait Mersha	F	24	Ethiopian	Bank employee	*Gofa*
Woinsehet Biruke	F	29	Ethiopian	Café owner	*Arabsa*

Ethical Considerations and Limitations of the Study

After providing my participants with information about the topic of my research to the best of my capabilities, they gave me informal verbal consent.

Before going to Addis Ababa, I had assumed that I would not have any problems acquiring consent to take pictures and videos of my informants, thinking that Eritreans living in Addis have been accepted as urban refugees and therefore would not have to hide their identities. I wanted to contribute to the production of knowledge about Eritrean refugees in the form of a documentary by utilizing visual media which holds information that may not be expressed in text form.

However, upon asking, the Eritrean participants did not want to be filmed at all, mostly because they had an ongoing resettlement application with the UNHCR and thought that this might somehow affect their status. Others were afraid of potential espionage activities from the Eritrean autocratic government and thought that video or photographs would compromise their anonymity. In addition, the Eritrean participants did not want the video to be seen by the host community in order to prevent further damage to their already constrained relationship.

At some points during the research, the participants and I misunderstood each other, mostly due to Amharic not being their native tongue. This was overcome by either clearly repeating or rephrasing what had been said. Robel served as a translator for the Tigrigna participants. In a few cases, the Eritrean participants spoke Arabic, so we switched and clarified what they wanted to say. Although the participants were able to communicate in Amharic, a language I am proficient in, the nuances of their answers might have been different had I spoken to them in their mother tongue Tigrigna. This is because it is best to express and deliver one's thoughts, emotions and critical explanations in a language one masters (Caldwell-Harris 2014, 1).

This research is limited to the multi-ethnic urban centre of Addis Ababa. Therefore, the data collected can only be said to be representative of the integration process in the capital of Ethiopia only. As Ethiopia is separated into a vast number of different ethnic regions, this research cannot be said to be representative of the whole country.

Chapter Three: Historical ties between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Introduction

Prior to discussing the central focus of the research, it is important to layout the foundation for the analysis in the following chapters. By bringing forward the historical context, it is easier to comprehend and contextualize the reasons certain similarities between the two nations exist, especially in terms of culture, religion, language and food. This also provides an explanation for why relationships between communities may be strained due to historical conflicts. Therefore, this chapter considers the following question: how are the two nations historically connected?

Conceptualizing the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia

Map of Ethiopia and Eritrea (The University of Texas Libraries 2009a)

In order to understand Eritrean history and its connection to Ethiopia, first we must go back to the time when the two nations were united. In the following section, a brief history of Eritrean-Ethiopian relations will be provided.

In the 19th century, the state formerly known as Abyssinia in the northern part of Ethiopia was expanding immensely (Gudina 2003, 60-62). The Amhara ethnic group was responsible for

bringing a large part of the Abyssinian Empire together, which provided the country with most of its current territory, spanning the geographical area of what is known today as Eritrea and Ethiopia (*idem,* 62-64). Amharic became spoken throughout most of the population, while Coptic Orthodox Christianity became the state religion *(idem,* 60-64).

Abyssinia later became Ethiopia with Haile Selassie (1930-1974) as its last emperor (Habtu and Fessha 2012, 163-67). He was responsible for the country's assimilation through the implementation of policies that homogenized the state. The elites and the Amhara rulers in the north subjected the people living in the south to economic exploitation. This mean that the land was controlled by the Amhara elite *(idem,* 163-67).

Between 1936-1941 Ethiopia was subject to colonial rule by Italy, before being seceded to Britain between 1941 and 1952 (Negash 1988, 136-137). When British colonial rule was dissolved, the future of Eritrea became uncertain, arousing concern amongst the United Nations, who ultimately decided to make Eritrea an autonomous region of Ethiopia under Haile Selassie's rule (Plaut 2016, 11). However, Selassie's absolutist rule alienated the Eritrean population by replacing Eritrean languages with Amharic, the official language of the empire (Plaut 2016, 11). Selassie also denied the Eritrean people basic human rights by subverting the sovereignty of the Eritrean government, prohibiting societal organizations and demonstrations, diminishing the freedom of the press, as well as by oppressing and imprisoning Eritrean nationalists (Haile 1987, 15).

In 1974, after years of student protests, a military junta known as the Derg, led by Mengistu Haile Mariam, forced Selassie to abdicate in a coup (Killion and Balsvik 1988, 293-95). In the beginning, it seemed that the Derg would introduce a solution to the issue of strained relations with Eritrea. However, the group eventually began to perpetuate Haile Selassie's policies, leading to a breakdown in discussions, and eventually, war (Plaut 2016, 12). Students from the northern part of Ethiopia formed a group known as Tigray and launched a campaign designed to force the government in Addis Ababa to secede from the capital *(ibid).* As a result, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was formed in 1975. In the beginning, there had been cooperation between the TPLF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF): both were against the Ethiopian absolutist regimes under Haile Selassie and Mengistu Haile Mariam, and both groups also shared a Marxist outlook (*ibid*). However, their understanding of national identity was very different, with the EPLF fighting for political independence against colonial

powers and the TPLF desiring the Tigrayan nation to be accepted as an integral part of the Ethiopian state *(ibid).*

In 1989, the TPLF later became the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and opted to work with the new coalition government in Addis Ababa (Reid 2003, 397).

Eritrean nationalism envisioned an independent Eritrea while the TPLF (also known as *woyne*, meaning rebellion or revolt) followed Tigrayan nationalism. The TPLF aspired to stop Tigrayan people from being subject to Amhara rule that had historically held power over the wider Ethiopian state (Plaut 2016, 14-16).

In 1991, the EPRDF, in cooperation with the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) and the Amhara Democratic Movement (ADP) formed a new government (Habtu and Fessha 2012, 175-90). Within the new Ethiopian constitution of 1994, the country established an ethnic federal state (University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center 1994), which divided the country into nine separate culturally autonomous states based on ethnicity. It also gave all ethnic groups the right to establish their own state and the right to secede (Tronvoll 2009, 26). The Eritrean state decided against this option as they opposed the idea of states being defined by ethnicity, desiring instead a unitary state (Plaut 2016, 26). In 1993, Eritrea declared its independence after a 30-year struggle against Ethiopia (Plaut 2016, 27). Subsequently, the EPLF continued to separate themselves from the Tigrayan Ethiopians, employing border guards (Abbay 1998, 225-227). One example of how this division manifested is in segregation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from the Eritrean Orthodox Church (*ibid*). The Eritrean state made it clear that the Eritrean Orthodox Church is now linked to the Coptic Church in Egypt by making sure that the consecration of their bishops were Egyptian, despite the fact that the two churches had been united for 1600 years (*ibid*).

Map of Eritrea (The University of Texas Libraries 2009b)

Eritrea has a heterogenic ethnic composition with nine officially recognized groups: the Tigrinya (55%), Tigre (30%), Saho (4%), Kunama (2%), Bilen (2%), and Rashaida (2%), as well as the Beni Amir, Afar, and Nera (2% combined) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). Before the civil war, the largest ethnic group, the Tigrayans (also known as Tigrinya), from the highlands of Eritrea and the northern part of Ethiopia, share ethnolinguistic characteristics, physical closeness and would intermarry, further strengthening their kinship. Nonetheless, this relationship has been strained by conflicts (Abbay 1998, 6). For example, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea led to several waves of Eritrean refugees fleeing their country, while a further 75,000 Ethiopians of Eritrean origin who were residing in Ethiopia were deported to Eritrea after being stripped of their citizenship *(ibid).* An additional 70,000 Ethiopians living and working in Eritrea were expelled, while several hundred thousand people were internally displaced. Around 400,000 men on the Ethiopian side and 350,000 Eritrean men and women were mobilized and around 200,000 women and men have died in combat (*ibid*).

Conclusion

In summary, the historical context allows to comprehend the political and cultural link between the two once united countries. Both share a strong adherence to the religion through the Orthodox Christian Church. Their language, Tigrinya, is also shared by both belonging to the Afroasiatic family. Amharic on the other hand has been taught in Eritrea during previous epochs. The relationship between the co-ethnic groups in both countries can be characterized

as close. Nonetheless, these have been negatively affected by deportations after the civil war causing mistrust and traumatic experiences on both sides. In the next chapters, it will become more visible how this historical interconnectedness affects the local integration of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa.

Chapter Four: Cultural Integration

Introduction

According to Berry, cultural integration corresponds to acquiring the cultural beliefs, practices and rituals of a different group, while maintaining one's own culture (Berry 2006, 5-7). This ultimately becomes a two-sided process from both the migrants' and the host community's perspective (*ibid*). This is reflected in the following UNCHR statement:

> "[Integration is] a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population" (UNHCR 2014).

From this perspective, integration can be viewed as a negotiation between the reality in which the host community lives and the reality of the refugees. In other words, integration is not a static, linear process, but a dynamic one.

According to Williams, for cultural integration to work, the host community needs to take a proactive role in the process by encouraging language training and participation in ceremonies where traditions and customs are exercised (Williams 1990, 698-705). This is reflected in the argument put forward by Kunz: cultural compatibility (meaning similarities in native language, religion, cultural beliefs, values and traditions) between the host country and country of origin is also considered of critical importance for integration (Kunz 1981, 42-43). Healey agrees that a program of education is essential for integration, especially the learning of host country's language (Healey 2006, 259).

Mengisteab and Bereketeab argue that in many African countries, a common history, culture, ethnic groups, and religion make it easier in some cases for refugees to integrate into a host society, creating an alternative informal manner of integration (Mengisteab and Bereketeab 2012, 102).

As already mentioned, cultural similarities can make it easier for refugees to integrate into a host community. For this study, participants were asked to describe their own personal understanding of 'culture,' to which many responded by pointing toward language, religion, food and coffee ceremonies.

> "We are habesha[1], with the same features, traditions, food and religious beliefs.[2]" (*Robel, Eritrean male, 26)*

Most of the Eritrean refugees and the Ethiopian host community agree that there are cultural similarities between the two communities, but does this facilitate or hinder the integration of Eritrean refugees? How do Eritrean refugees perceive language, religion, and food in conjunction with their integration process in Addis Ababa? How does the local Ethiopian community perceive the cultural integration of Eritrean refugees? This chapter attempts to answer these sub-questions.

Language

A number of studies, conducted both in Ethiopia and around the world, have found that refugees with knowledge of their host community's local language are more likely to find employment (Ager and Strang 2008; Chiswick & Miller 2007; OECD 2017; Niguise and Carver 2019). This essentially forges a link between linguistic ability and access to the local labour market. Despite several justifications for increased education of the local language, both the Ethiopian government and local NGOs do not offer official Amharic classes for the refugees:

> "We do not learn Amharic through the Jesuit Refugee Service (NGO). They are more focused on English. For us, we only learn it by practicing it on the street.[3]" *(Rebecca Ethiopian Female, 26)*

According to the interviewees from the Eritrean community, language is essential to the process of integration. One of my informants, Salvatore, explained that learning to speak Amharic is essential even for informal jobs, which he learned by talking to his neighbours. In this case, the host community has been providing support by teaching him some words and correcting his grammar:

> "My neighbours say I can teach you bit by bit, do not worry, it takes time, just continue talking in Amharic. I know some people that encourage me.[4]" *(Salvatore Eritrean Male, 47)*

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[1] A term that goes back to the Kingdom of Axum and used for people Semitic peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia.
[2] Interview-date: 27th February 2020.
[3] Interview-date: 7th March 2020.
[4] Interview-date: 28th February 2020.

Some of the older participants were made to take Amharic lessons in elementary school in Asmara, which were mandatory during the Haile Selassie and the Derg era. They reported that when they came to Addis Ababa, they become proficient through having to speak the language daily. I was surprised by the proficiency of two of my interlocutors, Tesfaye and Kidane, in Amharic during my conversations with them, as they had only been living in Ethiopia for 2 years. They later told me that was because of their early years of schooling in Asmara during the Derg. I could only hear a slight accent, but they were able to convey their ideas without any problem.

Some refugees, like Almi, used to live in Addis Ababa and were deported after the war and the subsequent closure of the border. For these groups, it has been easier to relearn Amharic. Most of the interviewees from the Tigrinya ethnic group in Eritrea who had come to Ethiopia had found learning Amharic easier due to its similarities with Ethiopian Tigrayan. For example, the pronunciation of the words may be different, but the meaning remains the same. Salvatore gives the following example:

> "Eritrean – Hiji (ሕጂ); Ethiopian - Hizi (ሕዚ). Both mean 'now.'[5]" (*Salvatore*)

However, regardless of both speaking the same language, some of the Eritrean reported having faced discrimination in Addis Ababa. They attributed this treatment to local political issues. Notably, the participants reported that people tend to think that Eritreans are actually Tigrayans from Ethiopia and will therefore be favoured by the government. As a result, they express hostility towards the Eritreans just because they speak Tigrigna.

> "In the past years, it might have been more difficult for them as they speak Tigrinya like the Ethiopian Tigrayans who are not very liked by many other ethnic groups.[6]" *(Rebecca, Ethiopian)*

Those born after independence do not have any link to Amharic. They do not speak it because they do not see the necessity of learning it. They speak Tigrinya amongst each other because of their limited interaction with the host community, which further makes it challenging to learn.

> "I try to encourage them to speak Amharic to me when they order something. I correct their pronunciation. Most in the area speak Tigrinya so the necessity to learn Amharic

[5] Ibid.
[6] Interview-date: 7th March 2020.

is not very high. And those who do speak it have a limited vocabulary due to the limited to interactions with Ethiopians. For example, they may know words for ordering, paying, numbers, and other basic vocabularies. They do not plan to live here since they want to go abroad. They are here waiting for resettlement[7] to another country. They only want to stay here a short time, so they learn a few words to get by.[8]" *(Mekdes, Ethiopian female, 24)*

Ager and Strang reason that if refugees do not plan to stay in the country where they first ask for asylum and instead view it primarily as a transit destination, their willingness to fully engage in local integration will be low (Ager and Strang 2010, 594-595). Consequently, those who choose to not speak Amharic cause friction with the host community due to the perception that they do not appreciate it because they only consider Ethiopia as a transit country. Mekdes explained this further:

"I mean it is obvious that if someone comes to your country and is not willing to speak your language it does not make you happy. But in my case, I want to live and earn money, and they are paying for their drinks, so you keep quiet and co-exist.[9] *(Mekdes)*

Through participant observation, I have realized that, for most participants, language was seen as a tool utilized for two things: everyday use and to interact with the two main refugee organizations, the UNHCR and Administration of Refugees and Returnees Affair (ARRA). They did not explicitly mention the role of language in building relations with the community.

"Learning Amharic is not that difficult for us. But it is useless for us. We only need it to talk to people here for the process[10] at the UNHCR or ARRA. We need Amharic for practical reasons and for our settlement process to a third country. For example, a person told me to go the office number 63 ስልሳ ሶስት (silisa sosit) in Amharic and it sounded like the number 66 ስሳ ሽድሽተ (silisa shdshte) in Tigrigna. It sounded so similar to me that I went to find 66. I kept searching for it in the whole building and when I could not find it, I left the building and could not make the appointment. Before this incident I really did not care a lot about Amharic and in this area many speak

[7] According to the UNHCR, refugees who cannot return to their country due to recurring conflict, wars and persecution and do not have their needs addressed in the country where they asked for refuge, UNHCR aids them to resettle to a third country (UNHCR 2020b).
[8] Interview-date: 8th March 2020.
[9] Ibid.
[10] The refugees use resettlement and process when referring to the resettlement program by UNHCR.

> Tigrinya so I thought why should I learn a language if I am only going to be living for more than 2-3 years.[11]" (*Robel, Eritrean*)

Like Robel, several of the interviewees mentioned that they had to undertake resettlement procedures, such as interviews to assess their resettlement requirements. They reported that these important interviews would be conducted entirely in Amharic, regardless of their knowledge and ability to speak the language. Without the ability to speak and understand Amharic, interviewees are unable to either provide the correct answers during the interview or to understand the valuable information provided by the interviewer.

These interviews are crucial for a refugee's resettlement process, as the interviewer's report is used together with their biography to provide a justified explanation of their need to resettle in a third country. This shows that the refugees are very much aware of the circumstances that will help them achieve their goals confirming that they have both the knowledge and agency to plan and execute for a better future. They would subsequently rather spend their time learning English, a language they see as necessary for their future permanent residence:

> "Learning to speak and write English at Jesuit Refugee Service (NGO) is much more important for me than Amharic because I am not going to stay in Addis Ababa for a long time. My sister has started a resettlement process for me. I will be leaving within the next years to go to Canada. There I plan to find a job and start living my life.[12]" (*Abel, Eritrean male, 28)*

As mentioned above, there are a number of academic and demographic reports which demonstrate that knowledge of the local language is key for facilitating interactions and communications between refugees and locals, as well as for finding employment. It is therefore recommended that Amharic should be taught to refugees so that they may find work. At the moment, local NGOs only provide language courses in English, which is not of direct use in Addis Ababa. This means the only opportunity for refugees to learn Amharic is through informal, personal interactions with neighbours.

For the older participants, language is used as an integration facilitator and they find informal ways to learn it due to lack of formal classes. The younger participants find Amharic useless. As a result, they only utilize it as practical tools to reach their end goal of leaving Ethiopia.

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11 Interview-date: 27th February 2020.
12 Interview-date: 5th March 2020.

Religion

The Role of the Church in the Lives of the People

Hagelund posits that religion can both promote and hinder integration (Hagelund 2005, 670). This fits well with the observations I made in churches throughout Addis Ababa. For example, those with a religious identity feel they belong to a community built upon shared beliefs, through which they can find sanctuary and peace. For example, the Eritrean Pentecostals are thankful to have the church in Addis Ababa. Following their lengthy persecution and eventual ban by the Eritrean government, they can now freely practice their religion. Mulu, who is Pentecostal stated:

> "A guy who goes to my church said to me that they could not practice their religion. For example, they were not allowed to go to church, pray or hold weddings or funerals. And here he can go pray in peace and he appreciates it. Plus, it connects him to the community. People who are religious can find their peace here and thus appreciate being here. And others like most of the people who live here are Orthodox and they go to church together and do not mingle with the rest. There are also a lot of P'ent'ay mezmur[13] that praise Jesus and they love it. It is such an essential part of our preaching as we sing only for God and here they can listen to it in peace not only in the church but they can buy CD and DVD and listen to it in their homes.[14]" (*Mulu, Ethiopian female, 26*)

In general, most of the Eritrean participants were not *P'ent'ay* but Orthodox Christians, who did not see any difference between the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches. After the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993, Eritrea decided to plead for the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Egypt for autocephaly in order to separate the church from the previously link to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (Abbay 1998, 225-227). However, both Eritrean and Ethiopian Orthodox churches are still similar as they emphasize the Old Testament teachings more than other churches, such as the Roman Catholic, Protestant or Eastern Orthodox. The language of the religious services is *Ge'ez* and both share the same religious holidays (*ibid*). As a result, those who want to go to a church in their neighbourhoods and in the rest of the city can easily find them.

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13 worship songs of Ethiopian/ Eritrean Pentecostal church.

14 Interview-date: 2nd March 2020.

During the fieldwork, I had been told by several Ethiopians and Eritreans that the two share religious festivities, granted they are both Orthodox Christians. Firstly, *timket* (ጥምቀት) is a celebration of Epiphany, which is a feast day that celebrates the revelation of God as Jesus Christ celebrated on the 19th and 20th of January (Jefkin-Elnekave 2004, 30-32). As the event focuses on the baptism of Jesus Christ, there is a ritual of baptisms held all over Ethiopia. The *tabot*, a model of the Ark of the Covenant found in all Ethiopian alters, is beautifully wrapped and borne by the head priest (*ibid*).

Tabot being carried by the priests. (2020)

Timket also represents Jesus as the Messiah. At the end of the ceremony, water that has been blessed by the priests is sprinkled on the attendees (*ibid*). On the 19th and 20th of January 2020, both Ethiopians and Eritrean refugees joined in the festivities. It is a day for all Orthodox Christians, one by which the two communities can be brought together. This was very evident by the fact that people were wearing *habesha kemis*[15]. A couple of days after *Timket* had passed, I was talking to one of the participants about the celebration and asked her if she had joined in with the celebrations. She answered as follows:

[15] Is the Amharic word for traditional attire of habesha (a term for peoples living in Eritrea and highlands of Ethiopian) women

“Yes, me and my friend went to *Timket* in Jan Meda[16] (ጃን ሜዳ), it was so beautiful. A celebration where all Christians come together and celebrate in public, us and the Ethiopians together.” (*Helen, Eritrean female, 22*)

Church choir performing during Timket. (2020)

People waiting in line to be blessed by the holy water. (2020)

[16] A place in the city centre where the celebrations take place every year.

Ethiopian and Eritrean women wearing habesha kemis. (2020)

In addition to *Timket*, the refugee and host communities share a number of other religious celebrations, such as *Gena* (ገና)[17]. However, after speaking to the participants, I realized that most of them went to official celebrations like *Timket* mainly with their own Eritrean groups. It also became evident that there is a strong religious community they have built amongst themselves that unifies and provides them with a strong sense of purpose. This allows them the freedom to, for example, proceed in a leisurely fashion on their way to the church, chatting as they go. They report that going to church is an activity which they mostly prefer to do together and not with the host community. They go to church to pray for their third-country resettlement process to be completed and to escape their struggles in Addis Ababa. Like most of the participants, religion comforts them. Here, the bonds between individuals within the subgroup of Eritrean refugees are intensified over shared experiences, such as past, present and future worries of job difficulties and the resettlement process. This emerged during a focus group discussion with the host community:

> "There are few who go to church and join us, and we become like friends and others that do not want to interact with us. They come and leave in groups and as a community of their own. They tend to congregate with their own kind. You do not see them mingling with us.[18]" *(Hirut, 27 Ethiopian female)*

[17] Ethiopian and Eritrean Christmas.

[18] Interview-date: 22nd February 2020.

This desire to stay with their fellow nationals is connected to the fact that they identify first and foremost as Eritreans and then by their religious identification. As will be discussed in a later chapter, these individuals have been taught to suppress all but their *national* identity.

Being a refugee in Addis Ababa is a hugely difficult experience. By identifying with others in similar predicaments (i.e. the inability to find formal employment) through talking and praying about their problems, refugees can find all-important emotional support. This is another major reason why they keep to themselves.

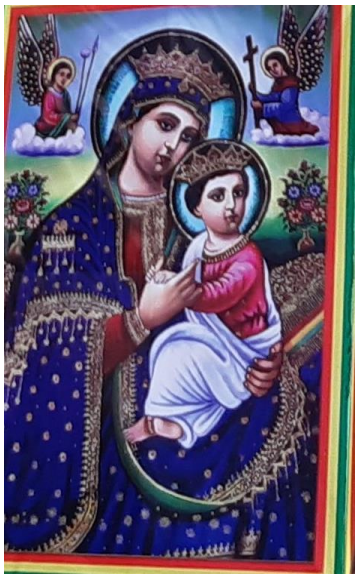
During one of my visits to Saint Merry Church in Addis Ababa with the participants. (2020)

Peschke (2009) agrees with Hagelund (2005) on the role of religion in the integration of migrants and refugees in European states, contending that religion can have both a negative and positive influence on integration. Peschke (2009) also posits that religion can act as an isolating force, one which makes refugees and migrants keep to themselves (as in the case of Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa) and makes it more difficult to integrate with the host community (*ibid*). Religion can also be a social safety net which makes them feel more at home in a country that is foreign to them, thus making them feel like they belong to the society (*ibid*). Religious institutions act as a space where refugees can be accepted and part of something meaningful. In the Eritrean case, religion helps refugees feel like they are back home in Eritrea where they have practiced the same teachings and traditions. This makes their lived experience in Addis Ababa more like that of Eritrea. However, they do not interact with the host community, making it more difficult for them to feel at home or become part of the community in Addis Ababa.

This shows the complexity of the situation. One cannot simply assume that religion will either promote or hinder integration. It can help in some cases, particularly if the religion is banned in the refugee's country of origin like that of the *P'ent'ay*. Additionally, this case shows that even with similarities in religious beliefs between the host country and refugees, refugees may choose to practice their religion separately and therefore negate their integration into the host community. As a result, they continue to live and stay in parallel societies despite their resemblance.

Religious Associations (mehaber ማኅበረ)

Social networks are an essential part of survival in urban communities as they act as informal welfare systems for their participants (Alemayehu et al. 2018, 14). In Addis Ababa, there are community-based informal organizations that grant social capital to people who are economically disadvantaged (Abebe and Hesselberg 2013, 44). For example, *mehaber,* is an association that brings together people of similar ethnicity and religion (*ibid*). Religious *mehaber* play a role in the lives of Ethiopian and Eritrean communities, during which members honour religious saints by gathering at a member's house each month on a saint's day (*ibid).* Each month, one member contributes food and drinks for the guests, after which the attendees pray to the saint (Flemmen and Zenebe 2016, 4). It acts as a social network where people can meet during social events and provide financial and emotional support to each other *(ibid).* It encourages mutual coexistence, the exchange of economic information, health services and local markets.



Picture that can be used during Saint Mary mehaber, usually placed in the middle and the members pray towards her. (2020)

Only one of the participants took part in a *mehaber* in their neighbourhood with the host community:

> "I have a *mehabe*r with my church friends of Saint Mary, we come together and pray, have some food, drinks, coffee and we chat. They ask how I am doing. If I have an issue, they help me. For example, when I had disputes with my landlord, they said to me: Almi you cannot let him treat you badly. They encouraged me to sue him because he was cutting off my electricity and water although I was paying rent on time.[19]" (*Almi, Eritrean female, 59).*

This was a rare situation, as both communities united to share in *mehaber* that benefited a variety of people, one of which being Almi. In most cases, refugees had a religious *mehaber* of their own. Salvatore explains that, in the past, he used to participate in a saint Mary *mehaber* with 8 or 9 of his Eritrean friends. They got to know each other on their journey from Eritrea to Ethiopia. Their *mehaber* intensified their communal bonds by establishing a space where they could come together and provide each other emotional support in Addis Ababa. They used to drink coffee and eat *ambasha* (አምባሻ)[20] during such gatherings.

He explained that Saint Mary had played a large role in his life. However, nowadays him and his friends do not have it anymore because the members have left for Europe and North America. Salvatore also mentioned that in his neighbourhood, many go abroad after 2-3 years in Addis Ababa making it hard to uphold such customs.

When it comes to religious *mehaber* it seems that both communities have similar traditions that act as a safety net in their time of need. However, *mehaber* that would normally bring people together and make them feel like they belong in society are experienced separately. This is partly because the refugees only plan to stay for a short time in Addis Ababa, making it useless for them to uphold and invest in social associations.

Food: "We eat Ingera, they eat Ingera"

> "We eat ingera, they (Ethiopians) eat ingera. It is what our ancestors ate, and we will continue to pass it on to the next generation. It is fundamental for our body and soul. I could not imagine eating only bread in a foreign country.[21]" (*Salvatore, Eritrean*).

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[19] Interview-date: 23rd March 2020.

[20] A bread that is moderately sweet.

[21] Interview-date: 4th March 2020.

As shown in the theoretical framework, cultural similarities can make it easier for refugees to integrate into a host community. For this study, the participants were asked to define 'culture.' They stated that culture for them can be found in religion, music, language, food and coffee. As a result, food and coffee will be examined because these were identified as essential components in the daily lives of the participants of this study and have enormous cultural significance within both communities.

The most essential and foundational nutrition for both communities is *injera*. This is a thin bread with a spongy texture made of *teff* flour and bunchgrass of edible seeds that grows in the Horn of Africa (Michigan State University 2020). It constitutes a fundamental component in the daily diets of Eritreans and Ethiopians. Normally, *ingera* is eaten on one communal plate with family and friends. Most participants stated that they could easily find all the ingredients for *injera,* which in turn made their life easier because they were able to find food that was familiar to them. *Injera* is eaten with different varieties of stews called *wet* (ወጥ) in Amharic, which are prepared with different kinds of meat, such as chicken (*doro wet*), lamb, beef or vegetables, and is blended together with a seasoned butter called (ቅቤ) *kiby* in Amharic. At times, meat or vegetables are mixed with *berbere*, a hot-tasting Ethiopian paste made of garlic, cayenne pepper, coriander, and other spices.

> "I can get *kiby* anywhere. I cannot imagine eating white sauce. I do not think it is good without any *berbere*.[22]" (*Aklilu, Eritrean male, 43*)

According to the host community in Addis Ababa, refugees living in *Gofa* and *Arabsa* have the same eating habits as them. This provides a positive experience for the refugees as similar culinary traditions make them feel at home in Addis Ababa. The participants who are mostly Christian Orthodox stated that particularly during *tsom*, a time of fasting and abstinence for the Christian Orthodox church, both Eritreans and Ethiopians abstain from meat and dairy. This is a major aspect they singled out as better than if they would be in a Western country.

> "They fast with us. We eat *fit shiro, misr* (lentils), other vegetables like gomen-spinach[23]and *ye som beyaynetu* (mixed vegetables). All Orthodox Christians eat the same fasting food as us. We also like to eat *shiro wet*[24] (ሽሮ ወጥ). I think that must be

[22] Interview-date: 21st February 2020.

[23] Spinach that is sautéed with onions.

[24] Made of chickpeas or broad bean. It is mixed with garlic, onions and in some cases chili peppers and chopped tomatoes with a gooey and creamy texture.

nicer for them than living in another country where they cannot find *ingera*.[25]" (*Senait, Ethiopian female, 24*)

When it comes to the *shiro*, a popular fasting dish, the Tigrayans from the North of Ethiopia and Eritreans knew it quite well.

> "They have some particular way to season their *shiro*. The Tigrayans from the North and Eritreans are known for that dish. It is so delicious. When I was a child and I would go to my Eritrean friend's house I would be so excited to eat it.[26]" (*Martha, Ethiopian female, 63*)

Ingera with shiro. (2020)

Both communities also share *ambasha* (አምባሻ), a bread that is slightly sweet and served with coffee on special occasions. However, there is one major difference: the Ethiopian dish

[25] Interview-date: 6th March 2020.
[26] Interview-date: 23rd February 2020.

consisting of raw meat called *Kurt Tirey Siga* (ቁርጥ ሥጋ)[27] which is considered a delicacy in Ethiopia but not in Eritrea.

> "We do not like *tirey siga*. It is so popular here. It is savage. I have heard that it came from a time of war when the soldiers did not have time to cook it but now why are they still eating it like that. But it is their culture not ours. It is not healthy at all. They may have salmonella and parasites that are so damaging. *Kitfo*[28] is also raw and as dangerous, we do not eat it at all.[29]" *(Tesfaye 44 and Kidane 47, both Eritrean male)*

Dish consisting of raw meat: Kurt Tire Siga. (2020)

Most of the cuisine in both countries is essentially identical, which led me to ask the participants if food can be a positive or negative factor in their integration. Robel's answer summarizes most of the Eritrean refugee's view on this topic:

> "Yes, we eat the same food, it is much nicer than *frengi*[30] food. However, it does not mean that we experience it together. I do not ask my neighbours to eat with me nor do

[27] Raw meat, most of the time beef that is cut in long strips.
[28] Ethiopian raw minced meat that is mixed with butter and chili.
[29] Interview-date: 8th March 2020.
[30] Amharic word meaning "foreigner" and is used for essentially white people.

they. Off course, it is nice to find every ingredient here, but it does not mean that it binds the two communities or makes us integrate into it.[31]" (*Robel, Eritrean*)

This discussion made me realize that food can be positive for integration. However, as Robel argues, although refugees and natives of the host community have the same eating habits, they do not eat together daily with the host. Most make *injera* and *shiro* within their own national groups. This will be further analysed in chapter five.

Another shared cultural practice that can be found is drinking coffee - *Bunna* (ቡና) in Amharic. Coffee plays an essential role in both societies and is enshrined in daily life. Coffee ceremonies are practiced in every household, restaurant, and social gathering in Addis Ababa. They also have cultural and social implications. For example, drinking coffee together in a group is an important activity for socializing and building relationships in the community. Coffee ceremonies can take place anywhere, anytime. The following items are used: *jebena* (traditional coffee pot), *cinis* (tiny drinking traditional coffee cups), mortar and pestle, *ittan* (incense), *berchuma* (three-legged wood chair) and a *rak'boat* serving tray (Metasebia 2013, 18). The ceremony follows strict customary steps that are respected by both the host and the participants.

(To the left: *rak'boat, cinis* and to the right: coffee being poured out of the *jebena, cinis* and *ittan*)

[31] Interview-date: 4th March 2020.

After all participants have gathered, the host begins with the *jebena* which is placed on a stove made of charcoal (Dahay 2016, 78). The coffee beans are also cleaned before they are roasted. The host then goes up to each participant and allows them to smell the roasted coffee beans (*ibid*). After grinding the beans, they are put into the *jebena* until it starts to boil and in the last step, the host pours the coffee into the *cinis*. During the ceremony, people gather and unwind, talking about their daily struggles. It facilitates the social gathering of different people and creates bonds between neighbours, friends, kin, and family (Brinkerhoff 2008, 26). Women are the primary participants of coffee ceremonies, and take this opportunity to relax, support and encourage each other (*ibid*). This results in a meaningful, personal, and communal connection between them *(ibid).*

Faven, a 22-year-old Eritrean resident of *Gofa*, attributes the improvement of her mental health to her Eritrean girlfriends, with whom she meets daily in her building block to have *buna* in one of their flats. She explains:

> "It is difficult for me to find the strength to do anything during the day. I get depressed when I think about how I am not helping my mother in Asmara. The journey here is also very damaging, I used to hear gun shots when trying to escape. At the time, you do not care about dying because you are dying just by being in Eritrea, you are dying by being limited with regards to everything: you do not work, eat or help your family. It is a state worse than death because you are nothing. And now that I am here and safe, but I still cannot work and help my family. My mental state is very bad. But when I sit together with my Eritrean friends for 1-3 hours a day, I can share with them. We talk about our worries and anxieties. We support each other and try to think of ways to solve our problems.[32]" *(Faven)*

When asked if they connect with the women from the host community during a coffee ceremony, she explained that such personal social relations are limited to her Eritrean group of friends. She did not think that the host community would understand her issues. For example, Ethiopian women in her neighbourhood were not confronted with problem of getting old without having children or a family. This is what most Eritrean women are afraid will happen to them as they await their destiny of resettlement to another country. Another issue they face that cannot be understood by the host community is not being able to help their families in

[32] Interview-date: 4th March 2020.

Eritrea by sending them money. Faven (and many women like her) therefore hope to leave Ethiopia so that they could start earning money to support their families.

There are few like Almi who were able to network with their neighbours and church community members through coffee and *ambasha*:

> "We regularly make coffee and eat Shiro or ambasha. They come and ask for me. They tell me come outside and let us drink coffee. We sit together for one hour or two hours, I tell them about my problems, and they say to me Almi: do not worry, I will fix your TV or anything that is broken in my home. We give *baraka*[33] and go home.[34]"

This kind of relationship is not a regular occurrence in both neighbourhoods. There are small coffee places (like Mulu's) in every restaurant or on corners of the streets of *Arabsa* and *Gofa*. However, the ritual of sitting down until you have finished your third *cini* and received or given blessings to the host is not present in the public sphere. For most of the participants, drinking coffee is a way to pass their time because they do have a job to preoccupy them.

> *"*I like drinking coffee. I go to the area to have coffee and sit there to pass the day. I do not talk to the coffee girl about my life. Why? I do not need to do that. However, if I go with my friends we chat about many things, resettlement process, family etc.*[35]" (Robel, Eritrean)*

In both areas, Eritrean refugees have coffee in groups amongst themselves. When I asked the participants why they do not have coffee or *shiro* with the host community, they replied that there are not enough chances to interact in condominium housing blocks because there aren't any communal spaces for social interaction. On the other hand, they live in shared apartments with between 5-8 other Eritreans with whom they can interact easily. As a result, they are mostly confined to their own shared flats and groups.

Eating *ingera* and *wot* is a shared custom and traditional practice of both communities. For Eritreans, these customs make them feel like they are back home, where they would traditionally share one plate with their families and friends. These customs also bring people together, as well as build and intensify new relationships. However, most refugees stay amongst themselves and rarely experience food with the host community. As such, their limited

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33 A blessing to the host after the third and final cup of coffee.

34 Interview-date: 23rd March 2020.

35 Interview-date: 4th March 2020.

interaction makes their integration into the host community more challenging. In a similar manner, coffee is an integral part of their daily life. For some, it is a tool for positive connections with the people around them and particularly with their subgroups.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the cultural similarities and differences between Eritrean refugees and the Ethiopian host community which affect the former's integration in Addis Ababa. In general, knowledge of the native language is an essential for integration as it increases their chances of being employed. Although for many it is easy to learn Amharic, refugees do not receive any official language course. Furthermore, the two nations share a common language with some members of the host community. Nonetheless, this has led to discrimination. Regardless of sharing religious beliefs, both communities experience religious practices separately. In most cases, refugees go to churches amongst their own groups where they receive emotional and spiritual support from each other. This does not lead to a close relationship with the host community and further impacts their integration in Addis Ababa.

While food and coffee ceremonies are almost identical in both communities, limited interaction hinders both from experiencing these together. Both local and refugee communities acknowledge this, despite also acknowledging the existence of cultural similarities. In fact, those very same factors, such as the knowledge of a specific language, makes it more difficult to integrate. Additionally, the urge to move onwards to a third destination and consideration of Ethiopia as a transit country minimizes the need to build social relations. The next chapter discusses in further detail why Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa are not socially integrated into the Ethiopian host community.

Chapter Five: Social Integration

Introduction

As suggested by Angell, "social integration" refers to members of the host society and immigrants cooperating for the mutual benefit of society as a whole (Angell 1997, 116). For this to happen, there needs to be a consolidation of relationships between immigrants and the rest of the society. This concept can also describe individual action as well as a social structure (Voydanoff 2004, 276).

Individual action can be described as an effective or structural interrelatedness with others and with social institutions (*ibid*). Social integration in the structural sense considers the participation of individuals in formal settings, such as economic systems and informal organizations, without fear of negative stereotyping and discrimination *(ibid*). For refugees in particular the aim is to bring together groups, community structures and social networks. This helps both host communities and refugees access the resources necessary to facilitate social integration.

Social networks can be used as an indicator for social integration, in which the interaction and connection between the host society and refugees is examined. This section aims to answer the following sub-questions: What are the challenges for social integration that Eritrean refugees face? What are the perceptions of Eritrean refugees with regards to their social networks in Addis Ababa? How does the local Ethiopian community perceive the social integration of Eritrean refugees?

Segregation and limited interaction

Spencer examines the social integration of refugees, commenting that when refugees and host communities lead separate, parallel lives with little to no social contact and interaction with the larger community, sustainable, positive social integration cannot take place (Spencer 2003, 7). As a result, refugees need to feel like they are active parts of the community to be considered as integrated into the host community.

As discussed before, both areas (*Arabsa* and *Gofa*) are located on the outskirts of the city. In *Gofa*, the people I spoke to had been living there for between 2-6 years. To get to the site, I had to take a taxi to the main gate of the housing blocks before continuing via *bajaj*[36] within

[36] Small three-wheeler taxis

the condominium areas, as it would have taken me at least 30 minutes by foot to go from one area to the other. The fact that the inhabitants are far away from the city centre makes their social interaction with the rest of the society limited. Without proximity to the city, they are effectively excluded from the informal local economy and any opportunities to create communal bonds.

In *Gofa*, there are Ethiopian Tigrayans from the Tigray Region of Ethiopia who are a co-ethnic group with the refugees. They primarily inhabit and work in the area, making it even harder for the Eritrean refugees to interact with other ethnicities from the host community.

Inside the Gofa condominium area, hairdresser advertising Tigrayan (Eritrea/Ethiopia) hairstyle (2020)

Gofa condominium blocks (2020)

The participants have indicated that both condominium blocks in *Gofa* and *Arabsa* are much more closed than normal houses in other parts of Addis Ababa. As Mulu explains:

> "Mostly, in the flats people have their doors shut and it is much more difficult, and you do not have as many chances for a social life where you cannot establish a close-knit relationship with your neighbours.[37]" (*Mulu, Ethiopian*)

Arabsa condominium blocks (2020)

In both areas, the participants were convinced that their UNHCR resettlement process would be successful, which would allow them to leave Ethiopia soon. Very much in agreeance with what Ager and Strang argue, their aim and hope to be able to resettle in a different country of asylum has an enormous impact on their integration (Ager and Strang 2010, 594). As a result, many do not feel the need to immerse themselves in the social life of their respective neighbourhoods and build strong social relations with the Ethiopians. However, they find it very important to do so with their fellow Eritreans in order to share communalities with each other. Aklilu explained his experience as follows:

> "We act like soldiers in our own environment. We take turns to cook, clean and go grocery shopping. In general, every person also has one thing they do in the flat and they have that assignment. For example, it is my turn now and I have already cooked lunch and dinner for everyone before leaving the flat. It is a social thing we are going through here, and we have to support each other and get through it together.[38]" *(Aklilu, Eritrean)*

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37 Interview-date: 2nd March 2020.

38 Interview-date: 22nd February 2020.

On the other hand, certain refugees believe they might benefit one day from these relationships if one person goes abroad and continues to send their support. Robel elaborates:

> "Within my social group we have solidarity. For example, one of my roommates went to Canada and he sent me a little bit of money.[39]"(*Robel, Eritrean)*

In Addis Ababa there are so-called *iddir*[40] and *iqub*[41] amongst Ethiopians. Eritrean refugees are not part of such associations. Yet if something happens to an Eritrean in their community, they are there for each other. It is not official like an *iddir* or *iqub*, but it is there when it is needed. Being member of such an association means that one is mentally prepared to be in Addis Ababa for a long period, however, given many are only there for a short period of time, they do not join in the first place. This relationship is on the one hand admired and on the other envied by the host community.

> "What I have noticed and admire about them is their closeness and tight bond. They support each other in many ways. For example, if one does not have money for the month, they help each other. Family members who have made it and have more give to their relatives. There is in general a sense of unity between them, on a family and community level. They are much more united than us in this aspect. I think for them its them against the world and here it is one ethnicity against another.[42]" (*Mulu, Ethiopian*)

The refugees in both *Arabsa* and *Gofa* lead separate and parallel lives to the Ethiopian host community. For social integration to work, there needs to be social interaction between the two. However, this is not the case. The lack of active participation in the social life of their neighbourhood (due to the presumption that Ethiopia is just a transit country) reinforces this idea.

Violence and Theft

Mekuria argues that social integration can be achieved through social interaction and the establishment of contacts between the host community and refugees (Mekuria 1988, 174). In so doing, barriers can be removed, and attitudes can be changed (*ibid*). In addition, Crisp

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[39] Interview took place on 10th March 2020.

[40] Is an informal voluntary association formed in a social group between neighbors where the member has to pay a certain sum of money each month which may later to paid out to descendants when the contributor dies (Alemayehu et al. 2018, 14-15).

[41] Is a saving or credit group of people with parallel financial problems. They have a revolving saving system that they have pooled together money each month to support themselves (*ibid*).

[42] Interview-date: 27th February 2020.

contends that local integration as a social process must facilitate refugees to become self-reliant and allow:

> "refugees to live among or alongside the host population, without fear of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by the authorities and peoples of the host population" (Crisp 2004, 1).

From the interviews conducted over the course of this research, it appears that Eritrean refugees in *Gofa* and *Arabsa* are not subject to systematic discrimination. In fact, most have indicated that they feel relatively safe in Addis Ababa, but some aggressions have occurred in both areas. In *Gofa*, Dahlak describes one such incident:

> "I have friends who have been subjected to violence. In this neighbourhood, there have been 3-4 deaths caused by stabbing against us in the last two months. A situation arose, when people claimed that one of us is Tigre and then after that a fight broke out where one refugee got stabbed.[43]" (*Dahlak, Eritrean male, 35*)

Some members of the refugee community in *Arabsa* have spoken of their fear of being robbed due to the perception of individuals amongst the host community thinking that they have money because they receive money from remittances. This has also caused high levels of burglary in their homes.

> "Here we fear the thieves who target us because they know we are Eritreans. There are so many of them. Even in the church there are thieves. Furthermore, when we come here, we think that it is as safe as our country. There are no thieves there at all. The police are rigorous, and they take them to jail. We are not used to it. Here there is a culture of stealing. Two months ago, a guy was beaten up and they stole all what he had with him.[44]" (*Tesfaye and Kidane, Eritreans*)

In some instances, quarrels broke out between the two communities and the host community was ultimately treated more favourably by the local authorities who were called to address the situation. Abel explains one such situation where he had been treated unfairly in comparison to his Ethiopian counterparts.

He was sitting in a café in *Arabsa* with a mixed group of Eritreans and Ethiopians from the northern region of Tigre. They were playing Tigrigna music from Eritrea, when the Ethiopians

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[43] Interview-date: 20th February 2020.
[44] Interview-date: 8th March 2020.

switched over the music by taking over the Bluetooth connection and playing their own music. Once they were done, Abel and his friends wanted to put their music back on, which triggered a dispute. He narrated this encounter as follows:

> "They called us *shabia*[45], refugees, and sons of bitches. They said we did not belong here. Then they spat on some of our faces, and others started hitting us. When the police arrived, they took us to the police station, and the Ethiopians just left. And the police did nothing to them! They did not even ask them for their IDs; they just told them to keep a low profile and get out of the area. We were taken to a prison, and it was only because the cafe owner's daughter who had witnessed everything stood up for us and they let us go. If she had not said something, I do not know how long they would have kept us in that cell![46]" (*Abel, Eritrean*)

Abel's story revels the aggression faced by refugees. Disputes over music are prevalent occurrences in both areas of fieldwork. For refugees, music is very nostalgic as it evokes memories of past experiences with families and friends. Listening to Tigrigna songs allows them to re-encounter past experiences from Eritrea. This creates a continuum between the present and the past and provides them with a feeling of peace and comfort. Given that Eritreans have a highly emotional connection to music, most participants indicated that they did not want to listen to songs from other ethnic groups that are also widespread in Ethiopia. For example, listening to music from *Oromo, Amhara* or *Gurage* groups did provide them with a meaningful significance or connection. In addition, there is often friction with the host community when they do ask for Tigrinya songs. This is reflected in the following quote attributed to Mekdes, who also lives in *Arabsa*:

> "We have music in the café and if I put Amharic songs they tell me to put Tigrinya, and I think that it is not fair that they are asking for refuge here and then want to suppress my needs to listen to what I want to. They have more rights than me in this case. So, you have to listen to what they want to hear because they are the majority here. I want to play songs from every ethnic group in Ethiopia, but I cannot. They also ask for Tigrinya music from Eritrea, and for me, it is difficult because I do not know the difference so when I put Tigrinya music from Ethiopia, they think I put the wrong one

[45] Here, it is a derogatory term for Eritreans

[46] Interview-date: 5th March 2020.

on purpose. It is my country and they can do whatever they want in it.[47]" (*Mekdes, Ethiopian*)

Overall, there is a general sense of bitterness and annoyance over the perceived additional rights of refugees over the Ethiopian community. In Mekdes' case, this is limited to the minor agitation over her right to play her songs.

I say 'perceived' rights because refugees do not have equal rights as Ethiopians. For example, Crisp contends that "refugees are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by host states" (Crisp 2004, 1). This includes the right to "seek employment, to engage in other income-generating activities, to own and dispose of property, to have access to public services such as education" (*ibid*).

In September 2016, at the Leader's Summit on Refugees and Migrants in New York In 2016, Ethiopia made a series of pledges to incorporate the status of refugees into its national development plan. There were pledges to allow refugees to gain work permits, facilitate local integration to those in protracted situations, provide access to irrigable land, increase access to health and education, and earmark a percentage of jobs within industrial parks for refugees (UNHCR 2018a). As mentioned in the introduction, the CRRF conveys the Ethiopian government's policy to move away encampment towards an out-of-camp-policy (OCP).

However, many have indicated that they still do not have work permits and are therefore still excluded from the formal economy and their chances of finding employment are marginal at best. As a result, their primary source of livelihood depends on social networks of support, comprising relatives and friends living in Ethiopia and overseas. They have some access to informal skilled and unskilled jobs through these networks, such as household assistance, sewing clothes and assisting in celebrations. However, these jobs are also irregular, short-term, pay much less to refugees than locals would receive:

"I used to work here in Addis Ababa at a metal steel shop and handy work with regards to cars for four months. There is no real money in it. As an example, an Ethiopian from a village who has zero experience would earn as much as I did even though he was sort of my assistant. So, I told the owner to raise my salary, and he said no. I would earn

[47] Interview-date: 9th March 2020.

400 *birr* per week for 10 hours a day, and it was a risky job because you can get injured on the job, so I left.[48]" (*Aklilu, Eritrean male, 43*)

In order for social integration to be successful, refugees need to live amongst the local population without fear of discrimination or intimidation. However, violence, theft or general mistreatment by the local authorities makes social integration more challenging. Additionally, the perception of the refugees' "laziness" and preferential treatment by the host community also adds to the false narrative about the refugees in the public sphere.

Mistrust

Fielden examines the process of integration in protracted refugee situations, finding that historical ties can facilitate or hinder integration (Fielden 2018, 4). For example, if the host community sees refugees as an enemy due to historical conflict, they can be treated with hostility (Jacobsen 1996, 665). While Eritrean refugees do not feel like they are explicitly being treated as enemies, there is still a degree of mistrust due to the negative outcomes of past experiences which they carry with them today.

According to Gebrewold, there is a deep-rooted grudge and hostility between Eritrea and Ethiopia (Gebrewold 2006, 196). Eritreans feel more developed and civilized than Ethiopians due to their colonial history, during which the Italian government put them at the top of the social hierarchy (*ibid*). Accordingly, although they lived peacefully in Addis Ababa with the Eritreans, Ethiopians still sense the past lingering in the background. Mulu elaborates:

> "They have a sense of feeling superior to us. So, they want little to do with us. They think that they are more developed than us. These are opinions that have been passed on from previous generations. Also, they just do not trust us. My husband's mother who is from Asmara told me that she does not like Amhara and Gondar because they think that they had been badly affected by the previous Ethiopian rulers such as Mengistu or Haile Selassie who were also Amhara rulers.[49]" (*Mulu, Ethiopian*)

Martha delves deeper into this topic:

> "After the war there were those who freely wanted to return to Eritrea and those who had been evicted, their money and houses taken away and forced out by the Ethiopians. They were treated as aliens and a national security threat and I can imagine that this

[48] Interview-date: 21st February 2020.

[49] Ibid.

> memory still lives in them or they are afraid of history repeating itself granted they integrate here, and they are evited again. This has resulted in frictions and mistrust between us. I mean if a person that is my age (65) tells her children that she was kicked out of Ethiopia this will stay with them even if they come here to seek refuge. Also, there were those who were supporters of the secession living secretly amongst the society here whilst supporting the idea of Eritrea as a separate state and this has caused us to mistrust them.[50]" (*Martha, Ethiopian*)

Mistrust can be found on both sides. The consequences of previous wrongdoings by Ethiopian rulers in Eritrea and the war has cultivated certain negative preconceived notions about Ethiopians amongst the Eritrean participants. By keeping to themselves and within their neighbourhoods, the Eritrean participants believe they will be protected. Robel explains the perceived fears within the Eritrean community as follows:

> "All of what has happened during the war and after period is not something you can forget easily through one generation. In 1980s during the Derg period many people died. The Derg and Haile Selassie were supported by external powers, but we were not. We fought for our nation without anyone helping us. We have been fighting for so long with Ethiopians along the borders, it is only natural that resentment and animosity exists over the years. When we had our independence, we had already fought for 30 years and now we are being led by dictatorship making our past, present and future tragic, it is more difficult to forget and forgive.[51]" (*Robel, Eritrean*)

According to Abel, Kidane and Robel there is a process of indoctrination influenced by the current oppressive government which makes Eritreans distrust Ethiopians. As Abel explains:

> "Our generation would grow up blaming Ethiopia. We did not have a lot of information (no internet) to read and see the rest of the world. Everything is controlled. Now in hindsight, we realize that our education and thoughts were also controlled. You come here with the impression that they want to hurt you and you cannot change your mentality very easily.[52]"(*Abel, Eritrean*)

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[50] Interview-date: 23rd February 2020.
[51] Interview-date: 6th March 2020.
[52] Interview-date: 5th March 2020.

Robel shares his story of how he got punished in school for not repeating a song against Ethiopia:

> "The lyrics go as follows: those who live across the border want to diminish us. They want to cross it and take our lands. The teacher said that I was not doing it because of my mother who he called a 'filthy Ethiopian'.[53]" (*Robel, Eritrean*)

Mekdes's narrative is insightful to this effect:

> "The trust does not exist because of what they have been told there and they kept the mentality of conflict which flues their mistrust. They grew up thinking that we were evil. But for increased trust between us and for them to integrate, we need to interact more so that the fear goes away.[54]"

Deportations on both sides, the closure of the border, and indoctrination of the youth by the Eritrean government are all remnants of Eritrea and Ethiopia's historical conflict. Today, this manifests in each group being suspicious of one another and the holding of grudges, both of which add fuel to the fire of mistrust between the two nations. Importantly, the fact that the Ethiopian government has evicted the Eritreans before labelling them as a national security threat makes it even more difficult to build trust, as there is little guarantee that this will not happen again. Both the host community and refugees underline these as challenges with regards to their local integration.

Ethnic vs National Identity

According to Ager and Strang, communalities in terms of ethnic background are positive factors that influence the integration of refugees into the host community (Ager and Strang 2008, 182). However, it is equally important to examine how the two communities identify themselves. For example, Eritreans identify via nationality rather ethnicity (Redeker-Hepner 2009, 43).

In 1991, Ethiopia adopted a system of 'ethnic federalism' which divided the country along ethnic lines. After independence, the Eritrean government wanted to foster one national Eritrean identity based on unity (Kibreab 2014, 2). As a result, the country rejected identity based on ethnicity, religion, or region-based alliances to interconnect the community across these social cleavages (*ibid*). Here is what Robel had to say about ethnic identity:

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[53] Interview-date: 6th March 2020.

[54] Interview-date: 9th March 2020.

> "Ethnic identity is not engrained in our political system. National unity is created through national service in Eritrea to keep that solidarity. We were not allowed to religious diversity. For example, a Christian like me was not allowed to wear a cross as a symbol of my devotion to my religion. The state believes that if I put forward my religious identity it can affect my national identity which should be the most important. They wanted us to show absolute loyalty to the national state that is why they forced us to work for so long in the military and national service. They wanted us to be part of the state and it part of our identity. It is good for the "unity" but damaging for us as individuals. You can wear a marriage ring but nothing else. We only have one national TV channel called EriTV and one national newspaper *Haddas Eritrea*.[55]" (*Robel, Eritrean*)

Eritrea's national identity promotes the unity of its people. In 1973, the current President Isayas Afwerki published a pamphlet entitled *Our Struggle and Its Goals*. This pamphlet pointed out that the country and its struggle for liberation from Ethiopia should not create religious or ethnic divisions (Redeker-Hepner 2009, 43). Afwerki's policy was built on nationalism that punishes cultural or religious plurality (*ibid*). As such, seeking for different identity other than the hegemonic nationalist rhetoric was unwelcomed.

The Eritrean state's aim for national homogeneity suppresses individualistic goals, culture and traditions. This can be explained using Foucault's argument that the role of the state is to birth citizens that are docile bodies that can be used, subjected, transformed and improved (Woldemikael 2009, 11). This is done to serve the state's nationalist aspirations *(ibid*).

During the focus group discussion with the Ethiopian host community, one member explained that, as a result of his/her national identity, s/he did not want to get involved in an Ethiopian system based on ethnic identity as a basis of political identification. They see that the pan-Ethiopian identity is at risk because people are aligning themselves with one specific group:

> "They consider themselves Eritrean more than anything. And here in Addis Ababa, we are a heterogenous society and they fear that. Here, you have a lot of languages and issues concerning ethnicity linked to our past. Oromos have problems with the Amhara or Tigrayans and vice versa. They think if they try to fit to a specific group like for

[55] Ibid.

example with the Tigrayans who are most similar to them, they will face issues such facing discrimination from one group or the other.[56]" (*Senait, Ethiopian*)

Some reported that they have new concerns regarding their lives in Addis Ababa. As Dahlak argued, the implementation of the peace deal has caused negative attitudes from one ethnic group towards another:

> "Now since the peace of Abiy and Isais making a peace deal with the Amhara, the Tigrayans here start to hate us. How we are being treated and people's reaction towards us here is very much linked to the general political atmosphere in Ethiopia. We keep a lower profile not to interfere in the ethnic conflicts between different ethnicities in Addis Ababa. We cannot afford to take sides in their battle or get caught up in their issues, so we keep to ourselves.[57]" (*Dahlak, Eritrean*)

Although identifying with ethnic backgrounds may bring them more advantages vis-à-vis the Ethiopian Tigrayans, Eritrean refugees choose to identify themselves by their nationality. They do not want to take the side of one ethnic group over the other because they fear that they will be discriminated against by other ethnic groups. As such, Eritrean refugees choose to keep to themselves instead of integrating with the host community.

Social Networks

Social capital comprises a variety of social resources, including networks, associations and relationships that help people to live their daily lives (Narayan 1997, 50). These social networks not only include friends and family, but also other formal social structures in the host society. Eritreans in Addis Ababa clearly lack a social network with the Ethiopian host community due to their limited connection and interaction. In Ethiopia, access to social capital is a mandatory condition of entering the workplace, which the refugees do not have due to their limited local connections (Niguise and Carver 2019, 19).

Horst argues that refugees' social capital usually manifests in the form of support and assistance, i.e. remittances to sustain their livelihoods in a foreign country (Horst 2006, 132-134).

[56] Interview-date: 6th March 2020.

[57] Interview-date: 20th February 2020.

Sponsorships by Relatives Abroad

Ager and Strang contend that an increase in social interaction (wherein common interests between host and refugee communities are recognized and accommodated) can primarily be achieved through economic interaction (Ager and Strang 2008, 170). However, as previously mentioned, this is not the case with Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa, as their primary source of income is not obtained through the formal nor informal local economy.

Every person recruited for this research reported that they either currently or formerly receive assistance from Europe and North America in the form of remittances. These come from family members and act as a primary source for their livelihood, even though the payments aren't regular. Although remittances offer financial support, they prevent refugees from taking low-paying jobs. The money sent is spent on rent, health services, education fees and food but also on unnecessary activities such as gambling. Moreover, they do not consider future investment opportunities as a source of income as they do not plan to stay in Addis Ababa for long:

> "Within my circle we are 5 people and each of us receive [$100-150 USD] per month which is around 22000-25000 *birr* per month and we spend it because we do not think about saving since we will have an ongoing resettlement process. Also, we cannot start a business because we do not have a work permit so we cannot contribute to the economy. Moreover, receiving the money also makes us less likely to work any job we can find. We have enough to survive so we are complacent.[58]" (*Robel, Eritrean*)

As such, surviving with remittances has caused limited the refugee's ability to engage with the host community. According to many residents in both areas, receiving remittances also carries a heavy burden of knowing that they are making life more difficult for the family member that is supporting them financially. They feel both guilt and humiliation as a result of receiving money from other people because they are not earning it themselves. Aklilu narrated his story as follows:

> "I do not want to keep on receiving money from my sister. I also do not know how long she can continue to send it to me. And I worry about how long I can continue to ask for it. You feel hopeless and helpless. Your life is repetitive cycle of staying in one place and waiting. You start to feel hollowness in you, and you try to fill that up with anything that makes the time go faster. She sends me [$50-100 USD] and there have been times

[58] Interview-date: 10th March 2020.

where she has not sent me anything. So, I would have to ask my Eritrean friends. Thank God, we always support each other. We have a sense of obligation and brotherhood amongst us.[59]"(Aklilu, Eritrean)

For the host community, remittances received by the refugees from abroad brings up a feeling of resentment and inequality. Mekdes expresses her impression as follows:

"You feel the injustice. For example, I work 6 days per week from 9am-11 pm and I struggle to pay the rent at the end of the month. Then you see a person sitting around doing nothing except drinking, eating and gambling. You feel angry.[60]"(*Mekdes, Ethiopian*)

This resentment is fuelled by the fact that the host community also believes that they are not willing to work any low paying jobs they could find, which could help them interact with the Ethiopians and associate this with their superiority complex.

"I do not think they will do any small job they find. They compare the work with the amount of money they get, and they decide not to work. They do not want to be here while being in a position of inferiority. They are proud and feel like they are better than us. Also, if your mental state is fixed on leaving you do not want to work. Of course, there are those who work some informal jobs through family, yet the majority would never clean shoes for a living. If you walk around the square you will not find an Eritrean holding lottery tickets or mobile cards and walking around in the sun to sell them. For these professions you do not need a work permit and it does not cost a lot of money to start such as a business. However, they think that it is beneath them. Even in the city, they could sell tea or coffee and sweets on the streets, but they do not.[61]" (*Mekdes*)

The host community's negative view of refugees will undoubtedly have unfavourable effects on their integration. As Culbertson argues, the local integration of refugees can be negatively affected by the perception of the host community, particularly in relation to the economic ramifications of the refugee's settlement (Culbertson 2016, 37). If members of the host community see the refugees as competitors for scarce jobs, or identifies them a burden to their

[59] Interview-date: 21st February 2020.
[60] Interview-date: 9th March 2020.
[61] Ibid.

community by taking up essential services, such as housing, food, education and other necessities, their integration would be more difficult.

> "In this area (*Arabsa*), rent has gone up and if you ask why, landlords tell you that the Eritreans are willing to pay whichever amount requested because they conclude that their stay in Addis is limited. Their arrival has caused us rental issues.[62]" (*Woinsehet, Ethiopian female, 29*)

There are a number of structural factors which limit refugees' access to formal jobs, which in turn increases their dependency on remittances, such as the irregular nature of informal or temporary jobs and a lack of pride for working lowest-paying jobs. For refugees, the lack of interest in staying in Addis Ababa for longer periods of time also disincentivizes their involvement in the local (in)formal economy. This results in their limited social interaction with the host community and thus weaker social integration. In addition, when members of the host community observe refugees not working and sitting around, this can lead to resentment, prejudice, and ultimately tension between the two groups.

Conclusion

Social integration is primarily achieved through interpersonal interaction between refugees and the host community. One of the ways in which this happens is when refugees participate in the local economy. In *Gofa* and *Arabsa*, refugee communities live in condominium blocks on the periphery of the city, excluding them from the informal market in the city centre. In general, this enforces low interaction between the host and refugee communities.

Refugees are also subjected to intimidation, robbery and violence by the host community, further making their social integration a challenge. The mistrust that exists between the two nations since the civil war of 1961 and the impact of modern Ethiopian politics based on ethnic federalism has resulted in segregation between ethnic groups in Addis Ababa. Eritrean refugees fear associating themselves with one ethnic group as this could result in negative repercussions. Social capital from the host community and formal institutions for refugees is also meagre. For refugees, the only reliable form of social capital comes from outside of Ethiopia in the form of remittances from abroad. Being dependent on this money in turn results in low local engagement in the informal economy. Together with the restrictions on participating in the formal economy, this makes their chance of social integration almost non-existent.

[62] Interview-date: 4th March 2020.

Conclusion

This thesis examines why many Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa are not socio-culturally integrated into Ethiopian society. Under the CRRF, the Ethiopian government implemented the OCP, considering that the cultural and historical connection between the two countries would facilitate their local integration. This allows Eritreans to relocate to cities in Ethiopia where they can benefit from access to education and health services.

The findings of this thesis indicate that shared cultural factors can facilitate cultural integration. However, these similarities do not automatically contribute to social integration. Due to their former unification, Ethiopia and Eritrea share food, culture and language, which as the evidence above has shown, are essential parts of integration into the local Ethiopian host community. However, the two are segregated and do not interact and experience these together as they lead parallel lives.

Segregation is reinforced by linguistic barriers. When refugees come to the city, they do not have access to local language courses that could grant them entry into the local market. The Tigrigna language constitutes the very same reason that connects refugees with the Tigrigna locals in Addis. However, this also leads to discrimination. Despite the above-mentioned cultural similarities, Eritrean refugees are culturally not integrated into the Ethiopian host community because of the low social interaction.

The OCP provided refugees opportunities to live amongst the host community in *Arabsa* and *Gofa*. However, they live on the peripheries of the city, making it more difficult to interact with the rest of society in Addis Ababa. Once they relocate, they are on their own and must become self-sufficient (Niguise and Carver 2019). In *Gofa* and *Arabsa,* this is difficult for refugees as they are excluded from the informal local economy close to the city centre. Moreover, living in the city brings about other challenges, such as being robbed and treated poorly by local authorities and locals.

The two countries' shared history brings forward issues of the past and incites mistrust, grudges and mutual suspicion. This constrains social interaction, which thereby constrains social integration. Moreover, both countries have their own distinct system of political identity, an Eritrean one based on nationality and an Ethiopian one on ethnicity, which makes it difficult to find common ground. Although the OCP states that they must be self-sufficient, many do not have the necessary permits to work. As such, they must find informal employment, which is very challenging since they cannot rely on networks of support and social capital.

This low economic interaction leads to low social interaction. The only network of support refugees have is limited to their relatives abroad, which through the provision of financial support, creates friction with the locals. Additionally, many refugees claim that landlords unfairly increase prices.

Receiving money from diaspora communities abroad means that some Eritreans are not willing to accept low-paying jobs. This gives them a superiority complex, which negatively affects their social integration.

On a broader scale, one can ask the question whether of integrating into a heterogenous society based on ethnic federalism becomes more difficult. We observe that in some cases, Eritreans are willing to integrate with the co-ethnic Tigrayans.

Furthermore, Eritrea as a nation has fought to be independent from Ethiopia and built its own identity for many years and now, they are being forced by circumstances to integrate into the Ethiopian community.

Moreover, the issue is linked to circumstances the current global migration situation. All of my Eritrean participants including *Almi*, who feels integrated in Ethiopia, said that they want to leave Ethiopia and go to Europe, Canada, Australia or the US because they do not see a future on the African continent. They live in the hope of a better life elsewhere. This dream is strengthened as they see their relatives and friends sending them money and thus "making" it abroad. Furthermore, refugees have more access to information through social media and smartphones, which shows the unfairness in the world. Therefore, they ask themselves why stay and integrate?

This thesis will be concluded by a quote from Robel:

> "Ethiopia is a transit, never a destination. Our hope is to have a better future elsewhere! We live and survive with this hope.[63]"

This summarizes perhaps most effectively why most of the Eritrean refugees do not intend to integrate in Addis Ababa as they only consider it as a temporary place on their way to the country in which they hope to one day be resettled.

[63] Interview-date: 4th March 2020.

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