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La vida en dos maletas: Trajectories and everyday life of Colombian asylum seekers in The Netherlands

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La vida en dos maletas:
Trajectories and everyday
life of Colombian asylum
seekers in The Netherlands

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This thesis could not have been written without the stories that the Colombian asylum seekers openly shared. The warmest gratitude to all of them, not only for sharing with me the raw narrations of their fleeing paths but also for opening the doors of their houses [and hearts] with a warm *aguapanela* on the winter days.

Esto es para todas las víctimas del conflicto colombiano.

This is to all the ones that migration was not a decision but the only option to stay alive.

This is to all the ones that have squeezed their lives in two suitcases.

I want to thank Wim* for guiding me on the entanglements of the asylum chain in The Netherlands; without his clarity and knowledge, I would not have been able to map the 'refugees issue' structure and complexities while being an outsider.

I am thankful to my supervisor Ratna Saptari, for the meaningful conversations, guidance and academic lessons throughout the research. Special thanks to 'my partner in crime', thank you Sanne, for standing still from Chinatown to Zoeterwoude. Special gratitude to all my readers: Adam, Anna, Camilo and Steven. Thank you Nico, for the encouragement during these months of wandering and rambling.

May 4, 2021

After six months of interaction with the diaspora of Colombian asylum seekers and refugees in The Netherlands, the political and social event that brought me to the encounter with this research is happening all over again.

From April 28 (as popularly named- 28A) till today, May 4*, days and nights of terror are taking place in Colombia, one of the countries with the longest and deadliest conflicts in the world. For the past week, the country has been consumed in waves of violence ordered by the Government using systematic strategies of repression and massive assassinations of protestors perpetrated by the police towards civilians using their right to protest against pseudo-democracy with all the characteristics of a right-wing dictatorship.

Colombia, a country rich in resources and immersed in a wide range of corruption strategies, strikes, and public demonstrations, are the scenarios in which people can show their discontent to the abusive reforms in the taxation, health, and social welfare systems. Moreover, the streets are the space to question the Government emergency plans to counterbalance the effects of the Pandemic on the unemployment rates and the lack of management, leaving Colombia as the worse country in Latin-American in terms of public health strategies on the control of the spread of COVID-19.

Today, while reflecting on this sensitive matter and writing the introduction of this research, I see its relevance. Here are the life experiences of the individuals that could not stay in Colombia and be forced to flee. I can recognise my position as a researcher, I collected narrations, fears, and hopes of the Colombian asylum seekers, but I am not an outsider. I am describing with anthropological and sociological lenses stories that I have heard repeatedly my entire life. Along with the fieldwork, I got closer with the interlocutors, I got involved in their lives, and my role as a researcher doing ethnography becomes an active scenario of participant observation with an autoethnographic value.

The effects of being far from my homeland and experiencing the violence's unrest are a shared context that brings me closer to interlocutors.

The 21N (November 21, 2019), when I heard for the first time about the Colombians asylum seekers in The Netherlands, during a set of strikes with the same characteristics as the ones that are currently taking place, I feel once again the fear of waking up the next day with a higher number of people killed, I feel all over again the anxiety of reading news about people being cold blood murdered by the police following the central Government instruction, I feel the helpless emotion of being far from home.

Some of the questions that I inquired to the asylum seekers during the fieldwork of this research, today I can ask them to myself. Why did you flee from Colombia? What are the expectations about the future? How do you relate to other stories of being a migrant?

The oddest thing of all, the irony on all of this: in The Netherlands, today is Remembrance Day, and tomorrow is Freedom Day, and after watching the casting on TV of the ceremony in the Dam Square in Amsterdam, all the speeches are based on the Freedom discourse. I wonder...

What kind of freedom?

Freedom for whom?

Freedom since when?

Freedom how?

Freedom to flee, freedom of not being there, feel free to cross borders but never be free to cross them back, as a promise of no return that looks more like a restricted life in a free nation. The concept of freedom is a modern construction that we have not been able to completely shape, it is an idea that only belongs to some individuals, the freedom in democratic nations is not a 'per-se' right, but a flag for the governments to restrain movement, to decide who is welcome and who is not. This research has been the space for me to reflect on the different expressions of freedom, to wonder about the differences between the freedom of a citizen and the freedom of a refugee; freedom of being, freedom of fleeing.

~

May 28, 2021

After one month, The National Strike has not ceased; Colombia is immersed in a wave of violence with systematic human rights violations perpetrated by the Public Force. As it is sung in the streets: THEY ARE KILLING US.

955 victims of physical violence

43 murders allegedly committed by members of the Security Forces

1,388 arbitrary arrests of demonstrators

595 violent interventions in the context of peaceful protests

46 victims of ocular damage

165 firearm shooting cases

22 victims of sexual violence

5 victims of gender-based violence

(TEMBLORES ONG, 2021)

Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	1
<i>Introduction: From encounters to research</i>	4
The initial research problem	5
Research question and findings	6
<i>Methodology</i>	8
The tools	9
The fieldwork	10
Data Analysis	11
Ethics considerations	11
Context: A brief review of the current state of Colombia asylum seekers	13
Context: Untangling of the asylum chain in The Netherlands	14
<i>Chapter 1: Theoretical framework</i>	17
Refugees and label	18
Origin of the 'refugee issue'	19
Life trajectories and fluidity of the categories	20
Agency-structure in a transnational context	22
Everyday life	23
Rhythmanalysis	24
Cultural materialism of the everyday life	25
Social Representations and performance	26
<i>Chapter 2: Life trajectories</i>	29
Back in Colombia: paths and motives	29
The 8 days period	34
<i>Chapter 3: Rhythms of Everyday Life in an Asielzoekerscentrum</i>	38
Space and time: the rhythm of the AZC	39
Work and asylum procedure	42
Routine and repetition	43
<i>Chapter 4: Social representations of the Everyday Life in an Asielzoekerscentrum</i>	46
Roles, bonds and coexistence issues	46
Relationships with the asylum chain actors	49
Cultural Materialism and economic spheres of the asylum chain	50
<i>Final considerations about the Post AZC everyday life</i>	52
Possible scenarios of the Post AZC life	52
<i>Conclusions</i>	54
<i>References</i>	55

Introduction: From encounters to research

In 2019, a plurality of social movements calling for social change gathered strength across Latin America. Several historic mobilisations unfolded across the continent against systematic state corruption, a lack of control over the extraction of natural resources and the broader impacts of a neoliberal economy resulting in vast wealth gaps, budget cuts to public health systems and reduced employment opportunities. In Chile, the feminist movement became a global declaration of empowerment for Latin American women. This played out alongside protests, pension cuts, increasing and unaffordable household bills, and dramatic reductions in social services, resulting in a referendum to change the National Constitution, 2020. In Guatemala, thousands of people protested in support of the anti-corruption commission. Twelve days of protests in Quito, Ecuador, led the Government to repeal tax and labour reforms.

During the 'explosion' of social mobilisations across Latin America, Colombia was not an exception. Led by President Duque, the national Government approved a reform bill that protestors and the media call *el paquetazo neoliberal* (the neoliberal package), which includes damaging reforms to the country's tax, pension, and labour systems to highly controversial actions lead by the Government. For instance, On November 3, 2019, a national scandal hit the headlines as Colombia's National Air Force – under the leadership of President Duque and the Defence Minister – bombed a camp of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*-FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) killing more than ten children (AP NEWS, 2019). Representatives from different sectors of Colombian society called for a national strike on November 21 to show the people's disapproval of the Government. The popularly called '21N' is now recognised as the most significant social mobilisation in the country's history. It also took place worldwide where Colombian migrants wanted to support their fellow Colombians back home. The 21N in the Dam Square in Amsterdam was a commemoration to the victims of conflict, a statement of disagreement to the Government and the opportunity to relate with other Colombians in The Netherlands (Saint-Upéry, 2020).

During my experience living in The Netherlands, I met several Colombians with different backgrounds and sociodemographic characteristics, such as long-term migrants, students, second-generation Dutch Colombians, adopted, etc. However, in the 21N I encountered a group of Colombian asylum seekers who are part of the asylum chain in The Netherlands. At the beginning of this research, they lived together in an *Asielzoekerscentrum*-ACZ (Asylum Seekers' Centre) of the *Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers*-COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers). They were a group I had not previously been aware of because it is not as common for Colombians to seek asylum

in The Netherlands. They usually seek asylum in other countries, such as the United States of America, Spain or Canada (UNHCR, 2002).

The 21N was a significant moment for me, not only in a political sense but also as a moment of sociological acknowledgement of the 'Colombian refugees' in The Netherlands. On the 21N, I met Jorge, a man in his thirties from the south of Colombia. However, just when we were at the demonstration, I heard that he came more than five years ago under the figure of political asylum. For him, the procedures to keep the status and stay part of the refugees' scheme were an increasing struggle after signing the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC in 2016. In the inform "Stuck in the middle" - Seeking durable solutions in post-peace agreement Colombia is reported that for some refugees, one of the effects has been the decline in the number of successful asylum claims (IDMC, 2019). After losing his asylum seeker status, Jorge became an illegal migrant; later, he received a residence permit after registering his partnership with a European citizen.

Jorge's story drew the attention of another man: Andres. A young man in his late 20s, from the Caribbean of Colombia. At the demonstration, he took the microphone. He shared a brief but meaningful speech about how even when he lives 80 km apart from the demonstration location, he needed to be there because 'we need to show to the government that even when we are not there, we still victims, we still carry out with our nationality'. After months of keeping contact with him, this phrase guided me to several inquiries about the asylum seekers lives in The Netherlands. The 21N was the event where I encountered the ones to be the main interlocutors of the fieldwork for this research.

The initial research problem

Initially, I constructed the following research question: How is the label 'Colombian refugee' constructed and performed in COA-Dronnten? However, along with the fieldwork, I could spot some problematic elements of this research question. It is relevant to bring these findings into consideration as they are a representation of the complexity and fluidity of the concepts and categories related to the life trajectories and everyday life in the AZC:

To begin with, the people that are part of the asylum chain have flowed in diverse categories such as Internally Displaced People, migrant, asylum seeker and, at the end of the asylum chain when an asylum seeker gets granted a residence permit, in this case by The Netherlands they become a refugee. Although 'Refugee' is the concept that covers most of the literature, policies, and conventions, for the practical sake of the research, the category that I used in the data analysis and the writing of the thesis is Asylum Seeker. The term is based not only on its use in the Asylum Chain in

The Netherlands to refer to the people inside the AZCs but also on the auto-recognition that the interlocutors shared with me.

In addition, the intention of understanding the construction of the label 'Colombian refugee' and how it is performed was based on the assumption that I would find some elements in their performance that would highlight some behaviours, characteristics or challenges directly related to their nationality. However, while visiting the AZC, I could not identify something delimited as a 'Colombian refugee'. Nevertheless, the questions around a collective identity and the construction of the label allowed me to focus on the individual trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers and their relationship with everyday life inside the AZC.

Thirdly, in more practical terms, along with the research proposal and question, I referred to the Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers-COA Dronten, but the correct name of the asylum location seekers are living is the Asielzoekerscentrum-AZC. Furthermore, to preserve the privacy of the interlocutors, I will not use the detailed location of the Centre.

Research question and findings

This research aims to explore, describe, and analyse the correlation between the trajectories and everyday life within the asylum chain. The research question I sought to answer in the following chapters is:

How do the trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers shape their everyday life in the AZC?

To do so, I will analyse the trajectories of the asylum seekers, and I will describe the social dynamics of everyday life inside of the AZC.

For instance, for some of the interlocutors of this research, the migration trajectory begins with a situation of internal displacement. However, when the persecution or life-threatening situations still affect their lives and safety, the decision to relocate abroad occurs, and the international migration process starts. In this sense, the fluidity between social categories depends on the time and space in which the individuals are categorised or clustered.

Since December 2016, Colombian passport holders can visit any country of the Schengen area without a visa application. Thus they are regular tourists at first sight entering the European Union. Once the asylum chain is activated, they became asylum seekers. If the IND approves the residence permit after the entire process, they will become refugees. When it is denied, they can return to Colombia or stay in The Netherlands. The permanence depends on the appellation, on the extension of the asylum procedure or as undocumented or illegal migrants.

In this sense, the life trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers are a transition between the labels that are represented in the narrations of the motives, strategies, travel journey, expectations, identity and self-recognition. All these elements make the individual stories of the interlocutor's examples of the fluidity of the social categories in transnational migration contexts.

Besides, time and rhythm are relevant spheres of life in the AZC. In the asylum procedure, the RVT is the period in which the applicant is living in the Centre, a moment in which the social interactions and the bonding between asylum seekers are perceived as fleeting with residents coming and going every day, with little expressions of stability due to the uncertainty of the resolution of the IND in terms of the resident permit. However, there is a latent intention of stability and grounding actions that, for some of the interlocutors, is exemplified with the acquisition of goods linked with the possibility of ownership due to the safety they are experiencing in The Netherlands. This cultural materialism representation, in most cases, begins with the purchasing of a bike. The everyday life in the AZC has material expressions of making life in the Centre more bearable and grounding.

The exploration and description of the elements mentioned above are divided into four chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical framework in which this thesis has its anthropological and sociological foundations. In the first part of the chapter, I explore the construction of the social category refugees and how the labelling of migrants is related to a transition between different groups or clusters, as well the fluidity of the individuals between social categories such as regular migrant, asylum seeker, refugee or undocumented migrant is explored in the subchapter about life trajectories. Additionally, as in this research, I am also exploring the relationship between the asylum seekers and all the institutions and organisations involved in the asylum chain. The debate between agency and structure is relevant as it allows me to interconnect the individual actions of the asylees with the effects of the structure on the life of Colombian asylum seekers.

In the second part of the theoretical framework, I present the conceptualisation of everyday life. I include three main elements: the rhythm analysis and the cultural materialism of everyday life in the transnational context, the social representations and the roles and performance of the individuals. Resilience is an expression of overcoming the routine and time passing while living inside of the AZC.

The second chapter describes the life trajectories of Colombian asylum seekers; due to the socio-political characteristics of Colombia, most of the interlocutors are victims of internal conflict as they were persecuted and life threatened by either armed groups or criminal bands. However, their necessity of relocation abroad opens up a set of transitions in which, depending on the moment of the asylum chain, they may be clustered as asylum seekers, refugees or illegal migrants. To understand the life trajectories of the interlocutors, I will present along with the chapter the analysis

about the motives and strategies of relocation and the expectations about the future from a perspective of the material landscapes of The Netherlands that they had before and after the relocation.

The section about everyday life contains two dimensions: the third chapter is about the rhythms and routine in the AZC, the descriptions of the time passing experiences during the RVT, while the asylum seekers are waiting for the resident permit the resettlement in The Netherlands. The social gathering is passed through parties, food sharing and chatting. Besides, in this chapter, I will discuss the side-effects of the slow rhythm of everyday life in the AZC: loneliness and depression.

In the fourth chapter, I will walk the reader into the representations of everyday life in the *Asielzoekerscentrum*. I analysed the findings of the performativity of the roles and the relationships with 'the others' (asylum seekers of other nationalities and COA staff). The final section of this chapter is about the cultural materialism of the life of the Colombian asylum seekers, where the acquisition of goods represents a grounding- resettlement experience. Besides the flow of exchange of goods or services without money, it produces a microeconomy environment that enhances the productivity of the experience in the AZC.

Finally, last section, I explore everyday life after the AZC; once the main interlocutors of this research received their residence permit, they were relocated outside of the Centre and started the integration procedure, with it they faced the challenges of life independently of the shared environment of the AZC. However, as the fieldwork was done between December and March, I could not follow up the entire integration process of the main interlocutors. However, the enlightenment of these experiences is an opportunity for further research, including the considerations about the missing information during my fieldwork about the life trajectories of the asylum seekers that get the resident permit denied and fall under the undocumented or illegal spheres.

Methodology

Understanding the experiences of the Colombians seeking protection in The Netherlands is a sphere of entanglements of perceptions of the individuals, the asylum chain infrastructure, and the time-space characteristics of the life inside an AZC. For this research, I used qualitative methods to analyse how the life trajectories of the residents of the centres of asylum influence everyday life in this specific environment. To do so, in this ethnography, I include all the findings and analysis of the data gathered throughout the fieldwork done for three months, in which I did participant observations, in-depth interviews and informal interviews.

Hence, the fieldwork completed between December and March was categorised into two segments: first, I sought a comprehensive understanding of the interlocutor's life trajectories,

including the features of the categories' fluidity in which the individuals are framed in the asylum chain.

Secondly, I explored the complexity of everyday life inside the AZC as an intersection between space and time. This research is placed in the encounters between the asylum seekers, the COA employee, and myself. Hence the complexity of the 'everyday life' that I will describe in the core and the specific chapters of the thesis results from my participant observation as an ethnographer. Thus, the description and analysis of my research merely focused on this representation of space and time. The focus of this research was a correlation between the trajectories and everyday life cross with the knowledge of the asylum chain.

In this research, I focused on the life trajectories of the asylum seekers living inside an AZC without making a distinction in the stage of the process that they might be. In other words, the spatial location is a refugee camp where I did the fieldwork. However, to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information, the exact location of the AZC remains enclosed. Given that there are 51 AZCs distributed in the entire country, it will not be possible to trace back the opinions of the interlocutors concerning the location. To protect the privacy of the interlocutors, I changed all the names and possible biographical information that might be traced back.

One of the most relevant and repetitive metaphors that I encountered during the fieldwork was when asylum seekers began their journey, placing all their belongings in two suitcases: *La vida en dos maletas*. This image represents the moment of relocation as the crucial decision of moving between countries with a maximum of 30 kilograms of possessions, stories and memories. The figurative image of the moment of leaving a life back home and bringing all the basics to start a life in a new country represents the emotions, network, and expectations. The 'two suitcases' is a situation that most migrants can rely on, but its content may defer depending on cultural factors.

The tools

I combined qualitative methods throughout the fieldwork, such as participant observation and in-depth interviews. As the main interlocutors of my research are in The Netherlands, I could have face-to-face interactions, and the restrictions due to the COVID-19 Pandemic did not represent an issue for the fieldwork.

Participant observation was used to obtain a significant part of the information, allowing me to see and experience the interactions between asylum seekers, the tensions and the impacts on everyday life in the AZC, within residents of the Centre and other groups such as the COA staff. The field notes were an essential component of the data collection, and with it, I could also recognise my

engagement in the subjects' narratives (Hine, 2015, p. 74). The in-depth interviews were scheduled and recorded.

I made a guide for the in-depth interviews that included the topics I wanted to cover during the conversation. The interview with the Colombian asylum seekers had the following structure: 1) Biographical introduction of the interviewee; 2) Before arriving at The Netherlands (motives, strategies, trajectory, expectation, ideas about him being a refugee, identity and self-recognition); 3) After arriving in The Netherlands (asylum application, strategies, resilience, expectations for the future). In addition, I did one in-depth interview with an employee of COA that works in an AZC. Regarding this interview, I did not follow a guide because the conversation took place in an informal environment, and the second encounter with the interlocutor allowed me to cover the topics that I missed in the first interview.

The fieldwork

I visited an AZC between mid-December 2020 till end-March 2021. The fieldwork data was gathered on 13 field notes of participant observations, phone calls and informal conversations, and six in-depth interviews (see table 1).

The interlocutors granted me access to the AZC. As I was a regular visitor, I only needed to present my ID at the reception. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I had an informal video call with a Colombian documentarist that filmed a movie in one AZC in The Netherlands. Javier Guaqueta, director of Bakaçtepkax, narrates Daniel's life, a Colombian asylum seeker who lived in the ACZ Dronten. This conversation was an initial approach to access the field and gave me an overview of the physical space of the refugee camps.

The five times that I visited the AZC, I arrived at the house of the family hosting me. They also introduced me to other asylum seekers. In the field notes of the participant observations, I gathered information about the spatial distribution of the AZC,

the coexistence and sharing of the space inside of the houses, and the challenges in the communication between people from different nationalities. In this sense, most of the information I collected in the field notes is related to Colombian asylum seekers' everyday lives inside the AZC.

Fieldwork overview		
Phone calls	201211	Andres approval of the resident permit
	201216	Short interview with Javier Guaqueta director of the documental Bakaçtepkax (filmed in a AZC)
Participant observation	210107	First time in the AZC
	210114	Birthday party
	210128-29	Sleepover AZC
	210215-16	Overnight AZC
	210317-18	Overnight and interviews
	210321	New house
Informal interview	210212	Informal chat Win (COA)
	210122	Walking in amsterdam with Wendy
	210322	Paula- artist
	210323	Fabian Youtuber
In-depth interviews	210114	Andres- 1st Part
	210122	Wendy
	210215	Dilma
	210216	Andres- 2nd part
	210314	Wim
	210322	Jorge

On the other hand, I achieved a broader understanding of the asylum seekers' trajectories before-during-after the asylum process with the in-depth interviews. In the interviews done to the asylum seekers (former, current and refugee), I collected information about the before arriving in The Netherlands (motives, strategies, travel journey, expectations, identity, and self-recognition) and about the trajectories after arriving in The Netherlands and the process of asylum (Application, resilience, expectations about the future). The interview done to the Venezuelan asylum seeker covered the same topics as the one that I did to the Colombian ones. However, her nationality's political and economic background enounced differences in the trajectories before starting the application. Her narrations about the everyday life inside the AZC in general terms do not differ from what the Colombian interlocutors shared.

Data Analysis

After every visit to the AZC, I transferred the information into field notes in the participant observations or transcripts of the in-depth interviews. After the fieldwork period, I began with the data analysis. I included all the material gathered during fieldwork analysed in qualitative terms. The in-depth interviews were processed by linear analysis. For the field notes, I used the open coding technique. The comparison between the different profiles of the subjects of this research allowed me to find the juxtapositions, tensions and encounters in my research participants' narratives and experiences. The open coding technique allowed me to identify ideas, meanings, and clusters of information and link with the theoretical framework presented in the first chapter of this research. For the coding of the fieldwork material, I used Atlas Ti.

With Atlas Ti I could identify the distribution of the topics of the fieldwork material, the relevance and possible analysis of the most representative findings. I could also recognise possible elements for further research and gaps in the information.

Ethics considerations

This research used qualitative methods to collect data and analyse the findings of 3 months of participant observations and in-depth interviews. The purpose of the first time I visited the AZC was working a trust-building space and a breaking-ice situation; it allowed me to present to the interlocutors the purpose of the visits that I would do in the upcoming months. The research and its aims were gradually communicated to participants until sufficient trust was established to create a safe environment where the asylum seekers and other interlocutors feel safe sharing their experiences.

Even though it was the first time I visited the Centre, I already encountered the main interlocutors in previous situations outside of the research. Hence, I must acknowledge that I had a

participant role during the observations, and in some moments, that relationship ethnographer-participant was blurred (Babbie, 2012).

To preserve the information, I collected data while the observation was taken place. I briefly described the situations either in my field notebook or in voice recordings. The leading group of interlocutors had interactions with other asylum seekers most of the time. For instance, if we were sharing a meal, it was very likely that some other resident of the AZC would come over to share a coffee. In those situations, it was not pertinent for me to present my research motives. However, as my research focus is the everyday life of the asylees in the Centre, those interactions are part of the analysis presented in this thesis.

The sensitivity of the topics discussed during the fieldwork was compensated with the anthropological and sociological skills that I have gained as a qualitative researcher during the past years, in different environments, such as governmental institutions, non-profit and human rights organisations, where I designed, developed, and implemented qualitative studies about conflict and war, access to the public health system and public policies, and specific sensitive topics such as abortion or sexual abuse. This experience has provided me with the sensitivity required to research respectfully and ethically.

This research was a risk-free investigation; since retrospective research techniques such as in-depth interviews and other methods that I used did not intentionally modify the biological, physiological, psychological or social variables of the individuals participating in the study (AAA, 2009). However, to safeguard the confidentiality of the information, I applied the following mechanisms to preserve the safety of the interlocutors:

Confidentiality: refers to the ethics that arise from a relationship in which one person receives information. Whoever receives it is not obligated to use said information for any purpose other than the one originally given. To safeguard confidentiality, I informed the research participants about the objectives and potential impacts of the research. In the case of the in-depth interviews, I voice recorded the conversation. At the beginning of the recording, I briefly introduced the study and gained the verbal informed consent of the interlocutor(s) to continue with the interview and the recording. Besides, I emphasised that only I would hear the recordings, do the transcriptions, and further data analysis (Bourgois, 2007).

Privacy: refers to the information of a person within the private life spheres, and in principle, no one has the right to access it without their consent. It is the personal space that each one has as a limit between the self and the other, which encourages promoting the dignity of people, providing a safe space where information does not leak. The right and exercise of privacy always go hand in hand with confidentiality. Most interlocutors are still under The Netherlands' protection in this research,

and their application procedure is open with the IND. Thus, the use of pseudonyms and the nondisclosure of the location of the AZC in which I did the fieldwork are essential ethical principles of this research.

Conducting ethnography often implies becoming part of the private lives of research participants. As an individual, the fieldwork was a space in which I build up relationships further the dichotomy researcher-researched. In this sense, even after the data gathering period, I still encounter the primary informants, and safe communication scenarios are preserved for the interlocutors. For me, the moment of conversation has become a fluent sharing and opening moment about the experiences and further challenges that the Colombian asylum seekers may keep facing along with the procedure. During such moments, it was essential to build and maintain high levels of trust, especially, in my case, given the difficulties that the asylum seekers and refugees have faced.

Context: A brief review of the current state of Colombia asylum seekers

The extended Colombian history of war and conflict that rises to more than 60 years of internal armed conflict between the armed forces of the Government, the guerrillas, drug traffickers and criminal bands have left the country with an estimated 2-3 million internally displaced people, considering the country with the second-largest internally-displaced population in the world after Sudan (see, Bouvier, 2009; Bushnell, 1993; Rojas & Meltzer, 2005)(UNHCR, 2006).

The massive migration within the county has mainly been documented in diverse spheres such as academia, national and international human rights organisations, and governmental intuitions. However, the stories and paths of the Colombian migrants that fled to seek asylum and protection in other countries have received little attention(Torres, 2006). There is a problem of underreporting or monitoring the number of Colombians who migrated in the past decades in quantitative terms. Nevertheless, the extended scenario of violence is well known as a factor that increases the international migration and the refugees' flow (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018) there are not relevant sources of traceability of the main routes, causes or current state. According to the UNHCR, Colombian is one of the primary sources of refugees worldwide, with nearly 440,000 Colombian refugees and asylum seekers as of January 2012 (Bermudez, 2013)(Bérubé, 2005).

Most recent data from Eurostat and the IND about the asylum trends suggest that in 2020 were 29.155 first applications of Colombian asylum seekers in Europe.(IND, 2021a). Specifically, in The Netherlands in 2019 were 22.533 applications for protection; 158 were from Colombian asylum seekers. In 2020, of the 13.673 applications, only 106 were from Colombians. In the first three months of 2021, of the 2.669 applications that the IND received, 44 are from Colombians (IND, 2021b).

In this sense, some factors consider the reduced numbers of Colombian asylum seekers in The Netherlands. First, due to the applicants' trajectories to arrive in Europe, the main flight connection between Colombia and Europe is the Airport Madrid Barajas in Spain. Thus the Dublin Procedure reinforce the condition that the application for asylum and protection must be made in the first arrival territory. Second, Colombia and Spain's language and cultural proximity allow the asylum seeker to experience a more manageable integration process in everyday life.

Context: Untangling of the asylum chain in The Netherlands

The asylum chain is a complex system that involves several institutions and procedures. The guidelines for the asylum seekers and refugees' procedures are based on two international treaties: The Geneva Convention on Refugees and the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). Besides, in the EU Qualification Directive 2011/95, the standards for the qualification of the beneficiaries of international protection of nationals of third-countries or stateless persons (European Parliament, 2011). This research is framed in it, especially in the interactions in the RVT of applying for a resident permit for asylum seekers living in an AZC.

The *Immigratie-en Naturalisatiedienst*- IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) is the arm of the *Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid* (Ministry of Justice and Security) in charge of the resident permits and citizenship procedures for all migrants that are relocating to The Netherlands. One of the several lines of action of the IND is the asylum chain, in which every asylum seeker's case is examined to determine if their case is eligible for special protection with a resident permit (CoR, 2021). The evidence that the asylum seeker needs to provide to the IND serves as proves of their cases, in which they must qualify in one of the diverse scenarios of protection that the Parliament has established as the eligible for the resident permit for refugees (IND, 2021d). The applicant will qualify for asylum if is a foreigner, if was a victim of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political convictions, or sense of belonging, if is at risk of inhuman treatment, fears of violence as a result of armed conflict or if a family member had granted a refugee resident permit.

The asylum procedure begins when the applicant presents themselves to the national authorities, the border procedure is activated when the asylum seeker enters The Netherlands via an airport or seaport. When the immigration is done via Schiphol Airport, the applicant needs to report their intention of asylum to the *Koninklijke Marechaussee*- KMar (The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee). Afterwards, the asylum seeker would be transferred to the main reception facility of asylum seekers in the country: Ter Apel. This facility is the reception point for the applicants that arrived in the country by land. Later an initial identity examination, fingerprinting, and a luggage inspection is done by *De Afdeling Vreemdelingenpolitie, Identificatie en Mensenhandel*-AVIM (The Aliens Police, Identification and Human Trafficking department) (IND, 2020). However, if the applicant

entered Europe in another territory or started an asylum process in another EU nation, the Dublin Procedure would be activated to prevent double applications. It will conduct a returning procedure to the first entering country (European Commission, 2016).

After the registration is completed in Ter Apel, the *Algemene Asielprocedure*- AA (General Asylum Procedure) is initiated, the asylum seeker is relocated to one of the 51 AZC, in which depending on their characteristics, are assigned into a single or shared dorm and a period for resting starts after the fled journey (RVT). If the asylum seeker is under 18 without parents or caregivers will be under the protection of the AMV. If the person seeking protection is under 15, the Nidos Foundation will allocate a guardian for the minor.

'The 8-days period' begins. This procedure represents the main events that an asylum seeker will experience during the entire application process, which can take up to two years, including the appeal to the IND resolution. The 'first day' is the reporting interview with an IND staff member, in which the asylum seeker will be asked about identity, origin, family, education, work, life history, living environment, documentation and journey. On the 'second day', the asylum seeker meets a lawyer from the *Raad voor Rechtsbijstand* (Legal Aid Board) to receive assistance during the procedure. The following day is considered one of the most relevant steps in the entire application: the detailed interview with the IND, in which after the preparation with the legal advisor, the asylum seeker is interrogated about the motives of the application, including the details of the route that they have followed to arrive in The Netherlands. During the interview, an interpreter will be present. If the asylee and the lawyer consider it pertinent, a member of *Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland*--VWN (The Dutch Council for Refugees) may join the interview. The IND will fill in a report with all the information gathered during the interview. On the 'fourth day', the lawyer will inform the applicant about the interview outcomes and review that the information goes according to the one reported by the asylum seeker.

On the 'fifth day', the IND issues a formal decision after reading the transcripts of the interviews and the letters from the lawyer, if any. There are three possible outcomes of the IND decision.

First, the asylum seeker receives a temporary resident permit valid for five years, which allows the applicant to remain in The Netherlands; with it, the refugee's relatives can start applying for a residence permit under the regulation of the family reunification procedure. Additionally, VWN offers administrative and social accompaniment to refugees to help them accomplish their rights and duties. The refugee must register in *De Basisregistratie Personen*- BRP (Municipal Personal Records Database) at the *Gemeente* (Municipality) in which they are going to be resettled. Besides, with the resident permit, the asylee has the right to accommodation in a municipality. In The Netherlands, it is

a legal requirement to have health insurance. As soon as the asylum seekers leave the COA facilities, they need to arrange it by themselves, followed up with a general practitioner and dentist registration.

The refugees can work without restriction and a working permit; besides the resident permit, asylees can travel abroad. However, if the refugee travels to the country of origin, it will indicate to the IND that it is a safe environment, and the permit may be revoked. Lastly, one of the most relevant steps in the *Inburgering* (Civic integration), the refugee must follow a language course including how Dutch society works.

The second possible outcome of the IND will move the application to the *Verlengde Asielprocedure*- VA (Extended asylum procedure). This may occur if further evaluation is required. If the asylum seekers are not in mental or physical condition to be interviewed or because the applicant is under 12 (IND, 2021c). The VA can take up to 18 months, however as the IND evaluates every case individually, the timeframe may vary between one asylum seeker and another. The decision of the IND can be either granting the resident permit, and the resettling period describe above will begin, or it can be denied.

The third possible result of the IND can be the rejection of the asylum application, and with it, another stage of the procedure will commence. If so, on the 'Sixth day' of the procedure, the asylum seeker and the lawyer guiding the case can appeal the decision with a letter explaining the disagreement with the rejection. On the 'seventh and eighth days' the IND will read the appealing and will determine if the provisional decision must be changed, either to the approval of the residence permit, to a time extension for the IND to evaluate deeply the application (a second VA procedure will be initiated), or the provisional decision of rejecting the application can be reinforced. In consultation with the lawyer, the applicant can appeal the decision to a Dutch court.

If, after the appeal, the IND or the Court are still not granting the resident permit, the asylum seeker has 28 days to arrange the return to the country of origin. If after that period, the applicant has not returned *De Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek*- DT&V (The Repatriation and Departure Service) will arrange the deportation.

In this regard, an significant social after-effect has been reported by different organisations (European Parliament, 2017; PACE, 2020), along with the asylum procedure, and after the residence permit is denied, a critical number of applicants are reported as 'departure with an unknown destination'. The EUROSTAT stated that between 2018 and 2020, there have been 18.292 minors reported missing from the asylum chain in Europe; in The Netherlands, COA informed 1007 cases (ARGOS, 2021).

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

This research is framed in migration studies, focusing on the mobility trajectories from Colombia to The Netherlands of the asylum seekers and the different spheres of everyday life inside the AZC.

Specifically, there are three different spheres to understand the migration processes among asylum seekers (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). First, the motives can explain the movement (i.e., persecution, death threat, forced recruitment by the armed groups in Colombia). Second the 'focus on the role of states in shaping the flows and life chances of mobile persons'. In the case of my research, the everyday life inside of the AZC is regulated by the spatial assignation of the living spaces (bungalows- dorms), the specific use of the facilities of the AZCs and the cultural interactions that are fractionated by the assignation of the asylum seekers to specific nodes based on gender, nationality or household. Third, the analysis of other concerns in the sociology of international migration, such as integration, transnationalism, and citizenship. However, even though these three concepts are relevant and transversal to the refugee's studies, in the observation that I did in the past months, I could not trace specific representations of transnationalism and citizenship, as the asylum seekers are still in a 'limbo' in which the recognition of their citizenship is acquired or gain because of a positive outcome in the resident permit application.

Second, to have a broader spectrum of transnational migration and understand its theoretical frame, the conceptual frame done by Levitt and Jaworsky's (2007) is relevant because the authors present a variety of approaches. First, this frame allows me to explore the economic sphere, where I can follow the class differences in the migration processes of the refugees in comparison with students or regular migrants. Second, in the political transnationalism in my research, the relationship between asylum seekers and The Netherlands along the procedure is regulated by the Government and institutions in charge and control of the asylum seekers relocation. Third, the transformations in social life are represented in the structure and dynamics of the family and the interrelations with the others, in my case, the 'other' asylum seekers in the COA. Fourth, the authors explain that there are different types of flows in transnational migration. However, the culture flows between the homeland (Colombia) and the receiving country (The Netherlands).

The individual and collective interactions inside of the AZC are framed in the concept of everyday life. The symbolic representation of this concept is a fracture mosaic compound of diverse, dynamic elements, in which it is essential to deconstruct the characteristics of the life inside the AZC (Lefebvre, 1991). As well the rhythms of everyday life in the AZC can be understood as expressions of temporal measures of life, in which the time creates a frame of activities but also

behaviours (Lefebvre, 2004), and social markers such as clothing, furnishings, homes, lodgings, neighbourhoods, environment (Lefebvre, 2010). All these elements are part of a performative act in which asylum seekers interact with others while participating in a specific role. In this sense, performance is the understanding of the human expressions that can be identified among the interactions of individuals (Goffman, 1959). Lastly, resilience is a mode of performance to understand the strategies that the Colombian asylum seekers in The Netherlands have crafted to overcome the barriers during asylum.

Refugees and label

This research is based on two central notions: first, understanding the social category 'refugees' and its conceptualisation in the sociological and anthropological debates and the international regulations issued by the UNHCR and the definitions given by organisations and scholars.

To understand the refugees' networks, flows, and connections between Colombia and The Netherlands, I framed my research with Hine's (1993) study, 'Refugees, Immigrants, and the State'. One of the main distinctions made by the author is that it is necessary to recognise the differences between an economic and a political migrant because this creates diverse challenges for the refugees, especially when the financial barriers for the Colombian asylum seekers in the present may be a collateral effect of the migration because of socio-political circumstances. In this sense, the standard division among refugees and migrants is still based on the reasons for the migration, which can either be due to economic and political factors or due to safety reasons that affect the daily life of the individuals (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018)

In *the sociology of refugee migration* (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018), the authors present two different approaches for understanding the complexity of the category, 'refugees'. Initially, the description of the refugee is based on practical elements, based on the status given during the asylum processes to a specific individual or household. Besides, the realist approach focuses on a holistic description of the experiences of the individuals independently of the label that is assigned. The complexity of the stories of the refugees associated with the 'in between' of the relocation and all the entanglements that it might have is sometimes used as a straightforward reason to label an individual as a refugee.

The political construction of the label is an integral part of the conceptualisation of this research because it allows me to frame the findings within the asylum chain in The Netherlands as presented in the introduction of this research. As well as the policy review and mapping of the chain, I could overview the infrastructure of the procedures and their impacts on the lives of Colombian asylum seekers.

Origin of the 'refugee issue'

In 1930, after World War I, the League of Nations created The Nansen International Office for Refugees, seeking to help and provide care assistance to the humanitarian crisis after the displacement of victims of the wars. After forming this institution, the term 'refugee' was officially used to carry out a census, certify the population, and negotiate their repatriation, exchange, or resettlement. In 1951, the Refugee Convention was announced, and in 1967 the primary protocol of action was published. These two elements are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' main legal documents (UNHCR). In Article 1 of the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 1951), a refugee is defined as someone that after an event migrates to a different territory seeking asylum:

"As a result of events occurring before January 1, 1951, and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR, 1951, p. 16).

In more recent developments from the Refugees Agency, essential distinctions between a migrant and refugees have been made, claiming that refugees are not regular migrants (Feller, 2005). First, by definition, a migrant decides rationally to move to another territory, and it is possible to return to their homeland without any restrictions. The reasons for migration are not related to threats, persecution, or death, but the pursuit of different opportunities, including work, education, family, or other reasons. On the other hand, the socio-political conditions of a 'refugee' are entanglements of conflict and persecution. Therefore, the seeking of safety is the leading cause of their crossing of national borders. They "[...]become internationally recognised as 'refugees' with access to assistance from States, UNHCR, and other organisations" (UNHCR, 2016). This involvement of the States and the supranational organisations is one of the main focuses of refugee studies and the focus on the role of states and how the state shapes processes in the flows and lives of the refugees (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018).

In the report, 'International Protection Considerations Regarding Colombian Asylum Seekers and Refugees', following the main elements from the Convention, the Colombian asylum seekers with a well-founded fear of persecution can be defined as refugees, because in the context of the asylum, is common to refer to generalised violence and insecurity as hostile environments in which the refugees survived deliberate attacks (UNHCR, 2005). Besides, in the report, there is a comprehensive categorisation of Colombian refugees based on political affiliation, participation in the Government (executive, legislative or penal), human rights defenders, union leaders, community leaders,

journalists, indigenous persons and afro-Colombians, child soldiers, marginalised social groups and victims of drug trafficking.

However, even when the practical construction of the label can be based on the institutional frame built by supranational organisations such as the UNHCR or the IOM, several scholars question the categorical construction to understand the complexity of the label refugees as a concept. Therefore, the management view that the UNHCR can offer to understand the complexity of the refugees can be short in the broad description of the characteristics of the social lives of the individuals, due to its focus on the standardisation of process to create a 'national order of things, in which bureaucrats can quickly provide access to the refugees to various schemes or programs (Scheel & Ratfisch, 2014). For this research, the label refugee is a transversal topic of discussion regarding different spheres. For instance, when a person delimitates their condition of being a refugee, whether it needs to be part of a welfare system or if the requirements of the migration decision were based on external factors such as war or conflict. In this sense, the reductionist focus on the label refugee might end up in an invisibilisation of the complexity of the category; refugees, asylum seekers or migrants are not simple clusters in which the researcher or scholar can knit together everyone's life trajectories.

The label refugee has had different definitions that have been reshaped depending on political contexts and the policies constructed around the refugees themselves. In this sense, for this research, it is essential to consider the key characteristics of the label in this era, such as the proliferation of new categories depending on the clusters or groups that are at the Centre of the research and the main spheres of the construction of the label (forming, transforming and politicising) and the effects on the individual construction of the refugee identity (Zetter, 2007).

Additionally, the everyday life of the asylum seekers and refugees is framed in a set of expectations of behaviours that should come as a package after the labelling or assignments of the migration status, the actions of the individuals, their decisions or behaviours are part of processes of the legitimacy of their status as 'real refugees' (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

Life trajectories and fluidity of the categories

In this sense, Crawley and Skleparis (2018) appeal to researchers to consider categories linked to migration as fluid processes. During these processes, as people move across several places, for different reasons, the label changes and is reshaped depending on the actors involved. Understanding the category as a fluid process allows the researchers to see how a label such as 'refugee' changes throughout time, how it can be renegotiated depending on the actors using it and most importantly, how it can be redefined according to the necessities of the context.

Also, the comprehensive acknowledge of the transit between places requires that the policymakers, researchers and non-profit organisations understand the movement between categories within a time space dimension in which the migration is not directly linked with the act of crossing a border but implicates a consideration of the migration experiences driven by motivations, decision-making, planning and aspirations(Crawley et al., 2016)

Due to forced circumstances, individuals moving across places are immersed in fluid categorisation processes that depend on the public policies regarding asylum procedures. However, the movement among categories is not a linear transition in which the people flee between two fixed places; the timeline of the resettlement of an asylum seeker is filled up with different 'in between' events, which requires understanding how the resettlement is changed over space and time. (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

The complexity of the stories of the asylum seekers in most cases is not standard representations of a step-by-step relocation, but there are common elements such as the motives, travel journeys, or challenges they have to face when looking for protection. However, one representative moment of the labelling is when the individuals' answers are framed in the belonging to specific groups, for instance, regular migrants, asylum seekers or refugees (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

These migration categories have consequences related to public policies, international agreements and the assignation of resources; when naming a person as part of a social group, the individual is entitled to protection and rights. Hence the acquired status brings along with it expectations changes in the personal finances and the modes of living(Becker, 2014). On the other hand, the after-effects of being clustered due to a legal procedure of protection and residence in another country may lead to segregation, systematic exclusion and discrimination (Gupte & Mehta, 2007). Due to the national agendas of the Nations, specific characteristics such as gender or religion can be considered relevant in the protection procedures. The categorisation is also a factor of risk of inclusion-exclusion. For instance, the list of safe countries of origin classifies people before a process of transit or mobility started, frames nationalities as 'welcome' (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018),

The relocation and seek for protection that refugees experience are complex narrations of events, feelings and perceptions. In addition, the political and economic context of the country of origin influence the scenario of forced migration, in which the categories or labels are unavailable to show the complexity of the forced- or not- migration(Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

Agency-structure in a transnational context

In the contemporary debate on agency structure, both concepts are strongly correlated, as the individual can influence the structure, but it can also shape the individuals' practices, behaviours, and decisions. Also, the structural properties of the social systems are shaped around social rules or resources, in which the practices and knowledge shared among the actors are the opportunities of the actors to influence the structure (Giddens, 1993, p. 86). Furthermore, Giddens (2006) argues that the agency-structure relation is contained inside the social structure, where the societies are not only formed by individual's single actions but produced around stable features and based on the rules or recourses.

Giddens (1984) explains that human beings are intentional agents based on reason, and actors reflexively control their behaviour. Besides, one individual registers not only their action but also the 'others' actions because several individuals are immersed in a context, the social and infrastructural aspects in which they move along. However, in terms of migration, the capacity of relocation of the individuals and the ways to access the refugee's system compares to the possibilities of an economic migrant may be contrasted, for instance, for an ex-pat or a regular migrant, the agency and the rationality behind the decisions can be traced. However, for a refugee, the choice of relocation is highly reduced (Hunter et al., 2015).

The migration process of an individual is linked with economic, political and social drivers. The mobility cannot always be traced to forced migration or after-effects of war and conflict, but non-forced elements reflect structural issues (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). The juxtaposition between the structural problems of a Nation and the impacts on the individual's lives is in a rational but forced decision to leave the country and seek protection in another place (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

The realities of war, conflict and poverty from most of the asylum seekers position the individuals in a dispute between the agency and the structure (Richmond, 2002, p. 709), as the persecution is often seen as a process that eliminates the migrants choice or decision and forces them to begin with a method of relocation without a clear distinction between a 'proactive' and 'reactive' migrants, but rather a continuum between those who have some freedom of choice whether, when and where to move, and those who are impelled by circumstances beyond their control' (Richmond, 2002, p. 709).

The idea of migration contains itself an expression of agency of the individuals when the migrant voluntarily decides to abandon one place and migrate to another. In this sense, Turton (2003) explains that 'to migrate is something we do, not something that is done to us' however, the

movement of people in terms of displacement reveals the complexity of the agency when migration compasses several shades of motives and trajectories.

Another sphere of the tension between agency-structure is represented in the construction of the asylum seeker's identity, in which a structural imposition of behavioural expectations is required to receive a resident permit (Stewart, 2005). However, the labelling, classification or status assignation are procedures that have social side effects in terms of exclusion and segregation: "rather than being an act of self-identification, these 'micro strategies were a forced response to social exclusion, negative stereotyping and marginalisation by the majority population" (Stewart, 2005, p. 509).in which the asylum seeker identity is shaped along with a pragmatic understanding of the needs of the procedures or the social effects of their status. In this sense, Stewart suggests a process of self-awareness of the vulnerability of the asylum seekers, which can lead to recognition of advantages or disadvantages in particular situations or relationships with 'others'.

The labelling process is also framed in the relationship between agency and structure, as the label 'refugee' is provided to individuals with specific characteristics according to humanitarian agencies. In this sense, Zetter (2007) explains that the tags are designed and applied after a set of public policies and programs are created, and their impact affects the social life and cultural norms (Wood, 1985). The labelling can be considered a bureaucratic process in which the identity is formed and transformed, the individual association to a specific group or social category

Everyday life

The studies of everyday life in sociology and anthropology include a broad range of perspectives in which the interactions between individuals are framed in a social structure. However, the transition between the different focus (macro-micro) allows understanding the tensions in the debate agency-structure presented in the previous section. For instance, the studies of everyday life (Adler et al., 1987, p. 218) explain that individuals or actors internalise norms and values of society out of a desire for group membership in the macro perspectives.

On the one hand, the context influence the individuals shape the perceptions, feelings and meanings. On the other, the social structure understood as a compound of people and institutions influences the behaviours of individuals through rituals and micro social norms (Goffman, 1967). Precisely, in *the presentation of the self in everyday life*, Goffman (1959) introduces the idea of roles (the nature of the self) and rules (micro-social norms) in which an intrinsic intention of the individuals tends to manipulate the impressions caused on others. In the existentialist approaches of everyday life, people are constantly induced by feelings or moods, and the human behaviours have elements of emotionality and irrationality (Adler et al., 1987, p. 223).

However, in the adaptations of everyday life into a macro theory, the importance of the agent is to recognise, for instance, Parsons describes that voluntarism reflects the power of decision making of the individuals even when they are determinate by the social structure. However, understanding it requires recognising the context and the symbolic spheres of the interactions (Adler et al., 1987).

Everyday life is a compound of diverse and dynamic elements. Conlon (2011) suggest that experience of the symbolic representations of life in such a framed space as a refugee camp, in the case of this research, an *Asielzoekerscentrum*- AZC, has two main characteristics, first the rhythm and the time-space interactions, second, the materialism of the everyday life.

Rhythmanalysis

In *The everyday and everydayness*, Lefebvre & Levich (1987) explained that everyday life is framed in interconnected functions and create diverse social systems. The everyday is a product with unique, individual, evident and hidden conditions, but it also has mundane and extraordinary characteristics (Lefebvre, 2004), the everyday life flows in dichotomies such as public and private, cyclical and linear rhythms, time and space.

The rhythms of everyday life in the AZC express the temporal measures of life; as Lefebvre suggested, time creates a frame and shapes behaviours and practices *in* and *between* time and space (Conlon, 2011). The rhythmanalysis, or the study of everyday life in a specific moment and place, is based on understanding the imbrications between people, places, and things on repetition of events or experiences in a time-space frame. The notion of repetition involved in the rhythmanalysis is correlated with the life trajectories of the asylum seekers and the representations of the pre-migration and post-migration events highlighted on the narrations of the relocation process.

On the one hand, a notion of the cyclical timeline is visible in the narrations of the migration stories, for instance: the need of repetition of their travel journeys, motives and trajectories to the institutions in charge of their resident permit application, "the cyclical [rhythm] is manifest in the social organisation [...] in cyclical time, new cycles are produced from a completed one" (Given, 2008, p. 3). On the other hand, the linear rhythm manifest in daily routines is represented as a step-by-step or checklist of events that may occur throughout the day, the week or the months.

Lefebvre's conceptualisation of the rhythmanalysis as well includes a methodological approach to the field, as is suggested that in the area of qualitative research, the observer can have measured the frequency on which the life's of the individuals is represented on diverse events, but also needs to consider that in the life of a person there are several types of rhythms happening- *polyrhythmia*. For instance, from a biological perspective, life develops in a linear timeline. However, hormonal cycles with specific repetitions make the life rhythm cyclical (Lyon, 2018).

Cultural materialism of the everyday life

Everyday life is composed of a material sphere that can be identified along with its essential elements. Lefebvre (1971, p. 21) indicates that the 'everyday is sustenance, clothing, furnishings, homes, lodgings, neighbourhoods, environment'. The elements of everyday life from a materialism approach allow the understanding of the complexity of the modes that the acquisition of goods also represents the social and cultural life that individual seeks to manifest the pertinence to a particular group (Conlon, 2011).

In this sense, the materiality of everyday life contains material objects and practices that can be represented as cultural commodities, such as ideas, goods and activities, that circulate in a transnational context. Conlon's (2011) research about the everyday of refugees and asylum seeker women in Ireland merged both Lefebvre's approaches: rhythm analysis and materialism of everyday life. Media and religion, according to Conlon are cultural commodities that shape the migration experience of asylum seekers. Hence, the absence or accumulation of possessions and cultural commodities produce social markers that allow individuals to identify someone as part of a group. The accumulation of material objects generates forms of socialisation in which the asylum seekers learn behaviours, integrate them into their everyday lives, and 'thus become embedded with new forms of sociality' in Dutch society (Conlon, 2011, p. 717).

Additionally, Conlon (2011) suggests that the prior knowledge about the welcoming country creates expectations that may be confirmed, reinforced or denied after the arrival and asylum procedure. For instance, Conlon interviewed the women asylum seekers for her research and claimed that they knew nothing about Ireland more often than not. The material forms of media, and social media, are pre-migration sources of information that shaped the expectations about everyday life. The description of the media sources as cultural commodities that circulate across time and space positions the expectations in the transnational context.

The absence of possessions at the moment of arrival and along the asylum procedure is 'perhaps one of the most extraordinary aspects of asylum seekers as transactional migrants' (Conlon, 2011, p. 721). Most individuals need to follow the travel journeys to reach the European Countries, including long, dangerous and non-traditional transportation mechanisms. Thus, everyday life is initially marked by the absence of possessions, and this absence may continue until they get the resident permit and the possibility to purchase commodities.

Finally, Conlon (2011) explains that everyday life is subsumed within relations of exchange and consumption. A process of colonisation of everyday life increases the need to acquire commodities and cultural materialism elements. Besides, the diverse spheres of the asylum seeker life such as home, work and daily life are merged with environments of production and reproduction

goods and objects. A growing relationship between people and things makes more bearable and habitual the life in the camps (Dudley, 2011).

The transnational mobility and the relocation are full of representations of material losses and the lack of possessions. In contrast, the asylum procedure is an opportunity for the applicants to acquire the commodities that will reinforce the grounding experiences of seeking protection and a permanent residence permit in the country of application (Conlon, 2011).

Social Representations and performance

Everyday life is constructed throughout different social representations, in which reality is produced by the interactions of individuals and social groups (Flick, 1994). The social representations are phenomena related to modes of understanding and communicating along with the creation of reality and common sense (Moscovici, 1984); this 'approach aims to examine how individuals within social groups make sense of the world around them and how these understandings change, develop, interact and so on' (Flick et al., 2015, p. 64).

The exploration and analysis of the social representations on everyday life with qualitative methods, such as the one used for this research, allows the researcher to identify how the participants tell their own stories via narratives of the life trajectories of the asylum procedure (Flick et al., 2015), but also with the observation is possible to recognise the common or distinctive elements in the experiences of the individuals inside of a specific sphere. However, the particularities of each interlocutor of the research create a personal overview of the reality, and with it, several representations of a context can be collected with a qualitative approach (Flick et al., 2015).

The social representations 'are not merely present in people's heads, manifest in what they say' (Flick, 1994, p. 68) and present in everyday life's actions, behaviours, and interactions. The modes of interaction and the social representations of daily life are part of the exploration of the visible and invisible.

The performance is the understanding of the human expressions that can be identified among the interactions of individuals (Goffman, 1959). Additionally, it is possible to identify diverse spheres of the performance of the asylum seekers in a framed context with the lenses of the dramaturgical analysis of Goffman. According to Goffman (1959), the social expressions of an individual can be identified in two central moments, first, the one that comes with the verbal symbols, the information textually transmit, and the expressions that come under the table, that can be described as symptoms of the actor in which the individual is playing a role, involuntary and even theatrical. The expressions are the basis for Goffman's (1959, p. 15) dramaturgical analysis based on human social interactions.

First, the individual can be both an actor and an observer of the performance. This observing individual makes a series of inferences about what the actor represents and decides whether to trust them through the previous information. Second, the interaction develops as an information game in which the witness has an advantage over the actor since the witness is the one who defines the situation projected by the different participants. These projections harmonise because each participant is expected to repress their sincere feelings and enter the role that the context assigns to the actor (Goffman, 1959, pp. 16–21).

Third, the projection of the individual depends on the first impression since it is there that all the bases of the interaction are generated. Although the following is modifiable, they will not go against the initials. However, although the first impression is clear, contradicting facts may occur, discredit, or raise doubts about the projection. When the individual introduces themselves, it is demanding to be treated according to their moral construction of appreciation and value in the way that hers/his social group are treated (Goffman, 1959).

Fourth, the interaction or encounter occurs face to face, in which there is a reciprocal influence of one individual on the actions of one and other, and a total interaction takes place on any occasion that a given group of individuals meet. Fifth, the performance occurs when an actor influences other participants in some way. Sixth, the role or routine is the pre-established pattern of action that develops during the performance. Finally, the social role occurs when the individual represents the same role for the same audience on different occasions, and a social relationship will likely develop from this interaction (Goffman, 1959).

Another element of the social representations of the asylum seekers' everyday lives is their roles in two different spaces: the camp and the homeland. The roles of the asylum seekers while living in the camps create new responsibilities towards the homeland, family and the ones left behind. Life in the refugee centres has a sphere of friendship in which new relationships build with other asylum seekers (Candappa & Igbinigie, 2003).

Resilience

The resilience in this research is framed in the debate of agency structure (Giddens, 1984)(Bourdieu, 1984), in which I included the ideas of resilience as a moment in which the agency of the Colombian asylum seekers becomes manifest. As a mode of performance, the resilience to understand the strategies that the Colombian sales in The Netherlands have crafted to overcome the barriers during the asylum process.

In concrete terms, asylum seekers expressions of resilience can be understood as a juxtaposition of the concepts, agency structure, and performance. However, the sociological and

anthropological literature about resilience is limited (Olsson et al., 2015). A general definition of resilience in the social sciences (borrowed from the natural sciences) is concerned with coping with stress or, more precisely, returning to some form of the ordinary condition after a period of stress. However, because concepts such as agency, structure or power are part of the basis of the social sciences, 'resilience' has not been commonly used to explore how individuals, such as refugees in my case of study, develop rational and non-rational strategies to overcome barriers, 'given its insensitivity to the theoretical development of the social sciences and lack of attention to agency, conflict, knowledge, and power, resilience can become a powerful depoliticising or naturalising scientific concept and metaphor when used by political actors' (Olsson et al., 2015, p. 9).

Also, it is essential to explore the actions that contribute to human development and resilience, related to the "ability that people have to overcome adverse events that arise in life (death of parents, wars, severe traumas) (Becoña Iglesias, 2006). Besides, resilience is the human capacity to overcome adversity and build on it, making it possible to have a healthy and dignified life even in hostile environments (Rutter, 1993).

In the same way, resilience is characterised as allowing humans to face adversity, overcome it and emerge strengthened and transformed by experience (Grotberg, 1995). Hein (1993) argues that as refugees cannot return to their homeland, the strength that refugees gain between their new networks is one of the main support bases to overcome the challenges of resettlement.

Finally, Friedland and Arian (2005) illustrate that the concept of resilience has two connotations. First, it can be seen as the resistance and the flexibility that an individual has, for instance, in societal levels when the adversity is withstanding with its values and institutions remaining intact. Second, social resilience is based on coping with changes, creating innovative ways to overcome challenges.

Chapter 2: Life trajectories

This chapter will present all findings related to the life trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers that I encountered during fieldwork. The categories linked to the social movements of people seeking protection after fleeing from the country of origin tend to be understood as part of a linear process in which the individuals move from one place to another after a rational thinking decision. However, as presented in Chapter 1: theoretical framework, the life trajectories are a fluid process in which several elements converge that make it a complex scenario of transitions, changes, self-recognition and participation in the public life of the asylum seeker.

To understand the fluidity of the life trajectories, I present the findings related to the biographical features of the interlocutors, the fleeing motives and the decision making of the transnational migration. In addition, this chapter illustrates the details of the trajectories experienced by the interlocutors in the travel journey from Colombian to The Netherlands, the activation of the asylum procedure, and the main challenges along the process in the initial moment of seeking protection.

Back in Colombia: paths and motives



Map 1, Colombia's natural-cultural regions

The main interlocutor of this research is Andres (29), from a small village in the Caribbean in the northeast of Colombia (see map 1). He fled with his wife Claudia (29) and their two children, Evelin (13) and Alex (7). Andres is a technician specialising in chalk mining, and he was working as a project leader in a recognised mining transnational company in his region. Claudia is a nurse dedicated to the upbringing of children. As I presented in the introduction of this research, the 21N I met Andres, at first sight, I could recognize his character as the social leader; he was one of the spokesmen of the demonstration in Amsterdam regarding the protest against the Colombian Government.

I was a social leader in my community. I stood out for the rights of the people: I sought the electrifying the neighbourhood, the installation of electric poles, paving of the streets. I always stood out for my work, for being a syndicalist (Andres. In-depth Interview IdI, 14-01).

Andres invited me to the AZC, in which I did most of the participant observation and interviews for this research. He introduced me to other asylum seekers and guided me throughout the process. Andres was a social leader in Colombia, a human rights defender; he was part of the company's union that he used to work for as well as an activist for the environmental protection of the water sources that pass through his village. Like Andres, Wendy (32) was a social leader in her community in an intermediate city in the pacific region. Besides her work for a hydroelectric power plant, she used to be part of the football league of her district.

Dilma (55) used to work as an accountant for a governmental institution; she is from one of the main cities of Venezuela, on the border with Colombia. I decided to include Dilma's story and narration in this research because she is a double citizen from Venezuela and Colombia. Besides, her narrations and experiences are similar to the trajectories and the entanglements in everyday life with the Colombian asylum seekers. She lived in Colombia for several years; her mother is from Colombia. One of her sisters lives in Bogota (Colombia's capital).

Jorge (37) is from an intermediate city in the Andean region, an aeronautical engineer who worked for the Colombian Air Force. Wendy, Dilma and Jorge are single and part of the LGBTQ community. However, their cases are not based on gender persecution or threat. Besides, the three of them do not have children.

I came to The NL asking for asylum not because I was gay but because they [paramilitary] would kill me. I never asked for asylum because of my condition; it was not mentioned in my case. LBGT threads do not apply to Colombia because, in theory, Colombia is a free country for gays (Jorge. IdI, 22-03).

The relocation decision implicates a process of detachment on which the interlocutors leave behind their families and social network. However, their relatives' economic and emotional support is one of the catalysers that increase the decision making and the sense of uprooting. Some of the most moving conversations that I had with the Colombian asylum seekers were the ones that include the narrations of the moments in which they discussed the possibility of fleeing from Colombia with an unknown future with their families, including the length of the asylum procedure and the chance of meeting again.

When I was on the aeroplane, I called all my family crying because I knew I would never see them again (Andres. IdI, 14-01).

I said to my mother: 'I am leaving'. She answered: 'the best is that you go away' (Jorge. IdI, 22-03).

As I briefly presented in the introduction of this research, Colombia's extended history of violence, conflict and war is a compound of imbrications and entanglements. The complexity of the disputes for territory, power and natural resources have an unmeasurable impact on the life of the

citizens. Colombia is recognized globally as the country with the second-largest population of internally displaced people, and in an essentialising overview of the history, all Colombians have suffered the struggles of the war. The diversification of armed groups (criminal organizations, guerrillas, drug traffickers, paramilitary forces, governmental army), the wide range of multicultural and pluriethnic groups along with the extension of the country (afro-Colombians, indigenous, gypsies) and the labyrinthine of the political structure with eighteen political parties, create a blurred vision of historical explanation the necessity of fleeing of the Colombian asylum seekers that I met during the fieldwork.

Crawley & Skleparis (2018) conceptualisation regarding the construction of the categories related to regular migrants and refugees suggested that one of the standard divisions among these groups is based on the reasons for the relocation. In this sense, the narrations interlocutors of this research and the status that the procedure assigned them is 'asylum seekers' due to the safety reasons that affected their lives and the possibility of permanence in Colombia.

Andres [and his family], Wendy and Jorge are victims of explicit and direct expressions of violence. However, each narration involves intimidation, recruiting, and death threats perpetrated by diverse armed groups. One of the systematic ways that ordinary criminal organizations obtain economic resources is through extortion. Andres' story of persecution starts with the union of the mining company that he used to work for, aside from the community leader's actions to reduce the environmental impact that the open mining was causing on his co-workers' health town inhabitants.

I had to do something; I felt guilty because the rivers were diverted, the animals that you used to see in the mountains were no longer there, the pollution in the four or five towns around the mine is unacceptable [...] hospitals cannot cope with respiratory diseases, most of the people have pneumonia, the coal pollution that the wind blows away are microcapsules that go straight to the lungs [...] (Andres, IdI)

According to the inform 'Defending Tomorrow' (Global Witness, 2020), protecting Colombia's territories and ecosystems is a lethal activity. In 2019, with 212 murders to land and environmental defenders, Colombia ranked with 64 killings. These actions were the ones that made Andres a target, but the entanglement of actors involved in the Colombian conflict makes the scenario complex and blurred. Nevertheless, Andres knew the people who directly threatened him; the corruption and participation of the local authorities in illegal activities complicate the opportunity for an effective denounce.

At this moment, there are several criminal groups, and they can be related to the municipality, the mayor's office, the Government, a private company, a multinational, who gave the order? Or who paid a person to "just go, knock on the door" (Andres. IdI, 14-01).

The intimidation and extortion strategy that Andres experienced increased as time passed; it begins with requesting a monthly payment 'to support' activities of the paramilitary groups or the region. Months later, Andres decided to stop paying the monthly extortion resulting in death threats,

harassment, and actual life-threatening situations such as shootings around his house and persecution by assassins. However, the local government and police's lack of protection increased the fear and distress. Likewise, Wendy's private affective life, in addition to her participation in the public sphere of her community, made her a target of intimidation and persecution by different actors:

I came here [to The NL] first because I had a girlfriend and could not be openly together. Second, because my ex-partner threatened me, he kept haunting me because he found out that I was lesbian. Third, people from criminal organizations asked me for information [...] about other criminal bands from the other side [of the city]. Those guys stood in a corner in a store with a gun in hand; they forced me to talk and gave me 200,000 pesos. From there on, I lived scared, terrified. My nerves were on edge because I did not know when something was going to happen. (Wendy. IdI, 22-01)

Jorge's motives are a result of the intention of recruitment by the FARC. After working for seven years in the Colombian Air Force, his knowledge and experience, next to his expertise on inside air control protocols, increased the intimidations and the persecution started. Jorge's initial approach to overcome the threats was to abandon everything he had worked for in his hometown and be displaced to another city.

They wanted me; they even sent me letters. I received several calls ordering me to go to them. They said that I must join their army, the FARC. At that time, I did not go because I could not believe that this was happening to me [...]. I even changed cities, but the persecution continued. One year after, I was already living in Cali [largest city in the pacific region] and working for a private airline, when I am intercepted by two motorcycles, I saw them I thought that they were thefts, but they insulted me, I run away, but then I felt, they shout at me: 'why you have not shown up? If you do not do it, we are going to kill you'. (Jorge. IdI, 22-03).

The relocation decision within the country is one of the first labelling procedures that Jorge faced (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Once he arrived in Cali, he was registered as an IDP, and with it, he became subject to rights of protection by the government. Besides an identification number, it did not activate any other actual benefit. However, the Colombian public policy ensures the safety of the IDP 'with actions of and for assistance, protection, socioeconomic consolidation and stabilization of internally displaced people' (Law 387 of 1997, 1997).

The narrations of Andres, Jorge and Wendy reflect the main motives that I encounter during the fieldwork. The first time I visited the AZC, I heard different experiences from other Colombian asylum seekers visiting Andres and Claudia's bungalow. During that event, two women were narrating to the rest of us why and how they were supporting their asylum procedure application. The asylum becomes a permanence strategy for both of them, despite the lack of persecution or life-threatening situations.

Patricia (30), came to Belgium under a working visa (Au Pair), as she wanted to stay in Europe, applied for asylum when she came to the NL (Fieldnote, 07-01)

The awareness of the advantages that the asylum procedure might bring is openly considered and presented by Laura (27). Without hesitation, she told the details of her application. Her case was

not built around persecution or dangerous situations but of the necessity of medical treatment. This strategic application as well had a substantial justification around Laura's transgender identity.

Laura (27) is from the Caribbean region of Colombia, close to the border of Venezuela. She had an accident while she was on holiday in The NL. She needed complex surgery and lengthy recovery treatments. The doctor treating her suggested starting the asylum procedure like that the medical expenses would be covered. (Fieldnote, 07-01)

The fear sensation and the escalated intimidation are triggers for the decision to relocate. Once the threats become unbearable, the relocation abroad looks like the only survival path. The intercommunicated networks of the conflict actors (criminal organisations, guerrilla and paramilitary) make the country's displacement a lethal option. However, the economic cost of flying from Colombia to The Netherlands (€500 p.p.) delimitates the vast majority of Colombians' options to cope with life-threatening intimidations.

So I call my dad and tell him, "I cannot do it here anymore, I have to do something" Because I had to leave Colombia (Andres. IdI, 14-01).

I quit my job for fear of going out, and that is when I started looking for a solution. I did not even know it was a political asylum. I had no idea that I could go to another country until the prosecutor following my case says to me: Why don't you go? You have to get out of here, or they will kill you. He said: Ask for Asylum. Then I read about this, about the process, and I had no time. Either I flee, or they would have killed me. I was already here in less than a month (Jorge. IdI, 22-03).

The high costs of travelling and the developing knowledge of the asylum procedure are reflected in the asylum seekers' initial steps to start the journey. On the one hand, all of the interlocutors first raised the money for purchasing flights, personal items, and money if needed. For instance, Andres and Dilma sold their properties and vehicles. Wendy and Jorge raised the money with their savings and contributions of their relatives.

I sold my car. I sold a piece of land. I got loans to come here. I made three loans in three banks. (Andres. IdI, 14-01).

I came with my savings. I had to sell the house, the car. But I did not bring all the money I had, because you cannot bring more than €5000 if you want to live in the AZC. If so, you have to live on your own and ask for asylum. (Dilma. IdI, 15-02)

On the other hand, once the asylum procedure is activated, the IND will request all the necessary proofs that the applicants can provide to support the case. Intuitively, they carried all the possible documents that might prove the risk to their exposure to the authorities' lack of protection along the journey.

All I did was bring the displaced letter. (Wendy. IdI, 22-01)

I brought all the documents that I had, as I made to official denounces. Also, the security protocol that the police gave me was the paper that they declared me a victim (Jorge. IdI, 22-03).

All the original documents. The proofs that I was an auditor. I took the risk of leaving my country with those documents because I did not want to get my family into trouble. (Dilma. IdI, 15-02)

Since December 2016, Colombian nationals have not requested a visa to visit the member countries of the Schengen area. Thus, all the interlocutors could relocate to a list of 26 European

countries they could stay as regular tourists for up to 90 days. Wendy, Dilma and Jorge motives to migrate to The Netherlands included safety reasons, acquaintance references and LGBTQ rights. For Andres and his family, the final destination was Spain. However, they bought the flights tickets with a layover in Schiphol Airport.

And I start looking for tickets to Spain. Why Spain? Because I had to leave Colombia, we do not need a visa to go there, unlike the USA (Andres. Idl, 14-01).

The 8 days period

On the one hand, Andres, Jorge and Wendy started their asylum journey with the border procedure; when they arrived via Schiphol Airport, they report their intention of asylum to the Kmar, and with it, the petition of protection to The Netherlands is activated. On the other hand, Dilma decided to explore Amsterdam and its surroundings, and after nine days of doing tourism, she travelled to Tel Apel to request asylum and report her intention to the AVIM personnel.

I decided to come to The Netherlands because I heard about it, but primarily because it was a direct flight between Cali and Amsterdam, and that is one of the first requirements: Someone who is requesting asylum has to do it in the first country where they arrive (Jorge. Idl, 22-03).

I had to walk about 1 kilometre from the bus stop, with two suitcases. I had to for help to reach the AZC. It is a camp, same as here [the fieldwork location], but uglier, it was a huge shock. (Dilma. Idl, 15-02)

In the initial inspection, the migration authorities are informed by the asylum seekers about their intention. Beforehand, Wendy, Dilma and Jorge approached the asylum procedure when they looked and sought information on whom they should reach and how to communicate their necessities.

I got off the plane, showed up at the Kmar, made me wait there, and asked me for my documents. (Wendy. Idl, 22-01)

I arrived at Schiphol, looked for the police or someone in uniform, and said: I am here to seek asylum. They brought me to another office inside of the airport. (Jorge. Idl, 22-03).

In contrast, Andres intends to relocate to Spain because some relatives live in Barcelona. However, as the Dublin procedure establishes (European Commission, 2016), the asylum procedure needs to be initiated in the first European country where the applicant arrives. As the layover was in Amsterdam, the correspondent application must be made in The Netherlands in Andres's situation. The control done by the migration authorities in the Schiphol Airport prevented them from reaching their final destination.

The arrival to the COA facilities in the Schiphol Judicial Complex is the second step for the applicants following the border procedure. In Jorge and Wendy's cases, the days they expended in the facilities were an opportunity to rest and ease after the persecution and travel journey to reach The Netherlands. As Dilma decided to go directly to Ter Apel, the reception of her application was done directly by the AVIM, her belongings were also confiscated.

I had to wait for a while. I was transferred to a place called Schiphol. In there, they took all my belongings. I was there for nine days, but the truth is, one comes from living so many things, that a place like that one, that looks like a prison, I felt good in there. Finally, I felt calm, safe. I knew that nothing was going to happen to me. (Wendy. IdI, 22-01)

Independently on where the asylum process begins (Schiphol, Tel Apel), the first day of the procedure includes several steps: fingerprinting, gathering of personal information, photos, passport confiscation and the medical intake by the *GezondheidsZorg Asielzoekers* (GZA) (IND, 2021d).

In the beginning, everything is a shock. You feel like a prisoner. In the photo of the ID, I have scarred face. That day I also had my first interview. They asked me everything. I think that's the first filter to decide if you are a possible candidate. They evaluated me medically. (Dilma. IdI, 15-02)

One of the labelling processes highlights occurs when the individuals hand all their belongings, including identification documents, to the IND. As Becker (2014) suggested, the acquired status will drastically change the new 'asylum seekers' modes of living. Initially, the transfer to the AZC locations represents the resettlement's grounding effect. The assignation of living space and the integration in the living community of asylum seekers reinforce the categorisation process and the social representations of everyday life inside the AZC. For instance, the possession of the *Vreemdelingen Identiteitsbewijs*- VI (Aliens Identity Card) type W, commonly known among the asylum seekers as the 'blue card', is a material representation of the asylum procedure and the migration status of the individuals.

Then we had to wait for the documents because there they gave us a blue ID, that blue document means that we have priorities. It represents that we are legally here, and it is valid for one year. With that document, we can move around more confidently (Andres. IdI, 16-02).

On the second day of the general asylum procedure- AA, the applicants contact the lawyer to represent their cases and start to prepare for the interview¹.

The third and fourth days of the procedure do not represent significant changes in the label of the asylum seekers. As the interview takes place, the IND collects all the information the applicant prepared with the lawyers. Afterwards, a full report of the conversation is submitted by the lawyer with the approval of the asylum seeker. However, one of the most important findings that I encounter regarding the interview is the perception of burden and intensity that the extended narration of the motives can cause to the applicants.

I can say that they [IND interviewers] are not very sensitive. Because I think they are people who have never experienced a situation of fear, they have never felt that they are going to be killed, or that they are being persecuted, that they can torture them, they have never been raped, nothing, because the people here in this country do not know anything about that. (Wendy. IdI, 22-01)

The interviewers are cruel when doing the questions. On several occasions, I got angry with them because they think that all the people who come to ask for asylum come lying, so they ask you the same thing all over again, to see you falling in one. (Jorge. IdI, 22-03).

¹ (on Chapter 4: representations of the everyday life I present the findings related to the interrelationship with the lawyers

Indeed, as part of the procedure, the asylum seekers need to be emotionally, mentally, and physically capable of coping with the conversation's length and deepness. The IND interviewers double check if this is the case; otherwise, the interview can be postponed.

They first check you to see if they are suitable or not to enter the interview. If you want, you can say: no, I'm not in condition for this, I'll postpone it. They will send a report to the lawyer and the IND. As I was pregnant, they asked me three times, but I wanted to do it the sooner, the better (Claudia. IdI, 16-02).

The second part of the procedure includes the formal decision granted by the IND; the remaining four days of the process depend on the case's particular circumstances. As I presented in the [Context: Mapping of the asylum chain in The Netherlands](#), the interview's outcome is announced to the lawyer and the applicant on the fifth day. A possible result of the interview is the approval of the resident permit. However, this was not the scenario for any of the interlocutors. Andres, Jorge, Wendy and Dilma applications required a second stage in the VA's extended asylum procedure (IND, 2021c). For this reason, a second interview was scheduled, requiring further preparation with the support of the lawyer representing the case.

On the sixth day, the IND's decision regarding the second interview is shared with the applicants. In this stage, the life trajectories that include the highlights in the migration status of the applicants reach a branch point, in which new labels are assigned, and with it, a variety of scenarios of the everyday life [Post AZC](#) can be described.

Firstly, Dilma's² procedure required additional evidentiary material to prove the persecution and life-threatening situations that she was experiencing in her homeland; hence, the IND called out for a third interview, and the VA is extended longer. This outcome in the procedure places her back two years ago when her application was being submitted for the first time. Secondly, the IND's formal decision regarding Wendy's procedure rejected the request of protection, which led her case to an appealing process submitted to the Court.

On the seventh and eighth days, the closure of the procedure can have an approved or rejected outcome. On the one hand, Jorge is out of the asylum procedure after the IND, and The Court dismissed his case and appellations. The rejection of his application was the breaking moment in which he left the AZC and decided to stay in The Netherlands despite the illegal status that he acquired.

On the other hand, Andres and his family received the outcome of the second interview as a favourable decision from the IND, which positioned them as Refugees. The new label is reinforced with the integration procedure with the VWN and the Gemeente in which they got relocated (See [Chapter 5: Final considerations about the Post AZC everyday life.](#)).

² The last contact that I had with the interlocutors was May, 2021.

In sum, the life trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers are part of a process of relocation, in which the narrations of their fleeing paths are represented with the most significant highlights of the procedure. The labelling and social categorisation as part of a specific group or community depend on the stage of the asylum procedure that the applicants are experiencing. As well, the labels are representations of the milestones reached along with the process, on which is taken into consideration the previous events that are related to the motives of the relocation.

Chapter 3: Rhythms of Everyday Life in an Asielzoekerscentrum

The asylum seekers experience two synchronic processes that have similar effects on everyday life. Namely, the asylum procedure itself and the changes on the labelling are part of the continuous timeline that I presented in the previous chapter in the section [the 8 days period](#). However, the asylum procedure affects the applicants' life in a legal sphere, but it also has particular consequences related to everyday life and the compound of dynamic elements that occur in a specific time-space, such as the resting period-RVT while living in the AZC.

The theoretical discussion related to everyday life and its social representations suggests that the rhythm depends on the particular characteristics of the physical space and timeframe (2011). In this sense, the asylum procedure is part of the linear rhythm of everyday life, in which the highlights of 'the 8 days period' are a step-by-step process that has backward and forward jumps in the timeline (Lyon, 2018).

In contrast, the routine and the repetition are part of a cyclical understanding of the rhythm. The expectations regarding the procedure create an extended timeframe fulfilled with a social gathering and bonding activities among the Colombian asylum seekers that live in the AZC (Given, 2008, p. 3).

In this chapter, I present the findings related to the rhythms and routine of everyday life in the AZC. Initially, I illustrate the spatial distribution of the centre and the impacts of its geolocalisation. Then I describe the routine activities that the interlocutors presented to me as relevant as the time passed in the RVT. Lastly, the gatherings are part of the social activities and scenarios of comfort and disclosure of the side-effects, such as loneliness, stress and depression.

The experiences that I will present in this chapter are related to the narrations of Andres, Wendy and Dilma. The three of them live in the centre in which I did the fieldwork for this research. Although Jorge did not live in the same AZC, and his procedure occurred several years before, his perceptions regarding the rhythm of everyday life are included, especially his insights related to the after-effects of the asylum procedure.

which the asylum seekers are looking for protection and safety over a privileged location in the urban areas of the country 'the Dutch favour the use of asylum accommodation centres [AZCs], segregating asylum seekers from the general population' (Bakker et al., 2016).

One of the side effects of spatial segregation can be seen as one of the origins of the struggle in the integration that some asylum seekers may experience since the beginning of the procedure. The segregation and location in sub-urban areas prevent asylum seekers from contributing to the local economies and the social progress of the welcoming societies (Bakker et al., 2016). For instance, Jorge's calculations regarding the weekly spent in groceries for him and his family represent more than 80 per cent of their regular income.

However, the effects of segregation and spatial isolation are the catalysers for an active life inside of the AZC, the facilities are designed to cover a wide range of activities besides the housing and management buildings. The AZC facilities include school, garden, handcrafts room, computers room, gym, bike shop. The first time I visited the centre, Andres gave me a tour around the camp, in which more than a thousand asylum seekers live.

In the same building as the front desk are the social workers and the managers. There, the asylum seekers can request transportation cards to go to appointments with the lawyers. On the left side of the reception is storage, where they can collect cleaning and personal hygiene products weekly. Next to it is the gym, playground and multi-sports ground. While we kept walking, we passed by a garden and the school [...] we turned around, started to step back, and after 50mts we were back in the main garden. I was a 'GPS' confused. However, Andres showed me the reception and the large sign with the name of the location AZC ***. (Fieldnote. [First time in the AZC] 0701)

In detail, some of the buildings in the AZC are destined for specific activities: ceramic, wood and crafts workshops and music centre. However, the Covid-19 Pandemic affected the access to the spaces; before, those facilities were open for all the centre residents. The asylum seekers could develop new skills there and spend their free time. There is also a *moestuín* (vegetable garden), where some asylum seekers can work, but it was out of service during the fieldwork because of the winter and the Covid-19 restrictions.

As part of the services that the residents can use inside the centre, there is an office for the GZA, which can be visited with prior appointment. As well, there is a bikes workshop. However, some refugees, Andres included, have their workshop, and the services are seen as an additional source of money. During the RVT, Andres has been getting new tools and improving his services to other asylum seekers.

While we were having coffee in the living room, someone came to ask Andres for reparation of a bike wheel. He explained that he is the non-official AZCs bikes reparation service. He has been buying the tools to help people. His purpose with the service is economical. For him, it is a way to help the other residents. If they go to the closest city to make a simple reparation, they would be charged 15 euros, but he only charges them 3 euros. Because he is aware that no one has enough money and can recover the investments on tools and materials with every client he gets. (Fieldnote. [Birthday party] 1401)

Inside the AZC, there is an international school, not only for the children that are part of the asylum procedure but also for children that are part of the integration procedure in the centre's surroundings. Evelin and Alex (Andres and Claudia's children) have received Dutch lessons since the first day they arrived in the AZC; the school's primary focus is to teach them the language.

The layout of the houses is different depending on the characteristics of each group of asylum seekers. I visited three houses in the AZC for the fieldwork: familiar, individual, and mixed. Two studios form the familiar house with three rooms on each side connected in the middle, with a shared kitchen, shower, toilet, and washing and drying machine. The individual homes are assigned to single women, men and transgender asylum seekers following the procedure alone. Eight people occupy each house, and the rooms can be shared or single. The mixed houses are two-floor houses, with double rooms on the second floor usually assigned to couples.

The distribution and assignation of the houses are initially based on the gender of the applicant and the single/accompanied variant. For instance, Andres and his family used to live in a familiar house. Dilma lives in a mixed house. Wendy lives in an individual house only for women. Jorge used to live in an individual house only for gay men. Laura, a transgender woman, lives in an individual house only for transgender women; the assignation to the transgender house is one of the most strict to prevent gender mistreatments or abuses.

Criteria to assign people to houses there is no mix between men and women with children. Women and children live alone. Do not mix single men with single women. Pay attention sometimes between nationalities or ages. If they are old, it's not that much of a problem if they are not mixed, but if they are young, they will be mixed. They need to learn that here everything is mixed. (Fieldnote. [Birthday party] 1401)

In some AZC, they have special dorms for Trans people. (Wim- COA. Idl, 1403)

As well, the age is considered in the assignation of housing for underage applicants. The youngsters between 15 and 18 can have individual asylum processes, and they are located in houses exclusive for boys or girls. In front of their homes is the supervisor's house, to control and regulate their behaviours.

The distribution of the centres in terms of the architecture is related to planning the use of the facilities and their initial design. In other words, the AZC where I did the fieldwork was built for the reception of asylum seekers. On the contrary, other centres such as Duinrell were leased to the COA for a season to receive asylees; AZC- Den Helder is a former prison, the cells were rebuilt as new apartments. Hence, the perception of wellness and comfort is related to the relationship with the space.

That is an excellent camp; it was a vacation centre, the bungalows there had complete comfort, microwaves, the heating worked very well. (Jorge. Idl, 22-03).

That AZC was horrible, another horrible camp like Ter Apel. My dorm was in front of the men's toilet. (Dilma. Idl, 15-02).

Work and asylum procedure

The RVT for most asylum seekers is extended up to two years; during that time, 'the 8 days' represent some of the most relevant highlights during the asylum procedure. However, the asylum seekers' productive activities in the AZC can increase proactivity and fasten the resting period. Tasks such as working and volunteering are two of the spheres that the COA and its employees tend to reinforce to counteract the psychological aftereffects of the routine and repetition in everyday life of the asylum seeker.

In this sense, Wim explained that some of the jobs are the maintenance of the facilities, supervision and control of the workshops and gym, and activities related to productive projects. For instance, eight women were manufacturing face masks in the sewing atelier during the Covid-19 pandemic. The asylum seekers' work in the AZC is considered a voluntary job, and the payment is 14 euros on top of the weekly allowance. Wendy works in the gym of the AZC as a facilitator of the activities and at the front desk.

Some of the jobs are: making sets of bed linen, wash and fold them. Sweep the hallways, clean windows, garden work, play with kids, control the rooms where the pcs are. (Wim- COA. Idl, 12-02)

In the ACZ, they have also volunteer paid job opportunities that are considered a psychological way to give them some structure because the payment is deficient. 14€ a week for 2 hours a day. It feels weird to pay 0, 50€ per hour to someone that maybe was a doctor in their country, but it's not for the money; it is to feel useful. It's to have something to do, to make friends, to drink coffee. (Wim- COA. Idl, 12-02)

However, Wim explained that some of the jobs could be perceived as powerful; for instance, if one asylum seeker controls the access to the computers room for an extended period, the perception of power related to the facilities will be associated with the supervisor of the room. Wim described this situation as a hierarchy issue that involves a constant rotation of duties. The activities given to the asylum seekers require strategic planning, in which characteristics such as the cultural background and nationalities of the individuals need to be considered to prevent discrimination among the residents.

If they have a job for a long time, they may start to think they are more special and see themselves as the 'owners' of the room. (Wim- COA. Idl, 12-02)

Saudi Arabian people don't want to work for a Syrian because the Syrians are the underdogs back in their homelands; they are sometimes racist. It's complicated to assign the jobs. Don't let a nationality always do the sweeping. (Wim- COA. Idl, 14-03)

In terms of the work that the asylum seekers can do outside of the AZC, the working permit's restrictions allow them to work for six months. Still, any payment they received is discounted from the weekly allowance the individuals or households may receive. Andres is the only interlocutor that had a job and experienced the working environment out of the asylum procedure.

When we got here [AZC], we understood the BSN and why it is needed. After six months I already had it, and because of it I could work in construction, but that is not a good deal, because whatever you work they take it from your money, so in the end, it is not worth going out and working (Andres. Idl, 16-02)

For the interlocutors, the lack of work opportunities outside of the AZC is one of the unanticipated features of the asylum procedure. The effects of restrictions in terms of economic independence and productivity are related to the impact of the refugees' policies, on the individual lives, in a sense in which the applicants' social life and cultural norms are restrained to what is allowed by the public policy itself (Wood, 1985). The control of the lives of the asylum seekers positions them in a framed context in which the infrastructure of the asylum chain restricts the agency but increases the sense of community, the safe environment, and the development of new skills (Hunter et al.

You come here wanting to work, with a desire of freedom, of being able to do something for yourself. The NL is a beautiful country but also has its complexities. You arrive here with a will of being productive; I thought it would be like, "ok, it is ready, we are going to give you the permit, go to work". But no, they have us here, restricted, confined. You need to be two years waiting for an answer with your hands tied. (Wendy. Idl, 22-01)

I just wanted to work; I want to show this country that I am productive. I never liked to receive 'free' things from no one; I have worked for my family, but here I am forced to do nothing and sit and watch for two years. And then the Dutch people say that we are a parasite, yes maybe we are, but because they do not want to create jobs for us. (Andres. Idl, 16-02)

I tell you something, Victoria; I did not come to this country to depend on the Government. I am an independent, intelligent woman, I can work. Here in the AZC, I have proven myself, I give music and piano lessons. At my age, I am 55 years old; I have maximum productivity of 12 years. I want to work and pay my taxes and have a good pension. (Dilma. Idl, 15-02)

Routine and repetition

During the fieldwork, Andres invited me several times to stay overnight at his house with his family in the ACZ. The three times that I spend the night there, I could feel the routine; I experienced the repetition between on one day to the other: another asylum seeker went to visit the Andres and Claudia's bungalow, someone went to share a coffee, some other resident went to ask for bike reparations, and some other to have a chat or even watch TV. The everyday life of the asylum seekers during the RVT pass by slow. Several months of waiting for communication from the IND, about their cases or applications, restrain the possibilities of activities that the residents can do.

The highlight of a day usually is related to the social encounters or gatherings that may happen. In this sense, some of the fieldnotes that I wrote about the schedule and routine of the main interlocutors reflects the repetition of events: send the children to school, go to do groceries, prepare meals, welcome visitors, wait for an update on their procedure, host a party and repeat.

The following day, they [Andres and Claudia] got awake at 8 a.m. to send the kids to school. Afterwards, they went back to bed; the whole time, I was in the living room because I slept on the sofa. At 9:30 a.m. Andres prepared breakfast and the lunch bag for the kids. in the meantime, Claudia and I showered the newborn baby [Hanna]. Wendy came to have breakfast with us, Andres joined after doing groceries. We chatted for a bit longer while we were preparing lunch (Fieldnote. [First time in the AZC] 0701)

[...] As the bungalow is shared with another family of asylum seekers from Eritrea, the rhythms and schedules are mixed. For Andres and his family, the day starts at 8 a.m. On the contrary, for the other

family, at 6:30 a.m. They also have a toddler; the first activity was to shower her, she cried for more than one hour.

Andres had to get ready fast because he needed to leave at 10 a.m. to pick up a ladder in the next town [...] Andres left his clothes in the bathroom, as a sign that he was about to take a shower, in a matter of seconds that he went back to the bedroom the Eritrean woman whom they share the house with, went into the shower. Andres got upset because he was in a hurry. He knocked on the door and asked her to be more kind and thoughtful. After 30 minutes, he could take a shower. I stayed with Claudia while Andres left. I helped with Hanna, I changed her diaper, and we got ready to leave to visit Wendy in her bungalow because she was preparing *empanadas* [Colombian pastry] to sell. We stop at the reception of the AZC because it was stamping day. When we arrived at Wendy's, two Colombian asylum seekers were there; they left right away we arrived. (Fieldnote [overnight-3] 17.18-03)

The first night that I stayed over in the AZC, everything was a new experience. Hence I could not feel the repetition of the passing of the hours. However, the second and third time, it was complicated not to feel bored at certain moments, as the architecture of the camp is very repetitive, all the bungalows look the same, the paths and roads are circular and always bring you to the same place, the hours, the stories, the rhythms are repetitions of the day before. Even when the fieldwork was highlighted with the personal narrations of the life experiences of the interlocutors, part of the challenges was to keep alert and receptive to the conversations or events felt familiar to the one before.

As much as you want time to pass quickly, it is too slow every day. (Jorge. Idl, 22-03)

Here, the life of the asylee is easy because you do nothing. But doing nothing can drive you insane (Andres. Idl, 16-02)

However, the social gathering among the asylum seekers makes everyday life a collective experience. Sharing food and hosting a party is part of the spheres of bonding, rooting and nostalgia towards the life before the relocation. The first time I visited the AZC, Claudia welcomed me with a traditional Colombian breakfast: *arepas, caldo, chocolate, aguapanela and huevos*. Everyone was invited to share the meal.

All [the Colombian and Latin asylum seekers] came to greet me. It was a warm welcoming. They prepared what I thought was a special breakfast. Then I realised that this was not only for me but also for all the people who would arrive later. Andres and Claudia's bungalow looks like a communal house; everyone is welcome, feels at home, and behaves like that was their house. In the afternoon, they were going to prepare *sancocho*. All the asylum seekers involved in the meal had to pay 3 euros. They did not allow me to pay. (Fieldnote. [First time in the AZC] 0701)

Three times I visited the AZC, the gathering ended up in a party that included dancing and drinking in a Latin environment, full of music and diversity. The first time in the AZC, I thought it was a special occasion, perhaps because I was there, but soon I understood that it was a strategic routine to time pass to help the asylum seekers cope with emotional distress and psychological pressure that the asylum process represents. In this sense, the social gathering among asylum seekers is a form of resilience in which the feeling of loneliness and depression are overcome with the support of the social network created in the everyday life of the AZC (Grotberg, 1995).

In the subsequent visits to the AZC, several stories were related to the festive activities in the past days or the upcoming ones. The cheerful character of the Latin culture was the main description that the Wim gave me towards the Colombian asylum seekers, in comparison to northern African or Middle Eastern residents.

Of course, these are essentialisation and stereotyping comments that can be not so politically correct to mention, but with middle eastern, we specially have coexistence problems and with Africans communication issues, including the setting up of common ground in terms of hygiene. However, with Latin asylum seekers, the main problem is that they want to party the whole time; they bond so fast that one new resident that just arrived at the AZC, the same night you will see them in the bungalow of another Latin having a party. But in the end that is not a problem if they are not that loud, because they can drink, can dance, they can have fun (Wim- COA. Idl, 14-03)

After Laura left, we had dinner. I had a meaningful conversation with Andres and Claudia. After a while, Wendy came back, we bought some beers and stayed awake until 2 a.m. The conversation was interesting and laidback. (Fieldnote [overnight-1] 28.29-01)

Despite the coping strategies that the Colombian asylum seekers may have in their everyday lives, to compensate for the sense of loneliness, the coexistence issues and the uncertainty regarding the procedure trigger emotional distress and depression. The after-effects can be traced even in the Post AZC experience; for example, Jorge's asylum process ended several years ago. However, the psychological consequences still affect his everyday life currently.

During those two years, I had a depression crisis because I was very ill; I got sick, they sent me an organization that helped people with psychological problems. All the PTSD from my life experiences in Colombian, plus the stress that I experienced here, strike me. Now I have anxiety, severe depression and paranoia (Jorge. Idl, 22-03)

While we were all in the living room talking, Wendy went to the kitchen to wash the dishes. I went after and accompanied her. She told me that she is exhausted. She is having repeated nightmares and could not rest. She told me that she was tired and did not want to continue the process; she felt tied hands because she could not work or move anywhere. [...] Wendy says that since she received a rejection from the IND, she feels hopeless. Even when she is appealing, her lawyer is not very positive. In addition, the coexistence with her housemates is tense. I find it interesting that even though Wendy knew that the procedure takes time, the level of stress that implies being locked up and unable to do anything without working generates strong psychological pressure. (Fieldnote [overnight-3] 17.18-03)

In sum, the influence of the space and time in the rhythm of the everyday life of the Colombian asylum seekers that I encountered during this research are strongly represented in the forms that their experiences are repetitive and routinary while in RVT. The infrastructure of the AZC conditions the amount and variety of activities that can be performed, and the spatial distribution and assignment of the centre influences the social bonding and networks that are created.

Chapter 4: Social representations of the Everyday Life in an Asielzoekerscentrum

The representations of everyday life in the *Asielzoekerscentrum*-AZC are the expressions of the roles of the Colombian asylum seekers and their relationships within themselves and 'the others', such as asylum seekers of other nationalities, COA personnel and institutions related to the asylum procedure. In the second part of this chapter, I present the findings related to the cultural materialism of everyday life. The acquisition of goods is part of the resettlement process.

Roles, bonds and coexistence issues

One of the social representations of the asylum seekers' everyday lives is their roles in the AZC. The slow time passing is a scenario in which the networking and bonding among the centre residents create rhythms of functions. The relationships that are built also contain an unspoken assignation of regular activities to particular individuals.

For instance, during the fieldwork, I could perceive that Andres did house and bike reparations not only for his household but also for his inner social circle members. When someone needs to purchase online, Claudia is an expert searching for the best deals on *Ali Express* or bargain on *Marktplaats*. Wendy was in charge of doing groceries for the shared meals of the day. If it were a 'party' day, Camila would invite everyone and make sure that the drinks were covered; most of the times that I visited the AZC, I was called in advance to be informed of the evening program and which drinks food was going to be served. The friendship among asylum seekers is represented in the collective work on behalf of the group's welfare (Candappa & Igbinigie, 2003).

Claudia and I were visiting Wendy at her bungalow. Wendy's housemate is pregnant, and Claudia offered help to get free stuff for the upcoming newborn. Claudia said that she could find on *Marktplaats* people willing to bring the item for free because they know they are asylum seekers and have nothing. In the meantime, they [Claudia and the expectant mother] choose clothes and other items on *Ali Express*, and other them, Claudia paid with a credit card and received the money in cash. She did not ask for any extra money. It was just a favour. It is interesting to see those micro-networks of commerce and services that are inside the centre. (Fieldnote [overnight-3] 17.18-03)

The knowledge of the asylum chain, the domain of the language (English or Dutch) and the communication skills are also part of a collaborative network of favours, in which the ones that cannot communicate proficiently with the COA personnel or fill procedure forms request support to the asylum seekers that may do.

While we were walking around the AZC, Camila approach Andres to ask him for help to fill a document. They agreed that she'd pass by later on. [...] When Camila came to Andres' bungalow, she showed him the form, he used Google Translate, but it was surprising how well he knew the concepts or the meanings of all the questions. When Andres and his family migrate to The Netherlands, he didn't speak English, but his understanding of the system and the learning of the languages gives him the tools to help others (Fieldnote. [First time in the AZC] 0701)

When an individual arrives in a new social group, the social behaviour will tend to look for people with a common ground, as it might be easier to relate. The first time I visited the centre, I met a Colombian asylum seeker staying in the AZC for a couple of nights after a sanction he received for misbehaviour. For him, the best feature of the temporal shelter was the amount of Colombians and Latins; because of it, he felt at home and welcome immediately.

Wilson was happy because, in the other AZC, the environment was 'not that fun' compared to ambient in *** [the fieldwork AZC]. He said that after just one night of being there, he already felt at home. He did not want to be transferred back to the location that he is assigned. (Fieldnote. [First time in the AZC] 0701)

Andres and Claudia were expecting Hanna during the asylum procedure. For the group of Latin asylum seekers, their pregnancy was a collective celebration. Camila and Wendy, the family's closest friends, organised the baby shower and helped Claudia with all the preparations for the birth. The last time I visited the AZC before Hanna was born, Camila and Wendy discussed who should be the godmother and the details of the baptisms ceremony.

However, in specific scenarios, the relationship among the Colombian asylum seekers reproduce the divisions between social classes, making Latin-American the most unequal region in the world. For instance, the first time I visited the AZC, there were mocking moments when I introduced myself, and the people in the room could note that I am from Bogota because of my accent. The origin and education level can be an initial mode of labelling a person based on us-them dichotomies such as capital-province. The labelling towards me framed me as a 'doctor'³. This obeys the regionalisation of the conflict in Colombia because the most mistreated areas of the country are in the pacific and northern region of the country; on the contrary, in Bogota, the most significant expression of the war is the hosting of IDP.

The labelling among the regions or the social classes in Colombia is transferred to the AZC everyday life. The expectations regarding behaviours or manners, in addition to social markers as clothing and belongings, generate social dynamics based on previous knowledge or assumptions regarding others.

I am a person that used to be well-positioned, I was always in the best restaurants, I have travelled. I know how to treat everyone, but I always try to keep my distance because I am not like everyone. I do not care what they think, but I stay on the border. I do not want to be mixed with people with a different social status than mine, and here I have to, which is a problem. My housemate life-threatening me, and that is because we are not the same (Dilma. IdI, 15-02)

Likewise, Wim explains that the perceptions of the asylum seekers that are highly educated or from a privileged sector of the society back in their homeland are the ones that the COA personnel

³ In Colombia is common to call anyone on a higher hierarchical position 'doctor'. It is not related to PhD or medicine studies. As well, the centralism of the country, in which most of the policies, projects and programs are designed and apply by people from Bogota, creates a gap between the people from the regions and the people from the capital.

tends to pay extra attention, because the sensation of 'losses' can be more harmful, compared to the feeling of safety that a person in a less favourable position might experience.

This process is arduous for the highly educated people or that they used to have it all. The feeling of 'what am I doing here' is different between someone that has nothing back home to the one that can maybe return and still having (Wim- COA. IdI, 12-02)

It's also about status; they don't want to give up on their status. The transformation about leaving who you were and building a new identity here, it's one of the most difficult things for people; it's about that transition; somehow, highly educated people have a struggle, compared to people who don't have anything. (Wim- COA. IdI, 14-03)

It is hard when you look back and remember that you used to have a car and that your children had it all. (Andres. IdI, 16-02)

During the fieldwork, I explored the perceptions of the interlocutors regarding particular situations where they felt uncomfortable or even ashamed when interacting with outsiders of the AZC. For instance, Andres explained that there were no direct stereotypes of 'being asylum seeker'. However, when it is payday, and all the residents of the AZC take the same bus to the nearest town, everyone on the bus starred at them.

At some point, it brings you disadvantages, or you feel ashamed to say it if I'm honest. (Dilma. IdI, 15-02)

Patricia also explained that when she visits the supermarket near the AZC, the employees are cautious and even asked them to check their backpacks at the entrance. On the other hand, Claudia suggested that in her experience, the label of asylum seeker does not carry that many negative stereotypes, compared to the 'Colombian label, as it associated them with drug trafficking.

In the end, you try to hide it because once people know that you are an asylum seeker, they will see you differently. And afterwards, a questionnaire begins: what do you do? Why did you come here? Why not go somewhere else?. Then you practically try not to have social interaction with more people outside of the AZC. (Jorge. IdI, 22-03)

In the AZC in which I did the fieldwork are sheltered around 1.000 asylum seekers. The most frequent nationalities are Syrian, Moroccan, Eritrean and Algerian(IND, 2021b). The interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds supposed challenges for the asylum seekers themselves and the coordination of the centre. As I presented in the previous chapter in the section [Space and time: the rhythm of the AZC](#), the assignation of the housing obeys criteria related to the household, gender and nationality. However, the flow of asylum seekers arriving and leaving the AZC does not allow the COA personnel always to assign individuals with common sociocultural characteristics.

The interrelationship among the asylum seekers develops dynamics such as the networking and bonding that I discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, there are scenarios of interaction in which the struggles and issues of coexistence are part of everyday life in the AZC. When I retrieved information regarding the most commons reasons for conflict in the centre, the most repetitive

answer was the robbery and burglary situations, in which other residents break into the bungalows to steal anything by the hand.

Andres and Claudia bought a new television. When we were preparing to sleep, Andres took the TV and put it inside their room. He explained that some other residents have mater keys that steal from the COA personnel. There is not a CCTV system in the AZC [...] The COA is only in charge of housing, but not of internal problems among refugees. For example, if a bike is stolen, they have to call the Police because the COA security personnel do not have the authorization to enter the houses. (Fieldnote [overnight-1] 28.29-01)

Relationships with the asylum chain actors⁴

Along with the asylum procedure, the asylum seekers are exposed to different scenarios of interactions in which several relationships are established with personnel of all the governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in the asylum chain. Remarkably, the relationships with the lawyers are the most personal and interconnected ones. In addition, the interactions with the IND personnel can be considered the most strict and tensioning one. Lastly, the asylum seekers are in contact with the COA employees involved in everyday life spheres of the AZC.

The asylum seekers are accompanied and represented by a lawyer, who can be either assigned by the IND or contacted directly by the asylum seekers. The procedure pays the representation fees, including the travel expenses for the appointments with the lawyer. Wim, Andres and Dilma agreed on the relationship with the lawyer, as the case's defence and support are based on the preparation that the representative can offer to the applicant.

Sometimes they don't meet the right lawyer, or they don't get a good connection, some are lucky, and they meet the right lawyer, and they click personally, because if I can get some connection with you, I will defend your case like mine, but if you do not convince me I will not fight it. (Wim- COA. Idl, 12-02)

There are well-recognised lawyers among the Colombian and Latin asylum seekers. For instance, Andres and Dilma approach him directly to request representation to their claims. On the contrary, Wendy's procedure is represented by a lawyer from *Raad Voor Rechtsbijstand*, who offer legal aid and assistance. Regarding her procedure, Wendy said that the rejection of her application is due to problems in the communication and lack of engagement of the lawyer.

*I heard that *** was the best defender for the Latin asylum seekers. I contacted him; I went to his office with all my folios. I had an interview with him, and he accepted my case. (Dilma. Idl, 15-02)*

In addition, the perceptions regarding the relationship with the IND's personnel is complex, as on them lay the study of the asylum procedure and the approval or rejection of the residence permit. As the IND personnel follow the protocols of 'The 8 day period', the asylum seekers are not clear under which criteria their case is studied, which is the step by step and the timing of the RVT.

⁴ it is important to underline that the findings of this research are based on the interactions with the Colombian asylum seekers that I encounter during the fieldwork. The purpose of this ethnography did not contemplate interviews with Lawyers, IND or VWN personnel.

I find it unfair that someone who does not take a book, watch a documentary, or understand a war says that my story is false. Let's say that they have a beach house here with a small shop, and suddenly someone comes and says 'you need to pay or we kill you', pay for what? 'just because' (Wendy. Idl, 22-01)

When I tell my story to the IND, what do I expect? That they at the least pay attention to what I am saying. They cannot understand that we need them as much as they need us because we [Colombia] are the buyers of all their [The Netherlands] weapons. (Andres. Idl, 16-02)

The relationship between the asylum seekers and the COA staff is part of everyday life inside the AZC. Compared to the time-to-time interactions with the lawyers or the IND personnel, whose involvement influences life trajectories. In this sense, the *begeleiders* are active actors in daily interactions.

The COA personnel are in charge to guide the asylum seekers in the practical matters of the procedure. The *begeleiders* are assigned to specific areas of services (housing, travel allowances, work, education, coexistence). As the COA staff is not in charge of individual procedures or assumed dossiers of asylum seekers, there is no 'individualisation' of the attention given to the residents of the AZC. In this sense, the interlocutors' perceptions are conditioned by the particular interactions that they may have experienced.

We do it all, the conversations outside the asylum conversations, but also emptying rooms when somebody left, we have to put everything in a trash bag for three months, and then we throw it away. (Wim- COA. Idl, 12-02)

Since 2017, Wim* is working in the asylum chain, in different branches of the system, such as the AMV and the *Extra Begeleiding- en Toezicht Locaties*-EBTL (Enforcement and Supervision Locations)⁵ His experience as a *begeleider* in the AZC, and his narrations regarding the interactions between the 'COAs' and the asylum seekers, suggest that is not possible to individualized relationships due to the number of residents. The ethics of his role also demand professionalism and equal treatment, without this leading to the dehumanisation of the interaction.

For example, after two or three years, someone with many problems explains: 'my sister was killed in Iran'. It is good for me to know where some behaviours come from. It is not for me, but it helps me; now I know what is going on, and now I can get some help if they want to. [...] We are all humans. But I always try to stay very professional, not in a very static way, not like a robot, because they will probably feel that. It is not just about being professional; I try to make jokes, make it real, but also with caution, I have to keep some distance, emotional distance. Sometimes hard, because you want to be involved, but it is better not to be involved.

Cultural Materialism and economic spheres of the asylum chain

The asylum seekers' fleeing paths and the [relocation](#) process are filled with representations of material losses. The everyday life' is composed of cultural commodities. Once the Colombian seekers

⁵ The government take into consideration the situations of nuisance-causing by asylum seekers. For example, their asylum procedure can be process faster and they will be transferred to the locations of the EBTL.

are resettled in the AZC, the accumulation of material objects is part of the grounding dynamics and symbols of status and integration.

The isolated location of the AZCs and the Dutch 'biking culture' are the two reasons for acquiring the first commodities for most Colombian asylum seekers. In this sense, Wim explained that when a new resident arrives at the centre, the first activity is to show them their dorms and settle down in what will be their home for at least the upcoming six months. Afterwards, they are advised to purchase a bike, mainly because it increases the perception of freedom of movement. Wim described the use of the bicycle as the 'first step into the integration'.

The dorms or bungalows are furnished with essential appliances. However, any extra comfort that the asylum seekers might need should be purchased or obtained by themselves. For instance, during the two years of stay in the AZC, Claudia learned to use *Marktplaats* and Facebook Marketplace. In the communications with the sellers, she explains that they are a family of asylum seekers that live in an AZC. Presenting her migration status most often benefits the transaction, as the sellers even delivered the items directly to their door.

Another sphere of cultural materialism is the microeconomy transactions among asylum seekers. As I presented in the section [Roles, bonds and coexistence issues](#), some of the daily activities of the interlocutors are based on the assistance and services related to the common welfare of the community, but those activities are also a source of extra income for the exchange of commodities. For instance, every Thursday, Wendy prepares and sell traditional Colombian snacks. Sometimes the transaction is a part of a barter economy, in which the exchange of an *empanada* with a manicure, or a lunch meal with a hair braid extension, allows the asylum seekers to have a sort of independence regarding the value of their time and skills. However, those microeconomy activities inside of the AZC are not allowed.

If they get paid, that would be a problem, because they are receiving extra money, how can they guarantee that they are charging the same money to everyone. But most of the time, they need to do it smartly. What do I mean by it? They just need to do it with reserve, not placing a table in the entrance of the house with a big sign 'to sell' (Wim- COA. IdI, 14-03)

In sum, the relationships among asylum seekers and insiders and outsiders of the asylum procedure are essential characteristics of everyday live in the AZC. The interactions influence the individual's roles and behaviours. The relationships with the personnel of the institutions part of the asylum chain shape the everyday life inside the AZC and the upcoming experiences once the residents are out of the centre.

Final considerations about the Post AZC everyday life

This section presents the fieldwork findings concerning the life after the Colombian asylum seekers leave the AZC. Here I narrate the experiences of Andres and his family after they were relocated outside of the Centre and started the integration procedure. The representations labelling process in which after the asylum seekers get granted the resident permit are considered refugees. However, if the residence permit is denied but stay in The Netherlands, the labelling processes will consider them illegal or undocumented migrants. During the fieldwork, some of the interlocutors narrated some strategies to extend the period of residence despite the formal decision of the IND.

The scope of this research was limited to the life trajectories and the everyday life inside the AZC, but in the last section, I present some missing information gathered that can become opportunities for further research.

Possible scenarios of the Post AZC life

As I presented in the section [The 8 days period](#), once the procedure is completed, the IND communicates the final decision to asylum seekers. The life trajectories and the labelling process along the asylum procedure framed the individuals as asylum seekers, but the outcome will create a new label assignation, in which different life paths are constructed depending on each particular case. The sought label for every applicant is to receive a favourable decision in which the refugee status is granted, and for the upcoming years, they will become subjects of protection by the Dutch government. If the application is rejected, they would need to return to their country of origin. However, that is not an option for many asylum seekers, and the new migration status would be 'undocumented/illegal migrant'.

When I started the fieldwork at the beginning of January, Andres and Claudia received a positive decision regarding their application. At the end of March, they got assigned a *Gemeente*. Their department handles the administration of the practical matter of the transit out the centre for 'resident permit holders'. That will host the new residents. Since they are out of the AZC, they are not responsible for the COA anymore. All the follow-up procedures are done by the *Gemeente* and the VWN' personnel. After Andres and his family knew the new city or town in which they would be moved, with the support of the COA staff, the application for money allowances are submitted, as they are a family the initial relocation allowance tops up to 6000€, but their new home was unfurnished, did not have the floor, and it was not painted. Then they will receive a monthly allowance, from it is discount the rent and health insurance. As soon as Andres and Wendy received the resident permit, their rights are the same as any other regular migrant or citizen.

In addition, since Andres and his family lived for more than three months after receiving the residence permit, the acquired status influences interactions with other asylum seekers in the AZC. Wim explained that the representations of the refugee label, impact the everyday life, and some changes in the behaviour are part of the transition to life outside of the centre.

They say, 'Now I am Dutch, so everyone else is a loser' so people that used to work with each other one day, the next day when one family get the permit, and the other one does not, they do not talk to each other again. 'They are losers; They will not get it'. (Wim- COA. IdI, 14-03)

In contrast, Jorge's asylum application was rejected. Before the IND and DT&V could start with the repatriation procedure, he abandoned the AZC facilities. The decision of permanence in The Netherlands regarding the illegal status, labelled Jorge as an undocumented migrant. In the asylum chain, the people that abandoned the procedure is labelled as 'gone with an unknown destination.

I became illegal. I had to find a way to survive. After almost sleeping on the street I could have a bed and food. I moved from the south of The NL to Amsterdam, and in there I could start to have a life [...] I looked for an organization that helps people who have been denied asylum and remain illegal, the processes are super slow, but for me, there were not many options [...] After several years I could get the resident permit because I met a French citizen and we did the partnership union. Otherwise, I think it would still be illegal [...] And well, after that, things changed because you already have a residence and well ... life gets better. (Jorge. IdI, 22-03)

Conclusions

This research aimed to explore, describe, and analyse the correlation between the life trajectories and everyday life in an *Asielzoekerscentrum*.

One of the main results that I found is that the individual trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers are a shaping element to their roles, interactions, and position within the AZC. Additionally, those trajectories are highlighted with the social representations of the category that the individuals are assigned depending on the migration status in which they are framed. In other words, the social categories are labels that create a specific positionality in the asylum chain with certain rights and duties depending on it.

The life trajectories of the Colombian asylum seekers within the relocation processes form narrations of the fleeing paths, with significant representations of the different moments of the procedure. The constructed labels correlate with the asylum seekers' individual lives, experiences, and the particular conditions of the fleeing paths.

On the other hand, the second finding of this research is that the trajectory of the asylum seekers is an entanglement of experiences, and everyday life in the AZC becomes the scenario of the performativity of roles, status, and cultural materialism. The life inside of the *Asielzoekerscentrum* is framed in a delimited space and time. The geographical spatiality, architecture, and distribution create an ambient in which specific activities can be done, and the mobility outside of the location is restricted in terms of public transport. The repetitive features of the rhythm of the everyday life of the Colombian asylum seekers drag the attention to the particularities of life in the AZC. The social dimensions of the bonding among residents, the gathering as a time passing strategy and the struggles regarding loneliness and depression create a *polyrhythmia*. The linear features of the asylum procedure are entangled with the cyclical repetitions of everyday life.

After the fieldwork and during the writing of this thesis, I could perceive that the paths of the undocumented and illegal migrants after their asylum application is denied can be a relevant social issue to be further explored. The stories of the Post AZC life briefly describe in this section are a small illustration of the complexity of the asylum chain, that does not end with the approval or rejection of the application, but it is an entanglement of strategies of permanence, paths and individuals stories that well deserve to be described and analysed.

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